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**An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Educational  
Experiences of Three Young People, Detained or Placed in Custody, in a  
Secure Children's Home.**

**By:**

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## **Abstract**

Despite national and international legislation that enshrines the right for children and young people to have access to good quality education, educational provision and outcomes in the secure estate are considered poor. This thesis seeks to explore the educational experiences of three young people in a secure children's home (SCH). I have done this in order to provide a platform for voices that are often overlooked and to explore potential ways in which educational provision within the secure estate can be improved.

Participants were recruited in a collaborative effort between myself and the headteacher at the SCH. I interviewed each young person once. I used an unstructured interview format, seeking to dynamically engage with the double-hermeneutic, in order to deepen my understanding of each young person's educational experience. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and the transcriptions were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Analysis generated three super-ordinate themes: Nurture, Control, and The Utility of Education. Sub-ordinate themes for Nurture explored the importance of a bespoke curriculum tailored to individual need, relationships within the SCH, and how my participants experienced an absence of nurture when recollecting their experiences in mainstream education. Sub-ordinate themes for Control explored how participants experienced confinement, how they experienced and responded to power being exerted over them, and how the controlling powers of the SCH led to experiences of meaningful engagement with learning tasks or social interactions. Sub-ordinate themes for the Utility of Education explored how participants experienced education as leading to the meaningful reward of employment, how educational engagement affected their experience of temporality, and how education gave them an opportunity to experience feelings of success. The knowledge generated here should be considered idiographic and specific to the time and space in which it was generated.

The responses of my participants were presented in dialogue with relevant existing academic literature in order to seek a deeper interpretation of their responses. This analysis led to the generation of recommendations for educational psychology practice and future research. Recommendations include a greater focus on the embodied experiences of young people within the secure estate, a consideration of how relationships are experienced within the secure estate and how both can impact on how education is experienced in this environment.

## Definitions

I may sometimes mention 'England and Wales' instead of the UK. This is because Westminster government policies from the Ministry of Justice only have power over these two countries and not Scotland or Northern Ireland (The justice system and the constitution, n.d.).

Secure Estate is a collective term that refers to both secure children's homes, secure training centres and young offender institutions (Gyateng, Moretti, May & Turnbull, 2013).

Secure Children's Homes are places where the government houses children aged between 10 and 17, who have either been sentenced or detained by the Youth Justice Board, put on remand, or placed there on the grounds of welfare by the courts or local authority (Department for Education (DfE), 2016).

A Looked After Child (LAC) is a child who is in care and is looked after by their local authority. They may live in a residential children's home, in foster care, or in the secure estate (Children's Act, 1989).

When I use the phrases child-centred or person-centred education, I am referring to an approach that places the learner at the heart of the educational process. Here the teacher relinquishes power to the student, in the understanding that the student will take responsibility for their own development and know best how to achieve it. The teacher's role is to support the student's own self-led growth in a non-directive, empathetic manner (Gantongi, 2007).

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1: Introduction

In this introduction, I will first outline my reasons for undertaking this piece of research. I will then explore my positionality in order to further account for my personal reasons for this piece of work. Finally, I will outline the general structure of my thesis and the contents of my appendices.

This thesis seeks to explore the educational experiences of three young people placed within a SCH. The present academic literature relating to education within the secure estate is effective in outlining both risk and protective factors linked to education and youth offending. However, its largely quantitative focus means that the voices of those in the secure estate are often overlooked (Tam, Heng & Rose, 2007). In addition, educational provision and outcomes within the secure estate are considered poor (Rogers, Simonot, & Wilson, 2014; Senior, 2015; Taylor, Charlie, 2016). This thesis aims to take a person-centred, qualitative approach to exploring education within the secure estate in order to be better able to advocate for the needs of those within it. I hope that this, in turn, allows me to suggest ways forward to improve the educational experiences of those within the secure estate.

## 1.2: Positionality

My positionality is my individual worldview, based on influences from my socio-cultural, historical and economic situation (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). I include a consideration of my positionality here as part of my commitment to transparency and reflective practice within this thesis. I believe that it helps to contextualise why I chose to work with young people in a SCH, why I focused on their educational experiences in particular, and why I chose to use IPA as a methodology.

I have grown up in a politically active, left-wing family interested in promoting equality and socialism within society. Due to this, I have a long-standing interest in social justice issues. I am a trainee educational psychologist with prior experiences working as a TA supporting young people with learning difficulties and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). I also worked as a teacher within the Teach First programme. I have spent much of my post-undergraduate life working to support the needs of young people who are often socially marginalised. It is these factors that led me to want to conduct research with young people in the secure estate, as a marginalised group that I had not yet worked with or tried to support.

My life experiences led me to want to conduct qualitative, person-centred research within the secure estate as a way to advocate for marginalised voices within this system. My interest in working within a SCH originated with a visit to a SCH within my local community. Despite having lived and worked in this community for over ten years, I had no awareness of its existence, emphasising to me the nature of young people in the secure estate as a hidden and overlooked group of people within society (Tam et al., 2007).

I felt that a particular focus on education would be valuable as there is a lack of qualitative studies focusing on educational experiences of young people within the secure estate. Furthermore, I felt that by focusing on educational experience rather than experience as a whole, I could avoid a situation where my research becomes focused on past traumas or takes a deficit focused turn, in the hope that it would focus on the here-and-now of my participants lives. I hoped that this allowed my participants to express something positive about their lives within the secure estate. I also hoped that it has allowed me to suggest positive ways forward to improve the lives of those within the secure estate.

My interests in IPA stem from a growing realisation that more postmodern methodologies (e.g. discourse analysis), understand experiences as discursive constructions rather than realities (Willig, 2008). IPA, with its grounding in the modernist philosophy of phenomenology, considers subjective experience to have an

essence that we can, in part, begin to access through careful analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Whilst I will talk about this distinction in more depth in my methodology, I think it is important to acknowledge that my initial attraction to IPA stemmed from this key difference. I felt it was important to consider the marginalised voices of my participants as real, not merely as linguistic constructions. This was because I felt that it would give their experiences weight and importance.

### **1.3: Structure of my thesis**

Chapter 2 presents a critical literature review, first providing a historic context to education in the secure estate and then outlining main academic debates related to this area. I argue that, whilst the vastly quantitative focus of the current academic literature has identified both protective and risk factors relating to education within the secure estate, it does not allow for a consideration of pupil voice. I conclude this chapter with a justification for this study.

Chapter 3 outlines of the methodology of this study. It is split into two sections: design and procedure. In the design section I outline the ontological and epistemological foundations of my research before critically considering my chosen methodology, IPA. I then go on to consider several methodologies that I ultimately rejected, ethical considerations and how I maintained quality in my research. The procedure section considers participant recruitment, data collection, equipment used, the contents of my research diary, and how I analysed the data.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of my analysis, which is then discussed through dialogue with existing literature.

Chapter 5 concludes this thesis by considering the limitations of the study, recommendations for further research and implications for educational psychology practice.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1: Introduction**

In this literature review I will first present statistics on the youth offending population and specific information regarding SCHs. I will then outline a child's right to education, as delineated by legislation, juxtaposing this with an exploration of the educational provision that can be found in the secure estate, which is understood as poor (Taylor, Charlie, 2016). I will seek to explain the reasons for this poor provision through a brief historical analysis of discourses around youth offending and education. Following this I will outline the dominant themes of in the current academic literature, acknowledging its vastly quantitative focus. I will then present the qualitative literature in this area, arguing that it can contribute a nuanced and child-centred understanding of why education is often unsuccessful in the secure estate, in the hope that we can find ways to move forward positively. I will conclude by arguing for the value of this project and what I hope it will contribute to the academic literature already published on education in the secure estate.

### **2.2: Statistics on the young offender population**

As of March 2015, the secure estate held 1037 young people, mostly in young offender's institutes (for those aged between 15 and 17) (Youth Justice Board, 2016). Young people in the secure estate often have complex needs and experience many types of disadvantage; examples of this include higher rates of substance abuse, mental health issues, school exclusion (Blyth, Newman, & Wright, 2009). Young offenders are more likely to be from poor and minority backgrounds (Sullivan, 2004). Young offenders also tend to perform academically poorer when compared to those non-offending members of the population (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). They are more likely to be labelled with learning difficulties and truanting (Altschuler & Brash, 2004).

Those who leave the secure estate once their sentence has been fulfilled have a 75 per-cent re-offending rate (Ministry of Justice, 2010). This has led to the Howard League, the oldest penal reform charity in the world, to argue that the youth justice system does not work (The Howard League, 2012).

### **2.3: Secure Children's Homes**

There are 15 SCHs across England and Wales (DfE, 2016). Reflecting the growing privatisation of the public sector, three of the SCHs in England are owned and run by G4S (n.d.). As of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2016, there were 210 children in SCHs across England and Wales, up from 205 in 2015 (DfE, 2016). This shows that the SCH population is a tiny minority of the overall children held in custody in the secure state. 48 per-cent of children in SCHs are either detained, sentenced or placed there by the youth justice board, 8% are placed by the local authority due to criminality, and 50% are placed by local authority due to issues of welfare. In terms of the gender split, males are in the majority with 58% to 42% females. 78% of young people are detained for less than 6 months (DfE, 2016).

Overall, the number of children accommodated in SCHs has decreased from 221 in 2011, however, the occupancy rates have gone up from 70% to 83% (DfE, 2016). Ellicott (2013) argues that this is due to the austerity regime, from 2002 to 2012, 12 SCHs were closed and the 40% less beds were commissioned by the Youth Justice Board (YJB). This reduction in places has been justified by the government through the notion that SCHs are seen as a 'last resort', expensive to run and geographically isolating for the young person placed there (with many placed far away from their homes); with Local Authorities (LAs) preferring specialist foster carers or small residential homes providing privately funded therapy (Mooney, Statham, Knight, & Holmes, 2012). However, the Howard League (2012) argue that, as SCH provide high standards of rehabilitation and care when compared to the rest of the secure estate, these closures are having a negative impact.

## **2.4: Rhetoric and Reality: A Child's Right to Education and the Secure Estate**

To look at the acts that have been passed, both internationally and domestically, would give an initial picture of universal, equal, and high-quality education for all in the UK. Internationally, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (which has been ratified by the UK, among 192 other countries) states that “all segments of society, in particular parents and children”, should “have access to education” (The United Nations, 1989). It goes on to state that education should develop “the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” (The United Nations, 1989). In the United Kingdom, the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) states that “all children and young people are entitled to an appropriate education...this should enable them to achieve their best” (p. 92). It also states that, if a child or young person is in youth custody, the local authority “must promote the fulfilment of [their]...learning potential” and, where relevant, “special educational provision should be put in place as soon as possible” in order to “meet the educational needs of all detained persons” (p. 226). Furthermore, the Equality Act (2010) enshrines in law that no disabled person be discriminated against in their access to education.

Unfortunately, the rhetoric of the documents outlined above and the reality of how they are enacted, particularly in the youth justice sector, diverge considerably. Educational provision and outcomes in the secure estate are considered poor (Taylor, Charlie, 2016). As Rogers et al. (2014) and Senior (2015) attest, only a tiny proportion of young people leave prison with Level 2 qualifications (which are equivalent to GCSE grades 4 to 9) or higher.

Charlie Taylor (2016), in his recent governmental review of the youth justice system states that many workers within the secure estate do not have the specialist training they need and that teaching styles within the secure estate are often outdated. Charlie Taylor (2016) reports of an educational culture in which there is a lack of aspiration, with many feeling that the young people within the secure estate are incapable of

positive change. Charlie Taylor (2016) feels that these issues are exacerbated by staff shortages within the justice system.

Furthermore, education and educational outcomes in the secure estate are vastly under-researched, with the government not collecting data on educational outcomes in the secure estate (Stephenson, 2007; Youth Justice Board, 2016). This makes it hard to explore potential causes and solutions for this issue. In addition, it could suggest a lack of interest in creating positive change in the education system of the secure estate.

### **2.5: Youth Offending and the 'Punitive Turn': Socio-Cultural Attitudes Towards Youth Offending in England and Wales. The Victorian Era to Present.**

To help understand why education in the secure estate is poor, we must first situate childhood, both philosophically and historically. Here, childhood will be understood as a social construction, acknowledging that, outside of chronology, there is no 'truth' to childhood, only socio-culturally developed and agreed upon understandings of what childhood is (Davin, 1999). When childhood is understood as not fixed, but contested and mutable, we can explore the ways in which the child as 'criminal' is understood in the UK, and how this has led to such poor educational provision.

The concept of 'childhood' emerged during the nineteenth century, before this, children were understood as little adults, punishable by law in the exact same way as adults and expected to work the same jobs (Dunbabin, 2011). With the emergence of childhood as a discrete, chronologically based identity, came morally fuelled concepts of acceptable childhood behaviour (Lavalette & Cunningham, 2002).

Children who did not abide by the laws of the land or conform to Victorian notions of good behaviour were seen as delinquents; the root causes assumed to be bad parenting, poor education and a lack of punishment and discipline for wrongdoing (Shore, 1999). The identity of the 'good' child versus the 'delinquent' child often fell along class lines, with the genteel middle class 'good' child supposedly embodying

values such as virtue, homeliness, and innocence and the working class 'delinquent' child as too knowing, independent and defiant of authority (Brown, 2005). Delinquency increasingly became linked to neglect over the course of the nineteenth century, with the state reacting through a supposed remedy of discipline, punishment and didactic education (Brown, 2005).

Whilst much of our rhetoric around children has changed in the intervening years, our rhetoric around youth crime has remained remarkably static. Though the term delinquent has been substituted for young offender, these children are still predominantly working class and punishment and disciplinary correction through the judicial system is still seen as the remedy (Perry, 2012). This attitude is reflected in our laws. The United Nations (UN) (2008) views the UK as a poor upholder of children's rights, in relation to youth offending. The UN advises that the age of criminal responsibility should be no less than 12, however in the UK it is 10 (The United Nations, 2007; Age of Criminal Responsibility, 2016). The UN advises that children should not be tried in an adult court (The United Nations, 2007). However, in the UK children can be tried in the crown court if the crime they are accused of is expected to lead to a two-year prison sentence (Youth Justice Legal Centre, 2015).

In recent years, it has been argued that the Victorian disposition towards youth offenders has even strengthened. As Muncie (2008) argues, recent attitudes towards youth offending argue for a "responsibilising mentality" (p. 107) in which children should be held accountable for their own actions. This sentiment was emphasised in the Blair-era, via the 'punitive turn', fuelled by the moral panic resulting from high profile cases such as the murder of James Bulger in 1993 (Muncie, 2008). Bulger's murder symbolised what was felt to be a growing crisis in youth offending and a breakdown of the social order that needed to be combatted through punishment, moralisation and a taking-back of control (Bateman, 2011). During this punitive turn (between 1993 and 2003 youth custodial sentences increased by 90 per-cent (Nacro, 2003).

More recently, we have seen it again, with the response to the 2011 London riots. Here, lengthy prison sentences were justified with a discourse that was very much in keeping with the punitive turn's focus on morality, blame and punishment (Travis & Rogers, 2011). David Cameron said that the rioting was "pure criminality" arguing that the government would be "tough on crime" and blaming the riots on "children without fathers. Schools without discipline ...Crime without punishment" (Cameron, 2011).

## **2.6: The Current Picture: Education Within the Secure Estate**

We currently live in a time of governmental reflection upon the place of education in prisons. The narrative expressed by government shows promise, focusing more on prisoner welfare than discipline and punishment. Coates (2016) in her governmental review of education in prison, argues that education should be at the centre of rehabilitation in prison. She argues that this will encourage aspiration amongst prison staff and inmates in order to reduce costly reoffending rates that are estimated at around £9.5 to £13 billion per annum.

Charlie Taylor (2016) in his report on the youth justice system emphasises the correlations between poor educational attainment and young offending, to suggest that education can be a cure-all, "one of the most effective ways to prevent youth crime" (Taylor, Charlie, 2016, p. 4). Charlie Taylor (2016) goes on to argue that we should "reconceive youth prisons as schools...held to the same standard as other alternative provision schools" (p. 6). Here, he wants to see children receiving a

"bespoke package of support and an education that will address their difficulties and their offending behaviour, as well as giving them the skills, knowledge and qualifications that will help them to succeed when they are released." (Taylor, Charlie, 2016, p. 40).

He also emphasises the importance of these schools making links to parents and the wider community to help with resettlement (Taylor, Charlie, 2016).

However, despite Charlie Taylor's (2016) assertions, Neves (2013) argues that we are instead currently seeing a strain of managerialism become common in youth justice. Managerialism occurs when young offender institutions are less focused on the kind of community rehabilitation that Charlie Taylor (2016) is advocating and more focused on risk management and social control (Neves, 2013). Neves (2013) and Bateman (2014) argue that managerialism has led to a growing disinterest in the notion of prison as a place of rehabilitation, and a general de-politicisation of youth offending which, in turn, has led to an unwillingness to place young people in custody and seek to rehabilitate them. Reflecting this, from 2010 to 2015 there was a 57 per-cent reduction of young offenders in the secure estate (Youth Justice Board, 2016). Bateman (2014, 2015) suggests that this disinterest in rehabilitation has been compounded by the austerity policies of successive Conservative governments, encouraging a reduction in the number of children entering the youth justice system in order to reduce the cost to the tax payer.

How, then, does the contextual understanding of discourse and government policy relating to young offenders help us to understand the shortcomings of education within the secure estate? In order to answer this question, I think it is important to understand the ways in which discourses around justice and education interact at the site of the secure estate.

