

**CHALLENGING THE DOMINANT DISCOURSE OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM LOW
SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS: SOCIAL MOBILITY, ASPIRATIONS AND THE
ROLE OF INTERSECTIONALITY**

VOLUME ONE

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ABSTRACT

The current study was an exploration of the educational experiences of ‘academically successful’ young people from low socioeconomic (SE) and ethnic minority backgrounds. Research has shown that children and young people (CYP) that come from low SE backgrounds are at an increased risk of developing mental health difficulties (O’Donoghue et al, 2016; Gutman et al, 2015), presenting with attachment needs (Moullin et al, 2014) and are more likely to be exposed to neighbourhood stressors (Li et al, 2007). Information pertaining to the attainment gap of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds compared with their more advantaged counterparts is well documented, and during the current Covid-19 pandemic, disparities in the educational attainment of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds has been further emphasised in the media (Children’s Commission, 2020). Through the reflection on their educational experiences, the current study sought to explore the participants’ views related to significant facilitating factors and barriers, to their academic success. The research used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to conduct an in-depth analysis of the semi-structured interviews of six students from low SE and ethnic minority (predominantly South Asian) backgrounds in further education settings. The interview data were analysed utilising the stages of analysis outlined in Smith et al (2009) for IPA research. Four superordinate themes were presented: connectedness, identity, capital, and external influences on educational engagement. The findings were discussed alongside my interpretations of the data and relevant literature. The limitations of the research were outlined as well as the implications for educational psychology and wider educational practice.

DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this thesis to my team (my family and best friends), as they have supported, encouraged, and kept me sane throughout this lengthy journey through my career in psychology.

Mom, thank you so much for continuing to support and believe in me, even when I did not believe in myself.

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Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH	12
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE	17
2.1 INTRODUCTION	17
2.2.1 DEFINING SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND SOCIAL CLASS	20
2.2.2 FORMS OF CAPITAL	24
2.2.3 SOCIAL CLASS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS	27
2.3 EDUCATION: A VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY?	33
2.3.1 THE ATTAINMENT GAP	34
2.3.3 INTERSECTIONALITY: A CHALLENGE TO THE CONCEPTS OF MERITOCRACY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY	40
2.4 EXTERNAL SYSTEMS	46
2.4.1 THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS	46
2.4.2 PARENTS, CARERS, AND FAMILIES	52
2.5 ACHIEVING DESPITE DISADVANTAGE: THE ROLE OF RESILIENCE	56
2.5.1 RESILIENCE: INDIVIDUAL VS SYSTEMS-LEVEL FACTORS	56
2.6 SUMMARY	59
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	61
3.1 INTRODUCTION	61
3.2 ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY	61
3.3.1 PHENOMENOLOGY	65
3.3.2 HERMENEUTICS	67
3.3.3 IDIOGRAPHY	68
3.4 ETHICS	72
3.4.2 PARTICIPANTS	76
3.4.3 INCLUSION CRITERIA	77
3.5 ASSESSING RESEARCH QUALITY AND RIGOUR	81
3.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	85
3.7 REFLEXIVITY	85
3.8 ANALYSIS	87
3.9 SUMMARY	89
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	90
4.1 INTRODUCTION	90
4.2 FINDINGS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE SUPERORDINATE AND SUBORDINATE THEMES	91
4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	96
4.3.1 SUPERORDINATE THEME: CONNECTEDNESS	96

4.3.1.1 SUBORDINATE THEME: RELATIONSHIPS AND BEING ABLE TO RELATE.....	96
4.3.1.2 SUBORDINATE THEME: MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES	104
4.3.1.3 SUBORDINATE THEME: VALUING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	108
4.3.2 SUPERORDINATE THEME: IDENTITY	112
4.3.2.1 SUBORDINATE THEME: GENDER, CULTURE AND TRADITION	113
4.3.2.2 SUBORDINATE THEME: MY SOCIAL CLASS AND WHERE I LIVE	118
4.3.3 SUPERORDINATE THEME: CAPITAL.....	123
4.3.3.1 SUBORDINATE THEME: CONFIDENCE	125
4.3.3.2 SUBORDINATE THEME: UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE.....	130
4.3.3.3 SUBORDINATE THEME: FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS.....	134
4.3.4 SUPERORDINATE THEME: EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT	137
4.3.4.1 SUBORDINATE THEME: PARENTAL EXPERIENCES AND THE SUPPORT OF FAMILY	138
4.3.4.2 SUBORDINATE THEME: SOCIAL MOBILITY	144
4.4 SUMMARY	149
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EP PRACTICE	152
5.1 INTRODUCTION	152
5.1.1 WHAT ARE PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATION THROUGHOUT THEIR EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY?	152
5.1.2 WHAT FACTORS DO PARTICIPANTS VIEW AS FACILITATORS TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND WERE THERE ANY BARRIERS?	153
5.1.3 HOW DO PARTICIPANTS MAKE SENSE OF THEIR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR COMMUNITY AND WIDER SOCIETY?	155
5.4 CONCLUDING COMMENTS	162
REFERENCES.....	163
APPENDICES.....	205
A1 APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW.....	205
A2 EMAIL TO SCHOOL	226
A4 INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM.....	228
A5 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	231
A6 AIMEE INTERVIEW EXTRACT OF STAGE 1 – 3 OF ANALYSIS	235
A7 EXTRACT OF STAGES 4-5 OF ANALYSIS FOR AIMEE	252
A8 TABLE OF INITIAL SUPERORDINATE THEMES ACROSS PARTICIPANTS STAGE 6.....	253
A9 EXTRACTS FROM REFLECIVE DIARY	270

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Brief history of systemic theories and approaches	19
Figure 2 Model of Hard Interdependence vs Expressive Independence Stephenson et al (2014, p.614)	29
Figure 3 Hierarchies of knowledge in school systems (Francis et al, 2017, p.8)	48
Figure 4 Thematic Map of Final Themes	95
Figure 5 Types of Social Mobility outline in Pemberton and Humphris (2018)	148

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 The Disadvantaged Pupils Attainment gap data in England. (Source key stage 4 attainment data 2013/14 to 2018/19 DfE, 2020).....	35
Table 2 DfE KS4 data (DfE, 2020).....	36
Table 3 5+ A*-C GCSE (Inc. English & Maths) for all pupils entitled to FSM by ethnic group: 2004-2013 Strand (2015).....	41
Table 4 Ethical considerations and safeguards	73
Table 5 Pen portrait of participants	78
Table 6 Criteria outlined as acceptable – good as outlined by Smith (2011a).....	83
Table 7 Steps to data analysis in IPA as outlined by Smith et al (2009, p83-90).....	88
Table 8 Emergent Themes from Individual Analysis	93
Table 9 Implications for educational and EP practice	160

LIST OF BOXES

Box 1 Description of Discourse analysis	71
Box 2 Summary of key findings	151
Box 3 Study limitations.....	158

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

This study represents Volume One of two volumes required for the completion of a doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. The current study was completed during my second and third year of doctoral training, whilst on placement in an educational psychology service (EPS) in the West Midlands.

Research has shown that children and young people (CYP) that come from low socioeconomic (SE) backgrounds are at an increased risk of developing mental health difficulties (O'Donohue et al, 2016; Gutman et al, 2015), presenting with attachment needs (Moullin et al, 2014) and are at an increased likelihood of being exposed to neighbourhood stressors (Li et al, 2007). During the current Covid-19 pandemic, disparities in the educational attainment of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have been further emphasised in the media, and a report written by the Children's Commission (2020) highlighted that 60,000 children in the UK do not have access to the internet and 700,000 homes do not have access to a computer or tablet. This striking figure shows how children from poorer backgrounds are disadvantaged more generally compared to their more affluent counterparts. People from all ethnic minority backgrounds are twice as likely to be affected by poverty in comparison to their white counterparts (Bernard and Turner, 2011). Kenway and Palmer (2007) found that 65% of Bangladeshi families and 55% of Pakistani families were living in poverty, compared to 20% of their White British counterparts. Therefore, when considering difficulties related to socioeconomic background, it is also

important to consider factors related to ethnicity as people from ethnic minorities are likely to be disproportionately represented in low SE groups.

The attainment gap between young people from poorer backgrounds and those from more affluent backgrounds has been well documented (The Children's Commissioner, 2020) and this study hopes to add to the current body of research, using the voices of young people from low SE backgrounds to highlight facilitators and barriers to academic success. I think that it was important to focus on the barriers to success even though these young people are considered academically successful, to highlight the complexity of the issues of inequality in education. All participants in this study were from an ethnic minority background, highlighting further complex factors in relation to role of ethnicity on educational outcomes. Further, using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), I attempted to provide an in-depth analysis of the young people's accounts, which to my knowledge has not been utilised previously in this area of research.

This research was an exploration of the educational experiences of young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds who are in further education. The focus of this study was on academically successful young people and their perceptions of some of the facilitators and barriers to their academic success. As a person who fits this demographic, I wanted to understand the views of current young people and how they experience education and wider social factors in the current climate. I was interested in how they made sense of their

experiences and what they felt was most significant to their educational journey. The research, therefore, attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What are participants' experiences of education throughout their educational journey?
- What factors do participants view as facilitators to academic success and were there any barriers?
- How do participants make sense of their educational experiences in the context of their community and wider society?

Chapter two of this thesis explores research in relation to factors focussed on the individual, school, family, and wider societal narratives. The purpose of focusing on these factors was because I argue throughout this research that the educational outcomes of young people from low SE backgrounds is a complex interplay of several factors (Zaff and Smerdon, 2009; Richardson, 2020) and it is important to outline research pertaining to relevant contextual factors. I also argue that a systemic approach to educational practice is relevant here as this allows for the consideration of social graces or GGRRAACCEESSS, a term coined by Burnham (1992, 1993, 2012) and Roper-hall (1998) which refers to gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality. The term has evolved over time but refers to the ways in which these social constructs interact and are at the forefront or background of a person's life at different life stages (Burnham 2012). Current systemic approaches allow for practitioners to assume a collaborative, curious position when working with families and

includes how aspects of the practitioner's own contexts influence their practice (Totsuka, 2014). This approach is complementary to IPA as this method also allows for consideration of reflexivity in research.

Chapter three outlines the research methodology, considering the ontology, epistemology and the rationale for the methods chosen. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an approach widely used in psychological research (Eatough and Smith, 2017), underpinned by the fields of phenomenology, idiography, and hermeneutics (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009) which are explored in greater detail. IPA is concerned with the meaning people make of their life experiences and IPA research aims to reflect the salient aspects of this through the research (Smith et al, 2009). The research included data from semi-structured interviews with six participants from an ethnic minority background, in year 12 in further education settings. The interviews explored the participants' experiences of their educational journey from primary school up until their current year of study and explored their hopes and aspirations for the future. The participants reflected on the most important factors for them throughout their education and some of the challenges that they faced. The chapter concludes by outlining the method of analysis utilising the steps of analysis detailed in Smith et al (2009).

Chapter four presents the findings of this research beginning with the initial themes that emerged from individual interviews and then presenting the final thematic map, created by

looking across the participant group. Four superordinate themes were generated from the interview data and are discussed alongside extracts from the interviews that support the theme. Taking each of them in turn, I discuss relevant literature alongside my interpretation of the participant data.

Finally, Chapter five concludes this thesis by drawing together the findings, highlighting the most significant factors. Limitations of the research are discussed along with implications for EP practice.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

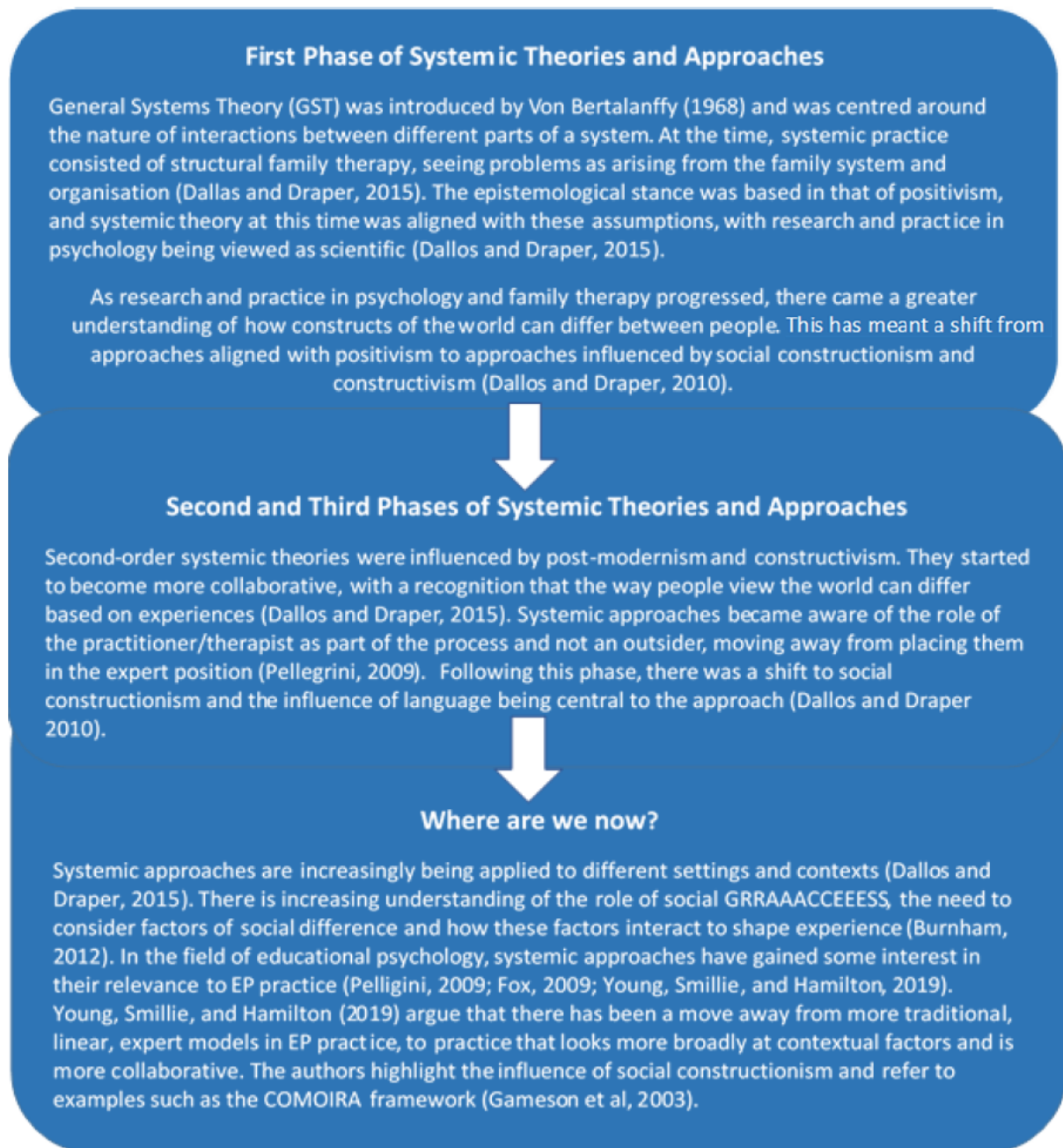
The current study explores the educational experiences of young people who are classed as academically successful and from low socioeconomic (SE) backgrounds. As will be discussed, the literature shows that children and young people from low SE backgrounds do not achieve the same academic outcomes as their high SE counterparts and this is known in the UK as the attainment gap (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018). Research has also shown that there are inequalities based on ethnicity and gender that can have a significant impact on attainment and outcomes (Richardson, 2020). However, a small proportion of young people achieve academically despite being in this so-called 'at risk' group. As a person who fits this demographic, I was interested in the facilitating factors of this phenomenon. I also wondered about the barriers faced by this group of young people and how this impacted their educational experiences, as I feel for the 'successful' groups, there is less emphasis on this.

In the field of educational psychology, it is our job to consider factors that may impact a child's learning, development, and social-emotional wellbeing (Young et al, 2019). Recent directions and models utilised in the field have shown the significance of considering contextual factors such as family, school, and wider society (Young et al, 2019; Pellegrini, 2009). It is common for educational psychologists (EPs) to consider systems-level factors and use formulation models such as the Interactive Factors Framework (Frederickson and Cameron, 1999), as they consider the interplay between contextual factors and systems surrounding children and young people (CYP). I argue that a systemic approach is relevant to

this research because it explains the complex patterns of interaction between different systems and factors (Pellegrini, 2009). Systemic approaches consider social factors or GRRAAACCEEESS, referring to gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, culture, class, ethnicity, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation, and spirituality (Burnham, 2012). Burnham (2012) argues that these factors shape identity, impact the social construction of realities, and influence the individual's perceptions of their position in relation to different systems including family, social relationships, cultural contexts, and wider society. Figure 1 shows an outline of systemic theories and approaches over time and their emergence in EP practice.

As such, I will outline literature pertaining to individual factors, education, family, and wider societal narratives around social class. Research has shown that people from all ethnic minority backgrounds are twice as likely to be affected by poverty in comparison to their White counterparts (Bernard and Turner, 2011). Kenway and Palmer (2007) found that 65% of Bangladeshi families and 55% of Pakistani families were living in poverty, compared to 20% of their White British counterparts. Therefore, when considering difficulties related to socioeconomic background, issues related to ethnicity but also gender differences must be viewed as interrelated and as such, the concept of intersectionality is discussed. The final section of this literature review will consider research related to the academic success of CYP from low SE backgrounds.

Figure 1 Brief history of systemic theories and approaches



2.2 Social class, Forms of Capital, and Psychology

The impact of social class on an individual's life is multifaceted and cannot be attributed to one factor. Dominant discourses in society provide a narrative of people with low SES that reflects an absence of aspirations, poor parenting, lack of discipline, failing schools and poor

attainment (Perry and Francis, 2010). This literature review will outline the evidence relevant to these areas to redress this discourse and highlight the impact of wider systems-level factors in society. Whilst research agrees that factors such as parenting or schooling are influential, they cannot be viewed in isolation and when considering educational inequality based on class, it is important to take a wider contextual view (Reay, 2012). This topic area is vast, and it is not within the scale of this research to outline all research in this area.

2.2.1 Defining Socioeconomic Status and social class

The terms social class and socioeconomic status are sometimes used interchangeably (Wyatt-Nichol et al, 2011), but Manstead (2018) argues although they are related, they are not interchangeable. Social class has been defined through both structural approaches focussing on a matrix of categories (e.g. education, household income) whereby an individual can move across a continuum, and processual approaches characterised more by identity and shared experiences (Wyatt- Nichol and Brown, 2011). Manstead (2018) argues that traditional class systems no longer reflect the current context and so an alternative approach examining education, occupation, and economic position, referred to as socioeconomic status, is more appropriate.

In UK policy and practice, the terminology used to describe social circumstances in society can be somewhat confusing, with terms like 'disadvantage' encompassing social, educational, and cultural factors (Smith and Smith, 2014). In a large proportion of government policies, eligibility for free school meals (FSM) is used as an indicator of deprivation/disadvantage. However, as pointed out by Gazeley et al (2017), this may not be

an accurate measure of material disadvantage, as changes in benefit regulations have meant that there was a small decrease in the number of CYP eligible for free school meals (DfE, 2017a). In addition, evidence in the UK has shown that 66% of working-age households classed as being in poverty, have someone in paid employment (The Joseph Rowntree Report, 2016). Ilie et al (2017) suggest that using FSM as an indicator of socioeconomic disadvantage may lead to inaccurate information, and policies used to address inequality will be ineffective. The results of this research suggest that parental education and occupation, are more accurate predictors of pupil attainment. Using FSM as an indicator of deprivation alone may miss out on families classed as the working poor (Hobbs and Vignoles, 2009). Research suggests that descriptions of disadvantage are diverse throughout the literature and therefore to provide a more accurate picture, income, and poverty, along with social capital, cultural capital and social positioning, should be considered (Jerrim et al, 2018).

Stephens et al (2014) note the complexity of terminology related to social background and in their research, they use the relative terms of working-class and middle-class to describe and organise a broad range of literature, that may use different measures of social class e.g. household income, education or occupation. When conducting the literature searches for this project, I encountered the same difficulties as relatively few studies refer to disadvantage using the term socioeconomic background, although this may, in fact, have been the focus.

In England, free school meals (FSM) has been the most common measure of economic disadvantage for children (EEF, 2018) however, the government has now broadened this definition.

*“Pupils are defined as disadvantaged if they are known to have been eligible for free school meals in the past six years (from year 6 to year 11), if they are recorded as having been looked after for at least one day or if they are recorded as having been adopted from care”
DfE (2020, p.8).*

Although there is an acknowledgement that FSM is not an accurate indicator of socioeconomic disadvantage, the government statistics regarding education are reported on this basis. Academic literature uses terms interchangeably and therefore research related to working-class, low SES, disadvantage and low income are reported throughout the current research. It should be noted that the current research used several measures to assess socioeconomic background including indicators of income (eligibility for 16-18 discretionary bursary), parental occupation and/or parental education, and type of secondary school participants attended, as recommended by the Cabinet Office (2018). Therefore, comparable to Stephens et al (2014), for continuity, throughout this research project I will use the terms high/low socioeconomic (SE) background or high/low socioeconomic status (SES) to describe all research in this area. It is important to note that use of this terminology may sometimes be different from the terminology used by other researchers.

Manstead (2018) asserts that although others have claimed that there is no longer a class system in the UK, research in sociology has drawn conclusions to the contrary. Savage et al (2013) provided an analysis of a large social class survey in the UK. An interesting reported finding was that only 14% of the population were identified as working-class and suggests that the traditional class system in the UK may have evolved to reflect current political and economic contexts (Manstead, 2018). The research conducted by Savage et al (2013) also highlights that the differences between classes expand beyond the financial, as there were observed differences in both cultural and social capital (please see section 2.2.2 for an explanation of these terms). Research has indicated that even though it seems that the class system has changed, perceptions and attitudes may not have shifted (Evans and Mellon, 2016). In their analysis of the British Social Attitude Survey, Evans and Mellon (2016) found that 60% of their sample identified themselves as working-class, even when their occupation may suggest a middle-class identity. This finding was also reflected in case study research conducted by Keane et al (2018).

It is argued that neoliberalism perceives individuals as capable of being successful, resourceful, and self-made, regardless of the social circumstances you are born into (DuGay, 1996). By this definition, a person's socioeconomic status should not prevent them from achieving in life and if they are offered opportunities to better themselves, they should be able to take them (Francis and Hey, 2009). Bauman (2005) asserts that this kind of rhetoric places blame on those from low SE backgrounds for their own disadvantage and absorbs society of the responsibility to address inequality. In section 2.3.2, the concept of social mobility is discussed and how people from low SE backgrounds are encouraged to use

education as a means for social mobility. This outlines an example of a system failing to address all contexts and structural forms of inequality, focussing solely on raising aspirations in education (Francis and Hey, 2009).

2.2.2 Forms of Capital

According to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, school success is not attributed to individual talent and giftedness alone, but it is in addition to the cultural capital inherited from an individual's family (Bourdieu, 1986). He argues that this concept explains the disparities in the academic achievement of CYP from different social classes. Bourdieu defines cultural capital as an understanding of how to competently use and understand language, manners, and preferences in line with the dominant culture in society (Bourdieu, 1977). Reay, David and Ball (2005) suggest that cultural capital can further extend to levels of confidence, assuredness, and entitlement. It is argued that cultural capital is not a standalone concept and is in fact interrelated with other forms of capital including economic, symbolic, and social capital (Reay, David and Ball, 2005). Economic capital is characterised by either inherited or generated wealth and material resources, while symbolic capital refers to encapsulating prestige, high social rank, or authority (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital refers to having access to networks of people, knowledge, and resources. (Harper and Kelly, 2003). Research suggests that those from low SE backgrounds lack social capital, so rather than parents not having high aspirations for their children, they lack the knowledge, skills, and resources to support attainment (Carter-Wall and Whitfield, 2012).

Reay, David and Ball (2005) argue that the impact of these aspects of social capital are often underplayed in empirical research, but they play a significant role in the individual's life choices. For example, decision-making when moving onto higher education differs between social classes. Having access to social, cultural, and economic capital significantly influences the individual's choice, confidence, and certainty about the future (Pemberton and Humphris, 2018). Research suggests that being from a low SE background reduces your social and cultural capital, which can have a direct impact on the decisions you make about your future career (Pemberton and Humphris, 2018).

Snellman et al (2015) argue that students who come from disadvantaged neighbourhoods are less likely to have access to networks of mentors or role models within the community that can support them with career advice or work experience, putting them at a disadvantage when considering career options. It is this type of social capital that Francis and Hey (2009) assert is fundamental to the structural causes of the social class gap.

Researchers have argued that Bourdieu's explanation of capital may not reflect the experiences of ethnic minority groups and have provided descriptions of alternative forms of capital to reflect this population (Zhou, 2000; Madood, 2004; Yosso, 2005). Yosso (2005) criticises the concept of cultural capital because it assumes that white 'middle-class' culture is the default or 'normal' position that everyone in society should aspire to. She argues that this conceptualisation of cultural capital implies that only the dominant cultural knowledge is valued in society. However, Yosso argues that when considered through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (please see section 2.3.3 for an explanation of this theory), ethnic

minority communities possess cultural wealth which includes a range of knowledge, skills and experience, that help to navigate and resist forms of oppression. Yosso goes on to argue that cultural wealth is cultivated in ethnic minority communities through alternative forms of capital. Aspirational capital describes the resilience of individuals who face significant barriers in society, to maintain a sense of optimism in improving their social circumstances. This could be in the form of parents cultivating a narrative of the possibility of high aspirations, opportunity and success for their children. Linguistic capital refers to the development of cognitive and social skills through being bilingual or using different types of communication styles.

Familial capital suggests that cultural knowledge and practices are cultivated within families. The term family is used to include extended family and friends and Yosso argues that the importance of connectedness to the community, caring, coping and providing, is nurtured through familial capital. Research has suggested that strong familial and cultural norms reinforce the value of education and its role in promoting upward social mobility and potentially allow cross-class relationships (Zhou, 2000), which Madood (2004) refers to as ethnic capital. Findings from a study conducted by Berrington et al (2016) support the concept of ethnic capital (Madood, 2004) as they found that parents from ethnic minorities had a higher parental engagement and interest in school, as well as more positive educational aspirations for their children

Navigational capital describes the skills used to navigate through institutions, such as the education system, that are set up to reflect the dominant culture in society. Resistant capital

refers to developing behaviours, skills and knowledge used to challenge the dominant discourse in society, which could involve challenging narratives based on gender, class or ethnicity. These descriptions of alternative capital offer an explanation as to how marginalised groups in society may possess the skills and knowledge to be 'successful' in society but perhaps this is not actualised in all cases due to deficits in the 'dominant' forms of capital.

2.2.3 Social Class and psychological factors

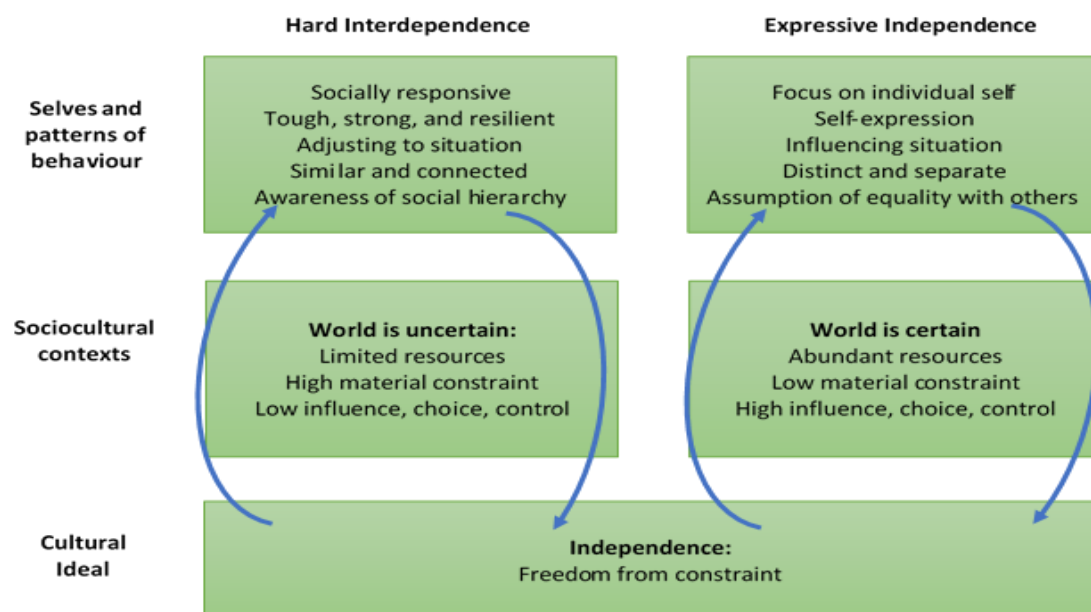
Although historically, social psychological research has paid little attention to factors of socioeconomic status (SES) or class as a form of identity, Easterbrook et al (2020) found that in their research, participants attached as much significance to factors of SES as gender or ethnicity. The results of this study showed that in contrast to participants with low SES, those with high SES placed more significance on aspects of their identities that relate to their SES position and less significance on sociocultural factors such as ethnicity or basic demographic factors such as age. This finding was echoed by research conducted by Aries and Seider (2007) with college students in the US. The results of this study indicated that participants from affluent backgrounds were more likely when compared to their less affluent peers, to recognize factors of social class in shaping their identity. Manstead (2018) therefore argues that although little attention has been paid to SES in research around self and identity, the above research suggests the significance of SES in structuring self-concept.

According to Stephens et al (2014), social class influences the way that we think, feel, and behave. The authors argue that those from low SE backgrounds, develop what they call hard

interdependence outlined, in Figure 2. The authors refer to the resilience, strength and toughness that is required to cope with adverse situations. They also highlight the impact of material deprivation, and the associated lack of opportunities, power, choice, and control. The authors argue that individuals from low SE backgrounds are highly responsive to their social environment, in contrast to the expressive independence of their middle-class peers, who feel they have an influence on their social environment and have a focus on developing aspects of the self.

Stephens et al (2014) further argue that although both hard interdependence and expressive independence can be equally functional, schools and workplaces are measured against middle-class norms, which creates barriers for upward social mobility. Some researchers have suggested that middle-class norms and values are shared through school and education systems, therefore recreating the very social inequalities they are attempting to mitigate (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Archer et al, 2010). Manstead (2018) argues that this can then account for the attainment gap and why children from high SE backgrounds outperform their low SE counterparts. Additionally, evidence suggests that children from low SE backgrounds experience academic pressures to perform and they lack confidence in their abilities to complete the tasks (Hirsch, 2007).

Figure 2 Model of Hard Interdependence vs Expressive Independence Stephenson et al (2014, p.614)



Research has shown that individuals from low SE backgrounds showed more inclination to help others, compared with their high SE peers (Piff et al, 2010) and have higher characteristics of empathy (Manstead, 2018). However, research conducted by Korndorfer et al (2015) found evidence to the contrary, with results from their research suggesting that individuals with high SES were more likely to make charitable donations, were more helpful and more likely to volunteer when compared with their peers with low SES.

Identity, in relation to social class, is evident when students consider applying for higher education institutions, especially prestige universities such as Oxford or Cambridge (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009). The reasons behind this are complex, but one explanation suggested by researchers is that there is dissonance between being from a low SE background and being a student at a prestige university (Manstead, 2018; Reay, Crozier and

Clayton, 2009; Lehmann, 2013). It is argued that this can impact on students' ability to imagine themselves being able to attend elite universities if they are from low SE backgrounds (Manstead, 2018) and that this, in turn, affects the likelihood of young people applying to such settings, even when they are academically able (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2019). Research has suggested that this leads to some young people opting out of applying to higher education altogether (Hutchings and Archer, 2001).

Gardner and Holley (2011) found that that first-generation postgraduate students are particularly inclined to experience 'imposter syndrome', feeling as though they do not deserve to be in higher education and are somewhat out of place. Nieuwenhuis et al (2019) report that for students from low SE backgrounds, lacking a sense of belonging and perceiving others from a similar background to have poor educational outcomes, significantly predicted lower GCSE grades, applications to low-ranking university and stress in relation to academic work.

Research has found that in the higher education context, students from low SE backgrounds were more likely than students from high SE backgrounds to experience emotional distress (Jury et al, 2017). John-Henderson et al (2013) conducted research involving 90 undergraduate students at UC Berkley, from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. They found that exposure to SES-based stereotype threat impacted negatively on task performance and increased physiological stress indicators in students from low SE backgrounds. Similarly, research has shown that negative stereotypes associated with low SES can impact psychological wellbeing, with students from low SE backgrounds reporting

lower self-efficacy and less confidence in their own academic skills, compared to those from high SE backgrounds (Stebbleton and Soria, 2012). This research shows the emotional impact of class stereotypes on psychological wellbeing and how in turn, this can impact performance on academic tasks. Further, students from low SE backgrounds face barriers before entering the higher education field (Jury et al, 2017) and the same can be said throughout their educational journey.

It is important to note that much of the research in this section is international, largely originating in the USA. The way that class is conceptualised varies between countries and societies. In societies such as the US, it is reported that there are unprecedented levels of inequality, with income gains only evident at the very top of the income distribution over the last 50 years (Stephens et al 2014). The UK is comparable in some ways, with reports outlining the wealthiest of the population increased its share of the national income by 10% between 1972 and 2009/2010, whilst the poorest 10% of the population saw a reduction of 3% (Manstead, 2018). Stephens et al (2014) assert that when considering class, it needs to be considered within a local and national context. However, although there are differences internationally in the way class is conceptualised, the key fact remains that material deprivation and the associated lack of opportunities, power, choice, and control leads to the disadvantage and marginalisation of low SE groups.

2.2.4 Risk factors associated with class and disadvantage

Thomas and Dorling (2007) reported on the ways in which health, finances, education, and life expectancy overlap, highlighting the significance of social class in relation to this. At the time, this finding sparked much media attention, as social inequality in the UK reflected a strongly uneven pattern of wealth and poverty (Francis and Hey, 2009). Research has suggested that social disadvantage is associated with an increased risk of mental health difficulties (O'Donoghue et al, 2016) with some research suggesting that this is four times more likely for children from poorer backgrounds (Gutman et al, 2015)

Poverty is related to increased risk of psychological difficulties in both parents and their children (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2011). Low income and the associated financial difficulties have been associated with parental depression in a range of populations (O'Neil et al, 2009). Moullin, Waldfogel and Washbrook (2014) argue that the strongest predictor for children having attachment needs is having a parent with attachment needs, and factors such as poverty or poor mental health are likely to impact a parent's attachment to their child.

Burstow et al (2018) suggest that current adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) categories have not paid enough attention to the impact of economic disadvantage, discrimination and racism and have been criticised for this. Bellis et al (2014) suggest that in addition to socio-economic factors exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can contribute to the development of social, emotional, and mental health difficulties in young people. As well as the impact of poverty within the family, research has also shown the impact of

neighbourhood poverty and the potential stressors of this on children and young people, relating to increased rates of internalising and externalising behaviour (Li, et al 2007).

A recent report produced by the Children's Commission (2020) emphasising the impact of the current Coronavirus pandemic on disadvantaged students, highlighted that 60,000 children in the UK do not have access to the internet, and a further 700,000 homes do not have access to a computer or tablet. Especially during the current context, this is likely to have a detrimental effect on the education of CYP from low SE backgrounds. Research suggests that children from low SE backgrounds are disadvantaged early on in childhood due to differences in exposure to vocabulary (ICAN and RCSLT, 2018) which in turn can affect cognitive development and school readiness (Fernald et al, 2013). This gap continues throughout their educational journey. The next section explores the disparities in education and the current policies/interventions in place to address this.

2.3 Education: A vehicle for social mobility?

This section will focus on the data and research surrounding the attainment gap, higher education, social mobility and intersectionality. There is vast research available focusing on the attainment gap across the age span for 'disadvantaged' CYP. For the purposes of this literature review, the focus will be on GCSEs as the participants were in the post 16 age range. As explained above, the statistics are not reported by socioeconomic status and instead refer to 'disadvantage' or free school meals (FSM).

2.3.1 The Attainment Gap

The attainment gap refers to the difference between academic attainment of those from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds (EEF, 2018). The attainment gap is reported to be more pronounced for CYP eligible for FSM and those with special educational needs (SEN) (EEF, 2018). In Britain, there are significant gaps between the attainment of CYP from the most and least advantaged backgrounds in society, starting on entry to school and continuing throughout their education (Montacute, 2018). The gap continues to widen as students' progress through school and there is reported to be over 19 months difference by the end of secondary education (EEF, 2018). Many of these inequalities in attainment become evident at GCSE and reportedly continue beyond further education (Montacute, 2018).

In the US there are persistent attainment gaps in those eligible for free school meals and those who are not (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2017). Barton and Coley (2009) reported that the US attainment gap and experiences of minority groups and low-income children, remained unchanged over a five year period and it has been argued that it would take a further 60 – 110 years before children from both poor and wealthy backgrounds would start school on an equal playing field (Reardon and Portilla, 2016).

Researchers have suggested that there is a general lack of consensus on what constitutes high attainment at GCSE level in the UK however, the emphasis on performance tables tends to be 5 or more A* - C grades at GCSE (Crawford, Macmillan and Vignoles, 2014). Achieving a C/4 or above in English and maths GCSE is considered in England to be reflective of good

literacy and numeracy skills, therefore those 16-18-year olds who do not achieve this are asked to retake it (EEF, 2018). In the UK, the attainment gap has remained steady over the last decade (EEF, 2018) and Table 1 outlines the data pertaining to the attainment gap index.

Table 1 The Disadvantaged Pupils Attainment gap data in England. (Source key stage 4 attainment data 2013/14 to 2018/19 DFE, 2020)

Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Disadvantaged pupils	135,589	142,098	154,018	150,444	151,176	149,876	143,544	141,134	143,816
All other pupils	431,338	419,207	417,304	407,988	402,020	390,780	384,200	382,502	398,752
National disadvantaged pupils' attainment gap index	4.07	3.89	3.81	3.74	3.80	3.78	3.66	3.68	3.70

The DFE (2015) state that the national disadvantaged pupils' attainment gap index is calculated by ranking all students' English and Maths point scores and deriving the average rank for both advantaged and disadvantaged groups. This provides a relative indicator of performance differences between disadvantaged pupils and their more advantaged counterparts. According to a report published by the Department for Work and Pensions (2020), the maximum possible gap is 10 and a disadvantage gap of zero would suggest that CYP from disadvantaged groups performed equally as well as their more advantaged peers. The data show the biggest difference was between 2010 – 2016. However, since then the attainment gap has slowly risen, which may reflect the impact of wider political agendas.

The meaningfulness of the attainment gap index score has been questioned as schools and parents may find the figures difficult to interpret (DFE, 2015). Further, the term

disadvantaged utilised by the government includes children in care, and this also may not accurately reflect socioeconomic background as for example, some children in care may not necessarily meet the low SE threshold. Therefore, although the figures have suggested fluctuations in the attainment gap index over time, this may not be a completely accurate representation of the attainment of CYP from low SE groups specifically.

The data outlined in Table 2 shows the percentage of young people achieving English and maths at grade 9-4/A*-C. There is a consistent difference of almost 30% between CYP eligible for FSM/disadvantaged CYP and all other pupils. Data published by the DfE (2020) shows that in 2019, 456 disadvantaged students achieved a grade 9 in GCSE English and maths, compared with 6136 other pupils. This may account for why some of these young people find themselves unable to apply for courses such as medicine where the grades required would be higher.

Table 2 DfE KS4 data (DfE, 2020)

Percentage of Students Achieving English and mathematics (at grades 9-4)	Year	FSM	All Other Pupils	Disadvantaged Pupils	All other pupils
	2016/17	40.3	67.4	44.3	71.2
	2017/18	40.0	67.7	44.5	71.5
	2018/19	41.4	68.5	44.7	71.8

Crawford et al (2014) suggest that the class differences in gaining entry to elite universities could partly be explained by lower attainment early on in education. The study tracked the prior attainment of high achieving students from low SE backgrounds, through the education

system and compared this with the attainment of their high SE counterparts. The research found that 8.5% of children from homes with the highest deprivation, achieved a level 5 in English and maths at Key stage 2 compared with 29.9% of the least deprived children. At Key stage 4, the results were even more pronounced showing that 14% of the children from the most deprived backgrounds achieved 5 or more A*- C grades at GCSE, compared with 58.8% of young people from least deprived backgrounds. The results also suggest that children from high SE backgrounds are likely to start with higher attainment and can maintain this throughout their schooling. Research suggests that although some children from low SE groups perform well in primary school, this is not maintained at secondary school (Montacute, 2018).

2.3.2 Social mobility

Social mobility is defined as a change in the social position of an individual based on the background of their parents and is measured through either income or social class (The Sutton Trust, 2017). It is argued that upward social mobility in the UK has remained dormant for decades (The Sutton Trust, 2017). A report published by The Sutton Trust (2017) identified stagnant wage growth, the attainment gap and access to employment/educational opportunities as potential barriers to social mobility. Over the last 20 years, UK governments have emphasised the importance of further education as a means of social mobility and have sought to increase the number of young adults continuing in education (Pemberton and Humphris, 2018). The Milburn Review (2012) outlined the crucial role that higher education plays in facilitating social mobility. However, current research conducted by Horton and Hilton (2020) indicates that there continue to be class disparities in educational

qualifications in the UK, which has a detrimental effect on later life outcomes and opportunities (Sutton Trust and Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2018).

The Social Mobility Commission (2016) found that young people from affluent families were 3.6 times more likely to attend a Russell Group university when compared to those from low SE backgrounds. This highlights that although there has been a shift to becoming a more socially inclusive society, there are still disparities and barriers to people who are less fortunate. This is highlighted explicitly by the probability of young people from low SE backgrounds gaining entry to Oxbridge being 1 in 1500 and for more affluent, privately educated students, 1 in 20 (Social Mobility Commission, 2016). Further, research from Universities UK (2016) found that in the 2013-2014 academic year, students from low SE backgrounds were 1.4 times more likely to not complete their course, when compared with more high SE peers.

Perry and Francis (2010) outline a range of UK government initiatives aimed at closing the social class gap in education, as well as schemes developed by various independent organisations. Initiatives such as Aim Higher have been implemented by UK governments in an attempt to address these inequalities and to encourage social mobility, with engagement in higher education being promoted as a vehicle to improving social circumstances (Horton and Hilton, 2020). The Aim Higher programme was developed to specifically target young people from deprived neighbourhoods, to raise aspirations and widen participation in higher education (Archer et al, 2010). The Department for Education and Skills (2003a) sought to improve the underachievement and underrepresentation of black and minority ethnic

groups in higher education, whilst also attempting to offer an alternative discourse around class (Archer et al, 2010). Archer and Francis (2007) argued that this initiative seemed to suggest that there was a problem within the black and minority ethnic community, rather than with the systems in society. Further, Francis and Hey (2009) suggest that the discourse put forward by the government around raising aspirations appear to suggest that young people from underrepresented groups had a lack of aspiration in the first place.

Research conducted by Gorard, Huat and Davies (2012) outline the difference between aspirations and expectations, stating that aspirations refer to a young person's hopes and desires for an idealistic future. In contrast, expectations are based on the young person's reality and can, therefore, be affected by socioeconomic or other contextual factors that may impact the young person's perceptions of the opportunities available to them. Research conducted by Pemberton and Humphris (2018) highlight that although young people from low SE backgrounds may have high aspirations, there is a distinct lack of support and guidance to show them how to actualise their aspirations. Evidence also suggests that inequalities continue upon entry into the labour market, with people from low SE backgrounds making significantly more applications for jobs than those from high SE backgrounds (Furlong and Cartmel, 2005).

Reay, David and Ball (2005) suggest that higher education is not as inclusive as it seems. This echoes the arguments of Bauman (2005) that the raising aspirations discourse suggests young people who do not utilise education as a way to better their social circumstances are responsible for their own failure to move out of poverty/disadvantage. This individualises

the problem and looks at within-person factors, falling short of examining the inequalities in the education systems and society (Francis and Hey, 2009). Manstead (2018) argues that material constraints have a significant impact on the way that individuals construe themselves, making it more difficult for those from low SE backgrounds to benefit from the opportunities that would increase social mobility. Therefore, the inequalities in society are such that the meritocratic narrative around social mobility is not as straight forward as it might seem. The interaction of class, gender and ethnicity lead to CYP facing significant barriers throughout their education (Shaw et al 2016). This will be explored further in the next section.

2.3.3 Intersectionality: a challenge to the concepts of meritocracy and social mobility

Intersectionality, a term coined by Crenshaw (1989), refers to how the effects of gender, class and ethnicity interact and influence an individual's life chances. The above research has outlined the impact of socioeconomic background on educational attainment. However, it is also pertinent to discuss the role of ethnicity and gender in relation to this. Evidence has discussed the role of intersectionality between class, ethnicity, and gender, in relation to the educational attainment of young people (Berrington, Roberts and Tammes, 2016). Strand (2015) conducted research examining the achievement gaps between White British children and children from ethnic minorities. The findings suggested that in 2013, Indian and Chinese students were twice as likely to achieve 5 or more A*-C grade GCSEs compared with White British students.

The report found students from Pakistani, Black Caribbean, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean background, were less likely to reach this level of attainment when compared with their White British counterparts. The 2019 KS4 data still reflects that overall, these groups achieve a lower level of attainment compared with their White British counterparts. However, the data in Table 3 shows that when considering pupils in the FSM group, it is White British students who achieve the lowest level of attainment. This supports the argument that low SE populations are diverse and indicates the need to consider wider contextual factors, such as the intersection of class and ethnicity (Berrington et al, 2016).

Table 3 5+ A-C GCSE (Inc. English & Maths) for all pupils entitled to FSM by ethnic group: 2004-2013 Strand (2015)*

Ethnic group	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
White	-	15.1	16.2	17.7	19.5	21.9	25.8	29.3	30.9	32.7
White British	14.1	14.7	16.0	17.4	19.1	21.5	25.3	28.8	30.5	32.3
Irish	19.5	21.4	19.5	24.1	24.6	24.0	29.1	33.6	32.7	38.5
Traveller of Irish Heritage	2.2	2.4	X	X	x	X	16.7	12.3	11.7	12.9
Gypsy / Roma	1.9	6.1	X	X	5.4	6.9	6.2	8.3	8.5	9.2
Any other White background	20.1	23.7	23.6	26.7	29.4	31.9	37.0	41.6	41.9	43.8
Mixed	-	21.2	22.0	24.6	27.9	30.7	34.9	39.5	41.3	43.9
White and Black Caribbean	13.7	17.8	18.0	19.4	23.1	27.4	30.0	33.7	36.0	37.5
White and Black African	24.3	23.7	25.6	27.6	28.1	29.1	37.8	43.6	44.7	48.6
White and Asian	27.6	27.7	31.4	29.6	34.3	35.9	38.6	42.5	46.3	47.9
Any other mixed background	18.5	22.4	22.6	28.7	31.6	33.4	38.9	43.9	44.5	48.0
Asian	-	28.6	32.0	33.7	37.6	39.6	45.7	49.5	51.8	52.8
Indian	35.3	37.4	39.5	41.9	45.9	48.0	55.0	57.0	57.9	61.5
Pakistani	22.5	24.1	27.1	29.5	32.3	34.2	40.6	42.9	46.5	46.8
Bangladeshi	29.3	30.5	35.3	36.4	41.7	43.0	50.3	56.2	58.6	59.2
Any other Asian background	29.8	32.7	34.4	36.0	40.5	45.9	45.3	51.8	49.6	52.4
Black	-	20.3	23.1	27.1	30.4	33.8	39.1	44.3	45.6	48.2
Black Caribbean	13.9	18.8	19.5	24.2	26.2	29.5	33.1	37.8	40.2	42.2
Black African	19.1	22.4	25.5	29.2	32.1	35.6	42.1	47.2	48.4	51.4
Any other Black background	16.3	14.8	20.7	23.5	30.7	32.7	34.9	41.3	40.0	43.1
Chinese	55.4	58.6	53.8	60.7	63.1	70.8	68.4	73.5	68.2	76.8
Any other ethnic group	24.2	27.6	29.7	33.4	35.5	42.2	44.2	48.5	51.2	51.5

Chinese students tend to be the highest attainers among the low SE ethnic minority groups, with the lowest-performing groups being White British and Black Caribbean respectively (Strand, 2015; Shaw et al 2016). At Key Stage 4, the difference in attainment between high and low SE groups is most prominent in the White British and White other ethnic groups (Nye et al, 2016). Shaw et al (2016) found that White British and White Other children from low SE backgrounds are the lowest-performing ethnic group and make less progress throughout their schooling when compared with their ethnic minority counterparts with the same SES. This research, therefore, indicates that for CYP from ethnic minority backgrounds, there may be factors other than class such as, inequality in access to good schools, low teacher expectations, conscious/unconscious bias in the school system or discrimination, that impact the educational attainment (Shaw, Menzies and Bernardes, 2016).

Despite the rhetoric of a need to raise aspirations among ethnic minority groups (Archer and Francis, 2007; Francis and Hey, 2009) , research has found that young people from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely than their white counterparts to progress to higher education (Richardson, 2020) and that the majority of ethnic minority CYP have high aspirations (Platt and Parsons, 2018). However, Boliver (2016) found that the proportion of students from Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black ethnic groups accessing places at Russell Group Universities, was considerably lower than would be expected. This is another potential factor that can impact opportunities for social mobility among ethnic minority groups, even with participation in higher education. Unfortunately, these disparities in relation to ethnicity continue into the labour market, with higher rates of unemployment among Gypsy Roma Travellers, Bangladeshi, Arab and Pakistani women, but also Black

Caribbean men (Catney and Sabater, 2016; UK National Audit Office, 2008). The Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (2014) found that even though ethnic minority groups are achieving higher qualifications, this does not translate into their opportunities in the labour market and people from Pakistani groups, in particular, have a significantly lower chance of gaining a professional or managerial role, compared with their White British counterparts (Platt, 2005). Shaw, Menzies and Bernardes (2016) argue that this may be explained by segregation in the labour market, the interaction of factors surrounding geography, local labour markets and employment opportunities, ethnic and gender discrimination and cultural norms related gender roles.

Shaw et al (2016) highlight the disparities in education based on ethnicity and refer to the attainment of black students falling substantially by the time they reach secondary school. Black Caribbean boys are three times more likely to be excluded from school when compared with all other students and 21.7% are identified as having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), compared with 15.2% of all other students. This research highlights that issues relating to ethnicity and gender can impact on the educational experiences and attainment of CYP. These inequalities can also be seen within the Asian Muslim community, particularly in relation to women (Stevenson et al, 2017). Although the attainment of Bangladeshi and Pakistani students has risen substantially in recent years, this is not always translated into the labour market with British Bangladeshi and Pakistani women earning less than their other ethnic minority counterparts (Shaw et al, 2016).

Nye, Menzies and Allen (2016) assert that previous research has suggested that girls have consistently achieved higher attainment than boys throughout their education, however, their analysis found that the trend is not as strong when considering science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. Further, when the researchers analysed the attainment among low socioeconomic groups, males outperformed females in the STEM subjects at A-Level. Similarly, research has found that girls are less likely to complete A-Level or higher education courses in pure sciences (Smith, 2011). Codioli (2015) found that for girls in particular from low SE backgrounds, subject choice has a considerable influence on their future career outcomes as they are less likely to take STEM subjects.

Over the last 30 years, women have been found to outperform men in higher education (Richardson, 2020). However, research has argued that factors related to gender such as parents' attitudes towards gender roles and young people from some ethnic groups aspiring to more or less 'gender-typical' occupations (Platt and Polavieja, 2016), have played a role in the gender disparities seen across the labour market. It is argued that when compared with their White, Black Caribbean and Black African counterparts, South Asian women are more likely to have attitudes pertaining to more traditional gender roles (Khoudja and Platt, 2017). However, research has also shown that young women from South Asian backgrounds aspire to gain employment in well-paid occupations (Platt and Parsons, 2018).

Critical Race Theory (CRT), underpinned by research based in law, sociology, history, ethnic studies and women's studies, was developed in the US to address issues of race and racism in the academic context (Yosso, 2005). The theory has been applied to the field of education

and Solorzano (1997,1998), outlines five key factors that should be considered in relation to research, theory and policy as well as the curriculum and pedagogy of educational institutions. Solorzona first refers to the intersectionality of race and racism with other forms of social disadvantage, which include gender and class. Second, he outlines the role of CRT in challenging the dominant ideology referring to the concepts of equal opportunity, meritocracy, colour-blindness and race neutrality. In relation to the current research, the concept of meritocracy is questioned as it almost simplifies the issues of social disadvantage and the significant barriers faced by some groups in society. Authors such as Eddo-Lodge (2018) completely reject the concept of meritocracy all together and she suggests that to accept such a concept serves to ignore the structural inequalities, social injustice and discrimination that exists in society.

Solorzona's third factor relates to CRT's focus on social justice and its challenges to various forms of oppression based on race, gender or class. He goes on to outline the importance of understanding the lived experiences of people of colour and critical information that can be learned from the experiences of ethnic minority groups. In relation to the current research, this was central to the decision of choosing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as the research method, so that the research topic could be understood from the position of the participants. The final factor discusses the importance of a transdisciplinary approach, drawing on multiple fields of research to analyse race and racism.

The above research and theory demonstrate the complex picture of the educational attainment and social mobility of CYP in the current context. There are clear factors related

to ethnicity, class and gender inequalities and discrimination, that play a significant role in the life outcomes of individuals in society. According to Richardson (2020), there is limited research that considers the intersection of ethnicity, gender, class and the interaction of these factors. The current research aimed to highlight factors of intersectionality and the more complex picture in relation to social mobility, aspirations and educational experiences.

2.4 External Systems

The role of schools in mitigating the impact of socioeconomic disadvantage on educational outcomes has long been debated by researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in the U.K (Shain, 2016). Similarly, it has been argued that parents from low SE backgrounds are highly influential in their children's educational attainment (Reay, 2013). However, as previously argued, these factors cannot be viewed as independent of each other as they both make up the significant systems that influence a child's life, in addition to other contextual factors. This section outlines research in relation to the role of schools/teachers and the role of parents, carers, and families.

2.4.1 The Role of Schools and teachers

In recent years, the UK government have heavily criticised schools classed as 'underperforming', developing a discourse of failing schools adding to the underachievement of students in the UK (Shain, 2016). These narratives put enormous pressure on schools and CYP to ensure high academic performance, potentially to the detriment of other areas in a student's life (Rich and Schachter, 2012). It has been argued

that to support the successful outcomes of children from low SE backgrounds, policies need to go beyond education and focus on systemic/structural change, as education is not the only way to address inequality (Ball, 2010).

Evidence has shown that schools with a higher number of students eligible for free school meals have lower numbers of teachers with specialisms in science (Kirby and Culinane, 2017) or maths (Allen and Sims, 2018). The Sutton Trust (2016) argue that schools in disadvantaged areas are less likely to have experienced teachers and therefore CYP from low SE backgrounds are less likely to be taught by the best teachers (Montecute, 2018). Research has outlined the significance of systemic school factors, differences in school quality, the quality of the teachers and the classroom environment (Muijs et al, 2014), in relation to the academic outcomes of children and young people. This is supported by a study conducted by Sammons, Toth and Sylva (2018) which found that the quality of schooling in lower secondary, student-teacher relationships, formative feedback and monitoring of work, all contributed to better outcomes at A level.

In an article in the Guardian, sociologist and Cambridge University professor Diane Reay emphasised the inequalities in the school system and the difference in the quality of teaching in working-class and ethnically mixed comprehensives.

“There are predominantly middle class comprehensives and predominantly working class and ethnically mixed comprehensives – and despite all the rhetoric around pupil premiums, pupils in the more working class comprehensives get less money per head. They get less qualified teachers. They get higher levels of teacher turnover and more supply teachers. Even if they are in the same schools as middle class children, they are in lower sets and yet again they get less experienced teachers.” Reay (2017)

Research conducted by Cassen and Kindgon (2007) found that pupils from low SE backgrounds are at an increased likelihood of attending poorly performing schools. Further, they suggest that the quality of teaching is lower for students perceived to be underperforming, because of the focus on the school’s overall academic attainment. This appears to relate to the arguments put forward Francis, Mills and Lupton (2017) in relation to the hierarchies of knowledge and the current dichotomies underpinning the direction of the curriculum and education policies, shown in figure 3 below.

Figure 3 Hierarchies of knowledge in school systems (Francis et al, 2017, p.8)

Vocational	V	Academic
Skills	V	Knowledge
Progressive	V	Traditional
Soft	V	Hard
Dumbed down	V	Rigour
Mass	V	Elite
Arts & humanities	V	Sciences
Body	V	Mind
Enquiry	V	Facts
Extrinsic	V	Intrinsic

Francis et al (2017) argue that this dichotomy outlines attitudes in the UK towards academic learning being superior to practical skill development, and the column on the right serves to devalue the column on the left. Over the years, there has been a trend in England of encouraging students from low SE backgrounds to pursue vocational qualifications (Francis et al, 2017). However, Wolf (2011) found that vocational qualifications were not recognised in the workplace, even though they were deemed to be the equivalent of GCSEs. This seems to feed into the argument that academic qualifications are superior, which is interesting to consider in the current context, as a large proportion of our key workers are likely to have been educated via vocational routes. Further, people in low paid, skill-based jobs have been keeping the country going at this time and are (rightly) being heralded as national heroes.

The view that 'academic' subjects are superior further pushes the agenda of young people gaining social mobility via academic means. It seems that there needs to be a structural change in education for academia and vocational learning, not to be mutually exclusive.

There appears to be an emerging version of this with the introduction of degree apprenticeships in some areas of industry however, it is argued that they need to be more widely available (The Sutton Trust, 2019). Francis et al (2017) suggest it would be helpful to consider how to use a 'non-traditional curriculum' to transmit the same powerful knowledge. Reay (2012) shares this view, arguing there needs to be a reframing of educational success that extends beyond the current narrowly academic indicator. The Education Endowment Foundation (2018) outline the negative impact of ability grouping on CYP who are not classed as 'high attainers' leading to a lack of confidence and conveying the message that attainment can be improved through effort. Given that the government

narrative is one of meritocracy and aiming high, it is unsurprising that some CYP who do not meet the academic standards set by schools, develop the notion that education is not for them and subsequently disengage.

Dyson et al (2010) argued that there should be changes to the curriculum to include more diversity and reflect local contexts. This appears to be a proposal to move towards a more meaningful approach to learning that CYP from all backgrounds can relate to, perhaps more specifically those from disadvantaged communities and low SE backgrounds. Perry and Francis (2010) suggest that social inequality in education should focus on educational engagement as opposed to attainment, addressing all CYP from low SE backgrounds, not just the 'high achievers', emphasising alternative routes to careers such as vocational routes and valuing the existing knowledge of CYP from low SE backgrounds. This was also reflected in a review conducted by Alexander and Armstrong (2010) outlining the significance of a curriculum being relevant to a young person to encourage academic engagement. Hayes et al (2006) argue that this is particularly pertinent to students from low SE backgrounds.

Research conducted by Keane et al (2018) emphasises the importance of the teacher-student relationship when working with students from low SE backgrounds. It has been argued that continuous professional development for teachers regarding the role of student-teacher relationships, is pertinent to the profession, particularly when working with students from low SE groups (Keane, 2011b). Research has found that students from low SE backgrounds value teachers being caring and offering active support and encouragement (Keane et al, 2018). This appears significant in providing a positive school experience, which

is important because research has shown that negative school experiences can significantly impact the self-belief of students with low SES (McCoy and Byrne, 2011).

Historically, researchers such as Erikson (1959, 1963, 1968, 1975) have considered identity formation as an interplay between the individual and the social. Flum and Kaplan (2012) consider the development of identity within the school context. They argued that when schools take a holistic view of students, identity and academic development occur simultaneously. Research has suggested that teachers connecting with students and showing interest in who they are, their goals and their aspirations, can positively impact motivation and engagement in learning (Faircloth, 2012; Sinai et al, 2012).

Findings from research conducted by Shain et al (2014, as cited in Shain, 2015) suggest there is not a singular factor that contributes to improving educational outcomes for students with low SES. They found that a combination of engagement of parents, considerable commitment from teaching staff, support with resources, early intervention, investing in extracurricular activities and enrichment activities, supported the improvement of educational outcomes for students from low SE backgrounds. When considering the research, policies, and initiatives there appears to be a somewhat lack of cohesiveness and consistency in the implementation, which is likely to influence the impact and outcomes. Shain et al (2014) also highlight the differences that can occur between primary and secondary school, potentially jeopardising any progress that may have been made early on (Shain, 2015).

2.4.2 Parents, carers, and families

Over the last decade, UK government policy has emphasised the importance of increasing parental involvement in children's education (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008; SEND Code of Practice, 2015). However, it is argued that at times, government policy surrounding families from low SE backgrounds can place blame on parents without taking account of other significant contextual factors (Crossley, 2018). In response to the 2011 riots, David Cameron, the Prime minister at the time, expressed a negative view of families from low SE backgrounds and more specifically, single-parent families.

"Either there was no one at home, they didn't much care or they'd lost control. Families matter. I don't doubt that many of the rioters out last week have no father at home. Perhaps they come from one of the neighbourhoods where it's standard for children to have a mum and not a dad, where it's normal for young men to grow up without a male role model, looking to the streets for their father figures, filled up with rage and anger. So, if we want to have any hope of mending our broken society, family and parenting is where we've got to start" Cameron (2011b).

Narratives of a 'broken society' being related to those from particular social backgrounds are likely to perpetuate social inequalities. Reay (2013) argues that there is a focus on parenting being highly influential on the educational aspirations and social mobility of children with low SES. However, research has found evidence to the contrary suggesting that the attitudes and behaviour of parents cannot outweigh structural and material disadvantage (Hartas, 2012).

"To regard parental learning support as a key strategy to raise achievement without considering families' individual circumstances may be overly simplistic and potentially ineffective. This is especially the case given that underachievement appears sustained by structural inequality, and not lack of parental involvement with children's learning." (Hartas 2012, p.3).

Hartas highlights that there are many contributing factors to the attainment gap and that parenting alone cannot be responsible for this. She suggests that although parents from low SE backgrounds may try to support their children, due to limited educational experiences they may not be able to provide the same quality of support as parents who have more experience of the education system. Kirk et al (2011) outline similar findings pertaining to the impact of parents' high expectations of their children, but lack of experience of higher education and a focus on concerns about financial constraints. This relates to the earlier discussion around limited forms of capital perhaps being more of an influencing factor.

Scanlon et al (2019) conducted research with 25 parents from low SE backgrounds about the future aspirations of their children. They found that some parents more actively guided their child, providing career advice and discussing subject choices, seeing themselves as having an effective role in their child's future outcomes. In contrast, other parents were supportive of their child's decision to progress to higher education, but the decision making was left to the child. The authors suggest that this was not due to a lack of interest but more related to the parents' lack of experience with the education system. Contrary to popular discourse, all the parents in this study valued education and were encouraging of their children aspiring to higher education. It could be argued that due to the experience of socioeconomic disadvantage and barriers, parents from low SE backgrounds are more encouraging of their

children engaging in education (Scanlon et al, 2019). According to Stokes et al (2015), research has suggested that parental expectations and aspirations can in some way explain the higher attainment of some ethnic minority groups, inclusive of those from a low SE background. Strand et al (2015) suggest that families that are newly arrived perceive education to be significant as they view this as a method to gain economic capital.

Hamden-Thompson and Galindo (2017) conducted a study that explored the correlation between school-family relationships and children's academic attainment. The study was underpinned by ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and considered the interaction between home and school factors on promoting academic success in children. The results showed that strong, positive relationships between home and school correlated with high parental satisfaction and improved educational attainment of young people. However, the results of this study indicated differences in parents' relationship with the school, based on SES. Parents with high SES were reported to have developed a relationship with their child's school in which they felt equal to and respected by the teachers, but this was not as common in parents with low SES. Further, researchers have found that parents from low SE backgrounds were not as confident in their role in their child's education which led to them being less proactive in some instances (Hamden-Thompson and Galindo, 2017; Scanlon et al, 2019). Evidence suggests that there are barriers to the engagement of parents from low SE backgrounds including multiple work commitments, time constraints and lack of resources (Galindo and Sheldon, 2012). Other research indicates that due to the level of stress associated with prolonged poverty and parents focussing on immediate financial needs, they may not have the capacity to consider educational factors (Hynes, 2014).

Mayo and Siraj (2015) conducted research exploring how parents from low SE backgrounds support their children's education and home factors that supported the development of academic skills. They concluded that emotional and practical support with education and parents being interested in and communicating with their children about school was related to higher academic success. They suggest that it is important for children to be encouraged by their parents to see the importance of school as this message can be internalised leading to more motivation to achieve academically. The results also found that parents provided practical support in the form of items such as computers, but this came with financial sacrifices

Positive parent-child relationships have been identified as one of the key factors in promoting positive outcomes for CYP from low-income families (Low and Stocker, 2005). Research has also found that a positive parent-child relationship promotes positive academic performance (Gutman et al, 2002), psychological adjustment (O'Doherty et al, 2013; Kirby et al. 2020) and the development of social-emotional knowledge (Brown et al, 2013). Parenting factors have been correlated with differences in school readiness and early school performance (Walker and Macphee, 2011). Kirby et al (2020) found strong links between maternal warmth as a mediator of financial hardship and promoter of positive mental health. They suggest that attachment to a primary caregiver more broadly promotes resilience and can mitigate socioeconomic factors.

2.5 Achieving despite disadvantage: The Role of Resilience

The notion of successful academic outcomes in relation to socioeconomic status is a well-researched area (Watkins and Howard, 2015). However, this section considers factors that are known to support the academic success of CYP from disadvantaged backgrounds and will explore the role of resilience, discussing the different ways this is conceptualised.

2.5.1 Resilience: individual vs systems-level factors

In 2013, a systematic review of 23 countries suggested that CYP facing socioeconomic disadvantage were at an increased risk of developing mental health difficulties, with CYP under 12 showing stronger evidence of this (Reis, 2013). A report conducted in the UK in 2012 found that children from poorer households were twice as likely to report low perceived wellbeing, compared with those from more affluent households (Rees et al, 2012). However, it is recognised that some CYP achieve positive life outcomes, despite experiencing material deprivation and these CYP are described as demonstrating resilience (Kirby et al, 2020).

Extensive literature has examined the risk factors for children from low SE backgrounds, but it is equally as important to learn from and acknowledge the protective factors that allow for positive outcomes (Watkins and Howard, 2015). Research suggests that by looking at the resilience of these children and their families, a great deal can be learned (Boyd-Franklin and Karger, 2012). The concept of resilience has been widely researched over the years, with several definitions proposed in the psychological research literature (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013). The way that resilience is conceptualised in research is diverse and has caused

difficulties in the way it has been understood historically (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013). Kirby et al (2020) argue that it is widely agreed that resilience refers to being able to adapt and cope with adverse experiences drawing on social competence and positive mental health skills. Fletcher and Sarkar (2013) suggest that the adaptation of the individual is proportional to the risk/adverse life event and therefore for some, this may mean not experiencing negative life outcomes rather than significant success.

The concept of academic resilience refers to individuals who are academically successful despite significant barriers in their lives (Morales and Trotman, 2004 as cited in Morales, 2008). Agasisti et al (2018) examined what specific school factors contributed to the development of academic resilience. They found that factors such as teacher-student collaborative relationship, schools that offer extracurricular activities to develop a sense of belonging and having a low turnover of teachers, to be highly significant.

Research examining the individual characteristics of academically successful young people from disadvantaged backgrounds suggest that individual factors such as confidence in their academic skills, assertiveness, high aspirations, increased self-motivation, and a hard-working attitude, play a significant role in the academic success of the young person (Martin and Marsh, 2009). Hampton (2016) found a strong relationship between academic success and successful learner characteristics (SLCs). The SLCs include self-respect, command of standard English, goal setting ability, time management skills, self-motivation, awareness of consequences and respect for others. Hampton argues that SLCs should be taught to all children at an early age to facilitate development and academic achievement. Similarly,

research has found internal protective factors such as high self-esteem, internal locus of control, average to high intelligence and social competence are helpful (Watkins and Howard, 2015).

Goodman and Gregg (2010) suggest that sometimes young people's aspirations may have been negatively affected by an adverse experience. Evidence suggests that young people and their families from poorer backgrounds do have high aspirations but lack the knowledge of how to actualise their ambitions (Kintrea et al, 2011). Research conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation was unable to determine a causal connection between aspirations, attitudes, and behaviour of CYP, and educational outcomes (Carter-Wall and Whitfield, 2012). This then raises the question of why government policies and interventions, related to widening participation, continue to focus on raising aspirations (Carter-Wall and Whitfield, 2012). It also suggests that there are more than just the individual factors outlined in the above research that contribute to the development of resilience.

Burstow et al (2018) suggest that resilience is not simply a within-person phenomenon, and they see it as encompassing personal, relationship, economic, identity and social factors. This definition is in line with more recent definitions of resilience that consider wider contextual factors and see resilience as a process, as well as being related to within-person character traits (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013; Tudor and Spray, 2017). O'Doherty et al (2013) also take a broader view of resilience, arguing that individual factors such as temperament, environmental factors such as the relationship with parents and psychological factors such as empathy, can all contribute to developing resilience. This view of resilience allows for the

idea of resilience being developed or promoted rather than being fixed and recognises that a person can be more, or less resilient at different stages of their lives (Davydov et al, 2010).

An interesting argument was raised by Morales (2010) who asserts that research focussing on protective factors sometimes loses sight of how the protective factors supported the individual to develop resilience, leading to the positive outcome. He suggests that it is important to understand the relationships between the protective factors as well as the risk factors. The current study was interested in not only facilitators of academic success but also barriers, to show that academically successful young people from low SE backgrounds still face several barriers to their education. Therefore, seeking to challenge the simplistic meritocratic discourse that high aspirations and successful academic attainment alone, lead to social mobility, resilience, and positive outcomes.

2.6 Summary

The above research has outlined the impact of class and material deprivation on educational inequalities. The research presented has shown that there are several factors that support the academic success of CYP from low SE backgrounds including the role of schools, teachers, parental factors, and the individual. It has also shown that although popular discourse tends to focus on singular factors when considering educational outcomes for CYP from low SE backgrounds, no one factor can be taken in isolation and there is a complex interplay between multiple contextual components.

A recurrent theme from the research presented across this literature review is the importance of relationships to CYP from low SE backgrounds and the importance of working systemically. There are increasing agreements among researchers in the field of youth development that the interactions between the individual and the systems around them play an important role in understanding academic outcomes (Zaff and Smerdon, 2009). The literature outlined was used to form the structure of the questions in my interview schedule (please see appendix 5) and the next chapter will outline the methodology employed to conduct this research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the research methods and methodology selected for this study and will consider my ontological and epistemological stance in relation to this. I will discuss my rationale for choosing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) for this research and my personal interest in the topic area. I will consider the salient aspects of reflexivity, positionality, and quality assurance (validity) in relation to the choice of methods. The ethical considerations will be outlined with information about how I adhered to ethical guidelines and principles. The chapter will then provide a pen portrait of the participants involved in the study before moving on to describe the procedure for data collection. Lastly, the process of data analysis will be discussed.

3.2 Ontology and Epistemology

Paradigms describe the various methods in which knowledge is investigated and understood (Scotland, 2012), comprising ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods (Scotland, 2012). According to Crotty (1998), ontology relates to the analysis of being and the beliefs people hold about what constitutes reality (Scotland, 2012). Thomas (2013) describes ontology as “the kinds of things that exist in the world, and how those things should be viewed and studied” (p.119).

Epistemology refers to the beliefs we hold about the nature of knowledge (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), whether there are different types of knowledge, and the most effective methods to investigate knowledge (Thomas, 2017). Positivist epistemology is underpinned by a realist ontology and holds that reality is objective and can be investigated impartially (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Positivism is concerned with investigating absolute truths that are not influenced by the researcher, context, language, or time (Scotland, 2012). In the 1800's Comte, a French philosopher argued that scientific methods that subscribe to a positivist epistemology were the most sophisticated form of thinking (Thomas, 2017). Therefore, other approaches to investigation were not held in high esteem.

Recent years have seen a shift in thinking and in the field of social science, the benefit of subscribing to interpretivist approaches have become apparent (Scotland, 2012). Rather than attempting to find causality or explaining relationships as is the case in positivism (Creswell, 2009), interpretivist approaches seek to understand concepts through the experiences of participants (Thomas, 2017). Interpretivism is underpinned by the ontological position of relativism, which asserts that reality is subjective and is based on the person's perception of what is (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). From a relativist position, reality is seen as constructed through the interplay of language, experiential, cultural, historical, and social contexts (Scotland, 2012). Interpretivist approaches do not see researchers as separate to the research and recognise that as researchers, we come with our own values, interests, and experiences (Thomas, 2017).

According to Yardley (2000), the ontological assumptions made in qualitative research are that reality is influenced by our individual experiences, conversations, and culture, rather than being considered as an objective truth that exists for everyone. She claims that it, therefore, follows that the epistemological and methodological stance, is shaped by the underlying ontology, meaning that there is no one fixed way of conducting qualitative research, as would be seen in more positivist approaches. Larkin and Thompson (2012) argue that IPA aligns with an interpretative phenomenological epistemology, as there is a focus on how a person relates to the world through their understanding or the meaning they make.

3.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

“Interpretative Phenomenological analysis is a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of major life experiences” (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009).