Wacquant, (2010) invoking Bourdieu's (1994) notions of state governance, conceptualises the state as having a left and a right hand. The left-hand of the state is there to ensure protection to individuals in society by providing welfare, social rights and uplift through education whilst, the right-hand prioritises discipline and obedience as characterised by our judicial system. Lanskey (2015) sees these tensions as exclusionary and inclusionary and argues that the inclusionary educational left hand is limited by the judicial right hand that acts as a barrier to quality, child-centred educational provision in the secure estate.

Ultimately, the historic discourse around delinquency, combined with the turn to managerialism (Neves, 2013), and the "responsibilising mentality" (Muncie, 2008, p.

107) has led to a situation where young people in the secure estate are understood as offenders who need to be punished and disciplined into correcting their behaviours, rather than children with needs (CLINKS, 2011). Austerity, and the depoliticisation of young offending has further exacerbated this problem (Bateman, 2014, 2015). In these discursive conditions, effective rehabilitation through education is ultimately neglected.

Academic and governmental research focusing on education within the secure estate is largely quantitative. This body of research explores educational risk factors and protective factors and how they are correlated with negative and positive outcomes for young people, respectively. Here, I will present this largely quantitative literature and then explore how a more qualitative, person-centred approach to research can help to add to our understanding of this area.

### **2.7: Educational Risk Factors Associated with an Increase in Young Offending**

The YJB (2006) identifies four educationally related areas of risk that they argue are associated with initial or continued offending on the part of young people. These are: detachment from mainstream education, low educational attainment, the influence of school organisation and the impact of being a LAC.

Evidence of detachment is provided by the MORI Youth Survey (2004), which showed that excluded young offenders commit twice as many crimes as those in mainstream education. Furthermore, seven out of ten offenders, first truanted school in Year 6 and committed their first offence age 11 or below (MORI, 2004). 88 per-cent of young offending boys have been excluded from school, and 38% of young offending boys were aged 14 or under when they last attended school (Prime, 2014).

There is wide ranging evidence to suggest that low educational attainment correlates with greater engagement in criminal activity (Elliot & Voss, 1974; Maguin & Loeber, 1996; Polk, 1981; Yoshikawa, 1994). Poor literacy has been shown to be significantly more common among younger offenders than their non-offending counterparts

(Caddick & Webster, 1998). International research also supports the correlation between educational achievement and youth offending. Research from Fergusson and Woodward (2000), Giordano, Cernkovich and Lowery (2004) and Oudekerk, Chauhan and Reppucci (2012), explores educational achievement amongst a female population of young offenders in America, using longitudinal data to show that low academic performance and criminal behaviour are correlated. Oudekerk et al. (2012) use their data to suggest that academic interventions would reduce youth offence in this population. However, I would approach this assertion with caution as it assumes causation, as opposed to correlation. Low academic achievement has also been correlated to a greater risk of recidivism in both America (Loeber & Dishion, 1983; Niarhos & Routh, 1992) and New Zealand (Rucklidge, McLean, & Bateup, 2013).

The influence of the school as an organisation is poorly researched (YJB, 2006). However, the Home Office Crime and Justice Survey (2005) suggests that a school with a poor-quality environment (e.g. low-quality leadership, discipline, relationships with parents), is a risk factor that can lead to anti-social behaviour, which has in-turn been linked to young offending.

With regards to LAC, it is widely understood that LACs find it harder to access education (Fletcher-Campbell, 1997). If a LAC becomes detached from education, they are then vulnerable to a breakdown of their foster placement, raising the likelihood of them 'falling through the gaps' of care between education and social services (YJB, 2006). Darker, Ward and Caulfield (2008) observe that, LACs are slightly more likely to offend than non-LAC children, making them a particularly important group to support educationally. Furthermore, Darker et al. (2008) note that, if a LAC has a history of offending behaviour, support services provided by the local authority to assist young people in recidivism are ineffective.

Stephenson (2005) highlights three main risks of on young people once they have received a custodial sentence. Firstly, it further detaches those already at risk of being detached from education (exacerbated by the fact that schools can remove young offenders from their roll call once they are sentenced). Secondly, the setting in which

the young person is learning is so far removed from mainstream life that it is very hard for any learning to be applied. Finally, the rule-following and disciplinarian structure undermines the development of any decision-making and self-planning skills. In addition to these three, Smeets (2014) notes that information is not effectively passed between schools and the secure estate, leading to insufficient information about their specific learning needs. This is further impacted by low expectations amongst teachers and education being seen as a low priority amongst staff members (Smeets, 2014). Therefore, once a young person has entered the secure estate, their educational experiences are further undermined.

## **2.8: Educational Protective Factors Associated with a Reduction in Young Offending**

Researchers also explore how good quality education can help to reduce young offending. It is important to notice that many of the suggestions for educational improvement in the secure estate outlined below appear designed to promote the left hand of the state (with its focus on welfare, social rights and uplift) whilst mitigating the effects of the right hand (Wacquant, 2010).

Positive mainstream school influences can be seen as a protective factor to reduce young offending (YJB, 2006). Evidence suggests that schools can support young people in planning their own lives, and that this has a positive impact on anti-social behaviour (YJB, 2006). Another study suggested that where relationships between schools and youth offending teams (YOTs) were strong, school staff perceived transition to be more effective (Stephenson, 2005). Furthermore, there is a range of evidence that correlates passive, neglectful, or harsh parenting with youth offending (Farrington, 1992; Rutter, 1998; Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992). Good bonds between parent and child have been shown to act as protective factors to youth offending (Farrington, 1992). Thus, if school can promote effective parenting via a good relationship, they can help reduce youth offending.

In Great Expectations, a document released by the charity, the Prisoners Education Trust (PET) (Taylor, Claire, 2016), ten recommendations are suggested to improve

education for young offenders. These recommendations clearly aim to improve the educational milieu within the secure estate in order to mitigate against the risk factors outlined by the YJB (2006). They are as follows:

- 1) Continued reductions in the children and young adult population in custody.
- 2) A “joined up approach” (p. 3) with a lead worker from the Ministry of Justice drawing together different views and research.
- 3) A flexible and bespoke focus on education fulfilling individual need, instead of the current fixed approach on 30 hours of entitlement and fulfilling outcome requirements.
- 4) Modern and up to date understandings of education and pedagogy focusing on positive change.
- 5) Better recruitment policies to ensure quality teaching staff.
- 6) A person-centred focus to learning that encourages participation on the part of the young person and participation on the part of the family.
- 7) Using sports and arts to encourage disengaged learners.
- 8) Promote effective digital learning.
- 9) A varied and aspirational learning journey that makes use of distance learning in places such as colleges.
- 10) An effective and well-planned resettlement strategy.

In addition to this, another charity, the Education Development Trust (Elwick, Davis, Crehan, & Clay, 2013) have made several recommendations to improve the quality of education in the secure estate. Many are similar to the ten recommendations proposed by PET but others include high staff ratios, mentors who support the young person after they are released, and local provision so the young person is not removed from their family.

The notion of a more bespoke and individualised education, based on need rather than outcome, is vital when we consider the low levels of engagement in education within the secure estate. Currently, of the 30 hours young people are supposed to use for education, on average they are only receiving 17 due to refusal or disciplinary

procedures (Taylor, Charlie, 2016). A bespoke approach could also lead to an understanding of education as therapeutic rather than directive and based around discipline (Adler et al., 2016). The introduction of nurture groups, that allow adults to model good relationships, could be relevant here and is advised by Claire Taylor (2016). Hobbs and Hook (2001), provide evidence to show that custody can lead to positive change, should the right interventions be implemented (such as those that support employability and provide a sense of achievement and independence).

Furthermore, the promotion of an inclusive education that involves family members has strong evidence to support it. Hunter, Skrine, Turnbull, Kazimirski and Pritchard's (2013) review of the literature suggests that family support can help individuals transition out of prison. Evidence suggests prisoners who maintain contact with their families show less desistance and greater resilience (Barry, 2010; Cid & Marti, 2012; Seaman, Turner, Hill, Walker, & Stafford, 2005). Contact with families is also useful for practical reasons as it means that the prisoner is more likely to have a place to stay when they are released, have access to financial support and have greater employment opportunities (Malloch, 2013). Furthermore, improved parenting is correlated with a reduction in re-offending (Sapouna, Bisset, & Conlong, 2011). There is clearly work to be done here, as the literature shows that only 37 per-cent of boys in the secure estate said it was easy for family and friends to see them; 21% saying they receive no visits whatsoever (Prime, 2014).

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of literature around how quality education is actually being promoted and implemented in the secure estate. Though there is currently a big emphasis in government rhetoric on placing quality education at the heart of prison reform, in reality the educational provision is considered poor (Taylor, Charlie, 2016). Only a tiny proportion of young people leave prison with Level 2 qualifications or higher (Rogers et al., 2014; Senior, 2015). The research that has been done here is outlined below.

Positive experience of education has been shown to be important in raising prisoners' educational engagement (Clements, 2004; Hughes, 2004). Wilson and Logan's (2006)

work supports this assertion, suggesting that prisoners are more likely to engage with music and art interventions than with literacy and numeracy. They argue that this is because prisoners are more likely to have experienced prior failure in literacy and numeracy (Wilson & Logan, 2006). Anderson and Overy (2010) provide evidence that highlights the importance of positive educational experiences within the secure estate. They take pre-and-post interview measures to provide evidence that music and art interventions improve young offenders' educational engagement (Anderson & Overy, 2010).

Though I was unable to find any papers on peer education and support relating to youth offending, in the adult sector some research has been done. Devilly, Sorbello, Eccleston and Ward (2005), argue that we should see prisoners, not as passive beings, but as great resources capable of supporting each other to improve their own outcomes. This idea seems to be supported by the evidence. In their systematic review of 57 studies, Bagnall et al. (2015), provide evidence to show that peer education in prisons is associated with health improvements and emotional resilience.

### **2.9 Why Take a Qualitative Approach?**

The quantitative research on education within the secure estate has helped us to become more aware of the risk and protective factors surrounding young people in this setting. However, it does not allow for a qualitative, more person-centred approach, where the researcher listens to the voices of the young people and the relevant adults in their lives. By solely focusing on the quantitative literature we run the risk of understanding education in the secure estate through the overly simplistic dichotomy of risk and protective factors. Either the young person finds it hard to access education and this leads to negative outcomes for them, or they are supported to engage in education and there is a positive impact.

By gathering the voices of young people in research, we will be better able to realise their dreams, desires, wants and opinions. We will be able to start answering questions around *why* young offenders struggle to attain good educational outcomes.

These are issues that are vital to confront in order to overcome problems with education in the secure estate. These issues are all the more pressing when we acknowledge the fact that young offenders' voices are rarely heard or acknowledged, and often ignored (Lane, Lanza-Kaduce, Frazier, & Bishop, 2002; Tam et al., 2007). Furthermore, listening to the voices of young offenders may help to challenge the notion that they need to be punished and promote an understanding of them as individuals with needs and aspirations (CLINKS, 2011). The limited qualitative research that is currently out there gives us an insight into the wants and needs of this, often overlooked, population.

The qualitative approach can help to argue for an eco-systemic understanding of children where we support their teachers to support the child. This is in contrast with quantitative studies that tend to focus on within-child factors and correlations. Hayden's (2008) work, for example, draws upon a case study of teachers working in a SCH. Here they complain of the lack of information that the child arrives with. They feel that this is a large barrier in providing a contextualised and effective programme of work for young people that connects with their prior learning.

Qualitative work can also be effective in critiquing normalised discourses in order to promote social justice and eco-systemic understandings. Hayden (2008) observes another teacher who states that the quality of education is not important to social workers as long as they are "off the street" and "into education" (p. 30). Shaw (2012), echoes this criticism of social worker attitudes in her qualitative study on LACs and youth offending. She notes that social workers had a tendency to blame young people for their own behaviour, seeing it as within-person and not acknowledging the wider eco-systemic factors that may lead to their behaviour. Shaw (2012) argues that we should promote a plurality of understanding in why LACs behave the way they do in order to promote greater tolerance and encourage better outcomes for these children.

As discussed previously, Lanskey's (2015) qualitative research notes the fundamental dissonance between educational discourse and judicial discourse and, in coming

together under the same roof, the tensions that lie therein. This was something her participants noted in their responses:

“They let you tick off the GCSEs you want to work towards, but at the end of the day when you get put into some place like I have, like, tuition, they don’t give you that choice . . . I didn’t actually learn anything. I did a bit of work each week, you know, and got home. That was pretty much it. You don’t get a voice, you just get what you get . . . when it comes to educational terms. (Ed).”

“They quite frankly said the only courses we have is either mechanics or IT. I’ve already done my IT in school. Mechanics don’t interest me at all. (Jack)”

“I think that for some people it clearly isn’t a good idea to put them in a place like that ‘cause they don’t end up doing much there ... I was more behaved in mainstream than how I was at that school. (Robin).” (pp. 576-577).

This leads to the majority of the students seeing their educational opportunities as narrow, controlled by the prison authority, and immutable causing them to become disengaged and drop out (Lanskey, 2015).

Qualitative research is valuable in providing an insight into the experiences of young offenders. Holligan’s (2013) work, for example, goes a great way in humanising the experiences of young offenders. Faced with the dehumanising label of criminal, we often overlook the distress and pain that young people who are incarcerated feel. In his interviews with an unspecified number of 16 to 18-year-old boys, he draws out several themes (through thematic analysis); separation and anxiety, coping strategies, prison a refuge, and pecking orders in prison. Below is one of the responses given for theme 3, *Prison as ‘Refuge’*.

“Going in here got me away from it all or I’d be doing a murder on my dad who sexually abused me. It’s good, but no good. I’d rather be in my own house not locked up 23 hours a day. You get used to it. Because we are young offenders if

they were open there would be too much fighting. I like watching *Big Bang Theory*, going to the gym and reading *Nuts*. (John)" (p. 371).

Through this, Holligan (2013) unveils a complex array of emotions that reconceptualise the young offender as someone going through trauma and using violence to protect themselves in prison. He argues that, only through attempting to understand and respect the voices of young offenders can we work with them to reduce recidivism.

In listening to the views of young offenders around education, Little (2015) continues this work, showing that when young people are given responsibility, a chance to leave the prison for periods of time and positive learning opportunities, they can help remould previous negative connotations around education. However, he concedes that education in the secure estate is often a form of control borne out of legal obligations rather than a genuine need to learn.

Tam et al. (2007) again, in listening to the voices of people who work with young offenders and the young offenders themselves suggest several recommendations based on their work. One is to provide mentoring to new staff to ensure that the workforce is empathetic to those in custody. Another is to make sure there are pro-actively teacher led, open channels of communication between teachers and young offenders and opportunities for peer supervision for young offenders.

Lane et al. (2002), in their findings from interviews with young offenders in Florida, also observe tensions between education and the judicial system. They note that provision in this setting was effective when it gave the young offenders hope (e.g. providing life skills or counselling). Disciplinary procedures, such as when the young people were sanctioned, were shown not to have a positive attitude on attitude or behaviour.

## **2.10: Justification for this Study**

A critical exploration of the literature related to education within the secure estate has led me to investigate the following research question:

*How do three young people, detained or placed in custody, experience education within a secure children's home?*

This proposed question, and research project, is highly relevant. We live in a time of governmental reflection upon the place of education in both young offender institutions and adult prisons (Coates, 2016; Taylor, Charlie, 2016). Good quality education within the secure estate is seen as "one of the most effective ways to prevent youth crime" (Taylor, Charlie, 2016, p. 4). Despite this, education within the secure estate is considered poor (Stephenson, 2007).

Furthermore, there are clear gaps within the current body of research. Its main focus is on quantitative studies that outline educationally related risk and protective factors for young offending. However, there are very few qualitative studies that seek to explore why young offenders find it difficult to access education and how they feel their educational lives can be improved. Whilst I welcome both Coates (2016) and Charlie Taylor's (2016) emphasis on putting education at the centre of prison reform neither report looks at how student voice can be incorporated into education, what students perceive as the barriers to education and how they believe they would better access it.

With this thesis, I hope to put student voice at the heart of my understanding of education within the secure estate. As the research of academics such as Tam et al. (2007) and Lane et al. (2002) demonstrate, listening to the voices of young people can reveal important insights into their experiences. I hope that, by taking a qualitative approach, I can begin to understand why educational outcomes are poor in the secure estate in the hope of finding positive ways forward.

This is an important area for the profession of educational psychology as it links to many of our core professional values, including promoting positive outcomes for all young people and safeguarding the interests of vulnerable young people (British Psychological Society, 2009). To develop better quality education in the secure estate promotes greater inclusivity by offering young offenders the skills and training they need to become integrated into society and not reoffend. To seek the voices of marginalised young people and advocate for their rights is also a vital part of our job.

Finally, I was unable to find a single IPA study, published in an academic paper, that explored educational experiences within the secure estate. I hope that, by looking at this topic through a new methodological lens, I will be able to contribute a new perspective to the existing body of academic literature.

### **2.11: Conclusion**

In this literature review I have historically tracked the socio-political development of the discourse around young offenders. I argue that young offenders are understood as individuals who need to be punished rather than supported, and that this explains why educational provision in the secure estate is poor. I go on to explore the current academic literature relating to education within the secure estate and how its vastly quantitative methodological lens encourages us to acknowledge both risk and protective factors relating to education and young offending. I then discuss the burgeoning field of qualitative research in the secure estate and how, with its person-centred focus, it has begun to explain why students find it hard to access education within the secure estate. I argue that, by putting student voice at the centre of this current piece of research, I hope to understand why education in the secure estate is poor, from the student's perspective, in order to find positive ways forward.