Qualitative approaches to research, aim to illuminate underlying social forces and structures (Scotland, 2012). Consequently, these approaches utilise research methods that attempt to understand rather than investigate individuals and groups (Scotland, 2012). They account for the values and experiences of the researcher and the results are centred on the interpretations that the researcher has made of the data (Thomas, 2017).

Smith (1996) was influential in the introduction of IPA into psychological research. The approach was largely developed in the field of health psychology in the UK in the 1990s but has subsequently branched out into clinical, social, counselling, and educational psychology (Eatough and Smith, 2017). Since then, IPA has been used increasingly by qualitative researchers in varied domains (Eatough and Smith, 2017) including organisational studies (Sanchez de Miguel et al, 2015), sports science (Lundkvist et al. 2012) and dance education (Hefferon and Ollis, 2006).

IPA is concerned with the meaning that individuals make of their own experiences and aims to reflect on the significance of this through the research (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009). Spinelli (1989) asserts that experience is subjective, as it is how the individual perceives their reality and is influenced by events, people, and objects. Therefore, unlike discursive approaches, IPA is not only concerned with the analysis of language but also the individual's interpretation of their experiences (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009).

Smith (1996) asserts, that the way events and experiences in our lives are retold and understood, have personal importance to us. Although people may have similar experiences or significant life events, the meaning they attribute to this is subjective and dependent on how it has been perceived and experienced by the person. In IPA research, there is an understanding that it is not possible to simply extract experiences from participants in a straightforward way, and therefore it requires a comprehensive, interpretative analytic process by the researcher (Smith, 2011a).

IPA is underpinned by the theoretical fields of hermeneutics, phenomenology, idiography and has firm roots in psychology (Eatough and Smith, 2017). To further understand the philosophical underpinnings of IPA and how this influences the epistemological stance of the approach, it is necessary to explore these three areas in further detail.

3.3.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is an approach that focusses on the study of lived experiences in human beings and how those experiences are understood (Smith et al, 2009). Unlike positivist approaches, phenomenology seeks to incorporate our subjective perceptions of the world, rather than separate them from objective reality (Langdridge, 2007). From this perspective, there is a recognition of the influence of perceptions and how this can influence how individuals make sense of the world. Phenomenology also considers the importance of context, asserting that the same person could have different interpretations/perceptions in a different context (Langdridge, 2007).

The field of phenomenology stems from the work of Edward Husserl, a phenomenological philosopher who argued that to be phenomenological, we must consciously return to experiences, reflecting on the thoughts and feelings of the experience (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009). According to Husserl, this involves moving away from what he called our natural attitude (everyday experience) and becoming more reflexive, moving towards a phenomenological attitude (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin. 2009).

Husserl introduced the concept of bracketing, which refers to an individual putting aside their everyday experience of the world and concentrating solely on their conscious perception of the world (Husserl, 1927). Husserl argues that through a sequence of reductions or repeatedly revisiting the world in this manner, the researcher can mediate the distraction or interference of their own assumptions and preconceptions. This concept of bracketing was particularly pertinent to my role in this research given that I share some commonalities with the participants. It was necessary for me, as a person from a low socioeconomic background, to consciously be mindful of my own pre-conceptions and experiences throughout the process of the research. Considering contextual factors was important for me, as I am aware that being a young person now and being a young person 20 years ago, brings with it a very different set of experiences. This led to further curiosity about the experiences of young people in the current context. Consequently, choosing to conduct IPA research came from this desire to hear the voices of the young people and to explore how they have experienced education but also the sense they made of any significant influencing factors.

Historically, phenomenology has changed and adapted throughout the ages. It began with a focus on transcendental phenomenology which focuses on the description of experience before moving on to hermeneutic phenomenology which had more of a focus on the interpretation of the experience (Larkin and Thompson, 2012). In contrast to Husserl, Merleau-Ponty argued that our perceptions of the world come from a position of difference and our relationship to it is shaped by our unique experiences (Smith et al, 2009). IPA is more aligned with the later developments in phenomenology which focus on not only the

description of lived experience but how it is experienced and the interpretation of this (Larkin and Thompson, 2012). IPA considers three elements, the description of the experience, the language used to describe the experience but also the researcher's interpretation of the experience, further extending the concepts outlined above.

3.3.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is a methodology of interpretation and it originated with the critical explanation of biblical texts (Eatough and Smith, 2017). Its application has since been expanded from the interpretation of text, to include the understanding of lived experiences (Eatough and Smith, 2017). There are three prominent theorists associated with the field of hermeneutics, Schleiermacher, Heidegger and Gadamer (Smith et al, 2009). Schleiermacher suggests that text is shaped by the uniqueness of the writer and that it is, therefore, an important part of interpretation to understand the writer as well as the text (Schleiermacher, 1998). Heidegger argues that a person's preconceptions and past experiences influence their interpretations, and this explains why people have a different interpretation of the same text (Heidegger, 1962). I found this to be particularly pertinent in relation to this research as the aim was to look at factors that facilitate academic success in young people from a group in society that the research deems at risk of academic failure. This was interesting because although research suggests socioeconomic disadvantage puts them in an at-risk group, their outcomes were somehow different, and for this reason, I was interested in their interpretation of significant factors of their educational journey.

A key tenet to the philosophical viewpoint of both Heidegger and Gadamer was the claim that interpretation is a fundamental part of living (Eatough and Smith, 2017). Gadamer was not only concerned with the individual's interpretation of text but also considered the impact of the historical context in which it is being read. Eatough and Smith (2017) claim that "for IPA, our interpretations are, amongst other things, attempts to understand how we have come to be situated in the world in the particular way we find ourselves" (p.195).

Smith et al (2009) describe IPA as a double hermeneutic in that the researcher is attempting to ascribe meaning to the way that the participants make sense of their experiences. In the current study, some of the participants found it quite difficult to reflect on their experiences in the moment and therefore without the process of double hermeneutics that IPA offers, some valuable information may have been lost.

3.3.3 Idiography

Idiography focusses on understanding the individual, their experiences, and their perspectives in relation to the phenomenon being examined (Eatough and Smith, 2017).

Smith et al (2009) argue that IPA is idiographic because even though it considers the experiences of homogeneous groups, there is an in-depth analysis of each participant's individual experiences in the first instance. The analysis in IPA research begins by firstly understanding the individual participants and their experiences, before moving on to looking at common themes across the participant group (Smith et al 2009). The analytic process focusses not only on the themes but what they mean for each participant (Smith, 2011a).

In the current research, I found that although there were some commonalities among the participants' overall themes, their experiences, and the sense that they made of this was unique. For example, the same theme could have different meanings for each participant. This idiographic focus is relatively unique in comparison to other qualitative research methods that generally focus on the analysis of a whole data set rather than individual cases (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014).

3.3.4 Why is IPA relevant to this research?

IPA is a methodological framework that is widely used in qualitative psychological research (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). As a trainee educational psychologist, I am interested in identifying potential barriers to learning and supporting children, young people, schools and families to overcome these barriers. In my first year of training, we were required to complete an assignment exploring pertinent assessment and interventions for vulnerable groups in society. My interest was in young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds and the reading around this topic area led to my interest in completing further research. As outlined in the literature review, research has shown that for some CYP from low SE backgrounds, educational outcomes are poor. There is also research presented that has provided a counterargument and a different narrative. I was therefore interested in exploring this phenomenon further. Positively, I am not the first researcher to explore this area. However, I noted that there was limited research from the perspective of the CYP using qualitative methods in the UK and to my knowledge, no research in this area using the IPA methodology. The rationale for selecting IPA for the purposes of this study was that I was interested in the participant's individual lived experiences of education and how they made

sense of their academic success. This required the participants to reflect on their experiences of education to date as well as to consider their parents' perceptions of education as well as their wider community.

Considering the philosophical assumptions underpinning IPA, it aligned well with the topic area being explored. Firstly, the concept of socioeconomic status is not one of objective, absolute certainty and it can be perceived differently from person to person. Similarly, the concepts of 'academic success' or 'high achieving' will vary in meaning between individuals. As will be seen from the results, the participants in the study had a very different concept of 'high achieving' and based on their comments, the study now instead refers to academic success, based on the government definition. These two concepts are influenced by historical and social contexts as the government's definition of both academic success and socioeconomic background can change with time and political agenda.

Secondly, IPA provides the opportunity to explore the participant's description of their experiences, their use of language and allows the researcher to generate concepts or interpretations of what the participant has shared. This method was preferred to discursive approaches such as discursive psychology and Foucauldian discourse analysis because there was a wider scope for exploration and interpretation which looks beyond the participant's construction of language. I have outlined this further in Box 1, outlining my justifications for conducting IPA research but acknowledging the alignment with some of the concepts of DA.

Box 1 Description of Discourse analysis

Discourse Analysis (DA)

- DA is underpinned by a constructionist ontology and therefore does not take for granted about what exists in the world or the 'truths' that exist, accepting that people can create their own version of the world (Holt, 2011).
- The focus of DA is on the use of language e.g. words, phrases, rhetoric etc and how this is used to construct reality (Thomas, 2017).
- DA views people as social and relational (Wiggins and Potter, 2017).
- It assumes that language comes before and shapes everything. It is particularly pertinent to areas such as social class and employs specific discursive resources during the interview (Holt, 2011).
- There are two main fields of discourse analysis in psychology which are **discursive psychology (DP)** and **Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA)** (Holt, 2011).
- Holt (2011) outlines the distinction between FDA and DP. FDA focuses on the ways in which objects and subjects (people) are constructed through language in wider societal discourse and the effect that this has on the way that they are subsequently positioned. DP considers factors at the micro level rather than the macro levels emphasised in FDA. There is a focus on the contextual interactional factors in which the data is produced, with a recognition that this can impact the accounts being given and how people adapt their language based on this.

In the literature review, I have referred several times to dominant discourses and narratives in society regarding social class and therefore in this sense, it could be argued that the current research aligns with DA, and FDA specifically. The language, discourses, and narratives around class and achievement, are pertinent to this research as they are related to how this has shaped the experiences of the participants. There are clear examples of power imbalances, for example through the outlined forms of capital, that are highly significant. However, this was not the only focus of the current research. There was also a focus on educational experiences and although constructions of class were pertinent, this was not the sole focus of the research. As described in chapter two, the current research was interested in factors including individual, family, school, and societal, and how these factors interact to influence the educational experiences/academic success of the young people. Further, and most importantly, the current research aimed to explore the way that the participants made sense of their experiences, the meaning that they placed on this and any factors that they felt were significant facilitators or barriers to their education. Therefore, I felt that IPA was the most appropriate method to address my research questions. Further, an article by Larkin, Shaw, and Flowers (2018), draws comparison between the philosophical underpinnings of IPA and systemic approaches. As outlined in section 2.1, I have argued that this approach is relevant to the current research and for wider EP practice.

3.4 Ethics

This research was conducted in line with the University of Birmingham Code of Practice for Research, the British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014) and The British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2018). The research was presented to the University of Birmingham Ethics Committee to seek ethical approval and the approval was obtained prior to the commencement of the research project.

Table 4 below outlines the ethical risks and the steps I took to safeguard the participants from these risks. In addition, I was aware of the potential power imbalance between myself and the participants with me being an older person and an educational professional. I took steps to try to counteract this by being as open and honest as possible with the participants about my reasons for wanting to conduct the research and as appropriate, my own personal background. I shared with the participants that I grew up in an urban area and also came from a low socioeconomic background as a way to try to connect, but at the same time being mindful not to influence them with my own views and experiences. I explained that I was interested in hearing about their experiences and the interview was intended to be an exploratory conversation.

Table 4 Ethical considerations and safeguards

Potential risks	Safeguards/considerations
Confidentiality	<p>Pseudonyms were used to ensure that the participants' data remained confidential. The name of the local authority and location of the research has also been kept confidential.</p> <p>The interview was carried out in a place that allowed for information to be collected privately and confidentially. The interview was conducted in the school setting but in a place where the interview could not be overheard. It was made clear that a private meeting was taking place.</p> <p>All transcripts, analysis and reporting are confidential; naming and storing of data were completed using the participant pseudonyms. Participants were informed that extracts of their responses would be recorded within the research paper and the potential of the research being published in an academic journal.</p> <p>Participants were informed that the only exception to confidentiality would be if participants disclosed anything during the interview that suggested that they were going to harm themselves, harm someone else or someone else was going to harm them. In this instance, the information would be shared with the designated safeguarding lead.</p>
Informed consent	<p>Written consent was gained from all participants and an information sheet was provided to them prior to the interview. At the start of the interview, key information was reiterated to the participants and I checked their understanding of the information that had been provided to them. As the participants were interviewed on the school premises, consent was also obtained from the headteacher and/or a member of the senior leadership team. They were also provided with an information sheet, a copy of the interview schedule and the poster for the recruitment of participants.</p>
Harm to participant	<p>Some of the information discussed in the interview was sensitive as I asked questions relating to participants family, neighbourhood and journey through education. Prior to the interview, I talked through the interview schedule with the participants, checking that they were ok with the types of questions that would be asked.</p> <p>Participants were informed of the need to break confidentiality for safeguarding purposes if they said anything that suggested there was a risk of them harming to themselves, causing harm to others or others harming them. They were reassured that if</p>

	<p>they were uncomfortable with anything being asked or any aspect of the interview, they could stop the interview at any time, or say that they did not wish to answer a question.</p> <p>I was mindful of the participants' body language and non-verbal cues throughout the interview and made sure to respond to this throughout the interview process e.g. rephrasing a question or saying we could return to the question if participants were struggling to answer.</p> <p>Following the interview, I had a debrief with the participant and gave them the opportunity to ask any questions or make any comments about the interview.</p>
Anonymity	It was not possible to keep the participants completely anonymous since I conducted face-to-face interviews and the school organised the interviews. However, once participants opted into the research, their identity and personal information were kept confidential.
Deception	There were no elements of deception in this project and the participants were given an information sheet outlining the purposes and procedure for the research. They also had the opportunity to ask questions prior to, during and after the interview had taken place.
Right to withdraw	The participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study in the information letter prior to participating in the research. They were also reminded of their right to withdraw prior to the interview commencing. They were directed to the contact details of myself and my supervising university tutor, outlined on the information sheet.
Privacy and data storage	<p>The interviews were audio-recorded on a University of Birmingham recording device. The files were saved securely onto a University of Birmingham computer and then deleted from the device. The files were saved without using the participant's information and were coded accordingly. All data has been stored securely in a place that can only be accessed by the researcher.</p> <p>Upon completion of the analysis, the audio files were deleted. All other data were stored in line with the University of Birmingham data management and retention guidelines and will be accessible for 10 years. All paper files, such as interview notes, have been scanned and stored electronically on a password-protected computer. Paper documents were disposed of in a confidential waste bin. After the 10 years, all electronic files will be erased and removed from any back-up drives.</p>

3.4.1 Sampling and recruitment

There are no fixed guidelines as to the number of participants that should be included in an IPA study, however, due to the idiographic nature of IPA, a small participant sample is recommended to allow for in-depth analysis of each case (Pietkiewicz and Smithe, 2014). In this study, the aim was to recruit between 4 and 6 young people who met the criteria outlined by the project.

In the first stages of recruitment, I contacted a large sixth form college by telephone to provide information about the project and see whether they would be willing to share the participant recruitment poster (please see appendix 3). The college was located on the outskirts of the city and has a diverse geographical population as well as diversity in relation to socioeconomic status and ethnicity. The college was keen to be involved in the project and agreed to send the poster and details of the project out with the student mailshot as well as discussing the project in form classes. Unfortunately, no participants came forward. The college attempted to share the project details again, this time targeting those students who were on their bursary scheme. Unfortunately, no participants were recruited via this route.

I decided to try different avenues of recruitment as the first had been unsuccessful. Having links with a local carers charity who work with young people, I emailed support workers who work directly with the young people to see whether they knew of anyone who may be interested in participating. The support workers then emailed the participant recruitment poster and information sheet to all the young people that they worked with. One young

person got in touch to say that they would like to be involved in the project but following initial contact, it was not possible to get in touch with them.

The final wave of recruitment involved speaking to the link Educational Psychologists (EPs) for schools with sixth forms in the team where I was on placement. As the EPs had already established relationships with the schools, it was easier for them to contact the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and introduce the research project to them. Of the five schools contacted, two of the schools responded and shared my poster with young people in their sixth forms. The school staff then contacted me to tell me whether they had students that were interested in participating and a time was set for me to come into the school to conduct the interviews. Prior to conducting the interviews, the schools discussed the project with a member of the senior leadership team and the information sheet, consent form, poster and interview schedule were emailed to them for their approval. Once approval was gained, a date and time were arranged for me to come in to conduct the interviews in the sixth form with the young people that were interested. Both schools shared the project details specifically with young people on their bursary schemes.

3.4.2 Participants

The participant sample in this research project were 4 female and 2 male year 12 students, from ethnic minority backgrounds, in further education establishments in an urban area. Landridge (2007) argues that the participant sample in IPA research should be as homogeneous as possible, as is relevant to the research area of interest.

3.4.3 Inclusion Criteria

In this study, all of the young people met the essential criteria of the project and had achieved 5 A* - C grades at GCSE, were classified as being from low SE backgrounds as measured by the sixth form's demographic data and were living in an urban area. All participants were aged between 16 and 18 years old at the time of the interview.

The participant poster outlined the following criteria for participants to be eligible to take part in the study, stating that they had to meet three or more of the following:

- Must have achieved 5 A* - C grades at GCSE (this was essential)
- Have eligibility for free school meals.
- Live in an urban area.
- Be the first person in the immediate family to go to university.
- Attend or attended a school in an urban area.

Information gathered from the interviews were used to confirm participants eligibility for the research. Due to the complexity of the terminology used to define socioeconomic status, several factors were used to assess the young people's suitability for the project. This included indicators of income (eligibility for 16-18 discretionary bursary), parental occupation and/or parental education, and type of secondary school participants attended, as recommended by the Cabinet Office (2018). Through the interview, I also considered the neighbourhood where the young person grew up.

A pen portrait of each participant is given in the table below.

Table 5 Pen portrait of participants

Participant	Kieran	Maisa	Aimee	Imogen	Surayj	Ben
Year group	12	12	12	12	12	12
Sex	F	F	F	F	M	M
Ethnicity	Asian – Indian	Not specified	Asian - Pakistani	Asian – Pakistani	Asian – Pakistani	Asian – Pakistani
Family background	Kieran lives at home with her mum, dad 2 sisters and 2 brothers.	Maisa lives at home with her mum and 2 younger brothers. Dad is working abroad. Older siblings are married.	Aimee lives with her mum, dad, 4 sisters and 1 brother.	Imogen lives at home with her mum, dad, younger brother, and sister. Older brother has moved out.	Surayj lives at home with his mum, dad and 3 brothers.	Ben lives at home with his mum, dad, and brother.
Type of course	A level	A level	A level	A level	A level	A level

<i>Aspirations when leaving sixth form</i>	Apprenticeship in Civil engineering or a degree apprenticeship in maths. Kieran considered a career in medicine but felt that she could not achieve this.	Unsure but would like to complete a course in coding where she can work from home.	Considering a career in chemical engineering either through university or an apprenticeship. Considered a career in medicine but felt that this was unachievable for her.	Would like to be a primary school teacher.	Wants a career that is medically related and helping patients. Considering medicine but he is unsure as he thinks it might be too hard.	Unsure, initially wanted to be an actuary but did not get the grade required for maths so he would now like to go to university to study accountancy or complete an apprenticeship.
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3.4.4 Procedure

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) describe interviews as “a conversation that has a structure and a purpose” (p.3). Thomas (2017) suggests that the personal contact during interviews provide more information than a method such as emails because of the presence of another person. Further, during interviews, you can pick up on more nuanced communication such as gesture (Thomas, 2017). Due to the exploratory nature of the research, semi-structured interviews were selected as the method of data collection as opposed to unstructured or structured interviews. This was because I wanted to outline the areas for exploration, prior to the interview and I also wanted the option to explore different avenues of inquiry relevant to the participant. This would not have been possible with a structured interview style and I felt that this would not be participant-led. The areas selected were loosely based on factors that seemed pertinent from the research in this area, so the unstructured interview would not have been appropriate in this instance either because I had specific areas I wanted to explore. Based on my literature review, the interview explored the participant’s personal experiences of education, perceptions of education in themselves, their families and their wider community/society, before considering any ideas participants had for supporting CYP from low SE backgrounds to achieve in education. Please see appendix 5 for the interview schedule and prompts.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants in their sixth form setting. It was not possible to meet with the participants prior to the interview and so before the interview started, I attempted to put the participants at ease by reading through the information sheet, checking their understanding of this and answering any questions. I also told the participants

a little bit about myself to build rapport and try to make them feel comfortable (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). I explained to the participants the broad areas we were going to cover and explained that the aim was for it to feel like a relaxed conversation. Participants were assured that if they did not wish to answer anything they did not have to and they could let me know if they were feeling uncomfortable in any way.

The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The participants were thanked for their time and offered the opportunity to ask questions or discuss anything further. They were told that I would contact them, via their sixth form, when the research was written up to provide feedback on the findings. Two of the participants seemed really keen to hear about the project and appeared to have a genuine interest in the topic area. After each interview, I recorded some reflections about the interview and how I felt I had connected to each participant. Please see extracts of my reflective diary in appendix 9. Although the broad areas explored remained the same across participants, the interviews were in fact somewhat different in terms of the line of inquiry and the experiences pertinent to each participant. I listened to each interview once prior to analysis or transcription, so that I could familiarise myself with the interview. Following this, each interview was transcribed verbatim.

3.5 Assessing research quality and rigour

Smith (2011a) outlines the substantial concerns that have arisen pertaining to quality and reliability in qualitative research. Frost (2011) argues that in qualitative research, the terms reliability and validity are not appropriate to describe the trustworthiness of the research, suggesting that this is more akin to positivist epistemologies. The need to assess the quality

and rigour of qualitative research is both necessary and inevitable, but the terminology is more aligned with positivist approaches to inquiry (Yardley, 2000). This is supported by Morse (1999) who further asserts “To state that reliability and validity are not pertinent to qualitative inquiry places qualitative research in the realm of being not reliable and not valid ‘(p.717). Other researchers have suggested that the terms transparency (Coyle, 2007), coherence (Harper, 2006) or quality (Willig, 2008), would be a more appropriate description.

Larkin and Thompson (2012) suggest that due to the interpretative nature of IPA, qualitative research validation strategies such as member-checking may not be appropriate. Instead, they suggest that IPA research should employ strategies such as sample validation, peer validation with fellow researchers or auditing. In this study, all the participants that opted to be part of the study were included in the final sample and therefore sample validation was not appropriate. However, the themes and processes were checked by fellow researchers and discussed in tutorials with my university supervising tutors.

In psychological research, some researchers have developed guidelines for assessing the quality and validity of qualitative research conducted (e.g. Elliot et al, 1999; Yardley, 2000). Smith (2011a) argues that the existing guidance for assessing the quality of qualitative research, is not specific enough for IPA and he, therefore, developed guidance specifically related to IPA research. Table 6 outlines Smith’s characteristics for acceptable to good IPA research and the steps that I have taken to try to meet these criteria.

Table 6 Criteria outlined as acceptable – good as outlined by Smith (2011a)

Smith (2011a) Criteria outlined as acceptable – good	How this research has attempted to meet the criteria
<i>Clearly aligned with the theoretical principles of IPA demonstrating that it is phenomenological, hermeneutic, and idiographic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theoretical principles outlined in the methodology section with a clear rationale as to why IPA was selected for this research.
<i>The process is clear and transparent for the reader to see the process taken.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process of analysis outlined in detail, with evidence of the steps taken to achieve the final superordinate and subordinate themes. The methodology section outlines to procedure undertaken as well as the recruitment process. Recruitment poster, information sheet/consent form and email to sixth forms can be found in the appendices 2-4. Clear rationale for the project outlined with evidence in the literature review.
<i>Analysis appears coherent, interesting, and believable.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process outlined in Smith et al (2009) was followed. Evidence of process detailed in the results section. Extracts from reflective diary can be found in appendix 9. Evidence for each superordinate and subordinate theme presented.
<i>The researcher has provided enough evidence for each theme: N4-8: extracts from at least three participants for each theme.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence from at least three participants for each theme was presented.

<i>The paper has a clear focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above, the aims, rationale and purpose of the research were outlined in the methodology and literature review chapters.
<i>The analysis should go further than just description. Interpretation is required.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process outlined by Smith et al (2009) was followed and therefore the transcripts were analysed at a descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual level.
<i>The data should show both the patterns and differences of the themes for each participant.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As recommended by IPA literature, each case was considered on an individual basis first before moving on to group themes across cases. Evidence was provided for which participants contributed to the development of each theme. Extracts were used to illustrate how the participant had made sense of the theme being presented. Difference in how participants perceived their experiences is outlined.
<i>The research should be rigorous with a clear rationale for why a theme was selected.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As outlined above, each theme presented shows which participant contributed to the theme and the evidence for this from their transcripts.

3.6 Research questions

When employing qualitative research methodologies, the research questions are inductive and exploratory rather than an attempt to prove or disprove a hypothesis (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). I was interested in exploring the educational experiences of YPs from low SE backgrounds and what they felt had been facilitators of their academic success. I was interested in their conceptualisation and perceptions of education in their wider community and society in which they live. As outlined in the literature review, the research indicates multiple factors that contribute to academic success and I was therefore interested in hearing the voices of young people currently in education, reflecting on their past, present and potential future educational experiences. Based on the above, the following research questions were developed:

- What are participants' experiences of education throughout their educational journey?
- What factors do participants view as facilitators to academic success and were there any barriers?
- How do participants make sense of their educational experiences in the context of their community and wider society?

3.7 Reflexivity

The concept of reflexivity refers to an awareness of the influences that the researcher has on constructing meaning throughout the research process and the difficulty in separating the researcher from the research (Willig, 2013). Willig (2013) outlines the concepts of personal

reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity. The former relates to the researcher's personal attributes and experiences and how this may shape the research process. The latter refers to the process of conducting the research and the questions that can be asked about how the research questions were conducted, the method of data collection, the method of analysis and how this has impacted on the results and findings.

In the current research, the concept of personal reflexivity seemed to be more pertinent. As an individual from a low SE background who lives and went to school in an urban area, there are some common characteristics between me and the participants. I have been open about this throughout the course of my research and particularly when meeting the participants. I acknowledged in supervision that this could be both a strength and a limitation of the research in terms of how the participants might respond to me and also with my interpretations of the data.

Ahern (1999) outlined some useful factors to consider for reflexive bracketing. She suggested keeping a reflexive journal prior to and during the research process to consider potential issues that may arise. I kept a reflective diary throughout the research and talked through issues that came up in tutorials with university tutors. Ahern suggests considering your personal values and experiences which may make you subjective. In supervision, I talked through the ways that the participants and I shared characteristics but also how we differed. Similarly, I considered how the participants themselves differed even though they are a homogenous group based on the characteristics outlined by the study.

A factor that I had not accounted for, was that the participants' accounts and reflections on their experiences gave rise to factors that I had never considered about my own experiences. This is detailed further in my reflective diary in appendix 9. It was interesting to hear and learn about what it was like to be a young person in the present day and provided useful points for reflection on my own experiences of education. This provided further justification for my decision to choose this particular age group where the participants were articulate enough to express their views and reflect on their experiences but were also still in the education system and so had current knowledge of the educational context in situ and could explain through their interviews current issues for young people from their perspective.

3.8 Analysis

When analysing qualitative data, the aim is to provide an illuminative analysis of what you are researching (Thomas, 2017). It is described as a complex process, with no single method of analysis (Cohen et al, 2017). Glaser and Laudel (2013) suggest that the process of moving from data to interpretation needs to be transparent. Smith et al (2009) have outlined a framework that researchers can use to analyse data in IPA research. Analysis in IPA involves navigating between different levels of interpretation (Eatough and Smith, 2017) namely, descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual (Smith et al, 2009). Although Smith et al (2009) state that the method is not prescriptive, it is a useful framework to guide researchers through the process. This process was followed in the current research and is outlined in the table below.

Table 7 Steps to data analysis in IPA as outlined by Smith et al (2009, p83-90)

Steps, as outlined by Smith et al (2009)	Details the process in this study
Step 1: Transcription of the data	I listened to each interview once to familiarise myself with the interview and then transcribed each interview verbatim. An extract from my interview with Aimee can be found in appendix 6.
Step 2: Reading and re-reading	Following transcription, I read through the transcript, highlighting anything that seemed significant. At this stage, I was approaching the data from a purely descriptive perspective. Smith et al (2009) recommend looking at each level of analysis in turn, however, they do suggest that this is not the only way to analyse. I started with the descriptive and then the linguistic analysis naturally led to curious questions, forming the conceptual level of analysis. I found that reading the transcript through a few times, once listening to the audio recording whilst reading it, really helped to immerse myself into the data. An interview extract with initial thoughts is presented in appendix 6.
Step 3: Initial noting	The next step for me was to read the exploratory commentary in isolation to the transcript, only returning to the original transcript when I was unsure of something or when I needed further clarification of a comment. I subsequently attempted to find a phrase or word that accurately summarised each of the comments I was making.
Step 4: Developing emergent themes	<p>This step for me involved developing the pertinent phrases/words into emergent themes. I looked at the significance of what the participant was saying. For example, Maisa repeated talked about learning English and it came up quite a few times throughout the interview. This seemed significant for her and so this was then developed into a tentative theme around cultural identity. I used phrases/words that I felt captured what the participant was saying.</p> <p>The next phase in my analysis was to take all of the emerging themes and present them in an excel spreadsheet. This was very time consuming as this was completed for each participant, but it allowed me to see whether an emergent theme came up more than once and to consider the significance of this. It also allowed me to work through the process systematically so if I need to track back through the process, I could easily trace my way through the steps. The themes were then printed out and cut up for easy, visual manipulation/grouping. Pictures are provided in appendix 7.</p>

<p>Step 5: Searching for connections</p>	<p>Willig (2013) suggests that some of the themes will naturally cluster together and others will be grouped based on a shared meaning.</p> <p>Smith et al (2009) suggest ways that you can find connections between themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstraction involves grouping themes that are similar, • Subsumption refers to emergent themes that can be included together (for e.g. discomfort talking about feelings and difficulty managing feeling eventually became coping), • Numeration which involves highlighting how many times a theme occurs (as in the example above with speaking English), • Polarisation referring to looking at opposite ends of a continuum • Attempting to identify the purpose that a theme serves in the participant account known as function. <p>The themes were grouped using the strategies above. It was then possible to consider an appropriate superordinate theme and label the groups of themes. Once the superordinate and subordinate themes were created, I moved on to the next participant and repeated the same process, bracketing off the themes outlined in the first interview.</p>
<p>Step 6: Looking for patterns</p>	<p>Once the process had been completed for all six participants, I presented the subordinate and superordinate themes in a table (please see the results section below), ensuring that I had evidence from extracts for all relevant participants (please see appendix 8). I then looked for patterns across the participants and used the abstraction, subsumption and polarisation strategies above, to find connections across cases. I then produced a final list of themes as presented in figure 4.</p>

3.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the philosophical theoretical underpinnings of IPA, my rationale for using the approach, the research design, and procedures and finally the process of analysis.

The next chapter will outline the results of the study, followed by a discussion of each theme.

CHAPTER Four: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings of the current study and how they answered the research questions will be explored in chapter 5. Section 4.2 discusses the findings and outlined in table 8 are the emerging superordinate and subordinate themes abstracted from individual participant interviews. The thematic map of final superordinate themes is then presented based on the analysis across the participant group. A table of the initial analysis across participants and emerging themes with supporting interview extracts can be found in appendix 8. This is an attempt to outline the stages of my analysis and to show how I achieved my final themes. My reflective log is also available in appendix 9 which outlines further changes that were made, resulting in the final themes presented in fig 4.

According to Smith and Osborn (2009), it is possible to present the findings of IPA using two approaches. The first presents the emergent thematic analysis and a separate section discussing the links to relevant literature. The second combines the findings and discussion section together, presenting extant literature alongside extracts and analysis. The latter method will be used in this research and section 4.3 will present an overview of each superordinate theme alongside extracts and any relevant literature.

4.2 Findings: An overview of the Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Table 8 below, presents the emergent themes from the individual participant interviews using IPA, following the stages outlined by Smith et al (2009), detailed in chapter 3. There were some similarities but also some differences in the way each theme was experienced by each participant. This emphasises the idiographic element to IPA and demonstrates that although the participants share several characteristics/experiences, they are not necessarily a completely homogenous group. Although the participants' comments may be grouped under the same theme, the content of the data is sometimes quite distinct.

Figure 4 outlines the final superordinate and subordinate themes produced from the data in this research. It is important to note that some of the themes are related and directly influence each other. Research has suggested that educational outcomes for CYP from low SE backgrounds depend on a complex interplay of several contextual factors (Zaff and Smerdon, 2009). This was very apparent in the current research and a description of each theme and the relationship to other themes is discussed throughout the presentation of the findings.

The final themes were initially produced by looking for patterns and similarities across participants employing the methods outlined in Smith et al (2009), as detailed in the methodology chapter. This resulted in some themes being grouped together. There were several commonalities across the participants which made this process somewhat easier in relation to themes such as connectedness and identity. During individual analysis, some of the themes were conceptualised differently based on the individual interview. However,

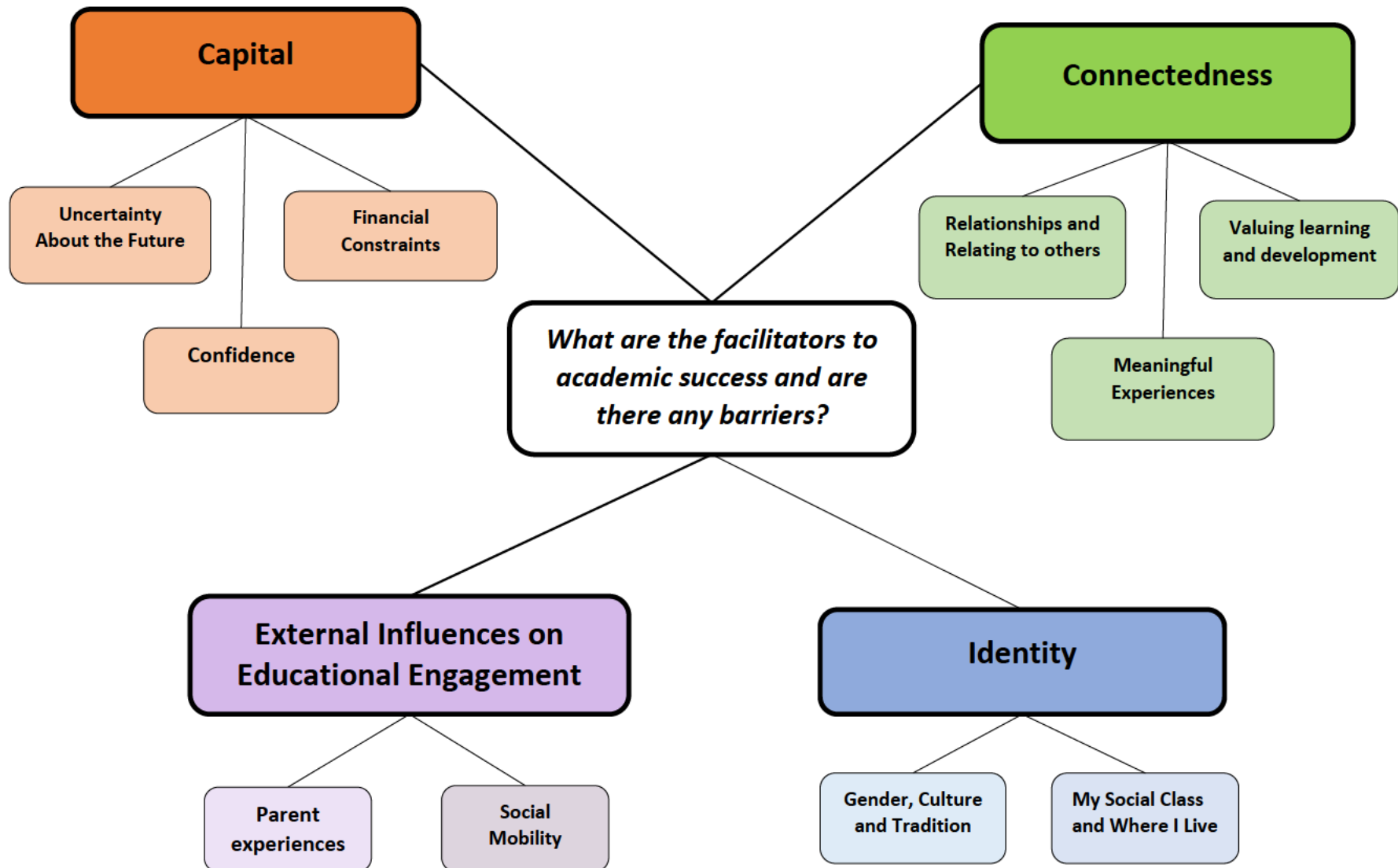
when drawing together the extracts to evidence each theme it was possible to find common characteristics and this process also initiated further changes, for example, 'External influences on educational engagement' becoming a superordinate theme. A theme was considered significant if present in three or more of the participants and again, when returning to the transcripts, evidence for themes were sometimes found in participant interviews where it had not initially appeared as prominent.