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology**

This chapter will outline the methodology used in this research project. I have separated the chapter into two parts.

The first section will look at how the thesis was designed, including a discussion, evaluation and an exploration of the appropriateness of the research methods chosen. It will also focus on ethical considerations relating to this research project and a section on how I have sought to achieve quality assurance in my research project.

The second section focuses on a procedural outline of this research project. Here I will examine the sampling method, how the data was collected and how it was analysed.

### **3.1.0: Design**

#### **3.1.1: Phenomenology**

Ontology is the study of what exists and what constitutes reality, epistemology is the study of knowledge, what knowledge is and how we can acquire it (Willig, 2008).

In this section I will provide a brief overview of the historical development of phenomenological ontology and epistemology. I will then explore how researchers have attempted to operationalise these philosophical foundations into the interpretative phenomenological analysis methodology.

Phenomenology is not a fixed and easily definable school of philosophical thought, with many important philosophers having their own interpretation on this school of thought (Gabriella, 2014). However, it could be initially and broadly understood as the study of consciousness or experience (Smith, 2016). The varying contributions of academics and intellectuals to our understanding of phenomenology is documented below.

Whilst Brentano (1874/1995) did not think of himself as a practitioner of phenomenology, he contributed to the movement by re-introducing the concept of intentionality to modern philosophy. Intentionality is the idea that every mental phenomena (e.g. a desire, a belief) is directed at an object (e.g. the believed, the desired) (Brentano, 1874/1995).

Husserl developed phenomenology in the early 1900s (Smith, 2016). He saw phenomenology as a science that, through rigorous analysis, could identify and describe “the essence of consciousness” (Husserl, 1913/2012, p. 32). In developing Brentano’s (1874/1995) ideas around intentionality, he argued that all experiences are experiences of something, and therefore all experiences have intentionality. Husserl (1913/2012) looked to exclude the influence of the outside world from the analysis of experiential structures through a method he called epoché. Here, the practitioner attempts to bracket all preconceived notions and beliefs about the natural world with the aim of reaching, and being able to describe, the lived reality of an experience. Ultimately, he sought to reduce the influence of the outside world to such a point that he was able to study consciousness itself (Smith et al., 2009). This form of phenomenology is now understood as transcendental phenomenology (Langdrige, 2007).

Heidegger (1927/1990), in his hugely influential book *Being and Time*, questioned Husserl’s (1913/2012) ideas around the epoché arguing that, as humans who exist, we are always actively engaged in existing in the world. Thus, rather than trying to bracket the natural world and our relationship to it, it is important to study the phenomena of experience as a part of the natural world.

Through this, Heidegger (1927/1990) developed his own phenomenological ontology. Heidegger (1927/1990) rejected the subject/object dualism of Descartes (1985). Descartes (1985) believed in a distinction between the mind and the body, and therefore the mind and the physical world. This leads to an understanding of the world where there is a subject (who thinks) and the object (which does not). Heidegger

(1927/1990) instead espouses that there are no such distinctions between subjects and objects. Human beings are not subjects cut off from a world of objects. We are part of the world we live in and the ways in which we interpret our experiences (which are shaped by time, space, society, culture, relationships and our embodied nature), are what constitutes our reality. In Heidegger's (1927/1990) understanding, experiences are perpetually interpreted by the experiencer and therefore reality is idiographic, subjective and contested, not fixed or 'real' representations. Due to this, the job of the phenomenologist is to engage in a hermeneutic (or interpretative) analysis of the experience being studied.

Heidegger's (1927/1990) phenomenological ontology shares similarities with a social constructionist ontology. Both support the idea that discourses influence our understanding of the world. However, strict social constructionist thought posits the idea that there is no essential human experience that lies underneath the linguistic constructions that we employ, and that nothing exists beyond discourse (Potter, 1996). Here, ideas such as the self, cognitions, self-identity, and experience are, in themselves, social constructions that do not have an essential reality to them (Burr, 2015). A phenomenological ontology posits that, beneath the linguistic constructions that we use, we can find reality in a person's lived experience and sense of self (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

The phenomenologist accesses epistemological knowledge through hermeneutics. Hermeneutics, is understood as "the art or technique of interpretation or understanding" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 314). This notion was developed by Schleiermacher (1998) who argues that interpretations of any text necessarily incorporate the context in which the text was generated. In this way, both the producer of the text and the interpreter bring their own personal preconceptions, contexts and experiences to an understanding of a text (Smith et al., 2009). Furthermore, Gadamer (1960/1990) argues that the process of interpretation will illuminate preconceptions and that this greater preconceptual awareness will allow the interpreter to become more open to new conceptions of experience that may arise out of the data.

Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2014) primary contribution to phenomenological thought was to put emphasis on the primacy of the body as the vessel through which we interpret our experiences. Merleau-Ponty (1945/2014) also rejected Cartesian dualism (Descartes, 1985), with its separation of mind and body. He posited that experience itself is embodied and thus the body and mind are one. The body is the site through which we experience and communicate with the world, and thus the body constitutes experience. The limitations of the body offer up both constraints and possibilities in terms of how we can interpret any particular experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2014). Thus, our capability to engage in hermeneutics is both given possibilities and limitations by the embodied way we are being-in-the-world.

### **3.1.2: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

IPA was developed as a way to operationalise phenomenological thought into an applied methodology for research (Smith, 1996). However, due to phenomenology's disparate collection of philosophies, IPA does not fit comfortably with all forms of phenomenological thought (Wagstaff et al., 2014). In this section I will outline IPA's methodological conceptions and provide critique. A detailed explanation of how an IPA study is conducted can be found in the Procedure section of this chapter.

IPA is a qualitative research method that looks to examine participant's life experiences through the collection of verbal or textual data (Smith et al., 2009). Data is often collected through interviews, however, focus groups, texts, video or email correspondence can also be used (Langdrige, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). Collected data is analysed in order to develop themes that help the researcher to interpret and make sense of participant experience (Langdrige, 2007).

#### *The Double Hermeneutic*

In phenomenology, language is the way in medium through which we can gain knowledge around the hermeneutic experience of human life (Gadamer, 1989). In IPA,

knowledge is gained through the double hermeneutic. Here the researcher meaning-makes and interprets the responses of the participant, whilst acknowledging that the responses of the participant will be based on the participant's own interpretations and meaning-making around the experience they are communicating. Through this process, the researcher hopes to gain insight into the participant's lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). However, it is important to note that, due to these layers of interpretations, my findings from this thesis do not claim to be the direct experiences of a young person's education within the secure estate. They are instead, my interpretation of the participants' interpretations of their experiences.

### *Ideography*

IPA understands knowledge as idiographic, which is to say, specific to the individual, embodied, specific to a certain time, culture, and space and non-generalizable (Smith et al., 2009). This links to the double hermeneutic because the way in which the participant interprets their experiences is idiographic, as is the way in which the researcher interprets the participants' interpretations (Smith et al., 2009). Due to this, I do not make any general claims that my participants' experiences represent something static and transferable, my research instead attempts to interpret the experiences of my participants at the moment in time and space when I interviewed them (Smith et al., 2009).

### *Reflexivity*

Langdridge (2007) sees reflexivity as an important part of the phenomenological method. He defines it as "the process in which researchers are conscious of and reflective about the ways in which their questions, methods and own subject position might impact on the psychological knowledge produced in a research study" (p. 58 – 59).

Reflexivity is particularly important in qualitative research that stands within a relativist ontology, such as IPA. This is because the researcher acknowledges their part

in the co-construction of experience throughout the interview, the interpretation and analysis of the data. Once the researcher acknowledges their influence on the project, it is vital that they are aware of how it impacts on the research through interpretations that are linked to our personal, cultural, historical and social identity (Etherington, 2004).

In order to make sure I am a reflexive practitioner, I kept a research diary throughout my time working on this thesis. I also discussed my research with my tutor on a regular basis. In my analysis of the data I included reflexive boxes that present reflections on my interpretations and acknowledge how my positionality influenced my analysis. Finally, in order to support my own reflexivity, I answered Langdridge's (2007) list of reflexive questions prior to carrying out my research. I also answered Langdridge's (2007) list of reflexive questions after carrying out my research to help reflect on the process (see Appendix G).

### **3.1.3: Critical Assessment of IPA**

I chose IPA as a methodology because it seeks to better understand and explore the experiences of others. Unlike post-modern methodologies such as discourse analysis, which only seek to explore language (Potter, 1996), phenomenology ascribes to the view that there is an essential experience beneath the discourse (Smith et al., 2009). I think that this is particularly important in the light of my participants. The experiences of young people in the secure estate are rarely considered in the literature, or in wider society (Lane et al., 2002; Tam et al., 2007). I hope that, by employing a methodology that considers their experiences to be real, I have been able to demonstrate my view that these experiences are important and worth considering.

Whilst I feel that IPA is the most coherent methodology in relation to my ontology and epistemology and will be most useful in answering my research question, it does have limitations.

Firstly, IPA assumes that, as researchers, we can reach towards a greater understanding of experience through discipline and rigour. Due to this, the IPA researcher could be accused of prioritising their own interpretation of their participants' meaning making as of greatest value. This, in turn, could lead to the marginalised participant voices I am trying to reach becoming more marginalised.

This problem can never be truly overcome; participant responses will be analysed from my standpoint and, through this my own perspective will necessarily be prioritised. However, I believe that, by focusing on my own transparency and reflexivity throughout this thesis, I can present an authentic account of my interpretations that acknowledges this issue. At the same time, I still hope to use my reflexive skills to begin to uncover, or at least suggest, likely possibilities relating to, some of the essential components of my participants' experiences

Linked to the above point, IPA's understanding of language may also be considered problematic in its assumption that language is able to represent real, lived-in experience. Discursive psychologists may argue that instead language constructs reality and that language can only ever tell us how an individual talks about an experience rather than about the experience itself (Willig, 2008).

Langdrige (2007) also critiques IPA for only acknowledging language and text as ways of generating data. He argues that this can exclude potential participants who communicate in other ways or find it difficult to articulate themselves using language.

Another critique IPA is that it comes into conflict with the concept of ideography upon which it is based. Langdrige (2007) argues for maximum homogeneity between participants so that shared experience can be explored. Furthermore, handbooks on IPA by Langdrige (2007) and Smith et al. (2009) emphasise the importance of subsuming themes generated from individual participant data into super-ordinate themes that span across all participants, even if this means that previously generated themes are discarded so that there is a consistent super-ordinate theme. Neither

acknowledges the fact that this generalising procedure generates conflict with IPAs claims of idiography (Wagstaff et al., 2014).

It could be argued that this search for super-ordinate themes is due to phenomenology's Husserlian roots, and that the exploration of super-ordinate themes is an attempt to bring the researcher closer to the common and essential qualities of the phenomenon being explored (Husserl, 1913/2012). However, IPA's eschewing of Husserlian methodology (e.g. the epoché) problematizes any claims it could have of accessing more transcendental phenomenological knowledge (Smith et al., 2009).

A more fruitful way of overcoming the epistemological conflict outlined above might be to understand IPA as standing within the tradition of hermeneutics. Here IPA would seek to understand participant constructions of experience in relation to the shared environment in which the participants are embedded, in this instance a SCH (Ricoeur, 1978). Thus, the search for super-ordinate themes in this context would be done in order to understand how the data collected is influenced by wider 'horizons of understanding', created by shared social contexts (Gadamer, 1989).

#### **3.1.4: A Consideration of Some Rejected Methodologies**

Here I will consider alternate methodologies in order to justify my decision to use IPA. I will demonstrate why, due to my epistemology, ontology and research question it is the most appropriate methodology for this study.

Quantitative research methodologies were rejected for several reasons. Firstly, the educational experiences of children within the secure estate are not directly measurable, making quantitative methodologies inappropriate (Hagen, 2014).

Furthermore, due to the small amount of young people within the secure estate and my limited access to only one SCH, any sample size I could hope to obtain would be too small for statistical analysis or any kind of generalisation to a global population (Morgan, 2008). Finally, quantitative approaches are consistent with a positivist (or

post-positivist) ontology that is not consistent with phenomenological understandings of the world (Paley, 2008).

Qualitative approaches were deemed more appropriate for my question as they are geared towards exploring experience and construction of meaning (Willig, 2008). They do not need to command large sample sizes as they aim to be ideographic, rather than nomographic, exploring individual experience rather than looking for generalities that can approximate phenomenon to an acceptable degree of accuracy (Willig, 2008).

The methodologies that I considered could be appropriate for this research, but ultimately rejected, are as follows.

1. Discourse analysis.
2. Foucauldian discourse analysis.
3. Narrative research.

I will now spend some time reflecting on why I rejected these methodologies and chose IPA for this thesis.

1. Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis rejects the assumptions of cognitive psychology. Whereas cognitive psychology understands language as an approximation of internal cognitions, discursive psychology sees individual perception (including cognitions, objects, events) as constructed by language (Willig, 2008). Here there is no objective reality, instead truths are contested through language, communication and conversation. Discursive psychology aims to explore how participants use language in order to achieve interpersonal goals and manage how they interact with others (Wetherell, 2001).

Discourse analysis (and the social constructionist ontology it is based upon) has similarities with my own ontology; realities are contested and subjective. However, I

chose not to use discourse analysis as it is more in keeping with a social constructionist ontology, rather than the phenomenological ontology that I espouse.

In keeping with the above point, I am interested in giving voice to, and attempting to reach the authentic experiences of my participants, rather than only considering the language that they use. This is because their experiences are real to them and they are often overlooked as a hidden population. I feel that, to give voice to my participants and to emphasise that these experiences are real to the person experiencing them, may be a small act of social justice. If their voices are heard by even a small audience of educationalists, maybe it can lead to tangible improvements in how they experience education.

Discourse analysis would argue that there are no such thing as authentic experiences and would instead focus on analysing the linguistic constructions that my participants use (Willig, 2008). I worry that this will have the reverse effect and that the often-overlooked lived experiences of my participants, continuing to be marginalised.

## 2. Foucauldian discourse analysis

Foucauldian discourse analysis is a variation of Discourse Analysis, however it takes a different focus. Based on the works of Michel Foucault, it explores what different types of discourses are available to different people and how they constitute power-relations and notions of self-identity. Foucauldian discourse analysis looks to critique the worlds created by competing discourses and assess how they affect experience (Willig, 2008).

Foucauldian discourse analysis would be more appropriate than discourse analysis because it can critique the marginalisation of certain discourses, such as those espoused by children in the secure estate. However, for the reasons cited in the previous section, I still feel that IPA is a more appropriate methodology.

### 3. Narrative Research

Narrative research takes the presupposition that we organise our experiences into narratives in order to create meaning and try to interpret the disparate events and happenings that make up our day to day life (McAdams, 1997). McAdams (1997) understands narratives to most often have six features: characters, settings, initiating events, attempts, consequences and reactions. Hiles and Čermák (2008) argue that most of our stories are categorised as romances, comedies, satires or tragedies and that most have a beginning, middle and end.

Out of the rejected methodologies that I considered, I felt that narrative research might be the most appropriate. This is because it gives voice to the narratives of individuals in a way that might empower my participants and promote a more person-centred vision of their education. However, this methodology still focuses on language constructions rather than lived experience (Hiles & Čermák, 2008). This makes it inconsistent with my ontology and epistemology.

#### **3.1.5: Ethical Considerations**

This study adheres to the BPS (2009) ethical guidelines. It has also been given ethical approval by the board of ethics at the University of Sheffield (See Appendices D and E)

All participants gave their informed consent and were provided with a participant information sheet with all necessary information on it so that they knew what they were consenting to (See Appendix F). Whilst it was written to be age-appropriate, the participant information sheet was read to each participant in case they found it difficult to read. I also gave each participant the opportunity to ask questions they had about the research prior to them giving consent. All participants were reminded throughout the process that they could withdraw their participation at any time.

Consent was also received from the SCH headteacher, and the individuals with parental responsibility. For Eric this was his social worker. Adam and Chris' parents had

parental responsibility for them and so consent was obtained from the mothers of both participants.

In order to ensure appropriate protection and well-being of the participants during the interview I recruited participants based on advice from the headteacher of the SCH. I ensured that a member of staff who is trained in positive handling was stationed outside the room. I sought to end the interviews on a positive note by concluding with what I enjoyed about the interview and thanking them. I also aspired to make the interview enjoyable for the participant.

Whilst I intended to return to the SCH to meet with participants one final time to see if participants wanted to discuss any issues or emotions that were raised, at present, I have been unable to gain access. This is due to the fact that my contact, the headteacher, no longer works there. I have contacted the current headteacher and another member of staff at the SCH many times across the year. However, I have received no response.

My ethical considerations are outlined in more detail in Appendix B (my application to the ethics board).

### **3.1.6: Quality in Research**

IPA is a qualitative research method whose epistemological basis rejects positivist notions that there is a fixed reality that can be measured and objectively observed (Langdrige, 2007). Due to this, traditional methods of establishing rigour and quality in research (e.g. internal and external validity, reliability) are epistemologically inconsistent and thus, will not be used in this research project (Yardley, 2008). Instead, I will use Yardley's (2008) guidelines, which were designed with qualitative research in mind. Below I will outline each of Yardley's (2008) guidelines and how I aimed to fulfil them in the development of this thesis. I will re-consider these guidelines after I have analysed my participants' responses, at the end of my Results and Discussion chapter to reflect on how successfully I adhered to them.

- Sensitivity to context.