Table 8 Emergent Themes from Individual Analysis

Kieran	Maisa	Aimee	Imogen	Surayj	Ben
Importance of Education <i>Social Mobility</i> <i>Valuing learning</i> <i>Sharing knowledge</i>	Sense of Belonging <i>Community and wider society</i> <i>Social relationships</i> <i>Family</i> <i>Teachers</i>	Connectedness <i>Shared experience</i> <i>Community</i> <i>The importance of peer relationships</i>	Connectedness <i>Community</i> <i>Inclusion vs Exclusion</i> <i>Shared experience</i> <i>Peer relationships</i>	Connectedness <i>Relationships</i> <i>Motivation and interest in learning</i> <i>Extracurricular activities</i> <i>Shared experience</i>	Connectedness <i>Doing things that interest you</i> <i>Community</i> <i>Shared experience</i> <i>Relationships</i>
External Influence <i>Parental experience</i> <i>Opportunities in the school environment</i> <i>Attributing success to teachers and friends</i>		Personal Qualities <i>Emotional wellbeing</i> <i>Compassion</i> <i>Resilience</i> <i>Hardworking</i>			
Barriers to HE <i>Lack of guidance around careers</i> <i>Lack of confidence/not recognising strengths</i> <i>Financial constraints</i>	Identity <i>Religious</i> <i>Cultural</i> <i>Gender</i>	Importance of Education <i>Family value</i> <i>education</i> <i>Parental experience</i> <i>Impact of school experience</i> <i>Social mobility</i>	Importance of Education <i>Family value</i> <i>education</i> <i>Parental experience</i> <i>Impact of school experience</i> <i>Social mobility</i>	Importance of Education <i>Parental experiences</i> <i>Teacher's having/encouraging high aspirations</i> <i>Social mobility</i> <i>Values learning/personal growth</i>	Identity <i>Gender</i> <i>SES</i>
Connectedness <i>Relationships</i> <i>Education being meaningful</i> <i>Connection to community</i>	Disadvantage <i>Lack of support around careers</i> <i>Lack of resources (school/family)</i>	External Influence <i>Parental experience</i> <i>Family encouraging high aspirations</i> <i>Societal perceptions</i> <i>School encouraging high aspirations</i>	Identity <i>Gender</i> <i>Cultural/religious</i> <i>Impact of SES label</i>	Importance of Education <i>Skills/experience-based education</i> <i>Education valued in the home</i> <i>Social mobility</i>	Importance of Education <i>Social mobility</i> <i>High Aspirations</i> <i>Family value success and education</i>
		Personal Attributes <i>Resilience</i> <i>Determination</i> <i>Compassion</i>			
Emotional regulation	External Influence <i>Societal</i> <i>Parental experience</i> <i>School</i>	Importance of Education <i>Skills/experience-based education</i> <i>Education valued in the home</i> <i>Social mobility</i>	Identity <i>Gender</i> <i>Cultural/religious</i> <i>Impact of SES label</i>	Identity <i>Community</i> <i>Gender</i> <i>Individual SES</i>	Influences on Educational Engagement <i>Parental experiences</i> <i>Lack of guidance around careers</i> <i>Emotional wellbeing</i>
Emotional regulation	Importance of Education	Importance of Education <i>Skills/experience-based education</i> <i>Education valued in the home</i> <i>Social mobility</i>	Personal Attributes <i>Resilience</i> <i>Determination</i> <i>Compassion</i>	Personal Attributes <i>Agency</i> <i>Determination</i> <i>Compassion</i>	Individual Characteristics <i>Determination</i>

<i>Managing demands of education</i> <i>Going with the flow</i> <i>Importance of having fun and doing things you enjoy</i>	<i>Values education</i> <i>Social mobility</i> <i>Sharing knowledge</i>	Impact of SES Background <i>Family resilience</i> <i>Financial constraints</i> <i>Impact on career choices</i>	Emotional Regulation <i>Shyness</i> <i>Anxiety</i> <i>Low confidence</i> <i>Difficulty managing/expressing emotions</i>	<i>Resilience</i>	<i>The comfort zone</i> <i>Growth mindset vs lack of confidence in skills</i> <i>Resilience</i>
Identity <i>Religious</i> <i>Equality</i> <i>Cultural</i>	Personal Attributes <i>Staying in the comfort zone</i> <i>Determination and motivation</i> <i>High expectation of self</i> <i>Resilience/experiencing failure</i> <i>Hardworking</i>	Identity <i>SES label - high vs low</i> <i>Cultural/religious</i> <i>Gender</i> <i>Challenging the dominant discourse</i>		Challenges <i>Inclusion and equality</i> <i>Lack of support with career path</i> <i>Lack of confidence</i> <i>Difficulty asking for support</i> <i>Difficulty managing and expressing emotions</i>	

Figure 4 Thematic Map of Final Themes



4.3 Discussion of findings

This section provides a narrative account of the findings of this study, outlining extracts to support each theme and drawing on extant literature previously outlined, in addition to new literature where appropriate.

4.3.1 Superordinate Theme: Connectedness

Connectedness as an overall theme was significant for all the participants in this study. There was a sense of wanting to feel connected to people, communities, education, and experiences. This superordinate theme was central to all other themes and it is therefore presented first. This superordinate theme produced three subordinate themes: relationships and being able to relate, meaningful experiences and valuing learning and development.

4.3.1.1 Subordinate theme: Relationships and being able to relate

All the participants talked about the importance of relationships in their lives, namely with peers, family, and teachers. Participants shared the importance of peer relationships and how this helped them to navigate their way through school. Being able to relate to people, especially their peers and teachers was significant because this could act as both a facilitator and a barrier to their engagement with education. It is not possible to explore all aspects of relationships in depth in this section and so the primary focus will be on the relationships with teachers, with a brief reference to the relationship with peers. As will be highlighted in the limitations of this study, life at home and the relationships with parents/family were not

explored in depth. However, it is hoped that the influence of parents can be seen throughout other sections of the findings presented e.g. parent experiences.

The importance of the student-teacher relationship was outlined previously in section 2.4.1 of the literature review (Keane et al, 2018; Shain et al, 2014) and research has also indicated that teacher support can predict academic and social motivation in students (Wentzel et al 2010). In addition, the results of a study conducted by Rich and Schachter (2012) found a relationship between students viewing teachers as positive role models, and their engagement in the lessons presented by that teacher. Kieran, Imogen, Maisa, Surayj and Aimee, made a distinction between teachers who were there just to teach and teachers that would go the 'extra mile' offering guidance/support outside of an academic context. This was something that appeared significant for Kieran as relationships and relating to teachers came up several times throughout the course of the interview.

Kieran: *"Umm, there were some teachers that were really nice and really approachable. Like they would have normal conversations with you like, it's really nice. Like I have one still here Miss D, she was my favourite but yeah. Um she used to be our form teacher, after every form errm because we had form at the end of the day as well, we'd stay back and we'd talk to her about I don't even know what but we'd stay for ages and talk to her. So errm they're really approachable. Some of them errm were more straight towards education-wise and don't really mix in with the students a lot but like a lot of them are really approachable and nice yeah".*

Kieran talks about having "normal" conversations with some teachers and appears to value the teacher making time for her and connecting with her outside of a teaching capacity. Her use of the words "really approachable" build a picture of a teacher that Kieran felt she could

relate to and talk to about things outside of school. She describes this as “really nice”, emphasising the importance this holds for her and I wondered whether the teacher making time for her, was an indication to Kieran that the teacher valued her as an individual, leading to a positive relationship with /depiction of, the teacher. She contrasts this with teachers who do not “mix” with the students creating a sort of ‘us and them’ narrative. This may suggest that Kieran would feel less inclined to approach these teachers if she had a problem outside of the academic context. I wondered about how this then affected Kieran’s engagement and motivation in lessons with teachers she felt she could not relate to. Similarly, Imogen shared two contrasting experiences of two teachers at one of her primary schools. One she describes as nurturing and supportive, whereas the other she describes as a horrible person.

***Imogen:** “Well the teacher that I like in year 5 she really was really sweet. So if she knew I couldn’t get something, she would help me and errm she would talk to me and errrm she would just like, she was like a friend kind of almost and she would always like support me and stuff like that whilst with errm my year 6 teacher, she was actually coloured errm like she was Asian but she was just a horrible person”.*

Imogen highlights almost an expectation through the words “she was actually coloured”, that because the teacher was of Asian heritage, she would be able to relate to her. I sensed Imogen’s significant disappointment with this, and she goes on to share the detrimental effect this experience with this teacher had on her relationship with education. This extract

highlights the influential relationship between teachers, school experiences and academic engagement.

Imogen: *"Yeah it, it kind of had a negative effect on me like I didn't in all honesty, I didn't try hard at all with like secondary school"*

As the research suggests, the consequences of a poor relationship with one of her teachers was that Imogen did not want to try at school, and it had an impact on her engagement with education. It seemed from this quote that Imogen, very similar to other participants, values connecting to her teachers. The words she uses suggest that she values teachers being warm, supportive, and trustworthy (Keane et al, 2018). Morales (2010) found that academic mentors played a significant role in the participants engaging with education by making education relatable to them and building positive relationships with the students. Surayj, Ben and Imogen refer to the importance of teachers and professionals understanding the impact of socioeconomic and neighbourhood factors.

Surayj: *"Yeah it [secondary school] was better because there were some teachers that were from around here, so they'd be like stay out of this, this stuff happens here. Like they knew exactly what was going on. So, the teachers that was telling me this stuff, I started to like them and like trust them more with like my like own stuff."*

...Well if they, they're like us. Like no not, by like I don't mean ah like they should, like as in if they're similar to us. Cos like nowadays you have teachers, they don't even live around here and they're telling us ah you can do this you can do that, and they don't even know half the things we go through"

Ben: *“Errrm, I think they [professionals from low SE backgrounds] should, errm like, visit like these kind of areas and talk about how they kind of, so obviously not all professional people were like rich and stuff. Some people came from like lower backgrounds so errrm they should like share like their stories to us guys and kind of like inspire us”*

Imogen: *“..say for example you have a teacher that’s always had like everything given to them on a plate and errm who’s had that kind of a life where errm her parents do everything for her or like she won’t be able to I dunno like associate herself with a student”*

The participants’ comments align with the argument that many of the schools perpetuate middle-class discourses and values (Archer et al 2010; Stephens et al 2014). My interpretation of what the young people are saying here is that they would like teaching staff to show an awareness of the barriers and difficulties that they might face, being from a low SE background. Surayj lives in a relatively deprived area and his comments about some teachers that do not have knowledge of the local area, allude to issues that may impact the community but also how this affects access to opportunities. For Surayj and Imogen, this came across as frustration and indicated that they did not feel understood by their teachers, impacting on their relationships with them. Ben’s suggestion of seeing a diverse range of professionals from different backgrounds, was shared by Stephens et al (2014) who suggest that seeing professionals from a range of backgrounds could support CYP to understand how to overcome barriers rather than being intimidated by them.

Research suggests that there is a lack of diversity in the teaching profession and that this is in stark contrast to the population of students (Keane et al, 2018)¹. Research has shown that having teachers from low SE backgrounds can impact positively on students from a similar social background as they are inclusive and have high expectations of all students (Maguire, 2005). Keane et al (2018) argue that student teachers in higher education from low SE backgrounds entered the profession with a motivation for social justice and to give back to their communities. Imogen expressed a desire to pursue a career in teaching because of her own negative experiences in primary school, as she wants to make a difference for children, she feels are marginalised.

Imogen: *“Well erm, I remember when I was at primary school, I went to primary school in [city she lived in] and it was always like the coloured people that were like dumbled down sitting on one table and so err like rather than being helped and stuff, it, you were just kind of like pushed to a side and not given much attention and so I feel like I actually wanna go into a primary school and make a difference and interact with students”*

Section 2.2.3 of the literature review referred to the idea of hard interdependence and the fact that those from low SE backgrounds tend to situate concepts of the self/behaviour within the social context, are more socially responsive and can find ways of adjusting to difficult situations (Stephens et al, 2014). As well as the importance of the relationships with teachers, participants talked about the relationships with peers as being highly influential and this was again related to their school experience. For Aimee and Kieran, peers were significant in helping them to navigate the educational environment and settle into school.

¹ It is reported that in 2018 85.9% of teachers in England were White British and 75% of teachers were women (DFE, 2019).

As with the relationships with teachers, the connection with peers depended on whether they felt that they could relate to them. This further reinforces my thoughts around whether relating to someone is important for the development of trust and the quality of the relationship.

When reflecting on her transition to secondary school, Aimee talked about the difficulties she had socially interacting with peers. Aimee initially struggled to build relationships and because of this, she found it difficult to navigate the new school environment. She repeats the word struggle and that she disliked the school environment twice, emphasising how difficult this transition was for her.

Aimee: *"I'm not like very errm, like when I first came here I wasn't very talky kind of thing and I struggled with like sort of like, I wouldn't say socialising as a general but if I don't know anyone I probably like struggle kind of thing. So at the start I didn't really like it here like I was like ah let's home school me or something (laughs). I really didn't like it here.. I didn't know anyone, I think a lot of my days was just like worrying about a lot of stuff and it just wasn't sort of like a good environment for me at the start"*

However, Aimee was able to build relationships with peers and talked about how much this helped her to feel like she had someone to navigate the school experiences with.

Aimee: *"I feel like slowly I started to be like making friends and getting to know people, I sort of enjoyed it more. Just like having people to share those experiences with at school to share with like um like was good"*

Kieran: *“Errrm, I think errm the friendship group I’m in has helped because I feel like if I was in a different friendship group I would have probably not paid attention to my education as much as I do now”*

Aimee and Kieran spoke positively about their peer groups and this was also evident in the experiences of Maisa and to a lesser extent, Imogen. Kieran attributes her engagement in education to her friendship group and Aimee reflects on how developing friendships helped her to settle into the school environment. Imogen was homeschooled for much of her secondary education and therefore has had a difficult time relating to peers as a result. It seemed to be something significant to her as she spoke of a time when she tried getting into trouble at primary school, to try to fit in. When she talked about her experience of home-schooling, she described it as lonely and said that she would not do this again, indicating to me the importance of peers to Imogen. Ben and Surayj had very negative experiences with peers at school, which significantly impacted their school experiences and affected their emotional wellbeing.

Ben: *“That errm, that actually made me like not do my work and stuff in school and just like, put me down I didn’t wanna do my work, I didn’t really listen to teachers. So, I was more of a ‘goodie two shoes’ guy before, I was more of like you know, did my work every time then that put me down and like mentally messed me up”*

Overall, the importance of relationships/being able to relate to peers and teachers, seemed to have a significant impact on educational engagement, school experiences and coping for all participants.

4.3.1.2 Subordinate Theme: Meaningful Experiences

According to Seligman (2011) as humans, we search for a meaningful and purposeful life. All the participants talked about experiences/activities outside of their education that they like to engage in. The activities that the participants shared seemed to have significance in different ways and some of the participants' shared their motivations for engaging in the activities. The activities that the participants engaged in appeared to reflect some of their core values, but also appeared to be a way to connect with others. Agasisti et al (2018) suggested that extracurricular activities that provided a sense of belonging, was one of the factors related to the development of academic resilience for participants in their study. This could perhaps be a contributing factor in the current study.

Kieran talked about enjoying painting, swimming, and playing badminton with her sister. It appears that for Kieran, it is important to have a life outside of academia and connect with experiences that are meaningful to you.

Kieran: *"I feel like education, it is important, but I don't think it comes like before your life so like, live your life to the best that you can. Put it before your education, don't put your education first because you do have other obligations in life. Like your education will like, you would be in school to a certain point but after that you won't be in school, but you still have your life throughout your years. So, I feel like it is important, it's important to build a life and like you know do the things that you want to do but at the same time if you're in education and an opportunity comes like to have fun or something, take it go and do something. Don't let it stop you from like exploring and having fun and things like that"*

I found Kieran's comments interesting because it was as if she separated education and 'life', suggesting that perhaps she does not see education as part of your life. She mentions other

obligations in life, suggesting that she sees education as a duty, perhaps a means to an end. I wondered whether she saw education as a way to improve your life circumstances, but it is something you must do rather than something you choose. I wondered whether if her circumstances were different, Kieran would have been the type of person to travel the world, engaging in experiences that she sees as new, different, and fun. Perhaps she would have taken a gap year after college, however, as a young person from a low SE background this would be perceived as her not being in education or training and unlike in middle-class society where this may be viewed more positively, she would have been perceived as 'at risk' (Archer et al, 2010). Her comments portray a narrative of someone perhaps constrained in some ways by her circumstances but using creative outlets for her wellbeing and connecting with activities outside of formal education that provide meaning for her.

Aimee offers a similar perception of there being other important aspects of life, sharing that she valued her mother's independence and hard work ethic over formal qualifications. These are perhaps skills that Aimee does not feel she has developed yet and perhaps reading further into her comments, this could suggest that she feels that this is something that school/formal education fails to teach you. According to Seligman and colleagues, a positive education incorporates both traditional skills and skills for wellbeing (Seligman et al 2009).

Aimee: *"I don't fully believe you need a university degree or an apprenticeship, like even though my mum didn't get a formal education, I still see her as one of the most educated people that I know in the sense that education doesn't just revolve around a classroom and a teacher teaching you, sometimes it's you teaching people, sometimes it's people teaching you and sometimes it's about skills. Like my mum learnt how to be independent, like her work ethic"*

Interestingly, both young women shared that they were considering the option of completing an apprenticeship. For Aimee there seemed to be a battle between wanting to aim high by perusing a career in medicine and completing an apprenticeship in line with her personal values of developing skills and practical experience but also perhaps she perceives this route as more realistic or achievable. Aimee had a wide range of interests outside of school including baking, playing sports, watching documentaries, and watching medical shows.

Ben and Surayj both shared that they engaged in sporting hobbies outside of school. Ben is part of a cricket team and talked about an opportunity to engage in the sport more professionally. Surayj engages in Mui Thai and has been doing this since he was at primary school.

Surayj: *"So, it's like a type of combat sport where basically you use knees, elbows, kicks, punches.*

....anyone can do it I would say cos there's guys at my gym that are 6ft tall, some guys are 4ft tall, they're doing it. There's girls doing it errrm, people just think ah yeah, you have to be really strong like. Like, there could be a really small guy in Muay Thai, he'll still have the same effect as someone who's really big"

Surayj shared that he started engaging in this sport following an experience of bullying in primary school. Surayj seems to be motivated to engage in this activity as a means of developing personal strength, not only physically but psychologically as well. His comments about anyone being able to engage in the sport suggest that he values something more

about this activity than just the sport itself. Surayj refers to the fact that there are people of all sizes, strengths and genders that can engage in this sport and be successful at it. He appears to value to the equality of the sport in that every member has a fair chance of winning. I wondered whether Surayj valued equality and inclusion more generally, as he talked about feeling marginalised due to the neighbourhood he lives in and his social position. Perhaps engagement in a sport that allows for a level playing field is a welcome distraction from the inequalities he faces in society.

Maisa came across as a very passionate young woman who was committed to her faith and sharing this with others. As well as being in full-time education, she was working 7 days a week after college, supporting younger children to learn the Quran.

Maisa: *“Errm, my brother actually so, so you know when I went to Egypt, my parents one of their errm. So, you know how you asked if my parents were focussed on education, more than education they wanted us to be quite attached to our religion so learning the Quran. So errm, I memorised the Quran when I was eleven”*

Maisa appeared to value sharing knowledge with others. She very much values her religion and talked about singing the Quran and enjoying this. Her commitment and connection to her faith seemed significant for Maisa and it appears that she found pleasure in sharing her knowledge with others, especially those younger than her.

The participants in this study all appear to value experiences that have meaning, including their education. Rich and Schachter (2012) argue that schools offering academic subjects

that the students perceive as meaningful is one factor that contributes to positive school experience and identity development. The researchers argue that engaging in meaningful academic activities encourages a sense of agency in students as they are completing studies that are personally meaningful to their lives. This relates to the valuing learning and development superordinate theme.

4.3.1.3 Subordinate theme: Valuing learning and Development

Originally this theme was termed “importance of education” however, upon further exploration of the participant interviews, it was apparent that it wasn’t necessarily the formal education that held importance for participants but the connection to the learning and development of their skills. The responses from all participants also seemed to indicate the significance of what education represents and the potential opportunities for the future, relating to the theme surrounding social mobility.

The participants reflected on the skills they thought had helped them to be academically successful at school. As shown in the extracts below, the participants tended to talk about skills such as being organised, asking questions, knowing when to prioritise and working hard.

Kieran: “Ummmm,in my education I think that my best quality is that I listen in lesson, very err like attentively, because I feel like umm, in the lesson is when I’m going to understand it. I won’t really understand it if I go home and try going over it myself so I try my best in lesson and I’m really inquisitive, I ask a lot of questions so every single one of my teachers will say she asks too many questions but yeah. Errm and ummm I think I have a strong memory but like, can’t remember my childhood that much but like I’d remember like my schoolwork and remember what I’ve learnt”

Ben reflects on having to be emotionally ready to learn and how affective factors can impact educational engagement.

Ben: *"I think if I'm , if I'm motivated then I like love doing my work and if I'm like in happy state then I love doing my work, like love like learning and stuff but I think because of the past kind of put me down and made me like kind of give up and stuff you know"*

All participants talked about a time in their lives where they disengaged from education, mainly related to difficulties with relationships. However, due to the narrative around social mobility, education is viewed as the only way out of disadvantage. In the UK, testing children's academic abilities starts in key stage 1 and this gives children key messages about their success or failure at school (Francis and Hey, 2009). Interestingly, despite the vast research that outlines that children from low SE backgrounds do not start school on an equal footing with their more privileged counterparts, this form of assessment is still heralded as an appropriate indicator of a child's academic skills. This culture of testing and driving up attainment may be why some of the participants had periods of disengagement. It seems that the constraints of a strict curriculum can sometimes perhaps contrast with the motivations/inclinations that CYP have towards learning. Maisa talks about how she likes to understand the work that she does rather than to just learn it.

Maisa: *"I know there's been a lot of teachers that have told me learn this and then it will come in the exam. Definitions you should learn it, but I prefer to understand it and, in the exam, give my own definition from my own understanding. I think understanding and memorising just before the exam helps me a lot"*

In the above extract, Maisa shows that she has an interest and motivation to not only learn, but to understand the subjects she is being taught. It seems that this may be at odds with the message from teaching staff who perhaps are working within the constraints of the curriculum and are reluctant to deviate from this. However, I think it is important to inspire a culture within schools that advocates and promotes a passion for learning, encouraging healthy debate and consideration of what you are being taught. Unfortunately, the government's drive for raising attainment and heavy criticism of 'underperforming' schools (Shain, 2015), means that teachers may be less inclined to focus on factors outside of the curriculum through pressures of meeting targets. This is reflected in Imogen's extract below.

Imogen: *"I'm organised so I kind of get things done and errm, hmmm....I try my hardest but my hardest is not always the best"*

Imogen is clearly committed to learning and working hard however, it seems that she is alluding to perhaps her grades not always reflecting this. I got a sense here of how disheartening this was for her. Although the participants value learning, at times in their lives, it has been hard to see the end goal for engaging in education. Aimee shared some of the difficulties making the links between what you are doing at school and the implications for later in life.

Aimee: *"It's just sort of more like inviting to actually wanting to learn and I feel like through secondary school, I feel like a lot of, at the start, like I still worked but I wasn't that like sort of like, there was no sort of purpose. Like in year 7 you're not gonna be like, I'll have like year 11 to my exams and stuff you're just focussing on getting through work and stuff."*

...I would probably say not seeing like an end goal in sight. Like doing your exams but not seeing what the sort of like how they'd affect you in real life. Like you don't realise like how like your GCSEs will affect your A levels, your A levels can affect whether you can get into university and things like that. And like how like hard the working world is. I don't think there's like a straight way to show that to students but like to just implement into a bit of learning like ok we are going out into a workplace, we are doing more like experience and stuff"

The concept of hierarchies of knowledge (Francis et al, 2017) was previously outlined in the literature review in section 2.4.1 and it seems that the experiences of the participants in the current study show that the schools they attend have a clear focus on academic skills. My interpretation, based on the information from the themes in this section, is that the participants in this study are naturally aligned with the vocational side of the scale (growth mindset, skill development, enquiry) but attend schools that are aligned with the academic side. As relative high achievers, they are constrained by the motivations and dominant narratives in their schools and society. The education system is almost a means to an end but the learning and personal growth/development that can occur is seen as more meaningful. Surayj illustrates this point as he talks about the more pragmatic outcomes/benefits of being educated.

Surayj: *"[Education] Helps you get to where you wanna. If you're interested in stuff it gets you out of certain scenarios like even if it's not like, like some people say they wanna buy a car, that's small to me. I think it's more for like stuff like, common sense like if you can, like knowing if there's a bad situation, how to get out of it education helps you in that. Like people nowadays will be like ah I want a big house, a big car but they don't think like about the general scenarios, everyday things"*

Surayj seems to be saying that he is not so much interested in symbolic capital (Boudieu, 1986), i.e. having a nice house or nice car (Kraus et al, 2011) but he values being educated as it can help you in everyday situations. Surayj talked a bit about his neighbourhood and the dangers of being drawn into criminal activities. I perceived his comments to be referring to being able to develop skills to stay away from compromising situations, keeping you focussed on aiming for a career and also almost developing the concept of being 'street smart' , which is urban slang for 'having your wits about you'. I felt that there was also a sense of learning to be resourceful and making the best of what you have (Hampton, 2016).

Although there is evidence to suggest raising attainment and aspirations should be a focus of practice (Stokes et al, 2015), there is an argument for making education meaningful and relevant to CYP (Francis et al, 2017). Hayes et al (2006) suggest that this is particularly pertinent to students with low SES. The young people in this study are academically successful, driven and determined young people, but they shared that it was sometimes hard to make the links to your education at school and later life. For young people that perhaps find education difficult or there is a more significant impact of their social circumstances, this may be even more pronounced and may account for why some CYP disengage from education.

4.3.2 Superordinate Theme: Identity

The participants' interviews reflected strong themes around identity which related to them individually, but also to their perceptions of how they are viewed by the wider society. For the young women in this study, the impact of cultural identity was very prominent and

therefore this subordinate theme is presented first, followed by My Social Class and Where I Live.

4.3.2.1 Subordinate theme: Gender, Culture and Tradition

Research has suggested that it is important to consider the intersection between gender, ethnicity, and social class (Bhopal, 2014; Strand, 2015; Richardson, 2020). In this regard, it was helpful to consider gender differences and factors of ethnicity and culture in relation to the participant group. Research has found that the experiences of South Asian men and women are shaped by gender in a way that differs from the White majority (Baggely and Hussain, 2016; Bhopal, 2014). The role of religious and traditional cultural gender roles was very prominent in the participants' interviews. There were clear differences between the experiences of the young men and the experiences of the young women regarding the role of cultural and religious expectations. The young women reported how at times, they felt constrained by traditional gendered expectations. This was not a concern for the young men however, they did show more of an awareness of crime and social difficulties in their neighbourhoods which will be explored in section 4.3.2.2. The results of the current study reflected the findings of Shah et al (2010) who found that the young women in their study identified cultural constructions as a barrier to progressing in their education and impacts on social mobility (Stevenson et al, 2017).

Baggely and Hussain (2016) suggest that the educational success and wider participation of South Asian women reflect wider changes in attitudes towards women within this community. Platt and Parsons (2018) found that young women from South Asian

backgrounds aspire to gain employment in well-paid occupations. Janmohamend (2016) coined the term 'Generation M' referring to a generation of Muslim young people who attempt to uphold their religion, whilst engaging in modern life. She argues that many of the Muslim young women in this generation believe in gender equality, respect, and the opportunity to hold a significant position in society.

Maisa: *"Before it was like a woman can just sit at home and that would be her life. Now women are becoming a lot more errm, what do I wanna say, they're a lot more errm successful in life and they're learning to do a lot of things like this. I don't wanna be a woman that's just sitting around at home. I wanna do what others are doing too"*

Maisa acknowledges that women are now becoming successful and engaging in education. She talks about wanting to do more than solely being a housewife and I wondered whether this reflected her perceptions of cultural/traditional expectations of women. It seems that Maisa is saying she wants to fight against tradition and aspires to be successful in her own right. She spoke about this with passion and considering this together with her other comments about becoming educated to help her siblings and future children, this seemed significant to Maisa. Maisa also talked about an aunt who had completed A levels and so perhaps her aunt has provided her with a narrative of women being educated that is closer to home.

Imogen: "...I think it's more like in Asian communities, girls don't do this, girls don't do that kind of thing so it's like, family. So, if like even with me going to college like certain family members like my grandma like they don't agree with it. Like there's been girls in the family who have gone to college and messed about and like linked guys or what not and stuff like that so it's always like, 'oh but she's going to end up doing the same thing' and like it's kind of like so when you go like, you're not just stressed about your grades, you're stressed about what rumours people might like make about you and stuff like that"

Imogen shared difficulties within her family with her attending college due to the risk of her messing around or 'linking' (meeting up with) boys. Although Imogen didn't explicitly express this during her interview, the analysis of what she said here suggests that this may have been a significant contributing factor to her attending a girls sixth form, as this is not the closest college/sixth form to where she lives. Throughout the interview with Imogen, there was also a sense of the social-emotional impact of the pressures of culture and tradition, as she shared that it sometimes got in the way of her being able to do things that other young people do e.g. access social media.

Kieran reflected on her mother's experiences and the fact that she was forced to leave school in year 10.

Kieran: "So, my mom's from India. She dropped out [of school] by year 10 and because err, culturally they didn't agree to women being in education at that time, but now they're a bit more evolved, but yeah"

Aimee also reflects on her experiences of the strong discourse in the Asian community she grew up in, regarding women engaging in education. She saw this as more of a barrier to her education than her socioeconomic status.

Aimee: *“But I feel like, more so than like the sort socioeconomic thing, it would probably be for me more sort of like the culture of the community that I grew up in sort of like yeah just like because I grew up in like the Asian sort of community, which I’ve probably said like 100 times (laughs) but errm I feel like a lot of people aren’t that open minded in terms of like females going into education and wanting to go into education. It’s a bit like ooh maybe you should just get married but it’s sometimes people having these opinions and not sort of thinking what’s in someone’s best interests and doing whatever works best for them”*

All four participants said that in their experience, the cultural expectation of women was more of a significant barrier to their education, than socioeconomic status. Although the participants can see that things have changed, their use of language suggests that there is still a way to go using phrases such as women “becoming” more successful and that culturally things are a “bit” more evolved. Research has suggested that for south Asian women, the decision-making over higher education choices is complex, at times leading to conflict around factors such as location, choice of subject and when to get married (Hussain and Baguley, 2007). Subject choice appeared to be a prominent issue for Imogen whose parents were keen for her to continue with Maths, but she felt that she wanted to change this subject for an alternative because she was finding it difficult.

A recent report published by Bi (2020) found that for the Muslim women involved in her study, a third of participants reported that family and partner expectations were significant

barriers to their career development. Bi also highlights the role of the structural disempowerment, discrimination and oppression of Muslim women in particular, as they are more likely to be 'visible Muslims', wearing clothing items such as hijabs and veils. In contrast, the research found that young Muslim men expected to be successful in the labour market, despite the identifiers of their religion e.g. wearing a beard or prayer commitments.

Maisa shared her experiences of the difficulties she faced when looking for a work experience placement. She talked about her Niqab (traditional Muslim face covering) being a barrier to her finding part-time employment in retail and other customer service industries.

Maisa: *"I would love to try going into Lidl and working and things like that but it's kind of hard for me because I wear the Niqab so it's hard.*

I understand that no shops can allow me to wear the Niqab, I understand that side of it because for them they think it's a health and safety thing. So, the thing is I'm not comfortable with taking it off. Like in school I'm fine but not outside. But errm that is a barrier for me. It would be a lot more nice if I could go into jobs like, if I could go into coding and things like that. We had to do work experience and I had to be very fussy with what I was choosing because of what I wear so, that is definitely a barrier"

All four female participants talked about wanting to have a career, but an interesting finding was as well as issues related to gender, they also appeared to have more concerns about the financial factors surrounding university. The male participants only talked tentatively about university because of concerns over not getting the right grades. The female participants talked about concerns related to university fees and wanting to be able to earn money. This will be explored further in the financial constraints subordinate theme.

4.3.2.2 Subordinate theme: My Social Class and Where I Live

Manstead (2018) argues that people are more likely to identify themselves in terms of social class rather than SES. In the current study, some participants were more inclined to refer to themselves as working-class, viewing SES as more hierarchical. Further, all participants had a relatively negative view of low SES as a description of social position.

Kieran: *“Well it kind of puts us at the bottom of a hierarchy, right at the bottom but errm I don’t there should be a hierarchy. Like if you are low socioeconomic errrm but you shouldn’t be acknowledged as that. You shouldn’t see somebody as different as another and so somebody shouldn’t get more privileges than the other it should be the same for everyone”*

Kieran’s views around SES is that it almost marginalises a group of people, putting them at the bottom of the social order. There were strong themes around equality and social justice that emerged in what she was saying here, and I got a sense of an egalitarian ideal. It was interesting that she mentioned privileges and perhaps she is alluding to the forms of capital afforded to those from higher SE backgrounds. Kieran may have also been touching on the perceptions in society about people from low SE groups. This was a view shared by both Maisa and Aimee, who talked about the presumed lack of privilege of people from low SE backgrounds.

Maisa: *"Well errrm, I don't think it's correct to obviously term people like that because then they would think they come from a poor background, it would make people think that they were underprivileged growing up but you are privileged enough. Like for me personally I feel like I was very privileged growing up but errrm I can see where the government, why the government chooses that term to errm put people like us in that"*

Aimee: *"I wouldn't like see myself as that like growing up I'd probably say like errm for me personally, for me personally growing up we didn't like, like I might fit the criteria but we didn't like, it wasn't like oh we didn't have enough like food on the table"*

This interested me as I reflected on the concept of privilege and that this may mean different things to different people. When Maisa refers to a 'poor background', I got the sense that she was talking about more than financial constraints and she was thinking about the extremes of poverty. Perhaps those who are not fortunate enough to be able to go to school or have their basic needs met. Aimee also shared this view, talking about the fact that they always had food on the table. There was a sense of being grateful for what you have, adjusting to your social circumstances (Stephens et al, 2014) and showing compassion for others (Manstead, 2018). It could also be that the young people were distancing themselves from negative connotations of being classed as poor (Archer et al, 2007). I did also wonder about whether the disadvantages that participants face would perhaps not be apparent until

progressing into the labour market or higher education when they will meet a diverse range of people from different backgrounds.²

Ben views socioeconomic status in a similar way to Surayj who both see that it is based on area rather than family indicators such as parental employment.

Ben: *"Cos if like, you errm, most people from [area he lives in] they're working class so the government say like what is it low...[socioeconomic status]"*

Interestingly, there was a mixed view of living in highly deprived areas³. Ben talked about being aware of crime and knife crime in his neighbourhood, whereas Maisa and Kieran distanced themselves from their neighbourhood all together. Aimee, Surayj and Imogen all talked positively about the deprived areas they lived in. Shah et al (2010) argue that being in a community with people with shared experiences and similar ethnic backgrounds can act as a protective factor for second-generation young people from inner-city areas. Aimee and Imogen had moved to more affluent areas but both talked about preferring where they lived before as it had more of a sense of community.

² All the participants attend schools with a significantly higher proportion of students eligible for FSM, students who have English as an additional language and students who are classed as disadvantaged, compared with the national average. Therefore, it might be that others are 'worse off' and that due to shared experiences with peers, the disadvantage is not yet recognised as such. This finding reflects the results of Pemberton and Humphris (2018) who found that capital deficits were highlighted when the participants started university.

³ It is notable in the current study the participants did not live in the same geographical area, however, they all had experience of living in areas of high deprivation. Ben, Surayj and Kieran live in an area that is characterised by high rates of unemployment (ONS, 2011) and is in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England, as measured by the Indices of Deprivation (2019). Imogen, Maisa and Aimee shared that they had moved house to more affluent areas but previously lived in areas with high rates of deprivation.