This guideline emphasises the importance of being critically aware of the theoretical context in which I am working (the IPA methodology and the ontological and epistemological philosophies that underpin it). This guideline also promotes a need to be aware of the socio-economic, cultural and historical contexts in which I am working and how they might influence the ways in which both participant and researcher make sense of their experiences. Finally, there needs to be an understanding of the ways in which researcher and participant co-create meaning, and how this is affected by their relative power balance (Yardley, 2008)

I believe that my emphasis on reflexivity both within this methodology section and within the rest of my research project has helped me to fulfil this guideline. I have aimed to be reflexive and reflective throughout, acknowledging the importance of the various contexts in which I have worked. My consideration of Langdridge's (2007) reflexive questions have also helped to support this aim (See Appendix G).

- Commitment and rigour.

This guideline emphasises the importance of due diligence in the data collection, analysis and write up. Here, the researcher should be competent in their method of data collection and their analysis should be thorough and lead to greater understanding of the subject.

I sought to fulfil this guideline in several ways. In order to prepare for this research project, I read widely about IPA and the philosophy of phenomenology that underpins it. I practiced and honed my phenomenological interview technique, rehearsing the process by interviewing friends. Finally, throughout all parts of this research, I drew upon my seven years of experience working with young people and the knowledge that this has provided (Yardley, 2008)

- Transparency and coherence.

Here Yardley (2008) places importance in a cogent write up that is persuasive and has internal logic. Transparency is seen as an important aspect of this, as the reader will be more likely to find the research persuasive if they can clearly see how the data was collected, how the analysis was conducted and how that links to the reporting of findings.

I ensured that these criteria were fulfilled in the following ways. I made clear transcripts of my data and retained all audio files so that they are available should the marker wish to ensure that I have accurately transcribed the data. I ensured that all of my claims were justified, and that my interpretations engage with academic research. I answered Langdrige's (2007) reflective questions both before and after my data collection and analysis. I kept a research diary, with reflective questions. I will include reflective boxes within my analysis. Finally, I liaised regularly with my supervisor, looking for him to critique and assess my work so that I was able to reflect on it and ensure that it has a high level of coherence.

- Impact and importance.

Yardley (2008) understands this to be the most important of her guidelines. For her, value of research is judged by how it might impact on the ways in which other people think about your subject or behave in relation to your subject. She acknowledges that this influence can be both direct and indirect.

I believe that the very act of listening to my participants (who are so often ignored, marginalised or caricatured by mainstream discourse) and aspiring to articulate their experiences to a wider audience was important. I hope that this challenges the prevalent focus on statistics within research around the secure estate, which does not leave space for the importance of individual experience. I also hope that it has impact and encourages future research to become more child-centred, in the hope that this will place child-wellbeing at the centre of work in the secure estate.

### **3.2.0: Procedure**

#### **3.2.1: Participants**

This study employed purposive sampling to recruit participants. This is because I was looking to explore the experiences of a specific population of people (young people, who have experienced education in a SCH). All participants were either detained or sentenced and placed in custody at the same SCH. Participants were put forward for recruitment by the headteacher. I supported this process by providing the headteacher with the following criteria for recruitment.

- the young person is able to give informed consent.
- the young person actively wants to participate in the project.
- the young person has no known history of trauma within the setting.
- the young person has no history (since they arrived at the SCH) of experiencing distress when working with outside professionals.
- the young person has no history (since they arrived at the SCH) of becoming violent when working with outside professionals.
- the young person has settled into their life at the SCH, feels comfortable in their surroundings and has been there for at least three months.

My participants met these criteria based on judgement by the headteacher of the SCH, rather than myself. This was done for two reasons. Firstly, my access to my participants was limited and I was unable to arrange an extra visit. Secondly, it was based on the understanding that the headteacher knew my participants better than I did. I also acknowledge that, whilst the headteacher knew my participants well, there is some ambiguity in the criteria (e.g. what defines trauma? what defines feeling comfortable?). Due to this, recruitment was based around her interpretation of the criteria, in conjunction with her understanding of my participants.

This SCH was selected because I already had previously worked with the headteacher and she (along with the site manager) had granted permission for the research to take place.

Adam and Eric were 16 and Chris was 15 as of the date on which they were interviewed. Their names have been changed in order to maintain their anonymity. I purposefully asked staff at the SCH to refrain from talking to me about my participants and how they had ended up being placed there. This was because I wanted participants to speak for themselves and be understood on their own terms. I do know, however, that each participant was detained in custody within the SCH by the YJB. I mention this to distinguish them from the young people that are placed in a SCH by the local authority on other grounds, such as welfare.

I had hoped to recruit a mix of male and female participants, as females make up 35 per-cent of the national population of SCHs (DfE, 2016). However, I was unable to recruit any female participants as those available to participate did not fit the above criteria.

For this thesis, I recruited three participants. This is based on the guidance of Smith et al. (2009) who argue that three to six participants should be enough for a student IPA project, allowing me to collect enough data to develop emergent themes and points of difference or similarity.

Based on my chosen methodology and epistemological stance, this work is idiographic and does not claim to seek generalisability. Due to this, I did not need a large participant base, instead I looked for richness in my data (Smith et al., 2009). The project also had a small participant size of three due to the very specific nature of the population I was recruiting from and my limited access to one SCH. Out of the whole population, it was felt that only three participants were appropriate and met the criteria listed above.

### **3.2.2: Data Collection**

I visited the SCH twice to conduct interviews. Once on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2017, during which time I interviewed Eric, and again on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2017 to interview Chris and Adam. The interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes.

I used an unstructured interview approach to interview each participant. I chose unstructured interviews over other data collection techniques, such as diary entries, letters or focus groups for several reasons. Firstly, they allow for verbal responses rather than written ones and thus do not preclude students who have difficulty with expressing themselves in writing. Secondly, they allowed myself and the participant to communicate in real-time; as phenomenology places importance in how someone interprets their experiences in relation to their current time and place, I believe this to be important (Smith et al., 2009).

Relying solely on verbal responses does have its problems. As previously mentioned, Langdridge (2007) critiques IPA for focusing on language as it can exclude participants who struggle with articulation. Whilst I acknowledge that this could be potentially problematic, I feel that using scaffolds (e.g. photos, pictures) to aid responses would have complicated the double-hermeneutic, further abstracting the interaction and making it harder to access the experiences of the participant.

I chose to collect data through unstructured, rather than semi-structured interviews, because I felt that this method was most consistent with a phenomenological ontology. Unstructured interviews allow the researcher to engage more fully in meaning-making with the participant, allowing both individuals to shape and construct meaning through their interaction (Smith et al., 2009). Unstructured interviews also adhere closely to IPA's idiographic ideals in that they allow each interview to be led by the individual responses of the participant (Smith et al., 2009).

The unstructured interview format, without the distraction of an interview schedule, allowed me to fully focus on the interaction between myself and my participants. This allowed for a consideration of the participants' non-verbal communicational skills, in order to get to a more embodied sense of how participants experienced the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2014). The embodied way in which participants communicated with and experienced the world (e.g. the mechanics of our speaking, the tone of our voice, the facial expressions we present), were taken into account during my analysis.

Finally, unstructured interviews allow for flexibility and reflexivity within the interaction should any unexpected issues come up, allowing me as the researcher to adapt the interview in the moment to explore these issues further (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

In preparing for the interviews I considered Smith et al.'s (2009) advice on how to use various types of questions and their effect (e.g. descriptive, narrative, structural, contrast, evaluative, circular, comparative, prompts and probes). I also aimed to follow Smith et al.'s (2009) advice by aiming to avoid over-empathetic, manipulative, leading or closed questions.

### **3.2.3: Equipment**

I recorded each interview using a Dictaphone. Once the recordings were completed I stored them using encryption on a password protected computer. They will remain stored until my thesis has been passed by the University of Sheffield.

### **3.2.4: Research Diary**

In order to organise my thoughts and develop my reflections, I kept a research diary throughout the process of conceptualising, planning, data collection, analysis and writing this research project. I used the diary to inform the reflective boxes that are included throughout my results and discussion section

### **3.2.5: Analysis**

On the advice of Langdrige (2007) the data was transcribed in a way that provided me with a "verbatim account of the interview" (p. 73). All three of my participants found enunciation difficult and, due to this, at times I have had to write "*(inaudible)*".

Jefferson transcription was considered but ultimately rejected. I felt that it's focus on minute technical details were more appropriate for discourse or conversation analysis (Jefferson, 2004). As IPA focuses on analysing content meaning, I followed Smith et al.'s (2009) advice, that it is not necessary to record the exact length of pauses or non-verbal utterances.

My analysis followed Smith et al.'s (2009) six step framework. Below I have outlined the stages, as well as any comments and critiques I had relating to this particular analytic procedure:

- 1) Reading and re-reading: here the researcher immerses themselves in the data, actively engaging with the participant's world, searching for structure, narratives, events and an understanding of how the relationship between participant and interviewer develops.

In addition to this, I also referred to my research diary, reflecting on my initial experiential feelings related to the interview process itself. I did this to help with my reflective boxes in order to prioritise transparency in a way that Yardley (2008) advises.

- 2) Initial noting: here the researcher examines "semantic content and language use on a very exploratory level." (Smith et al., 2009, p. 83). The researcher begins by looking at descriptive and linguistic comments, after which the data is explored in a more conceptual and interpretative way, attempting to make sense of the participant's world.
- 3) Developing emergent themes: here the researcher attempts to effectively reduce the amount of data explored into themes that maintain the complexity and integrity of the previous explorations.
- 4) Searching for connections across emergent themes: here the researcher looks to draw together emergent themes into a coherent structure of super-ordinate themes that contain sub-ordinate themes. This process aims to illustrate how themes relate to each other within the participant's world.

- 5) Moving to the next case: here the researcher repeats this process for the next participant's data. It is important to take each participant on their own terms to maximise IPA's idiographic intent.

Langdrige's (2007) analytic method for IPA suggest that it is appropriate to use the themes from the first case as the template for further cases. However, I think that Smith et al.'s (2009) approach here is more effective as, by focusing on each case individually, the researcher can attempt to understand participants on their own terms to preserve idiography. Having said this, in my preparation for analysis I was aware that, even when analysing each case separately, I would be influenced by previous analyses. I aimed to use my own reflectivity and reflexivity to mitigate against this, maintaining an awareness of how and when other cases were impacting on the current one I was working on in order to ensure that emerging themes were appropriate for each individual case.

- 6) Looking for patterns across cases: here the researcher looks to organise the data into coherent super-ordinate themes across all of the participant data, under which the sub-ordinate themes from each participant coherently fit.

Regarding the development of emergent themes, the drawing of connections, and the organisation of themes into super and sub-ordinate themes, I had concerns. I was concerned that, prioritisation of organising my data across participants might endanger the idiographic nature of my study. As I have discussed earlier in this methodology, Ricoeur (1978) and Gadamer (1989) argue that we should look for idiography and individuality within the wider context of a shared milieu (which in this instance is created by the shared social environment of the SCH). However, this made me very aware of the fine balancing act that this method requires. As a researcher, I am responsible for ordering my data in a way that allows for accessibility and greater understanding whilst ensuring that, at the same time, individuality and complexity are not compromised.

After I arrived at stage 6, I decided to write one chapter that contained my results and my discussion together. I did not fully integrate my results and discussion section, with each sub-theme having a separate set of paragraphs acting as a discussion of the results. This was done to retain a sense of clarity between the purpose of the results (to present my interpretation of each participants' responses) and the purpose of the discussion (to unpack and develop this interpretation by engaging with the relevant literature). However, as these sections are so closely linked I felt that it was best to write them into the same chapter to ensure that the reader can easily draw parallels between what participant response and how I have analysed it.

As advised by Smith et al. (2009), when presenting my results, I did so in a clear narrative, structured into super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes, demonstrating what I have learned from my participants and backing this up with quotes. When quoting more than a sentence of text, I did so in a separate, indented paragraph. When quoting short phrases, I embedded them in the body of the results to allow me to contextualise these brief responses in a way that makes the text more readable.

Each sub-theme is then followed by a discussion section that uses academic literature in order to further unpack, explore and engage with participant responses (Smith et al., 2009). Some of the academic literature used is revisited work from my literature review, other literature presented here arose out of further research based around my participants responses. As advised by Smith et al. (2009), the discussion sections are presented as an interpretative dialogue between the academic literature and my results, using the literature to help interpret my results and vice-versa. Whilst some of the literature that I used may claim to present universal truths I do not make this claim. I used it to help explore the specific and idiographic context of my participants experiences.

In my results I have presented my interpretation of my participants' interpretations of their experiences via engagement with the double hermeneutic (Smith et al., 2009). In order to reflect this, I carefully chose my language. I avoid statements that imply truth or certainty (e.g. "Adam felt angry") and instead employ phrases such as "I felt that"

and “I got the sense that”. This, along with a heavy use of the authorial “I”, was done to demonstrate that my results are an interpretation rather than the definitive truth.

### **3.3.0: Conclusion**

In conclusion, I have used IPA as a way to explore the educational experiences of three young people in a SCH. I chose IPA because, unlike post-modern methodologies, it understands experience as something hard to grasp, yet partly tangible through the interpretation of language (Smith et al., 2009). By exploring the essential experiences of my participants, I have aimed to demonstrate that they are important experiences to consider, especially when thinking about education and educational reform within the secure estate.

## Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

### 4.0.0: Introduction

In this chapter I will present my results and discussion based on participant responses, in order to explore the following research question:

*How do three young people, detained or placed in custody, experience education within a secure children's home?*

I will first present a table of my super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes. I will then provide a brief pen portrait of each of my participants and my interactions with them. These are based on my reflections, post-interview, and are here in order to provide some context. I will then present each one of my super-ordinate themes and the sub-ordinate themes that they consist of. For each sub-ordinate theme, I will present my results and then discuss their implications with reference to academic literature. Once I have completed the presentation of my results and discussion I will return to Yardley's (2008) criteria for quality in research to demonstrate that I have met these criteria in my analysis. I will then conclude by summarising my findings.

It is important to note that all of my participants, to a greater or lesser extent, found articulating their experiences difficult. They would often be able to describe events, or environments but then find it difficult to explore how these events or environments made them feel. Due to this, I had to rely on my interpretation, based on the double-hermeneutic, throughout both the interviews and the analysis in order to search for a greater understanding. This involved checking my understanding with the participants, further questioning of their responses, the use of my experiential interpretation of their embodied responses, and the use of academic literature to explore their responses more deeply.

For ease of reading I have colour coded this chapter. Eric’s responses are written in green, Chris’ in blue, and Adam’s in purple.

*A Consideration of my Themes*

Below is a table of my super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes.

<b>Super-ordinate Theme</b>	<b>Sub-ordinate Theme</b>
Nurture	A Bespoke Curriculum
	Relationships and Attachment in the SCH
	Alienation from Mainstream Education
Control	Feeling Trapped or Contained
	Power - Resistance and Submission
	Enforced Yet Meaningful Engagement
The Utility of Education	Yields Meaningful Rewards
	A Way to Pass Time
	A Way to Experience Success

Whilst participant responses clearly touched on experiences that could be grouped into themes, the ways in which participants related to these themes was quite varied. Thus, in several instances I have been able to highlight the ideographic nature of participant responses within their shared ‘horizons of understanding’ (Gadamer, 1989). For example, the theme ‘Feeling Trapped or Contained’ explores how my participants responded to being confined. Eric and Chris appeared to find this experience unpleasant, whilst Adam appeared to find it comforting. Similarly, with the theme ‘Power - Resistance and Submission’, all three of my participants experienced the influence of power being exerted over them by the SCH. However, Eric’s responses demonstrate attempts at resistance, whilst Chris and Adam’s responses can be linked to feelings of submission.

### *General Reflections Regarding Each of my Participants*

Below I have provided some general reflections, taken from my research diary, about each of my participants. It is important to note that I purposefully only collected very basic demographic information about my participants, which can be found in my methodology chapter. I chose not to collect information on the reasons why each participant was in custody as I wanted to experience my participants' responses without intrusive narratives from other people affecting my interpretations. Due to this, these reflections are based around my subjective interpretations of the interview experience, in order to provide context.

#### *Eric*

Eric was the first participant I interviewed. Due to this I was more nervous completing this interview than I was with subsequent participants. This nervousness was exacerbated by my concern that Eric would struggle to articulate himself during the interview. Out of all of the initial meetings with my participants the one with Eric was the most difficult. Whilst he seemed happy to be there, he said very little.

In the actual interview, it was clear that Eric tried very hard to communicate his feelings. However, he still had to be regularly prompted and encouraged and found it difficult to articulate his experiences. Due to this, I talked a lot more during this interview than in the other two.

Eric appeared to me as very self-sufficient, less concerned with developing relationships within the SCH, than other participants. I felt Eric saw school as a way to move forward and liberate himself from the SCH. To me, his responses emphasised that he expected education to lead to a job and some financial security so that he could emancipate himself from his present situation. Due to this, I felt that he was not

interested in education-for-education's-sake, education as a way to communicate cultural capital, or education as a way to impress others.

### *Chris*

During the interview, I thought that Chris was very affable, friendly and eager to please. Out of my three participants, Chris was the most talkative and most eager to respond to my questions. To me Chris presented as someone who found relationships in the SCH to be very important. I felt that positive relationships helped Chris to deal with the anxieties and stresses of being placed in a SCH.

Beneath Chris' affability, I sensed a great deal of anxiety and nervousness. This came out in his emphasis on the importance how others perceived him. It appeared important to Chris that he was understood as a genuine and good person, to the point where I wondered if he was worried that this was not the case. Chris also presented in an anxious manner, speaking quickly and using the word 'obviously' in almost every sentence. I understood this to be partly a nervous tic, but also a form of (unconscious?) self-deprecation. Rather than understanding his perspective as unique and worth talking about, he may have felt it to be obvious and unimportant.

Of all of my participants, Chris presented to me as the most emotionally open. Particularly when he spoke about his relationship with a female peer at the SCH, how he felt like he protected her, and how upset he was when she left the SCH.

### *Adam*

In the initial meeting, where I obtained consent from Adam, he was concerned that I would ask him about why he was in the SCH. I assured him that I would not and that the focus of the interview was about his experiences in education in the SCH. He seemed relieved by this, however, it encouraged me to see several of his comments throughout the interview, through the lens of shame. For example, he did not seem to

want to refer to the SCH by name. This appeared to function as a way to distance Adam from the reality of his situation.

Upon reflection, I feel that Adam understood the SCH to be a safer and more secure place than the outside world. When Adam spoke of mainstream schooling it felt to me that his anxieties bordered on horror, particularly when he spoke about the rigorous assessment routines in mainstream secondary schools.

By contrast, Adam seemed to want to emphasise his understanding of the SCH as a place that nurtures and supports its pupils. A safe and comforting place, with routine and structure. A place where the teachers really care about you.

#### *Reflective Box*

Despite my attempts to avoid the narratives of others, I ended up being told the following information about my participants:

- The headteacher at the SCH told me that Adam had a diagnosis of autism.
- Chris' YOT worker told me that he would agree with everything I said.
- A support assistant at the SCH told me that Eric was manipulative.

At the time, this caused me to wonder how, or to what extent, these pieces of knowledge might affect my understanding of my participants responses. I will refer back to this in later reflective boxes as appropriate.

#### **4.1.0 Super-ordinate Theme: Nurture**

##### *Introduction to This Super-ordinate Theme*

Nurture was a key theme in each of my participant's experiences of education within the SCH. This theme is comprised of three sub-ordinate themes. Participant responses suggested that they experienced education within the SCH as bespoke in terms of

either having their interests catered for, or in terms of the way in which the tasks were differentiated. Relationships and attachment also presented as a sub-ordinate theme, with each participant placing importance in either their relationships with staff or with peers, or both. Finally, participants responses suggested that their past experiences of mainstream education lacked the nurture that they found in the SCH.

#### **4.1.1: Sub-ordinate Theme: A Bespoke Curriculum**

##### *Results*

I chose to title this theme 'A Bespoke Curriculum' as it encapsulated the two ways in which my participants appeared to experience a level of personalised adaptation to the educational curriculum. Namely, Eric and Chris appeared to feel that the curriculum was made bespoke for them in terms of the ways in which it was adapted to their interests. It was made bespoke for Adam by the way in which tasks were effectively differentiated to support learning.

Both Eric and Chris seemed to emphasise the importance of being able to pursue their own interests within the SCH curriculum. Eric liked "playing tennis and football...and table tennis" (11) he also liked "colouring and drawing" (18). In many of his responses, Eric focused on Motor Vehicle Studies (MVS) stating that he enjoyed "learning a lot about cars" (338). The fact that he was able to talk about a variety of interests he had within the SCH led me to interpret that he felt his experiences had been adapted to his interests.

Similarly, Chris focused on student-choice time. His use of the word "obviously" (251). emphasised to me that student-choice time was an adaptation that allowed him to engage with his interests.

"Every Friday you get something like student-choice...you get your first three lessons, you get intervention, you get tutor time, then you have assembly, then

you get student-choice. It's basically like your treat at the end of the week...obviously I picked football" (251-254).

The use of the word "treat" (253) led me to appreciate how much Chris appeared to enjoy this aspect of the curriculum. Furthermore, the way he listed all of the mandatory tasks he had to get through to get to student choice, emphasised to me the way Chris was focused on this outcome, further suggesting importance.

Chris also spoke about the range of educational experiences he had been offered at the SCH and how this helped him discover new interests, that he was good at.

"I like art, I like D.T., I like D. of E. as well...you don't realise how good you are until you do it" (262-263).

This suggested to me that, through exposure to lots of different educational experiences, Chris was able to develop new interests. In doing so, he appeared to find both enjoyment and mastery, boosting his self-concept as a learner.

To Chris, the school staff seemed vital in creating this bespoke curriculum, based around interest. He told a story where he was encouraged to do MVS.

"When I first wanted to do it...my mind drifted off and I didn't want to do it anymore...and then I tried it last week and I was like 'this is really good'...whatever you want to be the staff in here...will help you as best as they can to like become whatever you want." (442-447).

Chris' experiences of a bespoke education appeared to be well balanced between student interest and positive encouragement by staff. From his account, we can infer that staff encouraged Chris to try MVS again, possibly because they knew him well and thought that, with time, he would begin to like it.

Adam framed his understandings by comparing his experiences of education in the SCH with that of mainstream. Whereas in mainstream “they do...it one way” (27) and you have to “constantly ask questions, always struggling with it” (35) at the SCH he noted that lessons are based on “learning ability” (30). He emphasised this point by drawing my attention to the fact that students of different ages are in the same class based on “your learning ability” (30) “ranging from people that are 17-to-16 to 13-to-12 in one group” (29-30).

Thus, Adam’s experience appeared to be characterised by an educational programme that was bespoke due to its effective differentiation.

“It will challenge you as well, so as not to make it extremely easy...they’ll always put that pressure on you so constantly learning but they’ll do it in relative comfort instead of a lot of stress...they build it up gradually so it helps” (307-319).

Adam felt that the SCH placed great importance in initial assessment so as to make sure each student was placed in an appropriate group.

“You won’t go to education immediately. You’ll wait til, actually that was more of a testing how far in the curriculum you are. So they’ll do that. Then they’ll put you into the appropriate group. Then they’ll get you up to speed on what your group’s been doing. And then you’ll start getting into it and stuff” (113-117).

For Adam, this individualised, appropriately differentiated curriculum was key to the concept of nurture. It made him feel safe to learn and to be challenged. In his words, “it helps individual people understand what the work is” (34).

## *Discussion*

As I identified in my literature review, a bespoke education based around individual need has been suggested as a key way to improve educational outcome for young offenders (Taylor, Claire, 2016). My participant responses suggest two possible ways to approach this: by focusing on student interest and through appropriate differentiation of learning tasks.

Eric and Chris' apparent desire to pursue their interests in motor vehicles led me to examine how the academic literature understands interest as a factor in learning. Researchers in this field generally accept that interest is defined as developing from an individual's engagement with an event, object or idea leading to them becoming motivated to engage in activities relating to that event, object or idea (Dan & Todd, 2014).

Many of the classic psychologists of the early twentieth century felt that interests were the most pivotal of the motivating factors that encourage people to learn (Claparède, 1911; Dewey, 1913; Thorndike, 1935). However, by the middle of the twentieth century the academy became less focused on interest as a driving factor for learning and more focused on developing specific domains (e.g. curiosity, attention) to explain learning drives (Krapp, 1999).

Recent evidence suggests that interest is a vital component to learning. Jansen, Lüdtke and Schroeders (2016), in their large-scale study of 39,192 German ninth-grade students show that interest is positively correlated with higher achievement. Corbiere, Fraccaroli, Mbekou and Perron (2006) have demonstrated the same positive correlation with a participant sample from France and Italy. Furthermore, Schiefele (1992) has shown that there is a positive correlation between interest and text-comprehension. Thus, it is likely that interest plays a large factor in educational attitudes and aptitude. This fits in with the responses from Eric and Chris, whom I feel emphasise the importance of a bespoke education, tailored to their interests.

This theme is interesting to consider within the context of the increasing turn towards didactic teaching methods, a greater focus on assessment, a narrowing educational curriculum and the reduction of both teacher and pupil autonomy in the current UK education system (DfE, 2010; Lundström, 2015; TES Reporter, 2016). A more bespoke curriculum which incorporates individual student interest could be very valuable in encouraging learning and progress, both in the secure estate and in other educational contexts. Furthermore, a broader and more diverse curriculum could help to ensure that more students could have their interests sparked to encourage progress, rather than only engaging those who enjoy core subjects such as English, maths and science.

To help further understand Adam's apparent positivity towards gradual challenge and support in his learning, it was helpful to revisit Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which challenged previous ideas from Piaget (1936) that cognitive development was a precondition to learning. Vygotsky, instead, argued that there is a ZPD in learning where a more-capable teacher can support the learner to complete a task that they would be unable to complete alone. The teacher's goal is to continually support the learner so that they can ultimately complete tasks within their ZPD, without support. Once the learner can do this, the difficulty of the learning task is increased and a new ZPD is formed. Later theorists such as Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), introduced the term 'scaffolding' to describe the kinds of support and interaction teachers can give to help students achieve tasks within their ZPD and, through this, develop their learning.

Adam's description of a bespoke, appropriately differentiated and constantly challenging curriculum fits near-perfectly with Vygotsky and Bruner's ideas around learning. His apparent pleasure at learning in this way suggests that these classic psychological theories still have value and importance in the way we teach young people.

More recent social-constructionist commentators critique Piaget and Vygotsky for having an overt focus on universal and de-contextualised progress (Matusov & Hayes, 2000). To both Piaget and Vygotsky, the environment plays a part in child learning,

through logical deduction and cultural mediation respectively (Piaget, 1936; Vygotsky, 1978). However, both see the developing child as a rational and logical actor whose mental structures are fundamentally separate from the environment they observe (Matusov & Hayes, 2000). For social-constructionists, this dualistic notion is false. All knowledge is socially constructed through the combined activities of all individuals, and the historical-cultural context in which they are embedded (Matusov & Hayes, 2000).

Whilst this is a fair, well evidenced critique, it contradicts the lived-in experiences of my participants. Each participant appears to perceive themselves as an individual actor and learner, with their own rational interests at heart (see the sub-ordinate theme: Yields Meaningful Rewards). Adam particularly appears to understand learning as a dualistic process between teacher, who provides support, and learner, as Vygotsky (1978) suggests.

#### **4.1.2: Sub-ordinate Theme: Relationships and Attachment in the SCH**

##### *Results*

I felt that all three participants emphasised the importance of secure attachment relationships with others within the SCH. To me, each participant felt like they experienced positive relationships in the SCH. When discussing the concept of attachment here, I am referring to attachment theory as developed by John Bowlby (1944). I will explore this concept in detail in the discussion section of this sub-ordinate theme.

Though Eric, who presented himself as most self-sufficient of the three participants, focused on relationships less, he still got “on with most of the staff” (103). He saw them as a source of educational support: “They’ll help you out, help you do the work” (105). When he found preparing for his GCSEs “scary” (146), he sought security in his relationships with adults by asking “a member of staff to come and help me” (155).

*Reflective Box*

I perceived Eric to have a positive relationship with teachers at the SCH when I sat with him, the headteacher and the deputy head. He smiled and joked with them in a way that, to me, demonstrated trust. He was at his most jovial when they were present.

Eric also showed interest in engaging in relationships with his peers. Whilst it had to be on his terms, Eric seemed to have a level of pride at the idea of being an instructor to the other students.

“I’d probably just go over and tell them what, if I know, if I know what to do I’d tell them what to do.... I wouldn’t like to do it all the time, it would probably get a bit boring...I’d probably just do it for a bit” (193-202).

Out of my three participants, Chris was the one who most heavily emphasised relationships within his responses. Chris explicitly referenced the way in which his family relationships were disrupted when he was placed in custody. I strongly felt that this had cause Chris distress.

“About two week ago I had a little meltdown...I was missing my family, just then it was really getting to me, it was like, what have I done, like, my grandma she’s in hospital right now, she’s not feeling very well...what if I never see her again cus she might...become really ill and die” (88-93).

However, Chris also acknowledged the ways in which staff at the SCH supported him through this time.

“Even when you’re having little cries about something, the staff are always there for you” (95-96).

Chris heavily emphasised pastoral support and secure attachment in his experience of attending the SCH. He used the extended metaphor of 'school staff and students as family' to express this.

"I've been here that long that I feel happy about when everyone comes in so I'd say it's like a big family to me... Yeah but obviously, when you come here everyone gets a key worker, it's basically like, well when you're here it's basically like your step-dad or your step mom basically, they're the first people to find out like, what you like, like what subjects you're interested in, stuff like that" (121-135).

"My key worker was obviously he was like my step-dad" (154).

This is an apt metaphor. Like an idealised family, he presents staff members as individuals, not of his own choosing, who provide him with unconditional support.

"Even when you have the littlest of problems the staff are always there for you trying to solve it" (101-102).

Chris also extended this metaphor to his relationships with his peers. Similar to your family, you don't get to choose your peers within the SCH.

"But obviously you didn't come in here to find friends you came in here for the reason why you got locked up for...you didn't come to meet new people...you came to do your time...if you don't like them then, obviously, don't get locked up" (239-243).

Despite this reticence, Chris decided he would understand his group of peers as family.

"And then I was thinking about the other day, about two months ago, I had a look around, there were like nine-to-ten kids around with me, I had a look

around like now I'm here all these are my family I've all got to get on with them so I might as well take them in as family" (155-158).

From his responses, it seems that, once Chris began to feel comfortable with his peer relationships he began to see the value of collaboration.

"I'll obviously do group work me cus I like to be, I like to be part of something, but either way if it's individual or group work anyway I'll still do it but I prefer to do group work cus obviously you get your heads together and like, it comes together as like a bigger idea for something and obviously you get more things from it instead of just your own" (188-191).

Chris emphasised the importance of peer relationships in his responses about the small population of the SCH.

"In the end in secondary schools... I'd say it's better because they have bigger classes so obviously you can make more friends" (385-386)

However, he acknowledged that he makes "more progress being in a smaller group" (389-390).

Finally, Chris talked in detail about a particular relationship he has made within the SCH.

"You don't realise but when you make a strong relationship, right, you don't realise how long they've got left, it could be like, a few weeks and obviously if you've got a strong relationship and someone leaves there's like, you don't think about it but once they're gone you're like, it's like you didn't get a chance to say "bye" or anything like that, it's like, something like that obviously... Obviously, once they're gone, like you won't see them, you won't talk to them. It's like...it's really awful when someone close to you leaves... Er, I was gonna say, there was, there was a girl who left. Erm, in June. Erm, I had a strong

relationship with her...Erm. She was my friend then she, obviously she was the one who looked up to me as her bigger brother. And obviously erm, when she left obviously I didn't want her to leave because I had a strong relationship with and then once she left I was crying for about 3 days because it didn't feel the same without her but obviously when I write to her, erm, she writes back so it's like it's alright that we still keep in contact so I know what she's doing" (552-585)

*Reflective Box*

I feel that Chris gave a very honest and authentic account in his responses, particularly at this point. This very much contradicts his YOT worker's perception that he would just agree with or go along with everything I said.

Chris' embodied sense of sadness and frustration about being separated from a person he has made a secure attachment with was palpable and I found it incredibly moving.

*Reflective Box*

Upon reflection, I should have checked-in with Chris after he gave the above statement. In the moment, I moved on to a different subject without making sure he was ok. I did this because I did not want to put him in a situation where he had to talk about this distressing instance anymore. However, if I was to repeat the interview, I would have tactfully asked him how he was feeling to ensure that he was ok to continue.

Adam described his relationship with his teachers very positively.

"You can't really not like the teachers here cus they're all really fun in lessons...They all have a very good sense of humour...so that helps...helps you relax and work comfortably" (133-141).

For Adam, who stated that he was “not a very social person,” the SCH provided a safe space in which staff were able to support him to develop positive attachment relationships with his peers.

“Beforehand I didn’t actually talk to any people. Whereas now, I do talk to a lot of people here as well...Staff are always there anyway...but they do help a lot...Cus they’ll talk to you then they’ll talk to the other person, they’ll manage to get a conversation going between you anyway” (283-294).

*Reflective Box*

Being aware of Adam’s diagnosis of autism led me to consider whether I perceived any of his autistic traits during our interview. Adam was articulate, presented as empathetic and also clearly wanted to engage. I struggled to recognise any autistic traits in Adam, as outlined by the Diagnostic Statistical Manual V (APA, 2013).

For me, Adam’s needs were far better articulated by his emotional responses, which often came across as anxious, particularly when discussing his social interactions. To me his self-perception of his social skills did not match up with his social capability. I wondered if his autism diagnosis had negatively impacted on his self-perception as someone who is socially competent.

Out of all my participants, Adam was the one who I felt most presented as craving the safety and security of secure attachment. I felt, from his account, that staff pastoral support at the SCH helped made him feel secure.

Interestingly, I interpreted Adam’s responses as demonstrating a strong positive attachment relationship towards the concept of the SCH as an institution. To me, this went beyond his relationship with the staff to a notion that the SCH itself was a benevolent force. To Adam, the SCH doesn’t have a “proper school feel” (42) like mainstream school, which he appears to experience as unpleasant (see sub-ordinate theme: Alienation from Mainstream). Instead, it’s an environment where “people are quite calm, talking...happy going to school” (44-49) and “lessons [can be] really fun” (55).

Sometimes the potential for danger crept into Adam's account, disrupting his positive relationship with the SCH and his presentation of it as a pleasant place. This manifested in an awareness of the safeguarding adaptations that were been put in place by the SCH to prevent potential violent acts.

"Obviously cus of certain things, we're not allowed a lot of sharp objects out...Nor very heavy objects...Cus, people tend to improvise with whatever they can if they want to" (256-259).

"Gas taps and fire are not a good idea here" (298).

I felt that, implicit in his account of these safeguarding adaptations, was his awareness of a potential for violence. This is something that Adam addressed more directly in his responses relating to violent individuals. He appeared reluctant to acknowledge the potential for violence at the SCH, stating that his peers are "generally good people...only...two that are mean...extremely aggressive or violent" (232-236).