Aimee: *“Yea I’d say it was like, it was more like sort of....like when we used to live there [less affluent area] it was more of a sort of, I felt anyway, I dunno maybe it was just the people surrounding, it was more of a community focus kind of thing. It was like, like where I live now, if we asked the neighbours for like a favour or something, they’d be fine with it but I think we sort of feel like we we’re putting them out a little bit whereas back then it was like sort of like people would sort of like volunteer like ah do you need help with anything. It was more sort of, I dunno I think it was maybe cause like my parents both grew up from Pakistan, it was like very like, it wasn’t all just Pakistanis there but like a lot of people were there and would sort of like help”*

Imogen: *“Yeah because I feel like if you’re in like a neighbourhood where you don’t get on with people, you don’t talk to people you just feel like you can’t say for example you forget yours keys at home you can’t go round oh can I call my mum or something like you just think, I don’t know but like where I’m living now in [area she lives] like it’s like, it’s like very....everyone’s like high socioeconomic kind of thing. So, like Mercedes in the drive and that kind of stuff and so just walk past being moody like (laughs) so in all honesty I don’t talk to any of the neighbours there”*

Imogen refers to symbolic symbols of capital here suggesting that a Mercedes in the drive is related to a higher social class and economic capital. Researchers such as Reay and Lucey (2004) have emphasised that low SE, inner-city areas and schools are often described using terms depicting waste or excreta, and have questioned the effect that this has on the young people who live in such areas or attend such schools (Archer et al, 2010). Both Surayj and Imogen had strong views about being judged by others in society and their use of language, together with their perception of life experiences throughout the interview, suggested there was a strong discontentment with the inequalities in society.

Imogen: *"I feel like people are like say for example for the like the matter of hoodies and stuff. Like errm like if like a guy's wearing a, an Asian or a Black guy is wearing a hoodie he's a drug dealer no he's just wearing a hoodie because it's raining. Or like it's the whole the way people dress like if you was wearing a tracksuit oh he's a drug dealer or errm he must have a knife or something like that or errm if you're listening to a certain type of music, they're that type of a person and what not. Like, errm people are quick to judge but it's not always the case"*

Surayj: *"Cos it's like when you're personally from that background and someone else is from like a high upbringing, and they're talking about you, it's like they're looking down on you. Whereas you might have something that's either better than them or in common with them but they're not looking at that"*

Both Surayj and Imogen shared their views around the narratives surrounding people from deprived or inner-city areas in the wider society. Surayj suggested that people from high SE backgrounds would 'look down' on people from his community without getting to know them and Imogen felt that people were judged for the way they dressed or the music that they listen to, with some reference to the perception of males from ethnic minorities. Archer et al (2007) highlight ways in which people with low SES are associated with terms such as 'chav' and the preoccupation at that time, with young people from low SE backgrounds wearing hoodies being symbolic of criminality. Even though several years have passed since this research was conducted, for these two participants this narrative is still very much alive. There was very much an 'us and them' undertone that was more prominent in the interviews with Surayj and Imogen, as was depicted by the participants in Archer et al (2007).

It seems that there is a complex interplay between class, locality, and identity (Archer and Yamashita, 2003) but also how this is experienced by the participants. The participants' view

of where they live may be related to their perceptions of wider narratives in society about social class and could account for the apparent difference in perception among the participants. Kieran and Maisa distanced themselves from where they live and the connotations around this, whereas other participants embraced it. This could, in turn, influence their sense of identity and how they feel they connect with the wider world (Manstead, 2018; Easterbrook et al, 2020). This may relate to feeling out of place in more affluent areas and further, may impact their confidence about later career choices e.g. in the areas of medicine, where the students are predominantly from middle-class backgrounds. This will be discussed further in section 4.3.3.

As Kintrea et al (2015) found, the places young people live do not affect their aspirations, but it may influence their perceptions of how they are construed in wider society. I did wonder about when the participants do enter higher education or the labour market and how this will affect their working-class identity when they will be working within middle-class ideals and will have ultimately achieved upward social mobility, changing their social class. I have reflected on this increasingly while writing this thesis and it is a very interesting position to be in.

4.3.3 Superordinate Theme: Capital

Section 2.2.2 of the literature review also referred to Yosso (2005) and her concept of cultural wealth. Although there is evidence of lack of capital as measured by White 'middle-class' norms, there was evidence of cultural wealth which may, in fact, explain the resilience

of these young people. Aspirational capital can be seen in parents' encouragement for their children to aim high and be successful. There are clear indications of navigational and resistant capital evident in the participants' interviews. All participants have navigated their way through their educational experiences, often with little guidance from parents or teachers. They all have a sense of social justice and inclusion, challenging the stereotypes of class and in the case of the young women, gender.

However, although these alternative forms of capital may have served as facilitating factors in their educational attainment, in society, this may not always lead to success due to the focus being on the 'white middle-class' norms. Therefore, even when it is apparent that ethnic minority groups have developed skills and knowledge when this is measured against the dominant societal norms, it is not valued and could explain why the dominant forms of capital serve as a barrier to success.

In the current study, elements of capital and capital deficit were apparent in three areas: confidence, uncertainty about the future and financial constraints. The themes relate to limited social, cultural, and economic capital. Confidence was a significant feature across all participants interviews and therefore this theme is presented first, followed by uncertainty about the future and then financial constraints.

4.3.3.1 Subordinate theme: Confidence

All participants described themselves as shy when we explored factors related to the self, such as character traits or personality, and for all participants there seemed a somewhat discomfort related to talking about themselves. The current theme related to confidence came through in all the participant interviews but in different ways, as will be shown from the extracts. For Maisa, she had moved schools and countries several times throughout her life and she reflects on the fact that she has relied on her sister for support at school.

***Maisa:** " Yeah it's not just all one place. I've been so many... I think like growing up I was not confident and I've always been shy. My sister's always gone to the same schools as me so she's always been there if I didn't have a friend but as I got into... a year ago she got married and I was forced into a situation where I had to go places on my own"*

Maisa offers here the fact that she is not confident but there were other examples in her interview where there was evidence of this. She shared instances of wanting to 'stay in her comfort zone' and this was also present in other participant interviews (Ben, Imogen, Aimee), initially creating a superordinate theme but I later decided that this manifested as lack of confidence. Maisa talks about being forced into going places on her own, suggesting that she would have struggled to do this independently and needed support to be pushed out of her comfort zone. Ben and Imogen shared a similar experience, describing themselves as shy, nervous, and lacking confidence.

Ben: *"I think I'm kind, but I think I'm a bit nervous at times and I used to be really unconfident before, but I think I'm slowly building it up.
....Just in general. I was just like scared of putting my hand up in lessons sometimes...(laughs) yeah"*

Imogen: *"I lack confidence quite a lot. Errm I can be like awkward in new situations but errm I feel like if you do get to know me, I can come out my shell. With certain people I can just be like really hyper and stuff. It's like if some people just see me like that, they'd get really shocked cause they just think I'm really quiet but I can come out of my shell with the right people"*

I found this interesting because the young people selected for this study are academically successful, yet all of them describe lacking confidence. Research has argued that schools are ideally positioned to provide opportunities for the development of character and wellbeing, suggesting that learning should expand beyond the academic (Peterson, 2006). The concept of wellbeing is not unidimensional and involves a series of factors that may link and overlap (Kern et al, 2015). In education, academic outcomes are used as a measure of a students' overall achievement, perhaps ignoring areas where a student may struggle (Kern et al, 2015). Aimee refers to this and although she was talking more generally about children from low SE backgrounds, I could not help but wonder whether this reflected her personal experiences.

Aimee: *"...someone might be like academically fine, like doing well sort of thing but like other aspects of their life might suffer kind of thing"*

Lack of confidence was also evident in the participants' discomfort with talking about their strengths. This is evident in the extract from Surayj's interview below. He is reflecting on his experiences at primary school and thought that I might perceive him as being 'cocky' because he talked about having naturally strong academic skills.

Surayj: *"All the way through primary school, I didn't like really revise anything at all. I just went off like natural, and I was like towards the bottom of the highest groups, but if they put me in like a middle group, I used to be at the top of that. I'm not being cocky or anything"*

Surayj's comments here were interesting as it raises issues around the awareness that children have about being placed in sets. Archer et al (2007) found that the students in their study experienced feelings of shame at being in the bottom set. Although Surayj was not in the bottom set, he highlighted that he was at the bottom of the class in the top set and perhaps this could impact on the way he sees himself academically. Interestingly, the participants in the current study were uncomfortable with being referred to as high achievers and this is one of the reasons that I changed the title of the study. Lack of confidence in skills was something noted by Horton and Hilton (2020) when examining the barriers to learners from low SE backgrounds. This can have a significant effect on career aspirations and although learners may be academically successful, they may not have the confidence to take advantage of opportunities (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2018). This point was particularly pertinent to those participants considering a career in medicine which is often highly competitive and aimed at high achievers.

Aimee: “....all the people I used to hang out with or was like close friends with, moved schools or wanted to go to other schools where there’s maybe, like a lot of them wanted to go to Oxbridge university to do like medicine degrees that like nobody from this school has ever done like a medicine degree or gone to Oxbridge or anything like that so a lot of people wanted to leave”

Aimee’s point here relates to the earlier points about the comfort zone as she went on to talk about how this experience meant that she had to be more independent and learn to develop new relationships. It also relates to the point above referring to applying to courses in medicine. Research has outlined the significant disparities of students from low SE background gaining a place at Oxbridge compared to their more affluent peers (Social, Mobility Commission, 2016) and research has also highlighted the negative discourse of inner-city schools (Reay and Lucy, 2004; Archer et al, 2010). It seems here that Aimee’s perception is that people who attend a school like hers would have no chance of being successful in applying for a course in medicine or applying for Oxbridge.

Research suggests that cultural capital extends to levels of confidence, assuredness, and entitlement (Evans, 2009) and impacts choices about higher education (Reay, et al, 2005). Research has found that young people from low SE backgrounds are sometimes discouraged from applying to courses in medicine, as it has been suggested that you are more likely to be successful gaining a place if you have attended a private school (Pemberton and Humphris,

2018).⁴ In the current study, half of the participants had considered a career in medicine but were deterred by how difficult it was.

Kieran: *"Yeah. Umm I have been doing research. At the beginning of the year I wanted to do medicine but then I changed my mind because I found out it was really hard and I can't do that so then I decided I either want to go into civil engineering or do a degree in maths. It's completely different but yeah"*

Sukraj: *"Yeah I wanna get into either errr... I don't know like fully but something to do with science like medicine but that...it looks next level"*

According to Pemberton and Humphris (2018), in the UK an individual's SES has a significant influence on career progression and opportunities. Surayj was unsure whether he would be able to complete the course, referring to it as 'next level' (really hard) even though he has been assured by his teachers that he would be able to get the grades to apply for the course. This theme relates very closely to uncertainty about the future and the distinction made between aspirations and expectations explored in the next section.

⁴ Only 6% of doctors are from working-class backgrounds, compared to 73% from middle-class backgrounds (Friedman et al, 2017).

4.3.3.2 Subordinate theme: Uncertainty about the future

Research conducted by Pemberton and Humpris (2018) argued that the participants in their study “did not lack aspiration, but they did lack the ‘road map’ that directed them to achieve their goals” (p. 9). The study found that the participants had very little support around careers and had to navigate this themselves. This was echoed by the findings in the current study. Although the participants were supported and encouraged by their parents, none of the participants talked about their parents supporting them with their career choices and how to get there. The support offered from the school/sixth form was also variable. It seemed that the schools generally encouraged high aspirations in their students and attempted to promote initiatives to support access to universities. However, the uncertainty that the participants had about the future and their career plans indicated that there was not enough person-centred planning and support.

Kieran: *“It was just more free and like umm, you don’t have to stress about anything. Like, right now we have to stress about exams coming up and what you’re gonna do in the future, your career plans and stuff whereas in primary, don’t care about nothing or the only thing you wanna care about is if you’re gonna get golden time or not (laughs)”*

Kieran is reflecting here on the difference between primary and secondary school. She preferred it because it was stress-free. She talks about having to “stress” about the future which I thought was an interesting choice of words, as again for her it appears that she is feeling a significant amount of pressure. The choice does not appear to be something that can be exploratory and open, and I did not get the impression that she was supported with a

road map through the process. There was a very similar theme from the interview with Maisa who is very unclear about her career path. Maisa has the added factor of being educated in a different education system and therefore perhaps she is more unfamiliar about the career paths/options available to her.

Maisa: *“Right now I don’t even have a career path that I’ve chosen yet. I’m actually looking, right now I am looking into it but errm Maths, Chemistry and Biology when chose it I didn’t have a certain career in mind, I just chose it because of passion. That’s why I’m doing it.*

We weren’t prepared for college, they just told us make sure you apply for colleges and things like that. I thought ok I will just go in the summer”

Maisa may be at risk of falling into the static mobility category (Pemberton and Humphris, 2018, see fig 5), as she hasn’t considered her career path and she was at the point of having to apply for university if this is something she was considering. Maisa’s choices are likely to be impacted significantly by the factors discussed in section 4.3.2.1 and particularly as she told me that she specifically needed to attend an all-girls sixth form, even though this was relatively far away from where she lived. It is unclear whether Maisa has ever attended a mixed education setting, however, this is likely to be a significant barrier for her whether she chooses to continue into HE or continue into the labour market. Bi (2020) suggests that there needs to be specific consideration given to supporting the career development of Muslim women such as offering careers events for young women and their families, targeted/specific supporting the form of mentoring and engaging families of students, providing information around the diverse career opportunities. This issue was also raised by

the Social Mobility Commission (2017) who note the significant reduction in careers advice and work experience over the last 20 years.

Research conducted by Gorrard et al (2012) highlighted the difference between aspirations and expectations. Although the narrative surrounding young people from low SE and working-class backgrounds suggest a lack of aspirations (Francis and Hey, 2009; Berrington, et al 2016), it is evident that there are wider contextual factors at play. The participants in this study all had high hopes and aspirations of being successful and improving their social/financial circumstances. They are encouraged by their parents to engage in education to realise to achieve social mobility, reflecting the government's meritocratic rhetoric (Berrington et al, 2016). However, this can lead to enormous pressure being placed on the young person to be successful (Horgan, 2007). I wondered whether this is related to coming from a household where education is seen as your only chance at a better life and whether sometimes parents push this because they see no other options. However, without the right support in place, the young person can become disheartened and feel somewhat stuck.

Imogen: *"I tried my hardest on it but then I had like, I just like, you know when you can't get your head round something. So, I'm planning to switch that for health and social but errm I'm gonna have to have a meeting with my parents which I don't wanna have"*

Imogen shared that she had always found maths a difficult subject and that this was not helped by having a teacher who she did not get along with when she was in year 6. Imogen

has taken maths at A level, but she is finding it difficult to get her head around all the concepts and she shared that she found the jump from GCSE quite hard. However, her parents are keen for her to continue with this subject even though she is struggling. She talked about changing maths for a health and social care course but said that her parents would be disappointed. Imogen seemed so unsure about how she would manage this situation and this, in turn, is likely to be why she was uncertain about whether she would be attending university.

Research conducted by Keane et al (2017) asserts that lack of career guidance has been cited as a factor contributing to the barriers of those from lower SE groups accessing university. Reay et al (2005) suggest that this is because families from low SE backgrounds tend to be reliant on school for key information. However, only one of the participants in the current study referred to a careers advisor. Stephens et al (2014) argue that the social positioning of people with low SES means that they have access to fewer opportunities, less economic capital and consequently assert less control / have less choice over aspects of their lives. The researchers argue that as a result, people from low SE backgrounds have less confidence when navigating their way through middle-class contexts. All participants showed a determination to succeed and they expressed high aspirations, however, they are constrained in some ways by factors beyond their control for example, the cost of university fees. Berrington et al (2016) suggest that the government policy should focus less on raising aspirations and more on what factors prevent aspirations being actualised.

4.3.3.3 Subordinate theme: Financial constraints

Research has shown the impact of cuts in maintenance grants and increase in university fees, on students from poorer backgrounds and suggests that whilst the government have previously attempted to widen participation in higher education, there still appears to be clear disparities (Reay et al, 2005; Pemberton and Humphris, 2018). For some of the participants in the current study, this may have provided them with further opportunities to complete the courses that they aspired to.

Kieran: *"I'm going for an apprenticeship, I wanna go for an apprenticeship because I feel like umm, I wanna work now and I wanna earn instead of going to uni and plus uni fees are so much. Even though there's loans, my family's quite religious so they don't believe in like interest and stuff and so they don't want to take on the loan. They say that if I do go to uni they would pay for it themselves but its £9000 per year so, it's quite hard and so I'm like I'd rather go for the degree apprenticeship where it's more easier and you know you don't have to pay"*

Kieran's reasons for not applying for university appear to be related to a lack of confidence in her ability to successfully gain a place on a course in medicine but also related to financial factors. She has the added element of not being able to access student loans due to religious beliefs. The cost of university fees is clearly a barrier for Kieran as she also talks about wanting to earn money. Kieran mentioned that her dad is in a low paid job and perhaps she wants to earn so that she can contribute to her family household income. Aimee alluded to the same difficulty and her reasons for not applying for the medicine course at university was also impacted by financial constraints.

Aimee: *"I was speaking to, when I was planning to apply for medicine, errrm I spoke to one of the really good chemistry teachers here and he was like errm when his daughter did errm applied for medicine he said something like they got her a course for like err a couple hundred pounds and he was like it's quite expensive. I thought like it would be maybe 30, 40 pounds and I'll maybe get like my sister to sub me for it and then he said like 2-300 pounds and I was like, yeah no way (laughs). We have no money for that, not no money but like"*

It sounds as if Aimee's teacher was trying to be helpful by providing knowledge of what his daughter did when she applied for the medicine course. However, here is an example of the teacher not understanding the young person's context and the fact that they do not have the same level of social, cultural, and economic capital at their disposal. This was echoed by Imogen who also talked about it being important for teachers to understand the backgrounds of their students and not just to make assumptions about what they can afford.

Imogen: *"Say for example like if you have like a trip coming up and there's like certain people in the class that can't afford that trip or what not, I feel like people need to understand it. Like it's easy to say like what its just 20 quid but you have to understand people's like backgrounds and stuff"*

Initiatives such as the aim higher program fail to consider the structural and contextual barriers to young people accessing higher education (Perry and Francis, 2010). The participants in this study are deemed to be 'academically successful'⁵ however, there are factors such as financial difficulties that act as a barrier to them progressing to higher

⁵ as measured against the British benchmark of success i.e. they have achieved 5 or more A* - C grades at GCSE (Crawford, Macmillan and Vignoles, 2014)

education. This seems somewhat ironic given that the initiatives mentioned above are constructed as a means of encouraging social mobility and bettering your financial circumstances, but it may be your financial circumstances that prevent you accessing higher education in the first place.

Maisa reflected on the lack of resources in the schools she had attended. Kieran also talked about this saying that at her current school, they had less access to textbooks and equipment than schools that were better financed.

Maisa: *“Personally I believe that there are Islamic schools that are good but because it’s private and it’s not government funded, they can’t afford good teaching quality or certain access to labs and things like that. So, they can’t afford things like labs and things like that. I’m not saying that for all Islamic schools, but I’ve been to 2 so far, well I’ve been to 3 I think but 2 of them they weren’t able to afford it”*

As Maisa points out, lack of resources in schools relates to poor quality teaching and equipment, significantly disadvantaging the CYP who attend these schools. Diane Reay emphasised this in her interview with the guardian stating that working-class comprehensives have less funding for their pupils and less qualified teaching staff (Reay, 2017). Research also showed that schools with a higher number of children with FSM eligibility have less specialist teaching staff (Kirby and Culinane, 2017; Allens and Sims, 2018). It appears that CYP who are already disadvantaged by lack of social, economic, and cultural capital are further disadvantaged by the quality of the schools they attend. This supports the

arguments that the education system is potentially perpetuating inequality and disadvantage (Shain, 2016; Francis et al, 2017).

Interestingly, the participants did not mention financial constraints in relation to their families and when this did come up, there was a sense that parents just pulled through or shielded the young people from any financial difficulties that they may have experienced. It may also be because the participants did not know me prior to the interview and were therefore reluctant to discuss such a sensitive topic with a person that had never met. This was one of the limitations of this study that are discussed further in chapter 5.

4.3.4 Superordinate Theme: External Influences on Educational Engagement

Section 2.4 outlined the literature in relation to the external systems around CYP. According to Perry and Francis (2010), social inequality in education should focus on educational engagement not just attainment and themes that related to engagement are discussed in this section. Throughout the participant interviews, there were clear examples of how external systems influenced educational engagement both positively and negatively. It is interesting to consider engagement rather than attainment because the participants in this study still achieved academic success even at times when their engagement was affected. The most significant themes were parental experiences and social mobility.

4.3.4.1 Subordinate theme: Parental Experiences and the support of family

The participants' descriptions of the experiences of their parents were a significant factor in influencing their engagement with education. Majority of the participants' parents left education before the age of 16. They all talked about the experiences of their parents driving their determination to succeed in education, with some parents actively using their own experience to show their children the importance of education (Scanlon, et al 2019). This was argued by Shah et al (2010) in their study focussed on young British Pakistani students and they found that the parents did not want their children to experience the level of material deprivation that they had themselves experienced. The experiences of parents shared by Surayj and Aimee were particularly powerful and are consistent with the findings of Shah et al (2010).

Aimee: "... but I do know that like my parents did used to struggle when they first came over. Like my mom was like, so like when she first came over my dad would be at work, I think some days my mom would work, some days she wouldn't and errm she was like in the dark. They didn't have money for electricity at the start when they first came so she was like, she would just like clean in the dark. And that kinda like, it was like, it kinda hit me. She was like sometimes we didn't have enough like food to eat so then like the neighbours, if they had any spare food then like then they would sort of like help"

Surayj: "My dad is from a family of four brothers and my dad's educated in Pakistan and when he started off, no one was educated in his family. They literally lived in like, they lived on a farm when they started off and his sister didn't go to school or anything and his brothers didn't go. He was the only one that used to go, cos the school was quite far from his house and it was like a 3 hour walk for him. He's even like showed me how long it takes to get there, and he was still going every day and he goes to me, look how hard I worked. And now he lives here whilst, sadly his three brothers are still there, but he said it was their choice, they wanted to do that. And my dad even tells me the main reason he got into education is cos they didn't have that much money back then. He used to have a sister and cos they couldn't get medicine for her and sadly she passed away after a while".

Both participants talked about the impact that the experiences of their parents had on them. Surayj told me that his dad would tell him this story to motivate him to keep engaging with his education. These findings are consistent with a study conducted by Scanlan et al (2019) who found that the parents in their study drew on their own life experiences to emphasize to their children the importance of getting a good education. Aimee had a similar story and said that her mother tells her a saying in Mirpuri that essentially meant without your education you will not get anywhere in life. She reflected further on how this affected her growing up.

Aimee: *"...so my mum just didn't go to school. So I feel like that, it sort of impacted me in a way , I wouldn't say I missed out but there were things that like if my mum had an education, my life would be different in the sense of like, so sometimes we would go shopping and if she wants to buy like water or something, she won't be able to read underneath what it says and sometimes she can't read the price kind of thing. So, like I don't wanna have that for myself for like my future or my kids and they're in a position where they're struggling because they don't have that education"*

What Aimee is saying here relates to the capital superordinate theme, in the sense that Aimee's parents may have had limited financial, cultural, and social capital when arriving into the UK and being unfamiliar with the language and culture. Although Aimee did not frame it in this way, I wondered whether she saw this as being at a disadvantage as she may have had to rely on siblings for example for help with homework and other school-related matters. This experience has meant that Aimee is determined to achieve an education so that in the future, her children have a different experience.

Stokes et al (2015) argue that the differences in low SE ethnic groups could be explained by a form of ethnic minority resilience which means that they are more equipped to cope with deprivation and disadvantage. The significant deprivation experienced by these parents has probably meant that they have found helpful ways of adapting and coping with adversity. As previously mentioned, parents from low SE backgrounds may be more inclined to encourage their children to engage in education so that they do not have the same experiences of financial hardship.

Kieran: "... errm both of my parents are dropouts from year 10. So, my mom's from India she dropped out by year 10 and because err culturally they didn't agree to women being in education at that time but now their a bit more evolved but yeah. Umm and so she was a drop out at year 10 and she's seen the fact that she doesn't have the education, she can't go out and do the things she wants to do errrm and then my dad is also a drop out at year 10. He does Islamic teaching so like little kids teaching and it's not well paid at all and he also realises that you do need an education and a lot of jobs around here require you to have like a certain grade in your GCSEs or A levels or something and so...yeah, that's why they think it's important"

This narrative around education leading to a better job is shared by Kieran's parents and again this is directly related to their own experiences, and no doubt the challenges, of not finishing school. Imogen reflected a similar narrative however, her mother returned to education as a mature student.

Imogen: "Errm, my mom's actually graduating this year so.... She didn't study when she was younger. She left school at 14 and errm then she just recently like, there like a mature student kind of thing"

In Imogen's case, her mother may be even more encouraging of her continuing into higher education as she has now followed this route herself. There are likely to have been factors that influenced her decision to do this and again because of her experiences she will want Imogen to gain her qualifications so that she does not face the same barriers. However, I think that this narrative is somewhat problematic for two reasons. The first has already been discussed around the pressure that will be placed on CYP to perform well and may lead to parents being fairly strict in terms of engagement with education. An example from Kieran below illustrates this point.

Kieran: "I think that my parents also like enforced education and they also say like they never let me take a day off school. Never! Like I think this year was the only year where they were like ok you can take a few days off school. But even if I'm like ill, or if I have like have a temperature or something, they're like, your fine you can have paracetamol, go to school (laughs). It was, they won't let me take a day off school and so it becomes like your second home"

The second reason I think that this narrative is problematic and where there may be discord between parents' expectations/aspirations and that of CYP, is where the young person for whatever reason, finds it difficult to engage with education. Parents have been told that this is the only way for a child in their social position is able to better themselves, so what do they do when a child is struggling academically? The messages they get from home is that education is the only way to succeed, the school environment says that attainment is key and the narrative in society is that you need to raise your aspirations, but if you cannot

engage with education, then as a young person from a low SE background, what are you supposed to aspire to?

Ben's parents have taken quite a different approach. They have encouraged him to pursue both his education and sporting talents. Ben described his parents as quite laid back and they encouraged him to connect with things that interest him and that he enjoys.

Ben: *"But errm my parents actually they said just do what you like and also, so they say education is important but also I'm doing cricket as well, so they say that's quite important as well. Yeah. So, if you don't do good in your education you've go like your cricket stuff"*

Ben appeared quite laid back about the future although he was uncertain. He talked about aspiring to university however, if that he was not successful, he would go for an apprenticeship or "find something". In some ways, Ben's approach fits with the idea of connecting with what you enjoy and what is meaningful to you. Not necessarily solely focussing on higher education, just the idea that he does not want to be unemployed. Whether or not this view and attitude would seem acceptable from a societal point of view is a different story or whether he might be perceived as lacking aspirations for not aiming high enough. Scanlon et al (2019) found that parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds, actively rejected pressuring their children into pursuing a specific career or occupation. They were concerned about what this would do to the emotional wellbeing of their child and wanted to promote a sense of agency. However, being unemployed or seeking a 'dead-end'

job, was actively discouraged. This is reflected in the current study as all of the participants wanted to progress into employment or HE.

All the participants reported having a good relationship with their parents and family. Maisa shared that she felt the support of her family helped her to be successful in education.

Maisa: *“What has helped me become successful? I think family support. If you have a good family to back you, that helps you a lot.... Yeah because like I think like you go through frustrating phases in your life and you like to talk about it and find solutions and things like that. And to have someone to talk about it, help you find solutions I think that helped me with success because you obviously will face so many obstacles in life, you need to speak about it, you don’t wanna keep it in”*

Maisa talked about being close to her sister and that her brother had supported her to get a work experience placement. This fits research conducted by Shah et al (2010) that argues siblings can have a role in supporting CYP and mediating some of the disadvantages they may face. Aimee also talked about her older siblings being able to support her.

Aimee: *“I like being, having older siblings because I feel like they’ve gone through stuff first so I get to have that sort of like, not first experience but I can sort of like ask them but I’m not the first person so they can sort kind of like relate and stuff”*

Aimee and Maisa are fortunate enough to have older siblings in a position to support them. Whereas the other participants were either the oldest or have siblings that perhaps have not

progressed academically. Overall, in this study, parent support came in the form of encouraging the young people to go to school, communicating the importance of education (Scanlon et al, 2019) and encouraging high aspirations (Kirk et al, 2011). However, in terms of what seemed to have the most impact on participants, it appeared to be having an awareness of the experiences and struggles of their parents including factors such as language barriers.

4.3.4.2 Subordinate theme: Social mobility

The literature in section 2.3.2 outlines the initiatives that have been introduced to widen participation in higher education (Horton and Hilton, 2020; Perry and Francis, 2010) and raise aspirations of those from deprived neighbourhoods and low SE backgrounds (Archer et al, 2010). Researchers have argued that young people from low SE backgrounds are given the message that they alone are responsible for changing their own social circumstances and that this must be done by aiming high in education (Bauman, 2005). The participants in the current study all showed evidence of high aspirations and talked about seeing education as a way to succeed and achieve in life. They all want to go into professional careers and were keen to continue into further education so that they had access to opportunities in the world of work. However, the findings outlined in this chapter have shown that the concept of social mobility and opportunity, is not as simple as it may seem.

Imogen's view is that a good education will improve her salary and career prospects. In this extract, it appears that she wants to have the opportunities for growth, development, and

promotion in the future. It seems that she is saying that without education/qualifications, although you can gain employment, there is a chance that you will become stuck and not be able to progress any further. Imogen talked about seeing her mother complete her education as a significant factor in her wanting to do the same.

Imogen: *“Err it’s the whole better pay thing. I could have just come out of school and got a 9 to 5 or something but errm like doing that for the rest of your life you’re not gonna get anywhere and it’s hard to get a promotion as well like without qualifications so errm like it’s, it’s like you have to pay for your education like especially uni but at least at the end of it you will have like I dunno, a high amount of money compared to people with like regular jobs”*

Ben shared that his social class motivates him to be more successful and appears to suggest that it is his responsibility to improve his circumstances (Bauman, 2005).

Ben: *“Errrm, I think actually that [low SES classification] motivates me really so that I can achieve to do better and you know kind of raise that up”*

This narrative puts an enormous amount of pressure on CYP as they do not have the benefit of having parents with high levels of social, cultural, and economic capital, and are often encouraged to continue in education with little support to navigate this (Pemberton and Humphris, 2018). Aimee’s interview extract below further illustrates this point.

Aimee: *"I'd probably say, sometimes I guess it was so draining sometimes, constantly like working hard but like sometimes not getting something, but not like doing well out of it. Like I remember like it was a time when I revised super hard for this biology test and I remember like I ended up like getting like not even like a pass or anything on it. And I remember some people were like "I didn't even revise" and they'd come out as just flying and I think it was sometimes just like hitting a dead end sort of thing, where you're just like I don't know whether I want to try anymore like, you're just like pissed off and it makes you feel demotivated and not want to work"*

Aimee describes school as sometimes being "draining", painting a picture of carrying a huge weight and having to keep going with it, even in the face of failure. I do not think that there enough consideration given to the pressures of achieving in education on CYP. This is related to CYP from all backgrounds but being from a low SE background especially may mean more pressure, as the dominant narrative in society suggests that education is their only chance of a better life.

Maisa refers to education being pertinent to a successful life and being able to adapt in society. However, I felt that Maisa's perception of education was slightly different from the other participants and this may be because her educational and life experiences differed. Maisa has been educated in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and England. Therefore, she may not necessarily have been subject to the same narratives and messages about education as her peers. Maisa's view of the role of education is more pragmatic as she sees it as an essential part of life that supports you to meaningfully contribute to society. It seemed that Maisa was reflecting on education providing a sort of independence, referring to the basics of reading and writing. Maisa did not talk about the experiences of her parents, only that they implicitly

gave messages about the importance of education through returning to England at significant transition points such as year 6 (SATs) and year 11 (GCSEs).

Maisa: *“For you not to like know how to read or write...you want to be able to live and adapt in the world and society you’re in right now. So, I think that’s why education is important. You want to go on with life, you want your kids to be successful in life, then education now is a key”*

Maisa’s response here indicates a desire for her children to have a better life and further opportunities. She talks about being able to move forward with life and she sees a lack of education as a barrier to this. However, the difference between Maisa’s view and that of her peers is that she does not focus on higher education as a method of doing this. She is a young woman who is unsure about her career path but knows that she would like to grow and develop. Her motivation is around providing a better life for her children, perhaps gaining enough knowledge and experience of the way things work, (cultural capital) so that they are able to depend on her for support, rather than having to navigate the education system independently. I wondered whether this reflected Maisa’s own experiences and whether this was the reason she did not want that for her children.

Pemberton and Humphris (2018) detail three different types of social mobility outline in figure 5.

Figure 5 Types of Social Mobility outline in Pemberton and Humphris (2018)

Static mobility	Adapted Mobility	Rising Mobility
Individuals who progress from post 16 education into the world of work without a specific career trajectory in mind.	Career plans are developed by the individual around the end of their university course, which then require adaptation due to for example, lack of experience in the sector. Individuals in this category focus on the completion of their degree without considering the next steps for career progression earlier on, often leading to them experiencing frustration at being turned down for jobs.	Individual who often study subjects with a structured career path such as teaching or the medical profession. There is often no experience necessary and they are qualified in their profession at the end of their degree.

Aimee shows uncertainty about going to university seems to reflect her awareness of becoming stuck or achieving static mobility.

Aimee: “I think just the skills and the benefits it would give me. Like if I go to uni a lot of jobs in life will require a degree and if I’ve done an apprenticeship I will still have a qualification but it won’t be a degree so then it might not help me as much. But then at the same time I feel like if I did an apprenticeship I’d be earning as well so I’d be just sort of like paving the way for independence kind of thing and like gaining skills as well because I feel like, obviously I haven’t done uni but I sort of see it as like you’re still learning but with an apprenticeship it’s more hands on and sort of like getting into it already”

Aimee seems to be having a real conflict here around her decision to continue to HE or not, again reflecting the sort of pressure CYP from low SE face due to lack of guidance around careers. All participants in the current study demonstrated a degree of uncertainty about the future, which can impact the potential for upward social mobility. Imogen and Surayj are planning to pursue careers that would promote rising mobility as the career path is crystallised at the end of the degree course. However, Ben, Maisa, Aimee and Kieran are

considering options that have a less clearly defined route to employment, putting them at risk of falling into the adapted mobility category which, comes with further barriers and obstacles to overcome.

This resonated with my own experience of completing a degree in psychology, without the knowledge of how to progress to further training. I spent 9 years attempting to navigate my way through a career in psychology before finally gaining a place on my current doctorate course. Social mobility is not as simple a process as it may seem, especially when you consider the intersection of identity factors explored in section 4.3.2 in relation to social class. In reflecting on her own experiences of social mobility, Reay (2013) highlights the experiences of loss and displacement that can come with upward social mobility. She argues that social mobility has been used as a sticking plaster for social inequality and in fact fails to address the underlying causes.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the key findings from this study and the four superordinate themes generated from the participants' interviews. Through exploring these themes, the complex nature of the academic success of young people from low SE backgrounds has been demonstrated. Box 2 outlines the key findings from each theme. It is important to note that themes of resilience were noted throughout the participant interviews. However, this theme was not presented in this chapter as it was not significant enough as a theme in its own right. The concept of resilience was in line with the definition of Burstow et al (2018), encompassing personal, relationship, economic, identity and social factors which have

already been presented through the main themes in the findings. It has also been discussed in relation to aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005). Chapter 5 will discuss the key findings in relation to the research questions and implications for EP and educational practice.

Box 2 Summary of key findings

Summary of Key Findings

Connectedness

- Relationships are extremely significant for participants and impact on their school experience. Positive relationships with teachers and peers was related to positive engagement in education. Being able to relate to people is key for developing the relationship and establishing trust.
- Participants value personal development and growth.
- Participants engage in activities that are meaningful to them and that they can relate to and connect with. There is sometimes dissonance between this and the constraints of education. This can impact educational engagement, especially if participants cannot see the point of what they are learning.

Identity

- Gendered cultural expectations were experienced as a significant barrier to education for the young women in this study.
- Young people are proud of their working-class identity but do not connect with the low socioeconomic descriptor.
- There is a complex interplay between location, class, experiences, and identity.
- Shared experience and relating to others are very important.

Capital

- Lack of capital influenced opportunities for social mobility. This was in the form of social, cultural, and economic capital.
- Participants were uncomfortable talking about their strengths and lacked confidence.
- Participants experienced schools focusing more on the 'clever' children and on academic outcomes. Some of the participants talked about their experiences of being placed in sets and this seemed to have negatively impacted their perception of themselves as learners. This may be related to lack of confidence in their academic skills.
- Narratives around medical school seemed very dominant and highly influential. It was deemed too hard and participants viewed it as not for people like them who attend schools like theirs.
- Lack of support around careers.
- Financial barriers influenced higher education decisions for most participants.