Despite these acknowledgements, Adam resisted any counter-narratives that might undermine his positive relationship with the SCH institution. When I asked if he felt completely safe in the SCH, despite sharing the space with individuals he had characterised as violent, he stated "yeah" (239, 254), explaining how he felt protected by the staff at the SCH.

"We don't have to deal with it. Cus if they start to show signs of being angry or getting stressed staff will go in, take them out to one of the quiet rooms, where they'll sit in here, talk through it, calm down and stuff" (244-248).

Here, Adam did not allow the presence of violent individuals to impinge on his experience of a positive relationship with the SCH. Instead he used it as an opportunity to bolster his view that the SCH is a positive space by emphasising how the staff at the SCH work therapeutically. He also did this again at a later point when talking about another student.

“When they first came here they started to say they hated everyone...He came here for a couple of months then before he left he was talking to people, enjoying everything, getting good marks, full grades...it’s helped change him a lot” (337-341).

Where Adam perceived students at the SCH to not make positive change, he refused to acknowledge this as a failure of the SCH, instead blaming the student.

“Obviously, you’ll get the odd couple of people that are negative throughout but that’s probably due to themselves more than anything here” (344-345).

Thus, whilst Adam acknowledged both the presence of violence and the failure of an individual to make positive changes, he did not allow these factors to diminish the positive relationship he experienced with the SCH institution. Indeed, I interpreted his suppression of these potentially negative factors as a sign of the strength with which he experienced this positive relationship.

Pastoral support was also linked back to academic progress by all three participants. When I asked Eric what he looked for in a teacher he said that he wanted someone to “help you, support you in work, to try and get the best out of you” (180).

“The teachers try and get you to do the work and you can’t like walk out (226-227).

I felt that, for Eric, the teachers were demonstrating nurture and care because they were actually spending time encouraging him to engage with the work. Whilst he never outright said this, I felt that he experienced the comfort of a secure attachment relationship when working with the teachers, especially in light of the comments he made about mainstream school (see sub-ordinate theme: Alienation in Mainstream Education).

Chris, whilst not mentioning any teachers specifically, commented that,

“well, everyone’s got a career, everyone’s got something they want to do in life. Then obviously this place just helps you get towards it as best as you can” (602-603).

With Chris, I got the sense that an important part of his educational experience was being supported by a community of teachers to make academic progress through the emotional support provided by secure attachment relationships.

Adam talked about how his teachers protected him from the anxiety of having to complete GCSEs by hiding the fact that the students were preparing for them.

“So you’d do...sort of talking, do work like this, talk a bit, maybe read a bit...but then, without our knowledge, they were preparing us for our GCSEs” (89-92).

Here, I felt Adam experienced the attachment relationship between him and his teachers as protective in a parental way. Staff were shielding Adam from potentially distressing experiences whilst supporting him to engage with them when the time comes.

### *Discussion*

Lots of evidence highlights the positive influence of relationships within the secure estate. As I stated in my literature review, a nurturing environment that models good relationships has been advised to support educational outcomes in the secure estate (Taylor, Claire, 2016). Positive student-teacher relationships have been shown to correlate with optimal cortisol profiles and students who are able better regulate feelings of stress (Ahnert, Harwardt-Heinecke, Kappler, Eckstein-Madry, & Milatz, 2012). As unhealthy cortisol levels and an inability to regulate stress have both been linked to difficulties with attachment (Kidd, Hamer, & Steptoe, 2013), this may suggest that positive teacher-student relationships can protect against attachment difficulties.

Positive teacher-student relationships have been linked to greater social skill development, also important for developing attachment relationships (Berry & O'Connor, 2010).

Strong peer relationships have also been shown to act as a protective factor for school students at risk of grade completion and school engagement (Moses & Villodas, 2017). Positive teacher-pupil relationships have also been linked to more positive academic, behavioural, and engagement outcomes within school and lower drop-out rates. (Davis & Dupper, 2004; Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007). The responses from my participants appear to be in keeping with the literature, placing great importance on the development of positive relationships within the SCH and exploring how these relationships have helped my participants to understand their lives within the SCH more positively.

Here I would like to invoke attachment theory to better understand how my participants experienced relationships with their teachers in the SCH. Attachment theory was developed by John Bowlby in the 1930s. Bowlby (1944) looked at how our early relationships develop to see if they affect our relationships in later life. Attachment theory suggests that if a child has a healthy normal relationship with their primary caregiver they will become securely attached and use this as a model for healthy relationships in the future (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). However, if this early relationship is dysfunctional, it can negatively affect the ways in which the child will develop relationships in their adult life.

Very little research has been done exploring attachment difficulties and how they relate to young people in the secure estate. In one study, Moran, McDonald, Jackson, Turnbull and Minnis (2017), show that 52 per-cent of young offenders in their study met the diagnostic criteria for an attachment disorder diagnosis. As children in SCHs also fall under the category of LAC, it is also important to explore studies relating to attachment and LAC. Millward, Kennedy, Towlson and Minnis (2006) show that the LAC population in their study were significantly more likely to have Reactive Attachment Disorder (a psychiatric attachment disorder characterised through

extreme difficulties in engaging in social relationships) than the control group of non-LAC children. Furthermore, in their large sample analysis, Barrett and Katsiyannis (2016) demonstrate that early adversity, which includes adverse family situations, accounted for 20% of variance in adult offending. This could further suggest the likelihood of attachment and relational needs within the population of the secure estate.

Attachment theory is arguably the ubiquitous lens through which educationalists explore child-relationships, especially those felt to be dysfunctional (Buchanan, 2013). I feel that it should be explored critically. The increasing body of neuroscience has led to a post-hoc understanding of attachment theory as biological fact (Fox & Hane, 2008; Petrowski, Beetz, Schurig, Wintermann, & Buchheim, 2017). Furthermore, it encourages a level of fatalism as neuroscience has been used to suggest that, after the early years, brain development becomes fixed, and thus we only have a short window to prevent young people from experiencing trauma (Thornton, 2011).

Bruer (1999), critiques such fatalism, arguing that neuroscience evidence has been misconstrued and that very few aspects of human development are time sensitive. Furthermore, many of the attachment neuroscience studies undertaken are either based on animal studies that have not been replicated in humans (e.g. Higham et al., 2011) or are studies that aim to correlate questionnaire responses about attachment in adults with brain activity (e.g. Yaseen, Ezhang, Muran, Ewinston, & Galynker, 2016). I would argue that these critiques make the neuroscientific evidence around attachment difficulties problematic and unreliable.

Whilst I cannot say for certain that my participants have attachment difficulties, it is understood that many children in local authority care have been victims of neglect and abuse (Minnis, Pelosi, Knapp, & Dunn, 2001). Such traumatic events are linked to young people developing attachment difficulties (Bombèr, 2007). The fact that they have been forcibly separated from their families by being placed in custody makes the possibility of attachment difficulties more likely still. Nevertheless, my participant responses seem to emphasise that they are able to make strong and positive

attachments with others at the SCH, helping me to further question attachment theory's potentially fatalistic outlook.

Whilst I would reject attachment theory understood as a biological fact, it can still be a useful psychological framework through which we can seek to better understand the relational experiences of young people. Here, I find the work of Slater (2007) and Waddington (1957) illuminating. They argue that, whilst our early relational experiences can be damaging, we always have the potential to develop and progress along a more positive relational pathway if we are given lots of positive relational experiences. This, I believe, is an important idea for those who work within the secure estate.

Each young person who is placed in a SCH is forcibly removed from all of their prior attachments, no longer able to see their family or friends outside of prescribed visiting hours. I would suggest that this has the potential to profoundly damage the young person's perception of relationships, how they can be forged and how they can be secured. Whilst this is a negative backdrop from which to explore attachment and relationships, it is important to note that each of my participants appeared to be experiencing positive relationships at the SCH, suggesting that Slater's (2007) notion of relational pathways is relevant here. Furthermore, Mayseless and Popper (2007) argue that the sense of safety derived by an individual from their relationship with an institution, fits neatly into the attachment paradigm. I believe that this is important to consider within the context of Adam's positive relationship with the SCH institution.

Participant responses emphasised a feeling that staff were there to provide positive relational experiences to support young people in developing positive relational skills and understandings. This challenges Charlie Taylor's (2016) assertion that staff in the secure estate do not believe that many of the youth in custody can make positive change. This also contradicts Neves (2013) assertion, raised in my literature review, that managerialism is the dominant force in the secure estate, focusing on social control rather than the development of relationships and rehabilitation.

Chris in particular can be seen as someone who may have developed a new attachment pathway in the way that Slater (2007) suggests. Chris clearly emphasises a sense of anxiety when he talks about no longer being able to see his grandma or family. However, in lieu of his actual family, who he no longer has easy access to, he seeks safety and security from his peers. He also appears to seek a sense of responsibility in caring for the girl he sees as a “sister”. This caring role is likely to provide comfort and add to Chris’ feeling that he is part of a family by taking the role of big-brother. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the way sentencing works, this attachment relationship was brought to an end in a way that caused Chris upset. The way in which relationships end, and how this could be supported, should be considered by those working within the secure estate.

I think that Chris’ conceptualisation of the SCH as a surrogate family might be an idea worth generalising and promoting to support attachment and relationships within the SCH. It is accurate in a legal sense (the LA is the legal guardian of the young people within the SCH and by extension that means that the staff at the SCH are too), and it has clear similarities with the nuclear family (adults are there to care for younger people, they are interested in developing both the academic and emotional skills of the young people in their care, they are not chosen by the young person). It may be a productive way to promote good relationships between staff and children at SCHs.

#### **4.1.3: Sub-ordinate Theme: Alienation from Mainstream Education.**

##### *Results*

Each participant, to a greater or lesser extent, expressed a sense of being let down and alienated by the mainstream education system. This was particularly true of Adam, who’s depictions of education within mainstream school presented a heightened anxiety caused by a lack of nurture and sense of alienation.

When Eric talked about mainstream school, he talked about removing himself from the classroom.

“When I was at my old school I’d just, if I couldn’t be arsed doing the work I’d just walk out” (225-226).

Eric spoke about being proud of completing his GCSEs at the SCH (see sub-ordinate theme: Yields Meaningful Rewards). However, he admits that:

“if I was in my old school, I probably wouldn’t have done them” (293).

Eric did not refer to a single positive experience or positive engagement with a teacher in his mainstream secondary school throughout the interview. When he talked about walking out or refusal in mainstream, he did not mention anyone challenging him or encouraging him to engage. This led me to understand Eric’s experience of mainstream education as being linked to feeling alienated.

Both Chris and Adam repeatedly referred to negative experiences in mainstream secondary education that led to a sense of alienation. Furthermore, they emphasised the negativity of these experiences by comparing them to the positive experiences they had engaging in education within the SCH.

Chris repeatedly depicted mainstream education as a place where he felt lost in the crowd, invoking class size numbers to emphasise this.

“In a secondary school...you’re in a big class...it’s one teacher or maybe an assistant with you so you’ve got like 30 kids...once every half an hour the teacher will come and see you (381-384).

Chris also referred to mainstream when he said, “when you need the teacher there’s always someone else doing something” (395-396). Later on, he reiterated that he was “in a class of about 18, 19, maybe 20, and obviously I didn’t really find it that.... good” (494-495).

He associated crowded mainstream classrooms with noise and chaos that made it hard to learn.

“It’s harder to like take stuff in as the teacher is talking because everyone’s either talking or messing around” (403-404).

I interpreted a distance between Chris and the teacher, which led to a sense of alienation. Chris felt that he was not getting the support he needed due to the size of the classroom and having to compete with the other students for attention. This led to him feeling lost in the crowd and alienated.

Chris compared his experiences of mainstream to the SCH learning environment where:

“the maximum you can have in a group is 4 so it’s like, you get more focus. You can get...taught more stuff so it’s...easier to learn...since I’ve been here I’ve made a big improvement” (20-22).

At the SCH, that sense of being lost in the crowd was reversed and Chris appeared to experience a sense of belonging and progress.

The most profound comparative difference was found in Adam’s descriptions of his mainstream experiences. Similarly to Chris, he made a comparison about class size.

“You’re not in a class of 30 people. You’re in a class of 3 or 4 people...so there’s...a lot more choice that you can do. The teacher can focus on you more as well instead of dividing it between 30 odd people” (53-55).

However, Adam took this further by saying that he liked the SCH because it doesn’t have a “proper school feel”.

I felt that his depictions of mainstream demonstrated clear alienation and anxiety.

“In a mainstream school they’d’ve gone: normal work, hard work. You’re having tests soon. Really hard work and continuing 90 per-cent for months” (105-106).

Adam appeared quite agitated by this recollection. This was apparent in the way he gesticulated with his arms to emphasise this point. Adam compared it with the SCH where you would:

“not just cram, hope for the best. It’s learn, memorise, learn, memorise, learn memorise. So, it actually helps a lot with tests” (109-110).

When repeating “learn, memorise” (109-110), Adam did so in a much calmer and softer tone than when he spoke about mainstream school. These words felt to me akin to a reassuring chant or mantra when compared to his frantic recollection of mainstream learning, suggesting that Adam found this way of learning to be easier and less anxiety provoking.

Similarly, Adam painted a difficult picture of the experience of sitting GCSEs in mainstream school.

“In mainstream schools you’ve got hundreds of people talking about what’s going to happen...then you’re all put into one big hall where like, you can feel the tension rising...In my school we had a giant hall like it meant you were cold, stressed, there’s muttering going on everywhere, and it sort of helped to, that sort of brought on a sense of unease when you did exams” (370-387).

He was much more positive about his GCSE experiences at the SCH.

“Here, they’ll ask you if it’s too cold or too warm in the exam room to try and help you...You’re allowed to bring in water...they’d bring all the equipment in

for you so you didn't have to worry about that. They just tried to help in as many ways that were legally possible with exams" (387-391).

Adam's juxtaposition of these two different exam experiences highlighted to me how great a sense of alienation he felt at mainstream. He seemed to not feel any kind of support or belonging, leading to alienation and a heightened sense of anxiety and fear.

### *Discussion*

Interestingly, participant accounts of mainstream versus SCH education seemed to question Charlie Taylor's (2016) accusation in his review of the youth justice system, that schooling provision is poorer in the secure estate. This may reveal a competing set of values regarding schooling. For Charlie Taylor (2016) it is important that teaching methods are up-to-date. For my participants, it was important that they feel safe, secure and supported to achieve.

Negative, alienating experiences of mainstream education are likely to contribute to how education is experienced in a SCH. As outlined in my literature review, detachment and alienation from education and low educational attainment have been shown to positively correlate with youth offending (MORI, 2004; Prime, 2014; Elliot & Voss, 1974; Maguin & Loeber, 1996; Polk, 1981). All three participants voiced a sense of being alienated, left behind or lost in an indifferent mainstream schooling system. Thus, it is very important for us to consider these negative experiences when supporting students to have a positive educational experience within the SCH.

Each account suggested that the emotional needs of my participants were not met in mainstream school leading to alienation, a lack of belongingness, feelings of being left behind, a sense of being lost, and in Adam's case a profound sense of anxiety. Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs has been used to link emotional wellbeing to learning within school and, due to this, is important to consider here (Schunk, 2012).

If the basic and psychological needs of young people in mainstream education are not met, Maslow (1943, 1954) suggests that they will not be able to progress towards positive feelings of accomplishment and self-actualisation (i.e. the fulfilment of one's potential). This could lead to a sense of alienation in the way that is presented by my participants. Basic needs include the need for sustenance, shelter, sleep and safety. Psychological needs include needing to have positive relationships with friends and others and needing to feel positive in relation to learning experiences (Maslow, 1943, 1954).

Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs has been critiqued for being too linear and rigid (Fallatah & Syed, 2018). Furthermore, the concept of self-actualisation has been criticised as being ill-defined, hard to evidence and based on Western individualistic cultural attitudes (Fallatah & Syed, 2018). However, in their review of Maslow's theory, Kenrick, Griskevicius, Neuberg and Schaller (2010) argue that the basic and psychological needs in Maslow's hierarchy are still applicable and map well onto modern psychological and evolutionary theories relating to human motivation and behaviour. Due to this, whilst I understand the criticisms levelled above to be valid, I believe that Maslow's hierarchy is still an important lens through which to view human behaviour, particularly when focusing on these lower-order needs.

It seems likely from participant accounts that their psychological needs were not met in previous mainstream settings, and that this affected engagement levels and made their school experience unpleasant. It also appears that, from participant responses, their basic and psychological needs were met far better at the SCH. This should be an alarming issue for educationalists because, I outlined in my literature review, the quantitative research available shows us that negative educational experiences and feelings of alienation are linked to youth offending (MORI, 2004).

There is little qualitative research exploring why students feel negatively towards school in the first place (Tam et al., 2007; YJB, 2006). In this present study, the collection of student voice has been essential for demonstrating the kinds of negative educational experiences students can face; caused by exams, workload, large class

sizes and a sense of alienation. This highlights the importance of gathering student voice.

#### **4.2.0: Super-ordinate Theme: Control**

##### *Introduction to This Super-ordinate Theme*

Control, confinement, and restriction are all part of life within a SCH. Children are locked inside of class rooms and their own rooms at certain points of the day. They cannot leave, and they have to serve their sentence. Due to this, control emerged as a strong theme within the responses of each participant, though expressed through three sub-ordinate themes. Firstly, participants responses suggested that they feel trapped or contained within the SCH. Secondly, participant accounts seemed to reflect the ways in which they responded to power being exerted over them and whether they were able to resist or submit to this power. Thirdly, participants appeared to feel that they were placed in a situation where they were forced to engage with aspects of school life that they could have avoided in mainstream.

### *Reflective Box*

Researching this thesis alongside my placement work as a trainee educational psychologist has allowed me to draw parallels between mainstream school and the SCH. In many ways, the experience for young people who transgress school rules in mainstream is very similar to the experiences of a young person in a SCH.

If pupils break the rules in either of the secondary schools that I work in, they have to work in an isolation room, and they are not allowed to leave. Students who break the rules are separated from the other students, often by being placed in the bottom set. Furthermore, through detentions their freedoms of having a break and leaving school on-time are also taken away.

This curtailing of liberties shares clear similarities with the ways in which individual liberties are curtailed in the SCH. What does this suggest? Is the school experience for young people similar to the experience of being placed in a SCH or YOI? Are we, as educationalists, sending a message to young people who break the rules? Are we implicitly suggesting that they risk being placed in custody if they break the rules of school as a way to exert power and control?

#### **4.2.1: Sub-ordinate Theme: Feeling Trapped or Contained**

##### *Results*

My participants' responses demonstrated a strong awareness of the fact that they were confined. However, this manifested itself in markedly different ways, with Eric and Chris characterising their confinement in a negative way through the feeling of being trapped. Adam, on the other hand, appeared to take comfort out of confinement. Here I suggest that Adam's experience can be characterised by the psychoanalytic concept of containment, which I will explore in further detail below.

Eric emphasised a real feeling of frustration and disempowerment at the fact that he was locked in the classroom at the SCH. It was the first thing he spoke about when I asked him what it was like to be educated there.

“It’s just you’re locked up and you can’t leave the classroom whenever you want” (23).

“I try the door. That frustrates me because I can’t walk out like I used to when I was in my other school” (215-216).

“End of the day...I’m just ready to go get out of this place. Go back to the unit” (263).

His responses suggested that he tried to reapply control to the situation by commenting that, whilst being locked in made him feel a “bit frustrated...if I asked the staff they’d probably let me out anyways” (32). Nevertheless, he clearly disliked the disempowering sense of being contained in the classroom.

To Chris, being trapped was a very painful and anxiety provoking experience. Chris talks of the separation between him and his family and the growing realisation of being in the SCH.

“When you first come here you’re missing your family...you’ve been here for a long time, about 6 months, that’s when you like really realise how much you love your family” (14-16).

“The first month’s always the worst cus obviously that’s coping with being away from home” (147-148).

Chris appeared to experience anxiety at being confined in the SCH with others.

“The only thing I don’t like is when there’s something when there’s things going on behind my back and I can’t see it. I always want to see what’s going on even if it’s something like petty like an argument, it’s like I don’t like things going on behind my back cus like I like to see what’s happening” (360-363).

Chris expanded on this presentation of anxiety with complex feelings about being locked in his room.

“I won’t say I feel safe cus obviously the doors get locked at 9 and thy don’t get opened until 9 the next morning...but...I feel safe in my room because obviously whilst I’m in my room nothing can get to me” (352-358).

Of classrooms, he stated:

“When I get in small spaces, I don’t like it...I’d prefer not to go in small spaces” (418-419).

To me, these three responses spoke of the distress of claustrophobia, which I will discuss in more depth in the discussion of these results.

In stark contrast to Eric and Chris’ accounts, Adam appeared to experience a sense of security and safety at being contained in the SCH. His responses do not contain any references to feeling confined and do not present any instances where he talks about feeling anxious within the SCH setting. Instead, when he describes the classrooms at the SCH he states:

“so you’re only 5 steps away from like the doors or different subjects and stuff” (18).

Later on, he talked about the SCH rooms being

“quite small...quite tidy, so everything is put in its correct place. Everything is neat, ordered...it’s quite tight, quite neat, quite organised” (269-272).

To me, this emphasis on the smallness and orderliness of the SCH suggested that Adam’s environment engendered a sense of safety in him. This did not appear to be linked to any potential feelings of anxiety or a sense of being trapped. Instead, I

wondered if Adam's experiences of limited freedom within the SCH, accompanied by lots of staff support (see sub-ordinate theme: Relationships and Attachment in the SCH), might be better characterised as contained, a psychoanalytic term that I will explore in the discussion section of this theme.

### *Discussion*

Incapacitation is one of the four classically acknowledged justifications for imprisonment by the state (the others being rehabilitation, deterrence and retribution) (Rothman & Morris, 1995). The idea being that, when individuals are restricted within a secure unit, they will be unable to commit crimes or behave in a fashion dangerous to themselves or others (Arrigo & Milovanovic, 2009). This idea of incapacitation appeared to have distressing effects on Eric and Chris' experience of life within the SCH.

However, I believe that, to understand the lived-in experiences of feeling trapped more fully, we need to explore Foucauldian ideas around discipline, and through this, the creation of docile bodies (Foucault, 1977/1995). Foucault (1977/1995) argues that incarceration replaced public execution, not out of a need for humanitarian reform, but because it is a more effective way for governments to wield power over citizens. He posits that capital punishment was ineffective in deploying power because it could backfire (e.g. the general public could see the condemned person as a hero or could even physically free the condemned). Due to this, capital punishment was replaced by visual punishments (e.g. the chain gang) as a more effective way of making crime less attractive to citizens.

Foucault (1977/1995) argues that governments gradually replaced punishment with the discourse of discipline. Here institutions such as schools, factories the military or hospitals imposed techniques such as the timetables, exercise and drills to control the movements and behaviours of individuals. Foucault (1977/1995) contends that, through observation and assessment, institutions were able to ensure that individuals internalised controlling expectations, turning them into docile bodies that could

function effectively to perpetuate the economic, political and militaristic status-quos of the post-Enlightenment age.

In this context, Foucault (1977/1995) concludes that a new form of punishment was developed, appropriate for the docile body: the prison. This is because prison allows for the potential of constant observation by a very powerful, controlling institution. He acknowledges prison's inability to reform prisoners arguing that this is not the point of prison. In fact, he argues that prison's aim is to produce a delinquent class in order to reduce crime into acts that are controllable and manageable by governments and institutions.

If we understand the SCH as a place that is trying to institutionalise the individuals within it to become delinquents, we can start to better understand the source of Eric's frustration at being trapped. I believe that Eric's sense of frustration was heightened by the feeling of being indoctrinated into being a docile body. Similarly, Chris accepted that his movements and the movements of others are being controlled. However, it caused him great sadness. Finally, Adam may have accepted and found comfort in the controlling institution of the SCH.

It is also important to acknowledge Chris' experiences of claustrophobia within his response. Evolutionary theory aims to explain claustrophobia as an evolutionary hallmark to protect against being trapped in the face of an aggressor (Starratt, 2016). Behaviourists understand such phobias as a conditioned response resulting from exposure to unpleasant stimuli (Watson & Rayner, 1920). Psychobiologists have found an association between the *Gpm6a* gene and claustrophobic behaviours in mice (El-Kordi et al., 2013). However, none of these accounts can help us understand the lived-in experience of someone feeling claustrophobic.

Chris' experiences of claustrophobia seemed to be caused by a feeling that he was trapped in the SCH with other individuals whom he deemed to be a threat. Whilst Chris' comments on this were tangential rather than direct, they do point to the importance of considering the safety of young people in SCHs. There are no published

statistics on violence within SCHs, however, as 24 per-cent of all young people are in the secure estate due to a violent act (YJB, 2016), it is likely that Chris shared the SCH with other young people who he found intimidating.

One interpretation of Adam's more positive experience of the SCH is that, rather than feeling trapped, he may be feeling a sense of containment. Containment, in the psychoanalytic context, refers to the way in which a parent may create a safe space for their infant to express painful emotions, assisting the child to process and understand their emotions and returning them to the child in a modified form that they can manage (Finlay, 2015). Similarly, in psychoanalysis, the therapist helps to contain and hold the client's difficult emotions so that they can process and work through them.

I believe that the SCH, with its nurturing and caring adults, small number of peers and highly controlled environments, acts as a container for Alex's fears of the chaotic and frightening world outside. Rather than feeling trapped and oppressed by the limits of the SCH, these limits make him feel calm and secure. The adults that work at the SCH have created a safe-space that allows Alex to process past trauma and begin to feel secure.

I believe that this concept of containment could be a useful theory for SCHs to consider. A consideration of containment may encourage adults in SCHs try to aim to minimise experiences of feeling trapped (such as the ones Eric appears to feel) instead creating a safe space within which to support and contain the emotions of young offenders.

#### 4.2.2: Sub-ordinate Theme: Power - Resistance and Submission

##### *Results*

###### *Reflective Box*

In this section I talk about the extent to which my participants might feel a sense of responsibility for their situation. I would like to emphasise here that I am not making any value judgements around whether this is or is not a good thing. Instead I am trying to explore how the exertion of power may have led to these feelings of responsibility being generated.

Participant response suggested that they were highly aware of power being exerted over them by the SCH institution. However, the ways in which each participant responded to that power were different. Eric sought to resist the power of the SCH. Chris and Adam, on the other hand, submitted to the power exerted over them.

Eric became more verbose when referring to his resistance against exertions of power by staff in SCH. He spoke of how he manipulated the system in a way that allowed him to not complete work, whilst not getting punished either.

“If you don’t go in there...the staff will put down on the thing and you get points for not being there...I’ll probably get a sanction for that...activity ban or power ban...But if I went and sat in there and did no work...then I wouldn’t get an activity ban or nothing” (79-86).

Eric clearly saw opportunities to resist engagement in education as a way to wrest power back from the SCH. He liked to present as someone who chose when and how he engaged with school work.

“In the morning, I’ve just woke up and you can’t be arsed to do any work....They’ll keep me in class til the end of the day....I’d probably just sit there and tell them I don’t want to do no work” (256-274).

“I’ve never liked school...maybe cus it’s the staff nagging me all the time” (307-308).

As I will outline later, I felt that Eric experienced education as unenjoyable, but also as a means to a better future (see sub-ordinate theme: Education as a means to communicate success). He didn’t seem to believe in learning-for-learning’s-sake or working hard because he liked the teacher. If he didn’t see any tangible benefit to education he appeared to resist and reject.

*Reflective Box*

Eric’s resistance to the system and the way he adapts it to fit his needs, may fit into Eric’s support worker’s account of why she feels he is manipulative. However, I would argue that he is being no more coercive or manipulative than the educationalists trying to exert control or power onto him.

By contrast, Chris and Adam’s accounts suggest that they may have found it more difficult to resist the power structures of the SCH. Ultimately, I believe that both submitted to the assertions of the justice system: that they were to blame for their actions and that they had to take responsibility for those actions by accepting the punishment of being placed in custody. This is reflected in the fact that neither talked about resisting the instructions of staff. It is also reflected in the fact that they appeared to feel a sense of responsibility for the actions that lead to them being taken into custody.

Chris appeared to blame himself for being trapped in the SCH, unable to support or see his unwell grandmother. Chris linked feelings of responsibility to difficulties in accessing the curriculum, showing how emotions can affect educational experiences.

“I think to myself every night like, this is my fault for getting myself in here, what if I never see her again cus she might...something might happen to her she might become really ill and die” (91-93).

“Where I’ve like a family member’s like, not very well or something like that, it’d slow me down a bit that day, I wouldn’t do much. I’d still do my work but not to the best of my ability” (78-80).

Chris put himself at the centre of his account by using the first person when he stated, “what have I done? (90). I believe that this use of the first person emphasises that Chris held himself responsible for his own situation rather than any other external factors and that he felt a sense of guilt as a result. Due to this, he was unable to resist the power of the SCH. He linked his time in custody with the possible death of his grandma, almost suggesting that he could be a part-cause of her death. This appeared to be a powerfully distressing notion for Chris to submit to.

Adam appeared to submit to the rules imposed on him in the SCH. He stated “cus of the nature of where we are, certain rules have to apply to us” (172) There is no evidence of Adam rejecting the rules imposed on him within his account. Adam also stated that a key lesson he learned in the SCH is “you’ve got the lesson ‘don’t do it again’. Pretty obvious. Still helps. (348-349). Here I felt that Adam submitted to the notion of blame, that his actions were what caused him to be placed in custody.

I believe that Adam does not submit to the SCH power structures as wholly as Chris. This is because, in both of the above extracts, he uses discursive tactics as an attempt to put psychological distance between himself and his actions. In the first instance, and throughout his responses, Adam refuses to refer to the SCH by name. Instead it becomes “where we are” (172), a “school” (16), or “here” (26). In the second instance, he uses the second person when it appears he is talking about himself (“you’ve got the lesson” (348-349). In creating this distance, this suggests to me that Adam did not wholly submit to self-blame, in the same way that Chris appeared to in his account.

This sense of shame may have also been conveyed by the way in which Adam occasionally avoided making eye contact with me when talking about his present situation in the SCH. I believe that here, Adam felt a sense of shame that prevented him from taking responsibility for his actions in the way that Chris appears to. This will be discussed further in the next section.

### *Discussion*

Foucault's (1978/1998) writings can be helpful in understanding the resistance (or lack of resistance) to power that can be found in the experiences of each of my participants. To Foucault (1978/1998), power is always found in a dialectic relationship with resistance. In his words, "where there is power, there is resistance" (p. 95). However, it is important to note that this often-quoted phrase is accompanied by the following caveat: "...and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (p. 95). Here, Foucault (1978/1998) is saying that resistance can only exist within the context of the power that is being resisted. Thus, resistance is not limitless, but contained within a possible field of action which is defined by the power being exerted. Foucault (1978/1998) helps us to understand Eric's account by acknowledging both the presence and limits of his resistance in the power relationship. Eric was physically unable to exit the SCH, however, he could resist attempts to control his behaviours by refusing to engage in school work. Furthermore, he attempted to wrest back a modicum of power by engaging in work that he feels will lead to a more positive future for himself (See subordinate theme: Yields Meaningful Rewards).

The accounts of Chris and Adam reflect just how little power they perceived themselves to have in the SCH. Both chose to blame themselves and take responsibility for their incarceration, appearing to have internalised the disciplinary discourse that Foucault argues prisons are designed to perpetuate. I would suggest that this disciplinary discourse is analogous to the "responsibilising mentality" (Muncie, 2008, p. 107) that was discussed in the literature review.

Chris and Adam responded to the exertion of power by self-blaming, experiencing shame or guilt as a result. The self-blaming tendencies of both Chris and Adam are important to consider in the context of literature, which mainly focuses on how the traits shame and guilt correlate to different outcomes for both adult and young offenders. Here, shame is operationalised as a negative understanding of the self and guilt is operationalised as a negative understanding of the behaviour that has occurred (Baldwin, Baldwin, & Ewald, 2006; D. R. Karp, 1998; Tangney, Stuewig, Mashek, & Hastings, 2011). These studies suggest that an individual's guilt is more highly correlated with acceptance of responsibility and positive adaption of behaviour. This is because the individual is more likely to consider their self-concept positively and believe that their negative behaviour can be redeemed (Baldwin et al., 2006; D. R. Karp, 1998; Tangney et al., 2011). Contrariwise, feelings of shame have been linked to avoidant, angry and blaming behaviours. Tibbetts (1997) suggests this is because the individual feels that they are irredeemable due to their negative self-concept. Braithwaite (1989) encapsulates this notion in his 'Reintegrative Shaming Theory', which argues that shame helps to limit deviancy if it is linked to opportunities for redemption.

It could be suggested that, in the face of power-exertions, Chris appeared to be accepting responsibility for his actions by using the first person (e.g. "I think) and placing himself at the centre of his actions. Thus, he is more likely to feel guilt. Adam, who appeared to psychologically distance himself from his actions using the second person (e.g. "you've got the lesson"), may be more likely to feel shame.

One clear problem with the literature around 'shame' and 'guilt' is it only explores emotions considered negative in affect. Ristanovic (2014) demonstrates that there is a strong negative correlation between happiness and criminal activity. Promoting happiness for those who are in custody might be a way of overcoming this focus on the shame or guilt that comes with taking responsibility for criminal actions. Nevertheless, within academic study there has been little interest in looking to encourage people to stop criminal activity by improving their own subjective experience of happiness (Ronel & Elisha, 2011). I would argue that, by looking at happiness as a protective factor

against recidivism, we can generate a more positive, redemptive discourse around young people in the secure estate than if we solely focus on shame and guilt. It may also help us to reconceptualise the secure estate as somewhere that focuses less on power-exertion and more on support and rehabilitation.

#### **4.2.3: Sub-ordinate Theme: Enforced yet meaningful engagement**

##### *Results*

My participants were all in-custody and, due to this, had various freedoms withdrawn, leading to a lower level of autonomy over their own actions. Whilst this led to a sense of feeling trapped or contained, I also got a sense from participant responses that this withdrawal of freedoms led to an experience of enforced engagement with either learning tasks or social interactions. Importantly, every participant gave a positive example of situations where, due to this enforced expectation, engagement became meaningful and led to a success of some kind.

It is important to note that, in no instances did it seem that the SCH staff had bullied or manipulated the participants into enforced engagement due to the fact they were in custody. Rather, the staff appeared to have worked within the mandatory nature of rules and regulations within the SCH to create a safe and controlled space in which participants were able to meaningfully engage.

The fact that Eric was locked inside the SCH classroom meant that he felt a greater sense of the enforcement of the SCH system, leading to him engaging in his education.

“In my old school I’d just, if I couldn’t be arsed doing the work I’d just walk out. Whereas here, you have to...well you don’t have to...but the teachers try and get you to do the work and you can’t walk out” (225-227).