Influences on educational engagement

- Parents used their experiences to show the participants the importance of education and to motivate them to engage in education.
- Participants portrayed a sense of family coping as they perceived parents as adapting to and coping with adversity.
- The social mobility rhetoric is at times problematic as it puts pressure on CYP to achieve as parents see this as the only way for them to have a better life.
- Finally, social mobility was impacted by all the above factors and is therefore more complex than it appears.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EP PRACTICE

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the educational experiences of academically successful, young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The aim was to outline factors that the participants felt were helpful in facilitating their academic success and factors that they felt were barriers to this. There was also a focus on wider contextual factors and how this impacted on the participants' experiences and constructions of education.

This study has presented a complex picture in relation to the academic success of young people from low SE backgrounds. It has presented research in relation to social class, psychological factors, inequality in education, social mobility, intersectionality and the role of external systems in the form of schools and families. This chapter considers conclusions of the findings in relation to the initial research questions, strengths and limitations of the study and implications for EP/educational practice. The chapter will close with concluding comments in relation to the research.

5.1.1 What are participants' experiences of education throughout their educational journey?

The participants reported mixed experiences at school, which differed between primary and secondary school. The participants described primary school experiences that seemed quite

challenging. The participant accounts provide a sense of schools focusing on ‘the clever’ children and academic outcomes, with less attention paid to social-emotional or non-cognitive factors (Heckman and Kautz, 2013; Geddes, 2018). The participants did not necessarily feel part of this group, which raised questions about how they view themselves as learners. Secondary school appeared to be a better experience for some participants, but this was significantly impacted by relationships, as will be explored in relation to the next research question. This research has shown that even students that are ‘academically successful’ still face significant barriers throughout their education and that their experiences of education are not always necessarily positive.

5.1.2 What factors do participants view as facilitators to academic success and were there any barriers?

In consideration of the above research question, the facilitating factors to success could sometimes also serve as the barriers. Findings from Moullin et al (2014) suggest the overwhelming significance of warm, sensitive, and responsive care from parents. However, I would suggest that this extends beyond parents, carers and families to schools and teachers. The results in the current study showed that relationships were central to the school experiences. This included relationships with peers, teachers, and the curriculum. I think the most significant finding was the importance of connectedness, and the impact that this had on other areas of wellbeing, identity, and engagement. It could be argued that connectedness is the central tenet to the findings of this research. The participants’ accounts suggest that connectedness was both a significant facilitating factor and a barrier to their academic success. Difficulties relating to teachers led to a lack of engagement in education

and the same was found with experiences of bullying or difficulties relating to peers. When peer and teacher relationships were positive, this significantly improved school experience and engagement in education. Further, participants valued activities that were meaningful to them and some participants commented that they sometimes struggled to see the links between school and the future. Therefore, this did not necessarily mean that they valued or connected with school education per se, this was viewed more as a vehicle to improving their social circumstances and they seemed to value personal development/growth more. Stevenson et al (2017) found that in their study involving Muslim young people, the participants expressed a sense of obligation and duty to their parents to be academically successful. The parents in this research were reported to have a strong hard work ethic and resilience and promoted this to their children. The current research echoes this finding and the parents' experience of hardship formed the basis of encouraging the young people to aim high in the form of engaging in education.

The findings of the current research support the argument that students from low SE backgrounds value teachers being caring and offering active support and encouragement (Keane et al, 2018; Lynch and Lodge, 2002). The factors described by the participants show that there is a complex interplay between relationships, school experience and educational engagement. Shain et al (2014) have suggested that multiple factors contribute to improving the educational outcomes for CYP from low SE backgrounds and this was evident in the current study with the interaction of several factors.

Therefore, the prominent facilitators to success appeared to be related to positive relationships, meaningful experiences, resilience, and support from external systems such as parents, teachers, and peers. The barriers for the young people in this study were related to deficits in the dominant construct of capital (Pemberton and Humphris, 2018), cultural expectations of women, perceptions of social class in wider society as experienced by the participants, and difficult experiences at school related to relationships with peers and teachers. It is concerning to see the negative effects that these barriers had on the participants' sense of self and self-confidence. In line with previous research, the intersectionality of class, ethnicity and gender was also very prominent in the findings of this research. A surprising finding was that these findings are closely aligned with research of children with attachment needs, in relation to the focus on relationships, connectedness and the impact of social-emotional factors on educational engagement (Geddes, 2018).

5.1.3 How do participants make sense of their educational experiences in the context of their community and wider society?

The participants in this study were in some ways shaped by their experiences within their communities and wider society but not necessarily in the way that some may think. They all very much had the attitude that a person's social class should not stop them from achieving their potential in life. For some of the participants, living in a deprived area brought with it a sense of community, akin to the 'we are all in this together' attitude in society currently. Some of the participants' accounts suggest that although in their neighbourhoods they see high levels of deprivation and have an awareness of social issues and criminal activities, this motivates them to have high aspirations to improve their social/financial circumstances. This

being said, there was a sense of compassion and understanding from the participants that people do not necessarily choose to be in the situation they are in and as such, should not be judged by society as being less than anyone else.

The discourses in society around class, ethnicity and gender influenced the participants' expectations of potential career prospects. For one participant, narratives around health and safety in relation to her traditional religious dress were used as a form of discrimination and was a barrier to her accessing jobs in retail and other sectors. For the female participants, narratives around gender roles shaped their expectations about what was possible for them to achieve. The young women had high aspirations and wanted to learn (Platt and Pemberton, 2017), however, it was sometimes difficult for them to see how that would be possible in the context of cultural and community gendered roles (Khoudja and Platt, 2017; Stevenson et al, 2017). For all participants, narratives around class and deprived neighbourhoods shaped their experiences in the sense that, their perceptions of societal views of people from their background and/or neighbourhood, shaped their perception of their positioning in society. In turn, this had an impact on their confidence to engage with contexts or sometimes people, that they felt could not relate to their experience e.g. middle-class contexts, courses such as medicine and to some extent people from high SE backgrounds. This highlights how dominant narratives in society around class, ethnicity and gender, can impact a person's life chances and perceptions of opportunities.

5.2 Strengths and Limitations of the current study

The current study was unique in the methodology employed to conduct research in this area. The findings are consistent with several other studies in this area, as outlined in chapter 4. However, a strength of the current study was the focus on multiple factors that can influence the educational attainment and experience of CYP from low SE backgrounds. It was my aim to ensure that the voices of the young people were central to the research and it is hoped that this was captured through the extracts shared in chapter 4. It was not possible to present all the pertinent and powerful quotes from participant interviews, but the most salient extracts were presented. The table in section 3.5 outlines the methods I employed to ensure the quality and rigour of this research. I also followed the stages of analysis outlined in table 7 in section 3.8 to ensure the process of analysis was clear. Like all research, this study was not without its limitations and Box 3 provides an overview of the limitations.

Box 3 Study limitations

- **The recruitment process** – The participants were recruited via schools therefore I was not able to contact participants directly following the study. The impact of the current Covid-19 pandemic led to the closure of schools making it even more difficult to get in contact with the participants via their school to feed back the results. I will attempt to get in contact with the schools when they re-open and the students return.
- **Relationship with the participants** - I did not get to know the participants prior to the interviews. This has a sense of irony given what the participants said about relating to people and all the participants talked about being quite shy. This was particularly the case for Ben because he seemed quite closed in some of his responses, but I felt that this was because I was a stranger. I also feel that it may have felt more comfortable to explore factors such as financial constraints and family life in more depth. If I conducted this research again, I would conduct focus groups in schools with participants from all socioeconomic backgrounds and then select participants that met the study criteria based on the participants I spoke to. I might also conduct the research in a place neutral to home and school so that I presented more of a neutral stance and perhaps this would have provided richer data. Also, I would have had the contact details for the participants and could have given the offer of a follow-up interview.
- **Diversity of participants** – Five out of six participants were from a South Asian background and so it would have been interesting to have recruited participants from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds. Although ethnicity was not part of the inclusion criteria, it has a significant impact on the life experiences of participants, and it would have been interesting to consider the similarities and differences among young people from other ethnic groups.
- **Exploration of factors related to home and family life** - I did not explore sufficiently, factors relate to home life and how parents contributed to educational experiences in the home setting. This was because of being mindful of being a stranger to the participants but also because I had not been given any background information about the participants from the schools and I was therefore not aware of whether there would be something potentially upsetting in that line of questioning. Further, the research questions were centred around school and community and not specifically around parents. Consequently, I explored factors that came up naturally in conversation. I would say that may have meant that I missed out on some key information about the role of parents. It would be helpful for future research to incorporate an exploration of life at home and to consider how this interacts with and is related to other factors.
- **The findings are not generalisation and are based on the researcher interpretations** – the nature of IPA research is that it is qualitative, and the epistemological underpinnings are interpretative. This means that the results cannot be generalised to represent all CYP for low SE backgrounds. However, the findings can produce implications for further research and suggest considerations of current practice.
- **My role as the researcher** – I have reflected on my role as the researcher in section 3.7 and how this in turn my have influenced the research. I was open with the participants about my social background and I did wonder how this may have affected their responses in the interviews. For example, whether this fed into the 'us and them' narrative that seemed present in some interviews. However, given what they have said about connectedness and being able to relate to people, I think in this case the self-disclosure was positive.

5.3 Implications for EP and educational practice

The current research explored the educational experiences of ‘academically successful’ young people from low SE backgrounds. Although the findings of this research are not generalisable, they may provide some implications for practice. The table below shows some implications for EP and wider educational practice.

Table 9 Implications for educational and EP practice

Training for teachers There is an implication for teacher training to include information pertaining to the impact of SES on education, not only what is widely known, but how we must consider it when working with CYP. This suggestion is in line with previous research conducted by Narayanan's (2015) study involving adolescents with low SES in India and was also a suggestion from research conducted by Stephens et al (2014).

<i>The use of systemic approaches in EP practice.</i>	Using systemic approaches with schools that consider contextual factors and the impact on CYP. There could perhaps be further training in this approach in EP training, disentangling systems-level working and systemic practice (Pelligrini, 2009; Fox, 2009).
<i>Changes to assessment</i>	Consideration of how SES may impact results when conducting standardised assessments (see Olszewski-Kubilius and Corwith, 2018). It may be helpful to consider the use of dynamic assessment and assessment through teaching, alongside these assessments as a more meaningful measure of academic skills. There is extensive research outlining the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children. Measuring children with low SES against their high SE peers may serve to further disadvantage them and provide an inaccurate reflection of their cognitive/academic skills. It may be more helpful to identify skills and measure progress in ways that mediate against disadvantage.
<i>Supporting the link between childhood and adulthood</i>	<p>Crenna-Jennings (2018, p.16) suggest that "there is good evidence of what works to enhance the life chances of disadvantaged children. An effective strategy would entail a holistic life-course approach, involving sustained, multi-sectoral investment and joined-up working to support families from conception onwards, combined with a highly trained and stable workforce capable of addressing individual pupils' barriers to learning, and equal access to educational opportunities across all schools". Use of a framework such as the preparation for adulthood framework (SEND Code of Practice, 2015) across the school and not just for those with SEN may help to make education meaningful.</p> <p>Stephens et al (2014) suggest that widening the institutional norms would mediate the effects of the disadvantage of children from low SE backgrounds and that research in social psychology has suggested that this would promote a more inclusive environment. This relates to the arguments of Francis et al (2017) in developing a curriculum that is meaningful to CYP.</p>

<i>Supporting schools to make changes to the behaviour policy to reflect the importance of relationships</i>	Relationships and being able to relate were significant factors in this research. Therefore, a more relational approach to behaviour management (e.g. using strategies such as emotion coaching) and school ethos may support CYP with educational engagement. The educational psychology service where I am currently on placement has started to advocate this approach as part of their trauma informed, attachment aware schools initiative. As stated, there are some clear parallels in this research to the strategies and approaches that are helpful for children with attachment needs. Geddes (2018) argues that teaching staff should engage in training around attachment to further understand behaviours that CYP may present within the classroom. In turn, she argues that this may change their response to the behaviour.
<i>Use of the PERMA model of flourishing</i>	Seligman (2011) introduced a model of psychological wellbeing known as the PERMA model of flourishing. The model consists of five domains: positive emotions (P), engagement (E), relationships (R), Meaning (M) and accomplishment (A). Kern et al (2015) demonstrate how the PERMA model could be used to shape support for students based on developmental needs e.g. in year 7 the focus might be on building positive relationships whereas in later years there may be more of a focus on meaning and accomplishment. This model almost maps onto the themes in the current study that served as the facilitating factors. I wondered whether this might have some merit in considering how such a model could be utilised in the school curriculum.
<i>Training for schools around emotional literacy and wellbeing</i>	Research has highlighted the importance of having mentors that connect with the young person and their family (Bryan, 2005 as cited in Agasisti et al, 2018). It might be helpful for EPs to provide training to mentors in specific therapeutic models/ways of working. There would need to be consideration of contextual factors and the need to change the approach based on these. EP services in England are already offering Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) training to schools and education settings. This type of resource could be invaluable to CYP and their educational outcomes. It might be helpful, particularly for schools that lack resources, that these training programs are free. These schools usually have a higher proportion of CYP from disadvantaged backgrounds so it would ensure that this population are not disadvantaged further due to the school's lack of resources.
<i>Work with parents</i>	The findings suggest an argument for the role of schools in empowering parents and developing their confidence to guide their child (Carter-Wall and Whitfield, 2012). Some parents have limited experience of the education system and therefore work with families around options might be helpful. Bi (2020) suggested several strategies that could be employed to support the career development of Muslim women including offering careers events for young women and their families, targeted/specific supporting the form of mentoring and engaging families of students, providing information around the diverse career opportunities. These strategies also seem relevant to the wider population of young people.

5.4 Concluding Comments

This small-scale study has provided a unique contribution to research in this area by considering the facilitators, as well as the barriers to the academic success of young people from low SE backgrounds. This is an area that has been widely researched in relation to single factors, for example, parental involvement, but the current study has considered the interaction of several factors that influence academic success. There is also limited research in this area in the field of educational psychology.

In conclusion, I have argued all the way through this thesis that there is not just one singular factor that can explain the educational outcomes for children from low SE backgrounds. As the findings of this small-scale research show, there were several themes that were related and overlapped. Young et al (2019) argue that education itself is not a standalone system and that there are always other factors that interact with just this system alone. When considering the current research from a systemic perspective, there were clear relationships and interactions between within-person factors, familial factors, class narratives in society, cultural narratives, and relationships. Therefore, as EPs, there is an argument for us to consider this in our approach to practice and work systemically, considering the interaction of the factors that influence a child's life.

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APPENDICES

A1 APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW

<p style="text-align: center;">UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW</p>

Who should use this form:

This form is to be completed by PIs or supervisors (for PGR student research) who have completed the University of Birmingham's Ethical Review of Research Self Assessment Form (SAF) and have decided that further ethical review and approval is required before the commencement of a given Research Project.

Please be aware that all new research projects undertaken by postgraduate research (PGR) students first registered as from 1st September 2008 will be subject to the University's Ethical Review Process. PGR students first registered before 1st September 2008 should refer to their Department/School/College for further advice.

Researchers in the following categories are to use this form:

The project is to be conducted by:

staff of the University of Birmingham; or

postgraduate research (PGR) students enrolled at the University of Birmingham (to be completed by the student's supervisor);

The project is to be conducted at the University of Birmingham by visiting researchers.

Students undertaking undergraduate projects and taught postgraduate (PGT) students should refer to their Department/School for advice.

NOTES:

An electronic version of the completed form should be submitted to the Research Ethics Officer, at the following email address: aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. Please **do not** submit paper copies.

If, in any section, you find that you have insufficient space, or you wish to supply additional material not specifically requested by the form, please put it in a separate file, clearly marked and attached to the submission email.

If you have any queries about the form, please address them to the [Research Ethics Team](#).



Before submitting, please tick this box to confirm that you have consulted and understood the following information and guidance and that you have taken it into account when completing your application:

The information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages
(<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-of-Research.aspx>)

The University's Code of Practice for Research
(http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf)

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW	<i>OFFICE USE ONLY:</i>
	Application No:
	Date Received:

TITLE OF PROJECT

Challenging the dominant discourse about urban youth: Experiences of young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds in further education.

THIS PROJECT IS:

University of Birmingham Staff Research project ☐

University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project ☒

Other ☐ (Please specify):

INVESTIGATORS

PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS OR SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family name	Dr Colette Soan
Highest qualification & position held:	EdPsyD, Academic and Professional Tutor
School/Department	School of Education
Telephone:	

Name: Title / first name / family name	
Highest qualification & position held:	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF ANY CO-INVESTIGATORS OR CO-SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family name	
Highest qualification & position held:	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

In the case of PGR student projects, please give details of the student

Name of	Rachael Mulcare	Student No:	██████
Course of	Applied Educational	Email	████████████████████
Principal	Dr Colette Soan		

Name of student:		Student No:	
Course of study:		Email address:	
Principal			

ESTIMATED START OF PROJECT

Date:

May 2019

ESTIMATED END OF

Date:

September 2019

PROJECT

FUNDING

List the funding sources (including internal sources) and give the status of each source.

<i>Funding Body</i>	<i>Approved/Pending /To be submitted</i>
N/A	

If you are requesting a quick turnaround on your application, please explain the reasons below (including funding-related deadlines). You should be aware that whilst effort will be made in cases of genuine urgency, it will not always be possible for the Ethics Committees to meet such requests.

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SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Describe the purpose, background rationale for the proposed project, as well as the hypotheses/research questions to be examined and expected outcomes. This description should be in everyday language that is free from jargon. Please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases.

Background Research

There is substantial evidence outlining the poor outcomes of children and young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds and those who live in deprived areas. O'Donoghue et al (2016) argue that social exclusion and social disadvantage are associated with an increased risk of mental health difficulties. Evidence suggests that children and young people who experience poverty have poor outcomes in the future (Raver et al, 2015). Further, one researcher suggested that children and young people from inner-city areas tend to underachieve academically (Gordan, 1996). As well as the risk factors and impact of poverty, children and young people that live in the inner-city may be exposed to other neighbourhood stressors which have been related to increased rates of internalising and externalising behaviour in youths (Li et al, 2007). As educational psychologists, it is important that we are aware of the potential impact that social factors may have on children and young people and how this affects their aspirations and educational attainment.

Rationale

Despite the large body of research outlining the significant risk of poor outcomes for children and young people from low SES backgrounds, Brown et al (2013) have found evidence of successful outcomes for children from poorer backgrounds. Other research has suggested that by looking at the resilience of these children and their families, a great deal can be learned (Boyd-Franklin, 2012; Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000). The aim of my research project is to explore the experiences of young people who have managed to achieve academically in the face of adversity, to provide insight into factors that may have supported this.

Sammons et al (2018) suggest that little research has explored the educational attainment and journey of children using a longitudinal design. Although this research is not a longitudinal design, it will explore the retrospective experiences of young people in further education who are classified as having low socioeconomic status, living in an inner-city area. Research has shown that young people who live in deprived areas are three times less likely to apply to higher education (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013). The age group in this research was chosen because they have progressed through primary and secondary education and will be at the point of either applying to higher education or will be progressing into the employment sector. The experiences of the young people in this study may provide insights into the potential drivers and challenges of young people from low SES backgrounds progressing into higher education and their aspirations for future careers. Although the results of this research will not be generalisable as the sample size will be small, it will hopefully provide rich experiential data that may raise implications for practice locally and perhaps raise questions for future research in this area.

Explanations/theories from the literature

Anderson et al (2017) suggest that parent-child relationships that are positive and have lower levels of conflict can predict more desirable school readiness. They suggest that as poverty cannot be eradicated, it would be helpful to support families with the stressors associated with poverty with a particular focus on protective factors. Further, research has suggested that positive relationships between school and parents is significant and influential (Watkins and Howard, 2017; Dimmler, 2009; Hardy, 1995; Ingram et al, 2007; Robson et al, 1998).

Olzewski-Kubilius and Corwith (2018) reviewed the literature of the effects of poverty on academic achievement. They concluded that early intervention and support throughout the schooling of children from low-income backgrounds seems to increase opportunities to learn which improves outcomes. They also suggest that research that would provide insight into what the students felt supported their educational journey, would be helpful. This supports the rationale for the current study.

Other studies have outlined the idea of different forms of resilience including family resilience (Jarretand Coba-Roderiguez, 2017) and academic resilience (Watkins and Howard, 2015), as an explanation for why young people from low income backgrounds are able to succeed in education. Research conducted by Hampton (2016) introduced the idea of successful learner characteristics (SLCs) in urban students. He suggests that these characteristics can be taught and should be part of the school pedagogy. Hampton's research also aligns itself with the concept of resilience.

Project aim

My research will focus on the experiences of "urban" young people who are high achieving and classified as having low socio-economic status. Operationalising the terms used in this research is fundamental to ensure robust research methodology and interpretation of findings. Therefore, this research will follow the definitions outlined in a study conducted by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (Crawford et al, 2014). Crawford et al (2014) suggest using a range of measures including eligibility for free school meals, indices of deprivation score to measure socioeconomic status. According to ONS (2011), the definition of low-economic status relates to a person's household income, education and occupation. It will be important to check with the schools/sixth forms involved in the project how they measure socio-economic status and disadvantage. High achieving for the purposes of this research will refer to high academic attainment. This will follow the benchmark of five or more A*–C grades in EBacc subjects as outlined by Crawford et al (2014).

By conducting this research, I hope to provide insight into some of the facilitating factors for academic success that the young people identify. Research conducted by Archer et al (2010) outlines the complexities of racial and social identities of urban young people and also explores some of the challenges faced by young people in urban schools. Further research describes the negative discourse often surrounding urban schools and the impact that this can have on the children and young people who attend these schools (Reay, 2004; Reay and Lucey, 2000a). The potential participants will live and go to school in an inner-city area, so it would be interesting to explore the constraints and positive aspects relating to the neighbourhood they live in and how connected they feel to their community. This may shed some light on their sense of identity and how they identify with others in the community. Perceptions of education and educational success would also be helpful to explore. Therefore, I would hope to address the following research questions:

What are the lived experiences of young people through their educational journey?

What factors supported academic development/attainment and were there any barriers?

How do young people feel that education and academic success is perceived in the wider community?

What can educational psychologists learn from factors that promote academic success for children and young people from low SES backgrounds and how can this be applied to practice?

CONDUCT OF PROJECT

Please give a description of the research methodology that will be used

Stage 1

The first stage of the research will be contacting sixth forms and colleges in the authority that I am placed in to have a conversation with sixth form or college managers about the project. I would aim to discuss the project with them in person or if that is not possible over the phone. I would like to discuss the way that they collect data on socioeconomic status and academic results. This would help us to identify potential students to approach. It would be helpful to discuss potential ways to recruit participants and the best way to do this. I will arrange with the college/sixth form for a poster to be displayed around the college and also sent out to all students encouraging them to get in touch if they are interested in participating.

Stage 2

Conduct a pilot interview to ensure that the questions and data collection method is fit for purpose. Use participant feedback to make any changes required.

Stage 3

This research aims to explore the educational experiences of 4- 6 urban students from low SES backgrounds in year 12 and 13. I am interested in the lived experiences of young people in further education and how they came to overcome the barriers of social disadvantage. Although Foucauldian discourse analysis may have been appropriate due to the socio-political undertones of the research and the power imbalances in society, for the purposes of this research I am more interested in the understanding the views of the young people and how they make sense of their experiences. I intend to gather rich, in depth information from participants and have no intention of attempting to generalise data. Therefore, the use of a semi-structured interview, employing the use of an education journey timeline as used in Sultana (2014), would be an appropriate method of data collection. I intend to audio record my interviews as well as keeping handwritten notes and transcribe the data verbatim. To analyse the data I intend to use Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1996) as this approach is concerned with understanding the experiences of a particular sample of participants (Thomas, 2009).

DOES THE PROJECT INVOLVE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE OTHER THAN THE RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Note: 'Participation' includes both active participation (such as when participants take part in an interview) and cases where participants take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (for example, in crowd behaviour research).

If you have answered NO please go to Section 18. If you have answered YES to this question please complete all the following sections.

PARTICIPANTS AS THE SUBJECTS OF THE RESEARCH

Describe the number of participants and important characteristics (such as age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc.). Specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.

The research aims to recruit 4 - 6 year 12 or 13 students in further education establishments in an urban area. The recruitment will include both males and females and hopes to have some ethnic diversity. The young people must have achieved 5 A* - C at GCSE, live in a deprived area of the city, be classified as being from low SES backgrounds as measured by the sixth form/college's demographic data and the criteria outlined on the recruitment poster. All participants will be over the age of 16 and in full-time education.

RECRUITMENT

Please state clearly how the participants will be identified, approached and recruited. Include any relationship between the investigator(s) and participant(s) (e.g. instructor-student).

Note: Attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.

I will be using a purposive sample based on the participant criteria outlined above. My first step will be to contact the college/sixth form manager to discuss my research. I will create a recruitment poster for participants that will be emailed round to all students by the college or sixth form and also displayed around the school/college. Students will be encouraged to get in touch if they meet two or more of the criteria outlined on the poster. If students express an interest in participating in the project, an information letter/consent form outlining details of the research, rationale and data collection will be sent to them. The letter (outlined in Appendix 2) will broadly outline what will be asked in the interview, the participant's right to withdraw and the timeframe for this and what will happen with the participants' data. A copy of the information letter and interview schedule can be found in the appendices. The letter will ask participants to get in touch if they are still interested in participating in the study.

CONSENT

a) Describe the process that the investigator(s) will be using to obtain valid consent. If consent is not to be obtained explain why. If the participants are minors or for other reasons are not competent to consent, describe the proposed alternate source of consent, including any permission / information letter to be provided to the person(s) providing the consent.

If participants express an interest in participating in the research, written consent (outlined in Appendix 2) will be obtained. For participants who are under 18, I will discuss with them whether they would like the information letter to be shared with their parents.

Note: Attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (if applicable), the Consent Form (if applicable), the content of any telephone script (if applicable) and any other material that will be used in the consent process.

b) Will the participants be deceived in any way about the purpose of the study? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Include how and when the deception will be revealed, and who will administer this feedback.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Explain what feedback/ information will be provided to the participants after participation in the research. (For example, a more complete description of the purpose of the research, or access to the results of the research).

Following analysis of the data, participants will be contacted to check that my interpretation of the information is accurate. Following completion of the project participants will receive a short report thanking them for their participants and explaining the findings of the research.

PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project.

The participants will be informed of their right to withdraw in the information letter prior to participating in the research. They will also be reminded of their right to withdraw prior to the interview commencing. They will be informed about the timescale for them to do this and how to get in contact with the researcher. Participants will be advised that the timescale will be within one week of their interview being completed.

b) Explain any consequences for the participant of withdrawing from the study and indicate what will be done with the participant's data if they withdraw.

If participants choose to withdraw from the research, their information will be removed from the project and destroyed. They are free to withdraw their information up until the point of analysis, which will be explained to them during the interview process and in the information letter. The consequences of participants withdrawing may be that I need to recruit further participants to ensure an appropriate sample size.

COMPENSATION

Will participants receive compensation for participation?

i) Financial

Yes ☐ No ☒

ii) Non-financial

Yes ☐ No ☒

If **Yes** to **either** i) or ii) above, please provide details.

--

If participants choose to withdraw, how will you deal with compensation?

--

CONFIDENTIALITY

a) Will all participants be anonymous?

Yes ☐ No



b) Will all data be treated as confidential?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Note: Participants' identity/data will be confidential if an assigned ID code or number is used, but it will not be anonymous. Anonymous data cannot be traced back to an individual participant.

Describe the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and/or confidentiality of data both during the conduct of the research and in the release of its findings.

Pseudonyms for the participants and the educational establishment will be used to ensure that the participants data remains confidential. The name of the local authority and location of the research will also be kept confidential.

The interview process will be carried out in a place that allows for information to be collected confidentially and allows privacy for the participant. It will be within the school but in a place where the interview cannot be overheard. It will be made clear that the room is occupied and that a private meeting is taking place.

All transcripts, analysis and reporting will be confidential; naming and storing of data will be done using the participant codes. Participants will be informed that their responses will be recorded within the research paper and the potential of the research being published in an academic journal.

If participant anonymity or confidentiality is not appropriate to this research project, explain, providing details of how all participants will be advised of the fact that data will not be anonymous or confidential.

Due to the process of recruitment and the fact that the research will be conducted using face-to-face interviews, it is not possible for participants to be anonymous. However, their information will be kept confidential. The only exception to this would be if participants disclosed anything during the interview that suggested that they were going to harm themselves or someone else. In this instance the information would be shared with the designated safeguarding lead.

STORAGE, ACCESS AND DISPOSAL OF DATA

Describe what research data will be stored, where, for what period of time, the measures that will be put in place to ensure security of the data, who will have access to the data, and the method and timing of disposal of the data.

The interviews will be recorded on a University of Birmingham recording device. The files will be saved securely onto a University of Birmingham and then delete from the device. The files will be saved without using the participant's information and will be coded accordingly. All data will be stored securely in a place that can only be accessed by the researcher.

The recording will be deleted from the audio recorder. Upon completion, the files will be stored in line with the University of Birmingham ethical guidelines for the data will be preserved and accessible for 10 years. All electronic files will be stored on a password protected memory stick, so that the researcher, supervisors and any university examiners may have access to it. All paper files, such as interview notes, will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. After the 10 years, all electronic files will be erased, and removed from any back-up

OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED? e.g. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks or NHS R&D approvals.



YES



NO



NOT APPLICABLE

If yes, please specify.

A DBS check is required to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This was completed by the University of Birmingham upon entry to the doctoral programme. Copies of this are available to the school and local authority upon request.

SIGNIFICANCE/BENEFITS

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research

I hope for this research to provide insights into the experiences of young people from low SES backgrounds living in an inner-city area. As educational psychologists, we work with education providers and strive to promote inclusion and fair access to education. Although this is a small-scale research project, it might provide information about factors that can support young people's journey through the education system or provide other ideas about ways EPs can work to support families, schools and children/young people. The main benefit of this research is that it adds to the current body of research in this area which outlines the successes of students despite their social circumstances and challenges. I think this is important to highlight especially given the negative discourse that often surrounds people from this social group.

RISKS

a) Outline any potential risks to **INDIVIDUALS**, including research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap

The information discussed in the interview may be sensitive as I will be asking about the participants family, neighbourhood and journey through education. There may be some potentially upsetting events that I may not be aware of. The participants will be informed of the types of questions I will be asking prior to the interview. Following the interview, I will have a debrief with the participant giving them the opportunity to ask any questions. Prior to the interview I will also familiarise myself with the support services within the school/sixth form and the safeguarding procedures.

b) Outline any potential risks to **THE ENVIRONMENT and/or SOCIETY** and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap.

I do not foresee any risk to the environment or society.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please specify

EXPERT REVIEWER/OPINION

You may be asked to nominate an expert reviewer for certain types of project, including those of an interventional nature or those involving significant risks. If you anticipate that this may apply to your work and you would like to nominate an expert reviewer at this stage, please provide details below.

Name
Contact details (including email address)
Brief explanation of reasons for nominating and/or nominee's suitability

CHECKLIST

Please mark if the study involves any of the following:

Vulnerable groups, such as children and young people aged under 18 years, those with learning disability, or cognitive impairments ☒

Research that induces or results in or causes anxiety, stress, pain or physical discomfort, or poses a risk of harm to participants (which is more than is expected from everyday life) ☐

Risk to the personal safety of the researcher ☐

Deception or research that is conducted without full and informed consent of the participants at time study is carried out ☐

Administration of a chemical agent or vaccines or other substances (including vitamins or food substances) to human participants. ☐

Production and/or use of genetically modified plants or microbes ☐

Results that may have an adverse impact on the environment or food safety ☐

Results that may be used to develop chemical or biological weapons ☐

Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

	ATTACHED	NOT APPLICABLE
Recruitment advertisement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant information sheet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consent form	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interview Schedule	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

DECLARATION BY APPLICANTS

I submit this application on the basis that the information it contains is confidential and will be used by the

University of Birmingham for the purposes of ethical review and monitoring of the research project described

herein, and to satisfy reporting requirements to regulatory bodies. The information will not be used for any

other purpose without my prior consent.

I declare that:

The information in this form together with any accompanying information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.

I undertake to abide by University Code of Practice for Research (http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf) alongside any other relevant professional bodies' codes of conduct and/or ethical guidelines.

I will report any changes affecting the ethical aspects of the project to the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.

I will report any adverse or unforeseen events which occur to the relevant Ethics Committee via the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.

Name of principal investigator/project supervisor:

Dr Colette Soan

Date:

29/12/2018

Please now save your completed form, print a copy for your records, and then email a copy to the Research Ethics Officer, at aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. As noted above, please do not submit a paper copy.

A2 EMAIL TO SCHOOL

Dear X

I am a Year 2 educational psychology trainee from the University of Birmingham, currently on placement in the Educational Psychology Service. As part of my doctoral training, I am required to complete a research project in an area that I am interested in.

I am interested in the experiences of high achieving young people from less privileged backgrounds living in [city]. As a person from this background myself, I would like to hear the experiences of current young people and understand factors that help promote academic success. There has been lots in the media recently about gang violence and knife crime in urban areas and in my opinion not enough focus on young people's successes. I think it is important to highlight positive discourses about young people living in inner-city areas and to hear from young people themselves.

The research will involve me speaking to the young people and asking them a series of questions about their experience of education, factors that they feel have facilitated success and any barriers they may have encountered. I will also ask questions about their family and their neighbourhood. I am interested in the aspirations of the young people and factors that influenced their decision to either continue into higher education or into the labour market. The participant's name and any identifiable information will be kept confidential and during the write up of the research I will use pseudonyms to ensure that the participant or the school is not identifiable.

The criteria for this research are that the young people have achieved 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE, are in year 12 or 13, live in an urban area and are from a low socioeconomic (Low SES) background. I would be interested to talk to you about how SES is measured in your school so that I can ensure that I am targeting the right group of young people.

If you think that you may have any young people that would be interested in taking part in this research, then please reply to this email and let me know a time that would be convenient for me to contact you via phone.

Yours sincerely

Ms Rachael Mulcare

Supervised by

Dr Colette Soan

Email: C.A.Soan@bham.ac.uk



HAVE YOUR SAY!!

Hello, my name is Rachael Mulcare and I am a Year 2 educational psychology trainee from the University of Birmingham, currently on placement in the Educational Psychology Service. As part of my doctoral training, I am required to complete a research project in an area that I am interested in.

I am interested in the experiences of high achieving young people from less privileged backgrounds living in [city]. As a person from this background myself, I would like to hear the experiences of current young people and understand factors that help promote academic success. If you meet 3 or more of the following, then we would love to hear from you:

- ✓ **Achieved 5 A* - C grades at GCSE (this criterion must be met).**
- ✓ You are eligible for free school meals.
- ✓ You live in an urban area.
- ✓ You are the first person in your immediate family to go to university.
- ✓ You attend or attended a school in an urban area.

If you would like to find out more about the project please contact me on RSM791@student.bham.ac.uk



A4 INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Information sheet and consent form

I am a Year 2 educational psychology trainee from the University of Birmingham, currently on placement in the Educational Psychology Service. As part of my doctoral training, I am required to complete a research project in an area that I am interested in.

Why are you being asked to participate in this research?

I am interested in the experiences of high achieving young people from less privileged backgrounds living in [city] As a person from this background myself, I would like to hear the experiences of current young people and understand factors that help promote academic success. There has been a lot in the media recently about gang violence and knife crime in urban areas and in my opinion not enough focus on young people's successes. I think it is important to highlight positive discourses about young people living in urban areas and to hear from young people themselves. This research would help us to understand the views of young people who live in urban areas, their experiences of the education system and factors that have supported their academic success. We hope that this would help us to understand factors that facilitate academic success but also challenges for children and young people so that we are able to raise awareness of these factors with schools and colleges.

What does taking part in the research involve?

I am interested in finding out about you, your aspirations when you leave sixth form and your experiences of education up to this point. This will involve having a conversation (up to about 45 minutes) with me where I will be asking questions about factors throughout your education that you think have been helpful, things you may have seen as barriers and any ideas you may have about how education professionals could support young people through their educational journey. I will ask some questions about your family and about the neighbourhood that you live in. These questions are not intended to be intrusive but are to find out more about you and your experiences. If any of the questions I ask makes you feel upset or uncomfortable then you do not have to answer them. We can stop the conversation at any point and seek the support of an adult you trust to talk things through.

I am hoping to speak to 4 – 6 young people around the city about their experiences. The conversation will take place at your sixth form in a private area or a place that is convenient for you.

What will you do with my information?

All of your personal information will be kept confidential and when writing up the interview data your name and the name of your sixth form will be kept anonymous. In order to ensure I obtain accurate information from our conversation, I would like to audio- record the conversation and transcribe this verbatim. I will ensure that all research data is treated with great care to safeguard participant confidentiality and data security, in line with the University of Birmingham General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance. The audio recording of the interview will be appropriately destroyed once transcription is completed. The interview will be recorded on a University of Birmingham device and will not be saved on my personal devices.

The information from the interviews will be written up into a report which will be shared with you upon completion.

The only instance where confidentiality would be broken is if during the conversation you say something that suggests you want to harm yourself, harm someone else or that someone else has harmed you. In this instance I would have to share the information with the designated safeguarding lead at your school or college.

Can I withdraw from the project if I decide I do not want to take part?

If you agree to participate in this project you have the right to withdraw at any time by contacting me or the service to let them know. You can also ask for your interview to be deleted and not used in the data analysis. However, once the data analysis process has begun, it would be difficult to delete data from your interview, since the analysis process will involve combining findings from a number of interviews. If you did want your interview data to be deleted therefore, you'd need to give notice of this within one week of your interview being completed. You can do this by contacting the interviewer (Rachael Mulcare; RSM791@student.bham.ac.uk or Colette Soan; C.A.Soan@bham.ac.uk).

What will happen with my information?

Educational psychologists are encouraged to share their practice and research with other colleagues in order to improve knowledge and practice in the field. One way of doing this is via publication in an academic journal. Following the completion of my project, I may write a report for publication in an academic journal. As stated previously, school information and any information about you will be kept anonymous and confidential, to ensure that neither the school nor individuals who contribute to this study are identifiable.

Your participation in this project would be greatly appreciated and will provide useful information regarding the experiences of young people from less privileged backgrounds and may help us to understand how to support more young people with their education and career aspirations in the future.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding the project, I would be happy to answer any queries you may have.

Best wishes

Rachael Mulcare

Supervised by

Dr Colette Soan

Email: C.A.Soan@bham.ac.uk

Please tick the boxes and sign the consent form below to agree to take part in this project:

- I agree for my information to be used in this project, subject to deletion of all identifiers, to safeguard school and participant confidentiality ☐
- I agree for the interview to be audio-recorded and transcribed ☐
- I agree that the information from the project may be used for publication in a journal ☐
- I understand I have the right to withdraw data I have contributed and for my interview data to be deleted, provided this request is made within 48 hours of the interview ☐
- I understand that I can contact the researcher with any questions I have ☐
- I agree to quotes or extracts from my interview being used in the write up of this project and understand that the quotes or extracts will be anonymised. ☐

Name:

Signed:

Date:



Interview Schedule

Research Questions:

- What are the lived experiences of young people through their educational journey?
- What factors supported academic development/attainment and were there any barriers?
- How do young people feel that education and academic success is perceived in the wider community?

Introduction:

Hello, my name is Rachael. Thank you so much for agreeing to have a conversation with me today. So, I am interested in the educational experiences of high achieving young people from less privileged backgrounds who live in urban areas that are classified as deprived. This is what the government refers to as having low socioeconomic status. There are two reasons I am interested in this topic. The first reason is because there is lots of research and information in the media that outline the challenges and difficulties of young people from this background but there is only a small body of research that outlines the positive outcomes as well. I am interested in understanding more about the positive outcomes and successes of young people that fit this description. The second reason I am interested in this research is because I am from a similar background myself and would like to understand the experiences of current young people. You were selected as suitable for this study as you meet the above criteria. Do you feel that these factors describe your background? Do you have any questions about any of that before we start?

Plan for Interview:

Ok so I am going to give you a breakdown of the areas I would like to cover in our conversation today. We may not stick to a particular order as it depends where the conversation leads us but broadly I would like to know about:

- You: Your family, neighbourhood, aspirations and hopes for the future, personality and interests.
- Your education: pre-school (if applicable), primary school, secondary school and sixth form. At each stage we will talk about your experiences, your friends, parental input, supports and challenges.
- Perceptions of education: yours, your family, your neighbourhood/community.

The interview will be audio recorded on my Birmingham University device so that I have an accurate record of our conversation. Is that still ok? The interview should take up to 45 minutes but we may finish sooner depending on where our conversation leads us.

I would like to begin by getting to know a bit more about you if that's ok?

Issue/Topic	Possible questions	Possible follow-up questions	Probe
Personal information about participant	<p>How long have you lived in Birmingham?</p> <p>Who do you live at home with?</p> <p>What are your hobbies and interests?</p> <p>How would you describe yourself?</p> <p>What are your plans/aspirations when you leave sixth form?</p>	<p>What area do you live in now? What do you think of it? What do others say?</p> <p>How do you get along with them?</p> <p>When you aren't in school what do you like to do? Do you like any particular type of music/films/books?</p> <p>What would you say are your best qualities? How does this relate to you being successful with your studies?</p> <p>Will you continue into higher education? What influenced that decision? How are you feeling about this?</p>	Can you tell me more about that?
<p>Education</p> <p>I would like to know about your experiences throughout education. How far back can you remember? Nursery? Primary? Ok so what we are going to do is use this timeline to map out your journey</p>	<p>Ok so at each stage we will discuss the following questions:</p> <p>What was your experience of primary/secondary/sixth form?</p>	<p>Who did you hang around with?</p> <p>How did you get on with the teaching staff? Did you have any that you had a particularly close</p>	Can you tell me more about that?

and have a discussion about the questions on the sheet at each stage. Does that make sense?		relationship with? How did you find the work? What do you think helped you? Was there anything you found difficult or you felt was a barrier? How did you choose your subjects? (Secondary/sixth form) Did your parent(s) have much involvement with the school? What was this?	
Perceptions	<p>What do you think about education?</p> <p>What do your parent(s) think of education?</p> <p>This may be a tricky question but how do you think education is viewed in your neighbourhood?</p>	<p>Where did this thinking come from? Have you always enjoyed school?</p> <p>How do you know this? What do they say?</p> <p>Do you know anyone who has gone to university?</p>	
Ideas for support	Do you have any ideas or comments about how schools or professionals could support more young people to access education?	Do you know anyone who has had difficulties at school? Why do you think this is? How would you help them?	
Do you have any questions?			

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me today, I really appreciate it. If you think of anything you would like to know, please feel free to email me. As we discussed, you have the right to withdraw at any time up until the audio recording is transcribed. It was lovely talking to you and I will

be in touch again once I have completed the analysis to feedback to you. It is up to you how we do this. I can come and meet you again or we can catch up on the phone.

A6 AIMEE INTERVIEW EXTRACT OF STAGE 1 – 3 OF ANALYSIS

Emerging Themes (3)		Original Transcript (1 highlight interesting comments)	Exploratory comments (2)
	R	So firstly, low socioeconomic status is the term used by the government to describe education, household income and things like that, what are your thoughts about being described in that way?	
Low SES is a spectrum Not identifying with low SES label Family resilience Living within your means Making the best of what you have Parents not from the UK Parents experiences of financial hardship Parents EAL Awareness that she is in a better position than others Empathy	A	<p>I feel like it, it hasn't like personally like affected me. I wouldn't like see myself as that like growing up I'd probably say like errm for me personally, for me personally growing up we didn't like, like I might fit the criteria but we didn't like, it wasn't like oh we didn't have enough like food on the table. Like it wouldn't be...like of course we wouldn't be able to afford like a Lamborghini or something but we weren't like, we didn't like struggle with food, I dunno like, like, car bills and stuff like that or nothing that I was made aware of cause obviously like, a parent wouldn't like tell their kids I'm struggling with so and so but I do know that like my parents did used to struggle when they first came over. Like my mom was like, so like when she first came over my dad would be at work, I think some days my mom would work, some days she wouldn't and errm she was like in the dark. They didn't have money for electricity at the start when they first came so she was like, she would just like clean in the dark. And that kinda like, it was like, it kinda hit me. She was like sometimes we didn't have enough like food to eat so then like the neighbours, if they had any spare food then like then they would sort of like help. Like it hasn't really hit me but when she says stuff like that your sort of see like the hardships. Like errm I feel like I'm a lot luckier than a lot of people. Like we are way more privileged than like some people have. Like I spoke to errm like, I have a friend, obviously I won't say her name or anything, she was like up until recently her, her errm, 3 sisters and her parents would sleep in the same room. She's my age and they have to like put a little curtain like in between and she was like literally it's the same room, for so many years of her life and its just like she's never complained about it. Like I've never heard her complain or be like aaaw she sort of just takes it as it is kind of thing.</p>	<p>Personally affected me</p> <p>I wouldn't see myself like that</p> <p>Might fit the criteria –</p> <p>Did parents struggle but children were protected from this?</p> <p>Sense that parents managed financially with what they had – family resilience</p> <p>Lamborghini – obviously not rich but not poor either – living within your means</p> <p>Came over – parents not born in UK</p> <p>Used to struggle – difficult time when newly arrived but now more established don't struggle?</p> <p>Mum worked sometimes and sometimes she didn't – causal work. Trying to get by and make “ends meet”?</p>

			<p>Mum in the dark – get a sense of mum not only being in the dark literally, but being in the dark because she is in a new country with new customs. She doesn't speak English and has little experience of the western society. I wonder how they were treated when they came?</p> <p>Significant financial hardship/poverty</p> <p>A reflecting on how hard it was for her parents.</p> <p>Hit me – she had a sort of epiphany that actually she it was not as bad for her –</p> <p>resonated with me. Parents situation puts your own into perspective.</p> <p>We are a lot luckier than some people – there is a recognition that although they may be classes as low SES there are others who are much worse off.</p> <p>She reflects that she is more privileged than some people.</p> <p>This prompts her to reflect on the situation of a peer who experiences significant financial hardship. Also a sense that</p>
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			people make the best of what they have – resilience. They have an appreciation for people who are in more difficult positions - empathy
	R	It does put things into perspective a little bit. Ok, I was just interested because I really struggled with the terminology for the project.	
Societal perceptions of people from low SES backgrounds Spectrum of low SES	A	Yeah cos its's not like we are on benefit street sort of like, we're all put in that category but it's like a really broad category in itself.	Benefit street – stereotypical depiction of people from low SES backgrounds We are all put in that category – sounds as though she sees herself as very different. Relates to her earlier point of people's perceptions. Broad category – a spectrum of need and people. Reflection on a conversation with tutor about the difference between SES and class.
	R	It is yeah. So that was just a question to understand your thoughts on the terminology. Ok so I wanted to move on and ask how long have you lived in [city]?	
Stability	A	All my life.	Stability
	R	So whereabouts do you live in [city]	
	A	Errm I live in [area] so like about a 10 minute walk from here.	Lives in a more affluent area of city
	R	Ok and what do you think about where you live?	
	A	Err.....	Pause and slight hesitation here

	R	Do you like it?	
Lives in an affluent area but not that connected to it	A	Yeah I would probably say I do. Err we moved, err about like, maybe like 8, 9 years ago but I'd say I quite like the area we live in. It's quite like errm, its not really like, there's not really much that goes on but the neighbours are quite friendly and like everybody's quite like, everybody's quite like pleasant to be around.	Probably – seems unsure 8, 9 years ago – has lived there for a significant time but somehow doesn't seem connected to it. Not much goes on – quiet Everybody is pleasant – seems like its ok but a little boring or bland.
	R	Yeah. Ok so where did you live before that?	
	A	Errrm I lived in [area].	
	R	Ok. That's a bit different isn't it?	
Sense of community (more deprived area) Shared experience Identity EAL	A	Yea I'd say it was like, it was more like sort of.....like when we used to live there it was more of a sort of, I felt anyway, I dunno maybe it was just the people surrounding, it was more of a community focus kind of thing. It was like, like where I live now, if we asked the neighbours for like a favour or something, they'd be fine with it but I think we sort of feel like we we're putting them out a little bit whereas back then it was like sort of like people would sort of like volunteer like ah do you need help with anything. It was more sort of, I dunno I think it was maybe cause like my parents both grew up from Pakistan, it was like very like, it wasn't all just Pakistanis there but like a lot of people were there and would sort of like help.	Community focus- felt connected to the community. Less affluent area but seems like she was more comfortable there People in the less affluent area more willing to help even though they potentially have less. Something about being surrounded by people of the same culture/religion/maybe race as well. Maybe shared language and parents less isolated because they could speak their home language.
	R	Yeah. Ok so who lives at home with you?	

	A	My mom, my dad, my siblings.	2 parent family
	R	Ok. How many siblings have you got?	
	A	Err 4 sisters and a brother.	
	R	Wow. So where are you in the order.	
	A	Me and my brother are the middle 2.	
	R	Ok. How do you find that?	
	A	Errm I'd probably say...ok-ish. I think for a while, like 8 years I was the youngest so I used to get like, not like spoilt but like, I feel like if anybody came round they'd be like "oh where is she". Like or like if they had money to give they'd give it to me (laughs). I'd get it but like now errm- like because I was the youngest if I wanted something, I wouldn't always get it but like if I wanted to go to the park or do what I said and I wouldn't really get in trouble for anything.	Had experience of being the youngest child for a while and enjoyed the benefits of this. Getting attention and getting away with things.
	R	Yeah	
Identity	A	And then my two younger sisters were born and that kind of..(smiles)	This was said in jest, but I wonder about the true impact of being the youngest for 8 years and then having to change your identity due to the birth of a sibling.
	R	Spoilt your fun? (laughs)	
Social mobility Family support Exposure to family in further education	A	A little, my little sister, I wanna say she's spoiled but she's sort of always, I think she grew up in a different environment so she sort of got a lot to more what she wanted. I like being, having older siblings because I feel like they've gone through stuff first so I get to have that sort of like, not first experience but I can sort of like ask them but I'm not the first person so they can sort kind of like relate and stuff.	Grew up in a different environment – they probably moved around the time that her sibling was born. The younger siblings will only have known life in the affluent area and perhaps that move was a sign that things had financially got better. When she talks here about her sister being spoilt, I think what she is alluding to is

			that her sister hasn't faced the financial hardships or experienced living in a deprived area. Her older siblings are able to relate to this more. – Social mobility Strong family unit – support from older siblings. Seeing them “go through” things first has meant that she can go to them for advice or see how they have gone about things.
	R	How old are you sorry?	
	A	I'm 17	
	R	What do they do? Are they kind of in the world of work?	
Exposure to family in further education High aspirations in family	A	Errrm we've all got sort of 3 years between us so I'm 17, my brother's 20 and he goes to university. He's studying accounting and finance. At the moment I think he's just broken up so he doesn't really work at the moment. Maybe he'll work over summer. My other sisters 23 and she's working as an optician, optometrist....I think it's optometrist and then my oldest sisters 26 and she's.....she works as a finance, audit person. Something like that, I'm not really sure. She just works for like a company and she does like the money side of things. Errm but yeah.	All 3 of her older siblings are in higher education or a career. She has seen this and is aware this is possible. Clear message of the importance of education and high aspirations in the family. Messages in their family about achieving and having a profession.
	R	Ok so tell me about your hobbies and interests when you're not here. What do you like to do?	
Chilling	A	I would probably say I like chilling a lot (laughs). Just like relaxing, just like watching you know like TV.	Chilling – like to relax
	R	Tell me you don't watch love island?	
	A	I don't.	

	R	Good (laughs)	
	A	Errrm, someone was literally like to me I'm just watching love island when I finish (laughs).	
	R	What do you like watching then?	
	A	I'm currently watching suits at the moment.	Both researcher and participant connect again here. More like a conversation than an interview.
	R	Ahhh ok I was thinking about watching that.	
Interest in professional careers Interest in medicine	A	I feel like it sort of like makes you wanna be a lawyer. You know like when you see something and you're like, that would be awesome but obviously it's not really like that but yeah errrm sometimes I watch just random documentaries on stuff. So like...I can't remember what I last watched but I was gonna watch this sort of documentary style drama sort of on, I think it was on someone supporting like far right which I was planning to watch. Haven't got round to it yet. I like watching medical shows kind of thing. Errm I read occasionally when I have the time. I started a book so long ago and I haven't finished it yet. Literally like I want to but then I just.....	I wonder what about the show made her feel like this? The glamour? Lifestyle? Interesting choice of documentary. Does she find this sort of thing interesting? Difficulty finding the motivation to read. Medical shows – is she interested in a career in medicine? Or is she just interested in the field itself?
	R	Yeah it's finding the time isn't it and the motivation.	
Creativity	A	Yeah but when you read it its like a really good book. I like baking and just like making cakes and stuff or like truffles or like little things. I'm not much of a cooker so I can't really make anything.	Creativity – likes to bake. Reading
	R	I'm the opposite. I can't bake for toffee like literally cannot bake.	Researcher connecting with participant
Societal norms – healthy lifestyle	A	I can't cook at all. I think I would prefer to cook so I can actually like cook kind of thing and like with all this baking I'm just having a ton of junk. I like exercising when I have the time but because we recently had our mocks, I sort of put that on the back burner. I haven't really exercised. I want to like get into the whole healthy lifestyle thing but I don't really, I'm fine with the exercising but I just can't stick with the healthy eating.	Being healthy and exercising. Is this trying to adhere to societal norms?

	R	There's time for that, don't worry about that. (both laugh)	
Likes to play sports	A	Errm yea, I like playing sports, I like playing cricket. We are planning to have like a cricket match on the Friday before we break up.	Interested in sports. I wonder if it's more the team/social element of sport. She seems to like sports that involve others.
	R	Right.	
Likes to play sports	A	I like sports, I like badminton, but I haven't played in a while. There's probably more stuff but I can't think of anything. (laughs).	Enjoys sports but get the sense that academic work gets in the way of hobbies. Haven't played in a while, haven't read in a while.
	R	Errrm and how would you describe yourself? I know others have found this question a bit hard.	
Reflective and considered	A	It takes me time to like think of things like when I go home I will think I should've said this or that. I'd probably say.....Like in a word or in general?	Seems to find it difficult to reflect in the moment but generally able to reflect on her experiences. I wonder if she if she is quite considered and likes to think things through in her own time? I wonder if this is true of her as a learner? Should've – implies that perhaps she thinks that the researcher is expecting a particular type of response.
	R	Yeah like in general, could be like statements or things that make you think "oh yeah, that's me".	
Human – acceptance of not being perfect. Inclusion	A	I would probably say human in the sense of like, just like, there's sort of things that I feel like, human as in there's like faults in me. There's things that I could work better on. I would probably say also kind of like super talky when I'm like in the mood, super	Human – nice way to describe herself. Recognises that she makes mistakes or there's things that she could work on

		chatty and sort of errm like very like I dunno what the word is right now but it's like where just you do things on impulse kind of thing.	but that's ok. Acceptance of not being perfect. Also human in the sense that she is no different to anyone else. Almost a sense of equality coming through here.
	R	Impulsive?	
	A	Yeah kind of impulsive at sometimes or just like say something or do something. I would probably say also really like sort of laid back sometimes and probably.....what's use the word...pessimistic. Cause I'm not very- like I have a friend and she's super optimistic and I'm like the super opposite of that like in that sense. So, like whenever I have like a bad situation and I'll be like oh my god I dunno what to do, she always be like this sort of like be like the sort of, bring the hope and I'll bring like the clouds.	This may have been because of what I offered because this doesn't fit with the sense of her that I have. She seems reflective and considered. Perhaps she meant spontaneous rather than impulsive. Describes herself as pessimistic. Could this just be realistic?
	R	You need the mix of the 2 because sometimes you do need the realistic perspective and then she can be like the optimistic perspective.	
Anxiety Managing/recognising feelings Worrying about the future	A	But I feel like with me its's too much. Like I remember I was in year 7 and I was like "how am I gonna make friends at university". (laughs).	Suggests that this has always been part of her personality. Could suggest that she experiences anxiety rather than is pessimistic. May be that what she perceives as pessimism is actually anxiety about uncertainty and what's to come. Also suggest that friendships are important to her.

			She knew in year 7 that university was a possibility. Perhaps because she saw her siblings go to university or perhaps because of the messages she was given from her parents about aiming high in education.
	R	Aaw you were worrying about it already (laughs)?	
	A	Yeah like I just sorted out my life in year 7 and I was worrying about university. I think I just like worry too much sometimes about those things.	As above
	R	What would you say are your best qualities that have helped – I know you don't like this term but your academic success?	
	A	Errrm	
	R	So if you think about how you are in school and how you are in class	
Attentive Independent study/home study Difficulty talking about herself as a person	A	I'm kind of like attentive because I feel like if I don't listen then then I'm not gonna clock it then I'm not gonna understand the lesson and I can't go home revise it. I'd probably say.....	Attentive – listens in class. Can't go home and revise it – suggests independent study Struggles to reflect in the moment.
	R	I should have warned you that you are going to have to reflect a lot on yourself and it's a bit uncomfortable at times.	
	A	Yea I think it's just difficult to think of sometimes. I would probably say.....	
	R	Do you want to come back to it?	
	A	Yeah, hopefully I can think of something.	Trying to answer how she thinks I want her to?
	R	Don't feel pressure to though because it's just like a conversation so don't feel pressured about answering. So, when you leave sixth form, what are your plans?	
Interested in a career in medicine	A	Up until recently I was thinking of going along the medicine route so like I started my personal statement and then like I dunno I just felt like it wasn't really for me. Like I	Wanted to do medicine and from the interest in medical

Anxiety Lack of guidance around careers Resilience Home/life balance		<p>didn't want it that badly and I don't wanna be in a career where I'm like working all the time and like I'm putting so much effort into it and it's not something I really want and I feel like if someone died because I couldn't save them or something, I wouldn't be able to like bounce back from that because I feel like I didn't want it enough. It wouldn't allow me to have the home-life balance that I wanted. At the moment I'm thinking of like chemical engineering.</p>	<p>documentaries, suggests she still has an interest. Wondering if anxiety about things going wrong has got in the way here? Also I wonder about her experience/knowledge about the training route? Has she had the opportunity to speak to a medical student about the demands of training and how the impact of having people's lives in your hands? – barrier Bounce back – she appears to be questioning her emotional resilience here. I wonder whether she has had difficulties with “bouncing back” in the past and that's why she worried about this. Or has she never experienced that level of challenge and this makes her anxious?</p> <p>Home-life balance – life outside of work. Values being about to do things that she cares about. Chemical engineering – change of direction. I wonder what made her think of this career?</p>
	R	Ok so what is that?	

Uncertainty of career path	A	I feel like, because I do chemistry, biology and maths, the chemical side of it is more like erm like just a lot of chemistry and stuff (laughs) and then the engineering side is stuff to do with like building infrastructure, eventually doing something pharmaceutical like with the chemical side of it, like maybe mass making medicine.	She seems a little unsure here about the career. I wonder where she got the idea from?
	R	Ok what do you want to do go into further education or straight into the world of work?	
University vs Apprenticeship	A	At the moment I'm thinking further education in the form of either uni or an apprenticeship.	
	R	Ok so you've not kind of decided yet?	
Uncertainty of career path	A	Yeah not completely decided.	
	R	What's influenced your decision about whether to carry on or go into an apprenticeship?	
Anxiety Uncertainty of career path Lack of guidance/support around career routes University vs Apprenticeship Financial constraints Mum's messages about the value of education Education as a vehicle Social mobility	A	I think just the skills and the benefits it would give me. Like if I go to uni a lot of jobs in life will require a degree and if I've done an apprenticeship I will still have a qualification but it won't be a degree so then it might not help me as much. But then at the same time I feel like if I did an apprenticeship I'd be earning as well so I'd be just sort of like paving the way for independence kind of thing and like gaining skills as well because I feel like, obviously I haven't done uni but I sort of see it as like you're still learning but with an apprenticeship it's more hands on and sort of like getting into it already. That would be more sort of suited to the role but I'm scared that if I don't like the company that I work with and I change my mind about the sector I want to work in then I won't have a degree to fall back on. So then yeah, but I feel like the education itself would be important for me cause I just, I, my mom always sort says like um, its not in English but she says it in her home language so Mirpuri but she says something like as long as you have your education, like make sure you get it. You're gonna need that like regardless of like what you do or where you go.	Seems to be lots of uncertainty and anxiety here. Perhaps because she hasn't quite settled on a career path. I wonder what support young people get at this point of their education. She will be soon writing her personal statement and I wonder whether she is feeling the pressure to know what she wants to do without having the guidance and opportunities to explore the different career options. Apprenticeship- because she would be earning. Are financial constraints a consideration?

			<p>Fall back on – again anxiety about things going wrong. Wanting to have some security and sees a degree as providing more opportunities for jobs. Again I wonder whether she worries about not being able to earn?</p> <p>Mum gives messages about the importance of education. Message is that she will need the education no matter what career path she decides to take.</p>
	R	You've kind of nicely moved me on to your perceptions of education and why do you think it's important to have an education and then it was going to move onto your parents. So you've kind of already touched on-	
Importance of education Parents lack of formal education Skills/experience-based education Cultural expectations of women and girls Parental (mother) influence Social mobility Family resilience Hard work ethic Education as an opportunity	A	<p>Errm I'd say education, I personally find it really important. So my parents came to England when they got married, so after they got married they moved to England and errm my mom has never been to school. Like where she grew up in Pakistan she's never been to school like a day, not even for a minute like she's never been. So errm because it was like she, lived on like a farm sort of area kind of like and so like you have to go and like carry water for like the animals and go to the shop and maybe like get something. Look after the cows and the animals, clean the house and do all that kind of jazz. It's more sort of like labour work there and so like it was like someone needed to help my grandma and grandad so like looking after the house and like the work and stuff so my mum just didn't go to school. So I feel like that, it sort of impacted me in a way, I wouldn't say I missed out but there were things that like if my mum had an education, my life would be different in the sense of like, so sometimes we would go shopping and if she wants to buy like water or something, she won't be able to read underneath what it says and sometimes she can't read the price kind of thing. So like I don't wanna have that for myself for like my future or my kids and</p>	<p>Values education</p> <p>Mum didn't have the opportunity to go to school. Mum's education came through experience and labour work. Cultural expectations – as she was a girl she was expected to help on the farm and round the house.</p> <p>Mum's lack of education impacted her growing up – perhaps she is saying that mum wasn't able to help with academic work etc. Also she may have had little knowledge</p>

they're in a position where they're struggling because they don't have that education and I feel like just generally it's important for like growing, just learning and just having that experience itself. And also I would probably say, umm I don't fully believe you need a university degree or an apprenticeship, like even though my mum didn't get a formal education, I still see her as one of the most educated people that I know in the sense that education doesn't just revolve around a classroom and a teacher teaching you, sometimes it's you teaching people, sometimes it's people teaching you and sometimes its about skills. Like my mum learnt how to be independent, like her work ethic and but the sacrifices she's made, its still learning, it's just not your conventional form of learning. And just the fact that so many people don't get that chance. Like every chance we get we should strive to take it kind of thing.

of career options etc. This also impacted her in a way that she wanted more and so perhaps had high aspirations. She uses the work 'struggling' – perhaps things with her parents were not always easy. I get the sense of them having to work hard to get to the point they are at now. I really liked her reflection here. You don't need to have a formal education to be educated. Her mum will have skills and knowledge from her work. Again a sense of equality comes out here. Almost like strengths based approach – looking at what people can do etc. This resonated with me as I believe that people can be educated and not have had a formal education. One of the reasons I struggles with the title of the project and the criteria 'high achieving'. Hard work ethic Seeing education as an opportunity – her mum did not have this opportunity

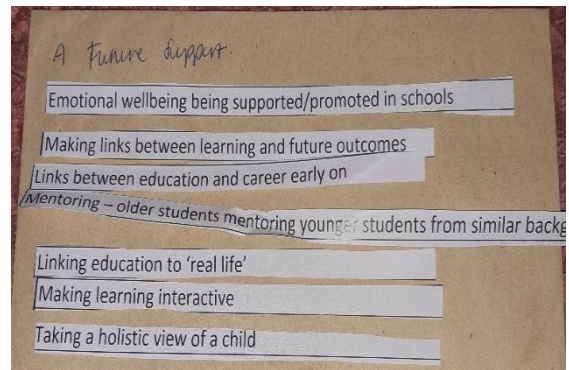
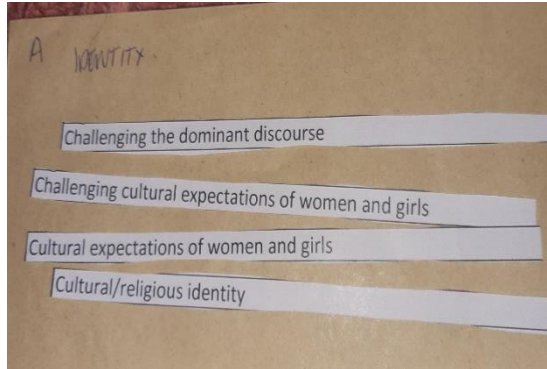
			Strive – use of this word suggests she is willing to work hard
	R	Ok so that's your perception, is your mum or parents perception is similar?	
Parental influence (mother) Importance of education	A	I think they think, they'd probably say the same. Especially my mom, sort of like that it's really important to have that education. I think my mom's sort of like, she's sort of more like leaning towards like an apprenticeship for me because I think she's saying that university will be like really hard even though all of my older siblings have gone. Errm I think she just thinks that maybe an apprenticeship would be better suited to me but then obviously I'm not sure so I need to figure that out for myself kind of thing but yeah I'd say they share similar perspectives.	Influence of mother Importance of education Mum says university will be really hard – is she influencing A's decision. I wonder what mum's reason behind this is. Would this be to do with financial implications of uni? Or does she think that A would find this difficult to navigate? I need to figure that out myself – this is a big decision and it would be beneficial for her to have some guidance around this.
	R	Ok, so then in your community that you live in now do you get a sense of how education is perceived?	
Connection with less affluent area Shared experience Education viewed as an opportunity Education as a vehicle to a higher paid job Respect for others – equality	A	I'd probably say the community where I used to live before was based around the sort of Asian community like the sort of culture around me. I feel like a lot of people – my parents didn't grow up in the city or anything, they grew up in villages, so the access to education wasn't prominent, you just sort of if you could go to school you would, if you couldn't you'd just sort of take it on the chin and not go. So I feel like a lot of people didn't get that education really. I feel like a lot of the jobs that they had were just sort of jobs that you could do without degrees and things like that. So it would be like, a lot of people in the community that I used to live in just do jobs that don't necessarily require degrees. I don't wanna say low paying because it sounds like I'm	Previous community was more culturally diverse. Sounds as though A connected more with this community perhaps because people had a shared experience. Education seen as an opportunity almost a privilege because in Pakistan it was not

<p>Making the best of what you have</p>		<p>sort of diminishing what they are doing cause it's still sort important to this type of life but like it's erm its not like things that need degrees, things like shop keeper or taxi driver sort of thing. So I would say like, they can get by but they're not like super rich.</p>	<p>automatically something that a child or young person had access to.</p> <p>A reflecting that people in the community didn't have access to education and so the result was that they ended up in jobs that didn't require a degree. A was very mindful not to 'look down' on these jobs. The people she was describing would probably have been considered as 'low SES' in 'low skilled' jobs.</p> <p>It seems that she and her mum see education as a way to get a higher skilled/more highly paid job – social mobility.</p> <p>Can get by – people making the best of what they have – financial resilience.</p>
<p>Lives in an area where there are professionals</p> <p>Social mobility</p>	<p>R</p> <p>A</p>	<p>And is that different to where you live now?</p> <p>I'd say now I live in a sort of like, erm, it's, like there's more like a variety of people there but I'd say a lot them have more errrm, like have sort of been to university and do sort of have like better career roles kind of thing. Like my neighbours on my left, they both went to uni they both ...they're both accountants. They're both like affluent kind of thing. I feel like it's a mix though, some people haven't and some people have but I feel like the older generation sort of haven't whereas their kids and stuff have.</p>	<p>Current area is more affluent and she lives next door to professionals.</p> <p>Social mobility within the area – sounds like some families have moved to a more affluent area and the parents have high aspirations for the children although they themselves may</p>

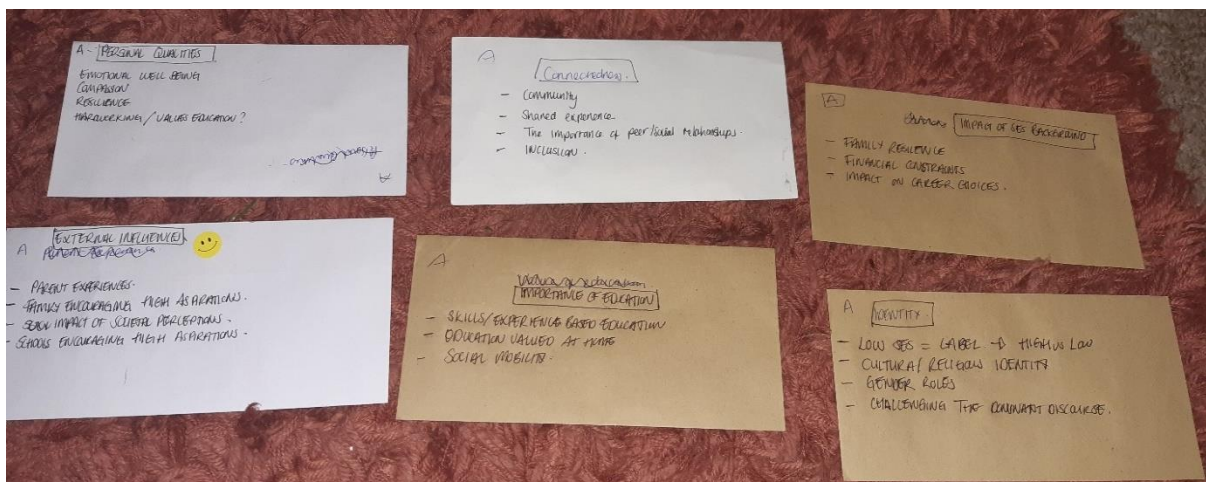
			not be in careers. Much like A's family.
	R	So where you are now and where you were before, where would you say you felt more connected and comfortable?	
Connection to less affluent area Hard work ethic Independence Education viewed as an opportunity Sense of community in less affluent area – shared experience	A	<p>I'd probably say before because I feel like people were more sort of friendly, not that they're not friendly here. It's not that being born in England doesn't mean that you aren't susceptible to hardships and pain and stuff like that or go through bad things but I feel like people there, like my parents, grew up in Pakistan, they sort of had a hard life growing up sort of thing. You're like, from a young age, like when I went I saw someone roughly my age, like their son was like just chopping up trees and stuff I think for bark for fires or something like that and for like half an hour, we sat down for half an hour and then came back and he was still doing that. I could see the sweat on the back of his erm, of his top and it was just like. I think their drive and their work ethic and they're not sort of like here like if it's like you don't want a job, like you really don't want a job, the government will give you like a bit of benefits whereas there you're so dependent on yourself that you sort of get on with it and I feel like people when they, in my old community there were a lot of people from Asian communities, Pakistani communities specifically so they sort of understood the fact that sometimes your struggling and to just lend a hand and be supportive.</p>	<p>She felt more connected in the less affluent (deprived) area. She appears to admire the work ethic of people who have had the experience of having to work hard. She reflects that you can get more support in the UK if you don't want to work but over in Pakistan for example, you are very dependent on yourself and there isn't the option of not working. She seems appreciative and grateful of the fact that she is able to go to school and have an education and hasn't faced some of the hardships that others have faced. People in the less affluent area were more friendly and willing to lend a hand. Perhaps there was more a sense of community.</p>

A7 EXTRACT OF STAGES 4-5 OF ANALYSIS FOR AIMEE

1. Group emerging themes together.



2. Produce list of superordinate themes



3. Repeat process for participants 2-6

A8 TABLE OF INITIAL SUPERORDINATE THEMES ACROSS PARTICIPANTS STAGE 6

Themes	Ps	Subthemes	Extracts to support subtheme
Connectedness	All	<i>Building Relationships and being able to relate</i>	<p><i>K: Umm, there were some teachers that were really nice and really approachable. Like they would have normal conversations with you like, it's really nice. Like I have one still here Miss D, she was my favourite but yeah. Um she used to be our form teacher, after every form errm because we had form at the end of the day as well, we'd stay back and we'd talk to her about I don't even know what but we'd stay for ages and talk to her. So errm they're really approachable. Some of them errm were more straight towards education-wise and don't really mix in with the students a lot but like a lot of them are really approachable and nice yeah.</i></p> <p><i>K: Errrm, I think errm the friendship group I'm in has helped because I feel like if I was in a different friendship group I would have probably not paid attention to my education as much as I do now</i></p> <p><i>M: And plus nearly everyone in year 12 knows one another because they came with their friends and they came from year 11 in this school, so they know each other and, it was a bit awkward at first but later on it got fine. You know you get to know your classmates and stuff and they slowly become your friends.</i></p> <p><i>A: so like my first primary school so CC, it was more, it was sort of more people with a similar background to me in a sense, a lot of them were in a sort of Asian community kind of thing, Muslims also it was just like we all kind of related sort of thing.</i></p> <p><i>A: I feel like slowly I started to be like making friends and getting to know people, I sort of enjoyed it more. Just like having people to share those experiences with at school to share with like um like was good.</i></p> <p><i>I: Well the teacher that I like in year 5 she really was really sweet. So if she knew I couldn't get something, she would help me and errm she would talk to me and errrm she would just like, she was like a friend kind of almost and she would always like support me and stuff like that whilst with errm my year 6 teacher, she was actually coloured errm like she was Asian but she was just a horrible person.</i></p>

			<p><i>R: So again, what helped you come out of your shell a bit then?</i></p> <p><i>B: Errrm I think just socialising with my friends, they like kinda helped me.</i></p> <p><i>S: Well if they, they're like us. Like no not, by like I don't mean ah like they should, like as in if they're similar to us. Cuz like nowadays you have teachers, they don't even live around here and they're telling us ah you can do this you can do that, and they don't even know half the things we go through.</i></p> <p><i>S: Yeah it [secondary school] was better because there were some teachers that were from around here so they'd be like stay out of this, this stuff happens here like they knew exactly what was going on. So the teachers that was telling me this stuff, I started to like them and like trust them more with like my like own stuff.</i></p> <p>.</p>
	All	Meaningful experiences: connecting with core values	<p><i>K: I feel like education, it is important but I don't think it comes like before your life so like, live your life to the best that you can. Put it before your education, don't put your education first because you do have other obligations in life. Like your education will like, you would be in school to a certain point but after that you won't be in school but you still have your life throughout your years. So, I feel like it is important, it's important to build a life and like you know do the things that you want to do but at the same time if you're in education and an opportunity comes like to have fun or something, take it go and do something. Don't let it stop you from like exploring and having fun and things like that.</i></p> <p><i>M: Errm, my brother actually so, so you know when I went to Egypt, my parents one of their errm. So you know how you asked if my parents were focussed on education, more than education they wanted us to be quite attached to our religion so learning the Quran. So errm, I memorised the Quran when I was eleven.</i></p> <p><i>A: I like baking and just like making cakes and stuff or like truffles or like little things.</i></p> <p><i>A: Errm yea, I like playing sports, I like playing cricket. We are planning to have like a cricket match on the Friday before we break up.</i></p> <p><i>A: I don't fully believe you need a university degree or an apprenticeship, like even though my mum didn't get a formal education, I still see her as one of the most educated people that I know in the sense that education doesn't just revolve around a classroom and a teacher teaching you, sometimes it's you teaching people, sometimes it's people teaching you and sometimes its about skills. Like my mum learnt how to be independent, like her work ethic</i></p> <p><i>I: I like watching dramas, Asian dramas. Errm they're like Pakistani dramas but like I can understand them. Errrm like I enjoy watching them.</i></p>

			<p><i>B: Soo in my spare time I play football and like cricket and stuff. Errrm, yeah errrm. Yeah</i></p> <p><i>B: Errrm so for football it's a hobby and for cricket it's a team. I got my actual cricket trials tomorrow.</i></p> <p><i>R: Ok that's good. What are your interests and hobbies when you're not in school?</i></p> <p><i>S: Errm Muay Thai or wrestling.</i></p> <p><i>R: Muay Thai? Tell me about that. I've never heard of that before.</i></p> <p><i>S: So it's like a type of combat sport where basically you use knees, elbows, kicks, punches.</i></p> <p><i>R: Gosh. So do you have to be like super fit to do that then?</i></p> <p><i>S: Not even that. I only learnt because....you don't have to be super fit. Anyone can do it I would say cos there's guys at my gym that are 6ft tall some guys are 4ft tall, they doing it. There's girls doing it errrm people just think ah yeah, has to be really strong like. Like if, there could be a really small guy in Muay Thai, he'll still have the same effect as someone who's really big.</i></p>
	Not K	Shared experience?	<p><i>A: Yea I'd say it was like, it was more like sort of.....like when we used to live there it was more of a sort of, I felt anyway, I dunno maybe it was just the people surrounding, it was more of a community focus kind of thing. It was like, like where I live now, if we asked the neighbours for like a favour or something, they'd be fine with it but I think we sort of feel like we we're putting them out a little bit whereas back then it was like sort of like people would sort of like volunteer like ah do you need help with anything. It was more sort of, I dunno I think it was maybe cause like my parents both grew up from Pakistan, it was like very like, it wasn't all just Pakistanis there but like a lot of people were there and would sort of like help.</i></p> <p><i>I: ..say for example you have a teacher that's always had like everything given to them on a plate and errm who's had that kind of a life where errm her parents do everything for her or like she won't be able to I dunno like associate herself with a student.</i></p>

			<p><i>B: Errrm, I think they should, errm like, visit like these kind of areas and talk about how they kind of, so obviously not all professional people were like rich and stuff. Some people came from like lower backgrounds so errrm they should like share like their stories to us guys and kind of like inspire us.</i></p> <p><i>S: Well if they, they're like us. Like no not, by like I don't mean ah like they should, like as in if they're similar to us. Cuz like nowadays you have teachers, they don't even live around here and they're telling us ah you can do this you can do that, and they don't even know half the things we go through.</i></p>
Motivation to Engage with Education		Social mobility: education as a vehicle to success	<p><i>K: Well I feel like errm at first it didn't used to be like that but now slowly everyone is starting to go to uni. Like there is a girl down our road who is going for midwifery she did go and there's another girl who's also doing something in uni so people are starting to go to uni, starting to become more educated and things like that. It didn't used to be like that.</i></p> <p><i>M: For you not to like know how to read or write...you want to be able to live and adapt in the world and society you're in right now. So I think that's why education is important. You want to go on with life, you want your kids to be successful in life, then education now is a key.</i></p> <p><i>A: maybe in primary school introducing them to different careers and like errm maybe like bringing in like a fireman or like a firewoman and like a policewoman or like a doctor, different professions so that they can sort of like have that experience of maybe like a doctor with like a stethoscope and they'd be amazed and it's just something that they could be like oh wow that's really cool like and sort of get to know more about it.</i></p>

			<p><i>I: Err it's the whole better pay thing. I could have just come out of school and got a 9 to 5 or something but errm like doing that for the rest of your life you're not gonna get anywhere and it's hard to get a promotion as well like without qualifications so errm like it's, it's like you have to pay for your education like especially uni but at least at the end of it you will have like I dunno, a high amount of money compared to people with like regular jobs.</i></p> <p><i>B: Errrm, I think actually that [low SES classification] motivates me really so that I can achieve to do better and you know kind of raise that up.</i></p> <p><i>S: Yeah they tell me work hard and like with education you're gonna do stuff, you're gonna go to places whereas if you don't you're gonna be less than average, I don't wanna say average is bad but you're just gonna be worse off than when you started.</i></p>
		Valuing learning and development	<p><i>K: Ummmm,in my education I think that my best quality is that I listen in lesson, very err like attentively, because I feel like umm, in the lesson is when I'm going to understand it. I won't really understand it if I go home and try going over it myself so I try my best in lesson and I'm really inquisitive, I ask a lot of questions so every single one of my teachers will say she asks too many questions but yeah.</i></p> <p><i>K: Errm and ummm I think I have a strong memory but like, can't remember my childhood that much but like I'd remember like my schoolwork and remember what I've learnt.</i></p> <p><i>M: I know there's been a lot of teachers that have told me learn this and then it will come in the exam. Definitions you should learn it but I prefer to understand it and in the exam give my own definition from my own understanding. I think understanding and memorising just before the exam helps me a lot.</i></p> <p><i>A: I would probably say [that I'm] human in the sense of like, just like, there's sort of things that I feel like, human as in there's like faults in me. There's things that I could work better on.</i></p> <p><i>A: I'm kind of like attentive because I feel like if I don't listen then then I'm not gonna clock it then I'm not gonna understand the lesson and I can't go home revise it</i></p> <p><i>B: I think if I'm , if I'm motivated then I like love doing my work and if I'm like in happy state then I love doing my work, like love like learning and stuff but I think because of the past kind of put me down and made me like kind of give up and stuff you know.</i></p>

			<p><i>S: I know like how to prioritise stuff so like if I knew that if I go out with my friends and I'm gonna play too much football, and then it will get in the way of my revision and stuff.</i></p> <p><i>S: Helps you get to where you wanna. If you're interested in stuff it gets you out of certain scenarios like even if it's not like, like some people say they wanna buy a car, that's small to me. I think it's more for like stuff like, common sense like if you can, like knowing if there's a bad situation, how to get out of it education helps you in that. Like people nowadays will be like ah I want a big house, a big car but they don't think like about the general scenarios, everyday things.</i></p>
Identity		Compassion	<p><i>K: ...she is striving literally. She's doing so well. You know FW grammar? She's there right now so she's the same age as us. She come from maybe, errm a low economic background and she really wants to get a job, and earn loads for her family.</i></p> <p><i>M: So my brother's opened up an institute, we wanted to help others to learn the Quran so right now I'm teaching the Quran.</i></p> <p><i>A: Like errm I feel like I'm a lot luckier than a lot of people. Like we are way more privileged than like some people have.</i></p> <p><i>S: He goes it's fun but you don't wanna be just picking up stuff. (interrupted) He says sometimes work's fun because he has nice people around him, people with the same story as him but he goes it's sometimes annoying having to do all the heavy work and not being able to do the computer work. But I'm like, when he tells me that I agree with him but I'm kind of like the opposite, I prefer more like in front work, rather than sat back.</i></p> <p><i>I: Well errm, I remember when I was at Primary school, I went to primary school in O and it was always like the coloured people that were like dumbed down sitting on one table and so err like rather than being helped and stuff, it, you were just kind of like pushed to a side and not given much attention and so I feel like I actually wanna go into a primary school and make a difference and interact with students.</i></p>
		Culture and tradition	<p><i>K: So my mom's from India she dropped out by year 10 and because err culturally they didn't agree to women being in education at that time but now their <u>a bit more evolved but yeah.</u></i></p>

			<p><i>M: Yeah they spoke to us err in English growing up and we were surrounded by British families. It was just we were learning Arabic and the language, my mum wanted us to learn it.</i></p> <p><i>M: Err to be educated I feel like, err, I feel like I'd be, how do I say that. When I'm educated I feel like you know like later on like, if I would have a conversation with a younger sibling, I could help out my younger siblings with their studying. I could help out my kids with their studying. You know like, they'll have someone to fall back on rather than just going to tutors and things. If I have some knowledge on that, they can fall back on me.</i></p> <p><i>M: Before it was like a woman can just sit at home and that would be her life. Now women are becoming a lot more errm, what do I wanna say, they're a lot more errrm successful in life and they 're learning to do a lot of things like this. I don't to be a woman that's just sitting around at home. I wanna do what others are doing too</i></p> <p><i>A: But I feel like, more so than like the sort socioeconomic thing, it would probably be for me more sort of like the culture of the community that I grew up in sort of like yeah just like because I grew up in like the Asian sort of community, which I've probably said like 100 times (laughs) but errm I feel like a lot of people aren't that open minded in terms of like females going into education and wanting to go into education. It's a bit like ooh maybe you should just get married but it's sometimes people having these opinions and not sort of thinking what's in someone's best interests and doing whatever works best for them.</i></p> <p><i>I: errm I think it's more like in Asian communities girls don't do this, girls don't do that kind of thing so it's like, family. So if like even with me going to college like certain family members like my grandma like they don't agree with it like there's been girls in the family who have gone to college and messed about and like linked guys or what not and stuff like that so it's always like oh but she's going to end up doing the same thing and like it's kind of like so when you go like, you not just stressed about your grades, your stressed about what rumours people might like make about you and stuff like that.</i></p> <p><i>B: Errrm, my dad he works and my mom is at home. Doesn't work.</i></p> <p><i>S: Especially like with Asian parents they will be like English and maths, English and maths, English and maths. That's all you need. But I wanted to get into science because I liked it.</i></p> <p><i>S: My mum, she doesn't work. She used to work but her only reason for working was, cos when she was here, she was born here, she wanted to bring my dad to this country so she stayed working. I think she work as, I don't know what you call it, she was seeing clothes, making clothes.</i></p>
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			<p><i>R: Oh yeah tailor?</i></p> <p><i>S: Yeah tailoring and stuff like that and she tells me how she got paid very little so she was working like days in, days out just to try and get enough money just to call my dad here.</i></p>
		<p><i>My Social class and where I live</i></p>	<p><i>K: Well it kind of puts us at the bottom of a hierarchy, right at the bottom but errm I don't there should be a hierarchy. Like if you are low socioeconomic errrm but you shouldn't be acknowledged as that. You shouldn't see somebody as different as another and so somebody shouldn't get more privileges than the other it should be the same for everyone.</i></p> <p><i>M: Well errrm, I don't think it's correct to obviously term people like that because then they would think they come from a poor background, it would make people think that they were underprivileged growing up but you are privileged enough. Like for me personally I feel like I was very privileged growing up but errrm I can see where the government, why the government chooses that term to errm put people like us in that</i></p> <p><i>A: I wouldn't like see myself as that like growing up I'd probably say like errm for me personally, for me personally growing up we didn't like, like I might fit the criteria but we didn't like, it wasn't like oh we didn't have enough like food on the table.</i></p> <p><i>I: It's kind of like a label in a way. I feel like, it depends on the person but it could affect certain people, like I dunno, how they do at school or something. I personally don't mind being described in that way, but it's kind of discriminatory in a way.</i></p> <p><i>B: Errrm, errrm, it's.....it's a bit harsh but it's true as well, yeah. It's kinda true.</i></p> <p><i>R: In what way?</i></p> <p><i>B: Cos if like, you errm, most people from [area he lives in] they're working-class so the government say like what is it low...</i></p> <p><i>R: Low socioeconomic status</i></p> <p><i>B: Yeah. That. Yeah, yeah.</i></p>

			<p><i>S: I get that you can see which areas are really nice and which areas are crappy but it doesn't really show what the people there are like, if you get what I mean</i></p> <p><i>S: Cos it's like when you're personally from that background and someone else is from like a high upbringing and their talking about you its like they're looking down on you. Whereas you might have something that's either better than them or in common with them but they're not looking at that.</i></p>
Resilience		Coping	<p><i>K: Again, I go with the flow a lot. I think up to year 10 that's when I didn't really acknowledge exams as err that serious and stuff and then in year 10 I started being like oh, <u>I have to worry about my GCSEs</u> a bit more now. But like, even if you ask my friends I'm quite calm. Like when there's an exam everyone's like opening their books like stressing, where I'm just like it's fine, you'll pass, don't worry. (laughs).</i></p> <p><i>M: I would say I am, when I find something interesting I would be motivated to complete that thing or project but if err if it becomes quite overwhelming, what I <u>would do is, if it's overwhelming I wouldn't take it on and I would be quite lazy with that project, I know that about myself</u></i></p> <p><i>A:, I'm not like very errm, like when I first came here I wasn't very talky kind of thing and I struggled with like sort of like, I wouldn't say socialising as a general but if I don't know anyone I probably like struggle kind of thing. So at the start I didn't really like it here like I was like <u>ah let's home school me or something</u> (laughs). I really didn't like it here.. I didn't know anyone, I think a lot of my days was just like <u>worrying about a lot of stuff and it just wasn't sort of like a good environment for me at the start</u></i></p> <p><i>A: like if your personal environment at home wasn't good enough or stuff was going on with my family or I wasn't feeling in like, in a mood where I wanted to try with anything, it just wouldn't be like a good environment like mentally to sort of like work in and I feel like that would make me be like nah I don't wanna, I don't see the point of education, when you're not in that space, in that zone.</i></p> <p><i>I: When I get annoyed like, rather than like, <u>I tend to get in trouble then as well because errm I won't and I say if they won't say anything and I end up swearing and going on a massive rant.</u></i></p> <p><i>I: I think it is probably the jump between GCSEs and A level as well cause it's quite big errm so, that was quite hard to deal with anyway and then like when you're new and stuff it's a bit awkward.</i></p> <p><i>R: How did you get through that then? What did you do?</i></p>

			<p><i>B: I kinda just I dunno I just errm <u>I just kind of became quiet and didn't really do anything and just...carried on.</u></i></p> <p><i>S: Not really, primary <u>I just didn't like talking to anyone, I was just on my ones but here when I came, out of luck, started talking to people.</u></i></p>
		<i>Determination to succeed</i>	<p><i>M: straight after school, right now I'm working 7 days a week so straight after school I go to work.</i></p> <p><i>M: Well I don't believe that just because you are from a low..a working-class background you would your education would be influenced by that. Like sometimes ok there could be problems back at home , it's hard to concentrate and things but if you're motivated and determined a lot of people have had problems back home and things like that, they still work through it, that means you can work through it too.</i></p> <p><i>A: ...so my mum just didn't go to school. So I feel like that, it sort of impacted me in a way, I wouldn't say I missed out but there were things that like if my mum had an education, my life would be different in the sense of like, so sometimes we would go shopping and if she wants to buy like water or something, she won't be able to read underneath what it says and sometimes she can't read the price kind of thing. So like I don't wanna have that for myself for like my future or my kids and they're in a position where they're struggling because they don't have that education</i></p> <p><i>I: I'm organised so I kind of get things done and errm, hmmm.....I try my hardest, I try my hardest but my hardest is not always the best.</i></p> <p><i>I: I've got an older brother and I've seen him mess about and stuff I thought ok, I can't end up like him, I need to try and make my parents proud and come out with something.</i></p>
		<i>Support</i>	<p><i>K: Umm, and like the teacher's support. They support you a lot and they do like realise when a student has talent and like if they can do something they do put more effort behind you. Errm yeah.</i></p> <p><i>M: What has helped me become successful? I think family support. If you have a good family to back you, that helps you a lot.</i></p> <p><i>A: I like being, having older siblings because I feel like they've gone through stuff first so I get to have that sort of like, not first experience but I can sort of like ask them but I'm not the first person so they can sort kind of like relate and stuff.</i></p>

			<p><i>A: Like there's been quite a few teachers who like I haven't understood something or a friends hasn't understood something and instead of being like oh like I don't have time, they'd be like come early tomorrow or something, can to stay a bit late today and I will explain it to you. They will go out their way to help you and just sort of, even though school is about academics and like doing well in that sort of sense but also sort of encouraging like, good life instead of, in the sense of like personal life. Like I remember errm I was in biology once and a friend was like I stayed up till like 2 or something revising or something and the teacher was like exams are important but your life shouldn't be around exams, like you should focus on yourself and your mental health and just being aware that like people might have personal problems as well and other things going on and just to like, to be like open to like a student being like if I was a teacher and I could see that a student was like visibly upset or something I would be like oh do you want to talk about it and have that's support in place for them and just to sort of help them with that and not to sort of assume oh cause they're from a certain background like, they're not willing to try hard sort of thing.</i></p> <p><i>I: I think it is probably the jump between GCSEs and A level as well cause it's quite big errm so, that was quite hard to deal with anyway and then like when you're new and stuff it's a bit awkward.</i></p> <p><i>R: Ok and who do you talk to about kind of your options and what you do that way?</i></p> <p><i>B: Errm to be honest, I'm very quiet about what I say but my parents will just like try and help me, like do this, do this and my brother as well but I never talk to them about it.</i></p> <p><i>R: Are you kind of more like independent, like to do it yourself?</i></p> <p><i>B: Errrm.....yeah and no. Like.....I'm, I'm independent but I'm also nervous. So it's just like, I don't really say things a lot. I just keep it to myself.</i></p> <p><i>R: And how were the teachers?</i></p> <p><i>B: Primary school.....they were ok actually. Yea but I was really nervous so I never really asked anything.</i></p>
		Confidence	<p><i>K: Yeah. Umm I have been doing research. At the beginning of the year I wanted to do medicine but then I changed my mind because I found out it was really hard and I can't do that so then I decided I either want to go into civil engineering or do a degree in maths. Its completely different but yeah.</i></p> <p><i>M: Yeah it's not just all one place. I've been so many – I think like growing up I was not confident and I've always been shy. My sister's always gone to the same schools as me so she's always been there if I didn't have a friend but</i></p>

			<p>as I got into – a year ago she got married and I was forced into a situation where I had to go places on my own. - Could be comfort zone example.</p> <p>A: this sounds really like weird, but it gave me more confidence in myself to do well at school. ...Err like if I did well at school. I'd feel like better about myself, just like that satisfaction of understanding something and like maybe helping someone else.</p> <p>I: I lack confidence quite a lot. Errm I can be like awkward in new situations but errm I feel like if you do get to know me, I can come out my shell. With certain people I can just be like really hyper and stuff. It's like if some people just see me like that they'd get really shocked cause they just think I'm really quiet but I can come out of my shell with the right people.</p> <p>B: I think I'm kind but I think I'm a bit nervous at times and I used to be really unconfident before but I think I'm slowly building it up.</p> <p>B: Just in general. I was just like scared of putting my hand up in lessons sometimes...(laughs) yeah.</p> <p>S: All the way through primary school, I didn't like really revise anything at all I just went off like natural and I was like, I was towards the bottom of the highest groups but if they put me in like a middle group I used to be at the top of that. I'm not being cocky or anything.:</p> <p>S: Yeah I wana get into either errr... I don't know like fully but something to do with science like medicine but that..it looks next level.</p>
Challenges		Financial constraints	<p>K: I'm going for an apprenticeship, I wanna go for an apprenticeship because I feel like umm, I wanna work now and I wanna earn instead of going to uni and plus uni's fee are so much. Even though there's loans, my family's quite religious so they don't believe in like interest and stuff and so they don't want to take on the loan. They say that if I do go to uni they would pay for it themselves but its £9000 per year so, its quite hard and so I'm like I'd rather go for the degree apprenticeship where it's more easier and you know you don't have to pay.</p> <p>M: Personally I believe that there are Islamic schools that are good but because it's private and its not government funded, they can't afford good teaching quality or certain access to labs and things like that. So they can't afford things like labs and things like that. I'm not saying that for all Islamic schools but I've been to 2 so far, well I've been to 3 I think but 2 of them they weren't able to afford it.</p>

			<p><i>A: Like if I go to uni a lot of jobs in life will require a degree and if I've done an apprenticeship I will still have a qualification but it won't be a degree so then it might not help me as much. But then at the same time I feel like if I did an apprenticeship I'd be earning as well so I'd be just sort of like paving the way for independence kind of thing</i></p> <p><i>A: I was speaking to, when I was planning to apply for medicine, errrm I spoke to one of the really good chemistry teachers here and he was like errm when his daughter did errm applied for medicine he said something like they got her a course for like err a couple hundred pounds and he was like it's quite expensive. I thought like it would be maybe 30, 40 pounds and I'll maybe get like my sister to sub me for it and then he said like 2-300 pounds and I was like, yeah no way (laughs). We have no money for that, not no money but like.</i></p> <p><i>I: Say for example like if you have like a trip coming up and there's like certain people in the class that can't afford that trip or what not, I feel like people need to understand it. Like it's easy to say like what its just 20 quid but you have to understand people's like backgrounds and stuff.</i></p>
		<p><i>Uncertainty about the future</i></p>	<p><i>K: It was just more free and like umm, you don't have to stress about anything . Like, right now we have to stress about exams coming up and what you're gonna do in the future, your career plans and stuff whereas in primary, don't care about nothing or the only thing you wanna care about is if you're gonna get golden time or not (laughs).</i></p> <p><i>M: right now I don't even have a career path that I've chosen yet. I'm actually looking, right now I am looking into it but errm Maths, Chemistry and Biology when chose it I didn't have a certain career in mind, I just chose it because of passion. That's why I'm doing it.</i></p> <p><i>M: We weren't prepared for college, they just told us make sure you apply for colleges and things like that. I thought ok I will just go in the summer and the summer I was in London all summer so when I came back there was this errrm thing in [college]/</i></p> <p><i>A: Like doing your exams but not seeing what the sort of like how they'd affect you in real life. Like you don't realise like how like your GCSEs will affect your A levels, your A levels can affect whether you can get into university and things like that. And like how like hard the working world is. I don't think there's like a straight way to show that students but like to just implement into a bit of learning like ok we are going out into a workplace, we are doing more like experience and stuff</i></p> <p><i>I: I tried my hardest on it but then I had like, I just like, you know when you can't get your head round something. So I'm planning to switch that for health and social but errm I'm gonna have to have a meeting with my parents which I don't wanna have.</i></p>

			<p><i>B: So, my cousin, my cousin is in university and he's doing maths and he wants to become an actuary as well. Yeah. Errrm so actually I actually wanted to become that but because from my GCSEs I didn't get the correct grade for maths so that kind of you know, like changed my idea so then like accountancy is like, because I like maths a lot that's why I chose accountancy.</i></p> <p><i>S: Yeah I wana get into either errr... I don't know like fully but something to do with science like medicine but that..it looks next level.</i></p>
		School experience	<p><i>K: Errm, they were friendly and they like joked around with me a lot. Like I used to have this problem when I was little I used to have headaches like every single day I used to come into school and say I have a headache and my teacher would be like so every time you say you have a headache, you have to give a pound to your friends. Umm cause I used to say it so much she used to get a bit like, why are you saying it so much? But yeah. Errm but that's gone now so it's fine.</i></p> <p><i>M: Hmm from what I've experienced in this school, they do give a lot of support and they do give like reality checks like nearly every single assembly. We've had university, we've had different people from different jobs come in and speak about their jobs. That's a really good way of going about it.</i></p> <p><i>A:then I feel like St X, didn't really like, that was sort of like a thing that happened and we, I left there. I only stayed there for a while but I feel like it was I dunno just weird like I would be in class then a child would be like miss can I got to my horse riding lesson and they'd just leave</i></p> <p><i>I: Well errm, I remember when I was at Primary school, I went to primary school in [city] and it was always like the coloured people that were like dumbed down sitting on one table and so err like rather than being helped and stuff, it, you were just kind of like pushed to a side and not given much attention and so I feel like I actually wanna go into a primary school and make a difference and interact with students.</i></p> <p><i>B: Oh errrm, which school. Errm [name of primary] school. Yeah. Errrm.....a....errrm... obviously I was very nervous before and very unconfident errrm but it wasn't, for me it wasn't a great place to be at that time cos I was errrm...bullied at that time as well.</i></p>

		<p><i>B: Errrm....I don't think I was bullied...ok I was bullied but I think certain individuals didn't like me for no reason and then it just kind of affected me and I was like, why? And then like that kind of put me down in my education and stuff.</i></p> <p><i>R: Ok. In what way?</i></p> <p><i>B: Errm I felt like I couldn't it and I just felt like very unconfident at doing my work and stuff.</i></p> <p><i>R: Only say what you are comfortable saying but yeah, how was secondary school?</i></p> <p><i>B: Errrr it wasn't my thing. Eerrrm it was, year 7 I was...like I didn't really talk to anyone, year 8 errrm. No year 7 year 8 I got bullied like quite harshly. Year 9 I think everyone just took the mick out of me err, year 10 it got better and then year 11 nothing happened. Errr and then sixth form, nothing happened so that's good.</i></p> <p><i>R: Ok and how did affect your learning?</i></p> <p><i>B: That errm, that actually made me like not do my work and stuff in school and just like, put me down I didn't wanna do my work, I didn't really listen to teachers. So I was more of a 'goodie two shoes' guy before, I was more of like you know, did my work every time then that put me down and like mentally messed me up.</i></p> <p><i>S: Oh errrm.....I got into it in primary cuz.. primary I used to err not really bullied but I used to get taken the mick out of a lot so I started getting into wrestling and then but then when I got in wrestling for the first few months I was messing around just, the bullies that were bullying me, I ended up bullying them. Cuz you know I thought these lot deserve it and after, what you call it, started realising that I was in the wrong and I was doing the same thing as them.</i></p>
External Influences on Educational Engagement	Parental experience	<p><i>R: So, the next part is about parents, Why do your parents think it's so important for you to have an education?</i></p> <p><i>K: ... errm both of my parents are drop outs from year 10. So my mom's from India she dropped out by year 10 and because err culturally they didn't agree to women being in education at that time but now their a bit more evolved but yeah. Umm and so she was a drop out at year 10 and she's seen the fact that she doesn't have the education, she can't go out and do the things she wants to do errrm and then my dad is also a drop out at year 10. He does Islamic teaching so like little kids teaching and it's not well paid at all and he also realises that you do need an education and a lot of jobs around here require you to have like a certain grade in your GCSEs or A levels or something and so...yeah, that's why they think it's important.</i></p>

			<p><i>A: but I do know that like my parents did used to struggle when they first came over. Like my mom was like, so like when she first came over my dad would be at work, I think some days my mom would work, some days she wouldn't and errm she was like in the dark. They didn't have money for electricity at the start when they first came so she was like, she would just like clean in the dark. And that kinda like, it was like, it kinda hit me. She was like sometimes we didn't have enough like food to eat so then like the neighbours, if they had any spare food then like then they would sort of like help.</i></p> <p><i>I: Errm, my mom's actually graduating this year so.... She didn't study when she was younger. She left school at 14 and errm then she just recently like, there like a mature student kind of thing.</i></p> <p><i>B: But errm my parents actually they said just do what you like and also so, they say education is important but also I'm doing cricket as well so they say that's quite important as well.</i></p> <p><i>R: To have like a balance?</i></p> <p><i>B: Yeah. So if you don't do good in your education you've go like your cricket stuff.</i></p> <p><i>S: My dad is from a family of four brothers and my dad's educated in Pakistan and when he started off, no one was educated in his family, they literally lived in like, they lived on a farm when they started off and his sister didn't go to school or anything and his brothers didn't go. He was the only one that used to go cos the school was quite far from his house and it was like a 3 hour walk for him, he's even like showed me how long it takes to get there and he was still going every day and he goes to me look how hard I worked and now he lives here whilst, sadly his 3 brothers are still there but he said it was their choice, they wanted to do that. And my dad even tells me the main reason he got into education is because cos they didn't have that much money back then, he used to have a sister and cos they couldn't get medicine for her and sadly she passed away after a while.</i></p>
		Powerful quote	<p><i>A:a lot of people that I've sort of spoken to or friends that I know have like, I think a lot of the socioeconomic things affected their sort of family life kind of thing and just sort of teachers sort of realising that often it isn't like, someone might be like academically fine, like doing well sort of thing but like other aspects of their life might suffer kind of thing in terms of like, a lot of people I've spoken to or talked to or like friends experiences kind of thing, like they have, academically they are doing fine, but because of the pressure and the stress their sort of mental health suffers because of it. I feel like doing things outside of school, like you know how at school you have things like sports day and maybe like citizenship day, maybe like a glimpse of what life could be like outside of school. So like if someone participates in like a football game, and its not your average boys playing football kind of thing, it's like a girl then they can be realise that is something they can pursue on the future. Like maybe realising that they can have like options and it's not sort of so limited. They don't have to like follow what everybody else has done and I feel like just sometimes I think it's important to let someone see their worth, I feel like it's important to promote it from a</i></p>

			<p><i>young age like self-love and self-care just in the sense of if someone has been around like a sort of I dunno like errm an abusive environment or something, their self- esteem or like self-confidence, isn't in a good place. Sometimes they need support to realise their – I dunno maybe they've grown up like not being able to do the things that everybody else has been able to, just offering them a way to realise that they are worth being able to do what they wanna do and they have those opportunities available too.</i></p>
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*These themes were amended when writing up to produce the final thematic map in chapter 4. This was based on discussions in tutorial and the evidence for each theme. Please see extracts of reflective diary.

A9 EXTRACTS FROM REFLECIVE DIARY

<i>Date</i>	<i>Comments</i>
17.07.19	<p>I completed my interviews today. The girls brought some really interesting views and perceptions. Lots resonated with my own experience but there was the added cultural element that I hadn't considered. They were four very different girls although they shared the same faith/culture. There were definite themes that emerged that were similar across the interviews.</p> <p>Reflections – Aimee</p> <p>Me and this participant seemed to connect on a more personal level. The interview felt much more relaxed and like a conversation. She gave some really reflective answers and seemed to have a genuine interest in the topic herself. I felt at times that she was holding back, perhaps because I was a stranger and there were particular experiences that she did not wish to discuss. I had a sense that A has experienced more challenges than has been highlighted in the interview and this may account for times where she hasn't done as well on exams. Also when she switches subtly from first to third person that made me feel as though perhaps she was talking about a personal experience but at the same time trying to distance herself from it because it was too difficult to talk about and also perhaps so I didn't explore with further questions. A said very little about her father during this interview and that did make me wonder about the relationship with him. Perhaps it was mum that was primary caregiver and therefore that's why she talks about her more. Listening to A made me reflect on my own challenges and how I might have answered some of the questions. A is very reflective for one so young, however, as with all of the participants, I do not think that she will fully understand the impact of disadvantage until she is on her career path and in early adulthood. With all of the participants I have had the thought "you don't know what you don't have until you know what there is" meaning that until they have a full understanding of other people's upbringings or experiences, their own experiences might be normalised therefore they may not see themselves as 'disadvantaged' or 'under privileged'. They also will not realise the significant strength, determination and resilience they have shown. A made me reflect on my experience now and often feeling out of place and having "imposter syndrome". There were some definite parallels with our experiences</p>
18.07.19	<p>Reading around philosophy underpinning IPA. Merleau-Ponty claimed that perceptions of the world come from a position of difference. That it is the individual's experiences and perception of the world that alter their relationship to it This is particularly pertinent to my research and the way that each participant's experiences shaped their relationship to education and relationship with the low SES label. Explains why some groups have poor outcomes and some positive from same groups in society.</p> <p>Foucauldian discourse analysis seemed an attractive and possible research method however I wonder whether at the age and stage of their lives, the participants would be aware of power dynamics. Would they need to be? Would the questions I ask illicit enough information about this? Focus is also only on language.</p>

	<p>Considering changing the wording of “high achieving” as the participants didn’t feel that this was representative of them. Perhaps academically successful? I do wonder whether high achieving makes people think of a straight A student. Once again evidence of the power of language and interpretation.</p>
21.06.19	<p>Discussion around limitation of approach. Recruitment, time, school being a mediator/gatekeeper.</p>
17.10.19	<p>Interviews with Ben and Surayj</p> <p>Reflections Surayj</p> <p>I was really unsure about this participant at first. His answers seemed really short which kind of threw me a little bit but as the interview progressed, he warmed up. After what he told me about being shy, it made sense. He was actually a lovely young man with a really good sense of humour. This interview made me reflect on the difference in experiences for boys and girls living in deprived areas such as this. It resonated with my own childhood and the different challenges faced by my younger brothers in terms of stigma and susceptibility to crime/gangs. Something that also resonated was him talking about his dad teaching him through experience rather than books yet encouraging him to be educated. It turned out that we went to the same primary school and I feel that after this point in the interview he relaxed with me a little bit more. I didn’t tell the participant this, but I live in the same area and understand a lot of the ways he felt about wider society’s perceptions of people who live there. At the end of the interview, he asked me lots of questions about my career path and how I felt about my grades and shared with me that he was “shook” (worried) about his A level grades. I was able to share that I felt exactly the same way and encouraged him not to give up on his aspirations to do medicine even if he doesn’t get the grades he wanted.</p> <p>Reflections Ben</p> <p>This interview was difficult for me at first because of B’s shyness and closed answers in the beginning. In the moment I wasn’t sure what to make of it but when he explained his experiences it made sense. I didn’t feel as comfortable further exploring personal experiences and questions which was a shame because I perhaps missed out on valuable insights. However, he did start to open up towards the end. Following the interview, B shared that he would like to apply to university I attend and took the opportunity to ask me some questions about my career path. On reflection, I think meeting with a group of participants of mixed backgrounds and sharing my story as part of a focus group and then conducting follow-up interviews with those who met my criteria, would have helped the participants to feel more comfortable. Particularly with B being shy, I should have conducted some icebreakers beforehand to make him feel more comfortable. Also perhaps checking whether the school had shared the interview schedule was shared ahead of time so that the interviewee knew what to expect. The recruitment process was very reliant on the schools and given that connectedness appears to be such an important factor for B and other participants, this may have limited the process and data.</p>

20/05/20	Discussion in tutorial about themes. Culture and tradition did not fit with a challenge. It was a significant barrier for the young women but didn't quite fit as a challenge. Tutor and I were talking about forms of capital and it dawned on me to that this was a significant theme linking three superordinate themes. Therefore, challenges has now become capital with financial constraints (economic), confidence (cultural) uncertainty about the future (social). Reflecting on other themes. Reading the evidence and seeing how some themes are linked and how some overlap. Considering whether some of the evidence in meaningful experiences fits more with valuing learning and development.
26.05.20	So, I have just completed the two subordinate themes for Identity. The third theme in this section was compassion. Reading through the other two, I am wondering how strong this theme is by comparison and I am considering removing it. I have created a working document for chapter four and so will make the changes on this document. Although I think that all of the young people were resilient, compassionate and determined, within the constraints of this word count, the strongest and most prominent themes will have to take priority. I just hope that it doesn't take anything away from the research. I created the working document so that I can tentatively remove it and it back in if I later decide it would add value. Again, something to discuss in tutorial on Friday.