This enforcement, characterised by the way that the doors are locked in the classroom and Eric can’t “just walk out” (225), led to meaningful engagement. When I asked Eric

what his biggest achievement was since he arrived at the SCH, he responded “my exams” (288). As mentioned previously (see the sub-ordinate theme: Alienation in Mainstream Education), Eric believed that if this enforcement was absent and he was back in mainstream education he “probably wouldn’t have done them” (293). Eric then further emphasised the importance of enforcement and its relationship to meaningful engagement within the SCH by saying “I don’t like school and at the same stage, I have to go to school to take my GCSEs” (298-299). He had no choice but to attend, but through this he engaged in an activity he found meaningful, taking his GCSEs (see sub-ordinate theme: Yields Meaningful Rewards).

For Chris, being confined in an enforced manner with other people appears to create a sense of anxiety (see sub-ordinate theme: Feeling Trapped or Contained). Despite these anxieties, Chris “take[s]” his peers “in as family” (158). This emphasised, to me, how the enforced nature of these relationships led Chris to meaningful social interactions. As I previously stated (see sub-ordinate theme: Relationships and Attachment in the SCH), Chris’ characterisation of his peers as a surrogate family reflected the enforced nature of these relationships. As with his family, he did not get to choose who his peers were. Nevertheless, rather than rejecting these relationships and isolating himself, he decided to understand his relationship with them through the positive idea of a familial bond.

In a safe learning environment, Chris suggested that he could tolerate his peers, even if he strongly disliked them, and begin to co-operate and collaborate.

“You don’t realise it but obviously, there’s some people that you do hate here like you don’t get on with everyone but obviously once you come together in a group like this, like, you don’t think about getting on with people it’s just like you put your ideas like into a circle and it’s like, one gets picked out, and it’s like, so everyone thinks of the one idea and then obviously you work together to think of the best one. So when you work together, it’s like, even if you hate someone you’ll still get on with someone, you’ll still cooperate with them to find out what they want to say about something” (219-225).

I would suggest that Chris was only able to come to this conclusion because the enforced expectation to be a part of this cohort was balanced with environmental support from staff (see sub-ordinate theme: Attachment and Relationships in the SCH) that allowed Chris to feel safe enough in his environment to start working alongside others.

Similarly, Adam's responses suggested that enforced containment led to him engaging more socially.

“Beforehand, I didn't actually talk to any people. Whereas now, I do talk to a lot of people here as well...I'm being forced to socialise. You haven't got a lot of room to move and if there's not staff, you have to stay out with other people and you end up talking to them and you end up getting into games here as well” (283-288).

“Staff...help a lot...cus they'll talk to you, then they'll talk to the other person, they'll manage to get a conversation going between you” (290-294).

Whilst being a part of this cohort was compulsory, Adam was supported by staff to feel comfortable and safe enough to engage in conversation. This is a really positive and meaningful achievement considering Adam's responses suggested that he found socialisation difficult.

### *Discussion*

Enforcement of SCH expectations was apparent in participant responses. Participants were confined in the same location with each other, locked in classrooms, and locked in their own rooms at certain times of the day. Where they could spend their time and who they could spend their time with, within the SCH, was enforced with very little room for negotiation. However, I believe that, due to this level of enforcement, meaningful engagement occurred. Eric engaged in his learning, where in the non-

enforced environment of a mainstream classroom he would have walked out. Chris learned to collaboratively engage in learning tasks with peers that he disliked. Adam was “forced to socialise” (286) and through this became a more social person.

It is important to note that enforcement here led to a positive outcome (meaningful engagement) rather than a negative one (e.g. alienation). I believe that this is because the enforced and mandatory nature of life within the SCH was combined with a staff-created environment where students felt safe to meaningfully engage. To me, this invokes Bourdieu’s (1994) understanding of the left and right hands of state governance, outlined in my literature review. Furthermore, in this particular instance it contradicts Lanskey’s (2015) assertion that the judicial right-hand acts as a barrier to the educational left-hand. Here the hands work together, with the right-hand enforcing, and the left-hand nurturing, leading to my participants being able to meaningfully engage. The following discussion will consider how my participants were supported by staff at the SCH to develop a sense of psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) and resiliency (Masten, 2001). I will argue that this, in conjunction with the enforced nature of the SCH environment, resulted in meaningful engagement.

Psychological safety, defined as a self-belief that a person can express themselves without fearing negative consequences (e.g. poor self-image, a reduction in status), has been found to be important in effective learning (Kahn, 1990; Edmondson, 1999). It has been argued that psychological safety is linked to important traits for learning such as greater critical thinking, more open mindedness in learning, and a willingness to learn from our failures (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009). Psychological safety is closely linked to the environment in which learners find themselves and is generated by the leaders within that environment, teachers in this instance (Baeva & Bordovskaia, 2015). Evidence suggests that psychological safety is significantly increased when individuals in a system have high-quality relationships (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009). Responses from all three of my participants suggest that they have high-quality relationships with their teachers and feel positive about the SCH environment (see super-ordinate theme: Nurture).

I have interpreted Adam and Chris' accounts as particularly reflecting a level of psychological safety. Both appeared less likely to experience negative consequences as a result of social interaction because of their environment. Staff at the SCH created scaffolds (in Adam's instance "games" (288) and in Chris' example a group activity) that helped to make interaction safe, structured, and collaborative. Thus, though interaction was enforced due to their confinement with others, Adam and Chris felt psychologically safe enough to meaningfully engage in these interactions.

Resiliency is understood as by Masten (2011) as the ability for a system to deal with significant challenges. It is important to consider when attempting to understand why my participants engaged meaningfully in the enforced environment of the SCH. This is because Fried and Chapman (2012) argue that resilience is needed when engaging in new learning situations or activities, where an individual faces the risk that they might fail or meet challenges. Masten (2011) does not understand resilience as a trait that an individual can internally draw upon. Instead, it is something that the individual derives from influences within the system in which they live (e.g. peer relationships, child-adult relationships, the individual's relationship to the institution in which they work or learn) (Nichols, Loper, & Meyer, 2016). If the system is working in an effective manner, the individuals within it will be able to act with more resilience (Nichols et al., 2016).

I believe that my participants developed the resilience needed to meaningfully engage in activities that they may have found intimidating or unenjoyable due to the positive SCH system around them. Masten (2001) argues that resiliency is developed by young people when they are around supportive and effective teachers in a safe and stimulating environment. Mirroring this, each of my participants' account suggested that the participant felt safe in the classroom environment and felt secure in their relationships with staff (see: super-ordinate theme: Nurture), giving them the resilience to meaningfully engage with tasks they may have wished to avoid. I feel that this is particularly true of Eric, whose mainstream educational experience appeared to have been characterised by avoidance. I believe that the positive influence of the SCH system engendered enough resilience for him to engage meaningfully with his education, despite its enforced nature.

In conclusion, from my participant's responses I have interpreted that the SCH system was able to balance enforcement with effective support (in the form of psychological safety and resilience). This led to my participants to meaningfully engage with activities that they may have refused to engage with under other circumstances.

#### **4.3.0: Super-ordinate Theme: The Utility of Education**

##### *Introduction to This Super-ordinate Theme*

One of the most positive aspects of each interview was that all three participants appeared to see multiple purposes to education. This was reflected within three sub-ordinate themes. Firstly, their responses seemed to support the idea that they experienced education as a way to access meaningful rewards. In this instance, all 3 of my participants were particularly focused on education as a means to gain employment. Secondly, education was seen by participants as a way to pass the time whilst in custody. Finally, education seems to have been understood as a way to communicate success to other individuals such as family or teachers.

#### **4.3.1: Sub-ordinate Theme: Yields Meaningful Rewards**

The responses of all three participants appear to show that they experienced education at the SCH as a way to enter further training or employment, and that this was a meaningful reward for their efforts. I got quite a strong feeling from all three that they understood education as the way to a more positive future.

Eric did not enjoy school or place value in learning for learning's sake. He was clear that he doesn't "like school" (299). He felt that he had "grown out of school" (112) and that he wouldn't work hard for a teacher, even if he really liked them. When I asked Eric, "are there some teachers you really like and work hard for?" He responded, "not really, no" (103).

When I asked if Eric would remember any teachers from the SCH 20 years from now he responded:

“Probably not no...cus I’ll be moving on anyway, and I’m not going to want to remember....I just want to get out and get my life back on track” (405-408).

Vitally, Eric perceived his GCSEs as something that will benefit him meaningfully.

“Doing my GCSEs, it can change your life because you can get any job you want when you get them...it’ll look good for you as well because of the job interview” (142-144).

To Eric, school had a transactional value in that he engaged with his work to get qualifications that he hoped would lead to a job. Throughout the interview he regularly linked engagement in school to the reward of a job.

“You need college to get a job and all that” (125).

“I don’t like school but you have to come to school to get a good job” (43).

To Eric, a job was the meaningful reward and the end goal. Due to this, Eric was focused on his own future and how education could get him there. Eric stated that he would only work hard if the work benefitted him in a meaningful way.

“If it’s not related I wouldn’t do it...You’ll not get nothing out of it if it’s not related (352-354).

*Reflective Box*

My emotional reaction to Eric's response here was one of admiration. Why should we expect young people to learn-for-learning's-sake if the activity or task has no meaning or importance to them? Why should he seek to access the curriculum unless it leads to the job as a mechanic that he wants?

However, I also felt a sense of sadness at the realisation that learning-for-learning's-sake is really the accrual of cultural capital and that, whilst learning to analyse poetry or reading Shakespeare won't teach a practical and tangible skill, it will help the young person develop a cultural understanding that enables them to access greater financial and cultural power in their adult lives. I feel that this is because knowledge is rated according to power-norms in society. I felt sadness because I believe that Eric's quest to learn about mechanics will never be as valued by society as an affluent middle-class Oxbridge candidate's quest to learn about Shakespeare.

Chris saw the meaningful reward of education as a path to college and then to employment.

"If I do my GCSEs next year, if I like them...they'll be looking at putting me in college and obviously in college I can get...more information about MVS that way" (606-609).

Adam focused in on the sort of support the SCH were giving him so that he could become a "military pilot" (188), something that his responses suggest was a meaningful reward to him.

"They come down with a laptop...and talk to you about what you want to do when you leave...they'll go through what you'll need if you can...what sort of skills you already have, what you need to learn, and all the stuff about that topic...Try the best to help you achieve what you want to do" (195-201).

## *Discussion*

All three participants' responses point to the importance of meaningful rewards as a motivating factor that encourages educational engagement. To unpack these responses further, I think it is important to consider motivation theory and the implications this has for the current theme.

Motivation theory assumes that motivation (i.e. an internal condition which produces and directs behaviour (Kleinginna and Kleinginna, 1981)) is essential to learning (Huitt, 2011). All of my participants' responses fit with many of the key psychological theories around motivation and education. For example, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, posits the following formula:

$$\text{Motivation} = \text{perceived probability of success (expectancy)} \times \text{connection of success and reward (instrumentality)} \times \text{value of obtaining goal (valence, value)}.$$

Here, for motivation to occur, the individual must understand that being successful will lead to a reward, and that reward must have value. Thus, the educational experiences that each participant appeared motivated towards are the ones that lead to a tangible and valued reward, employment.

Eric's responses that relate to this theme encouraged me to seriously reflect on what education is for. The government suggest that education's purpose is to introduce students

“to the best that has been thought and said, and instilling in them a love of knowledge and culture for their own sake....education is also about the practical business of ensuring that young people receive the preparation they need to secure a good job and a fulfilling career, and have the resilience and moral character to overcome challenges and succeed” (Gibb, 2015).

Thus, to government, a good job is merely part of the meaningful reward of education.

Eric saw education solely as a tool to get him out of the SCH and into gainful employment. Thus, he dismissed much of the government definition about learning for learning's sake. He needed education to have a tangible, positive impact on his life to help him escape from his situation. It is not surprising that Eric understood education in this manner. Education is typically understood as a key way through which an individual can raise their socio-economic status (Iannelli & Paterson, 2005). However, there is much evidence to question this assertion.

Whilst evidence suggests that educational level and earnings are positively correlated (ONS, 2011), there is much to suggest that socio-economic status is a key indicator of future wealth and prosperity. Parental income has been shown to be a significant factor affecting child outcomes such as health, educational level, cognitive ability and income (Cooper & Stewart, 2017). Thus, for a child to reach the high educational level that helps to increase their earnings, it is beneficial for them to be from an affluent background in the first place. Furthermore, research by the Social Mobility Commission (2016) leads them to conclude that Britain has a deep and worsening social mobility problem, arguing that a key problem is the unfairness and inequality of the British education system, linked to the postcode lottery.

Research suggests that family characteristics such as socio-economic status, education level, and social networks are linked to child educational outcome (de Graaf, de Graaf, & Kraaykamp, 2000; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Gunn, 1997; Gamoran, 2001). Finally, Sullivan (2001), shows that there is a significant correlation between cultural capital and educational outcomes. Thus, young people who possess forms of knowledge, dress, language, speaking styles that are embodied by the middle classes, are more likely to succeed in education (Bourdieu, 1977).

This leads me to the following uncomfortable conclusion. Eric's assertion that engagement with school and the attainment of GCSEs is enough to "change your life" is unlikely to be true. The belief that education alone can yield meaningful rewards is likely to be false. The overwhelming body of evidence suggests that socio-cultural

factors are hugely influential in deciding the future life outcomes of an individual (Erola, Jalonen, & Lehti, 2016). I would argue that my participants have internalised a false, yet powerful educational discourse that suggests the opposite; that individual action and effort is the most important deciding factor in future life outcomes. I find this concerning as I feel this discourse can be damaging, as it presents failure as situated within the individual and their aspirations, rather than down to their environmental constraints.

#### **4.3.2: Sub-ordinate Theme: A Way to Pass Time**

All three of my participants appeared to emphasise temporality in recounting their experiences of education, albeit in different ways. Eric endured time passing slowly, linking it to his attempts at resisting SCH power exertions (see sub-ordinate theme: Power – Resistance and Submission). Chris appeared eager to engage in education because he felt that it will speed up his perception of the passing of time. Adam recounted the stress of mainstream education and how this encouraged him to perceive time passing more slowly.

Eric, in his refusal to engage with work (unless he feels there will be a tangible benefit) felt that he spent much of his time in class just sitting and doing nothing. When asked what he thought about during these times he stated:

“I don’t think, I just sit there and watch other people do the work...I can do it, sitting there for a long time” (276-280).

He stated that

“sometimes [time] goes quickly, sometimes it goes slowly, you just have to deal with it...I just sit down or walk round the classroom or something, try and pass time. A lot of the time I just sit there in the classroom” (369-374)

I have interpreted Eric's responses here as a heightened awareness of time passing (whether quickly or slowly), due to his refusal to engage with educational tasks (see sub-ordinate theme: Power – Resistance and Submission). I understand his attempts to not think as a method of dealing with the boredom of waiting for time to pass. Here I believe Eric is attempting to almost shutdown his mind as a way of coping or helping to "deal with" (369) the emptiness of having nothing to do.

Chris saw educational opportunities as a way to speed up his perception of time within the SCH. When talking about being offered the opportunity to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh course he stated:

"Get in, sign me up for that, obviously I'm here long enough I don't want to be sat in here for the rest of my time" (288-290).

He spoke more explicitly about his perception of time passing later on when he stated:

"When you're in school you don't realise how fast the time goes because you're like, you don't think, like you don't keep asking every 5 minutes what time it is like, you get your head down and you do the work and about 5 minutes later the teacher's like "right, it's the end of the lesson" but we were sat there like 5 minutes ago and it's like, no Chris it's been 40 minutes now" (517-521).

Chris spoke with a levity that indicated pleasure at this recollection of time passing quickly in lessons. I feel that it is likely that, when Chris was engaged in a meaningful educational activity, he was able to forget about the fact that he was in custody or about the other things that he finds anxiety provoking.

By contrast he talked about how time passed slowly when he did not enjoy a lesson and he was not engaging with it.

“When I’m in it [music lessons] just like seems boring at times, dragging...If I’m not doing anything if we’re just like there talking then it’s boring...Our lessons here are 45 minutes each see if I’ve got 15 minutes and you’re getting bored of it you can either ask to go to a quiet room and obviously go by yourself and go and do the work with someone else or you can just sit there and be bored for the rest of the lesson” (319-328).

His emphasis on the time-length of his lessons and his use of the word “dragging” (319) emphasises, to me, the way he was very aware of time passing slowly.

Chris also talks the lack of meaningful engagement at weekends and on holidays.

“I just see the work as giving you something to do cus when you’re on...the unit Saturdays and Sundays, or when you’re on holiday...it’s boring. You watch films, TV, Xbox” (513-515).

These responses make it very likely that Chris experienced time passing far quicker when he was engaged educationally.

I understood Adam as the least concerned of my three participants regarding the use of education to pass the time. This makes sense given the context, he consistently appeared to feel content and safe in the SCH, comparing it positively to the outside world. For Adam, it’s the mainstream educational experience that feels stuck in time.

“In a mainstream school they’d’ve gone: normal work, hard work. You’re having tests soon. Really hard work and continuing 90 percent for months. Whereas here they’d gradually build up on it. And they’d do quizzes and stuff to test your knowledge throughout that instead of just sort of learning” (105-108).

I perceive that his reference to working “90 percent for months” (106) conveys a sense of exhaustion that he does not present with when talking about education in the SCH.

For Adam, the very fact that he did not comment on time passing slowly in the SCH could be interpreted as a level of contentment with his life at the SCH.

### *Discussion*

In order to develop a greater understanding of what it might feel like to experience the passage of time for my participants, I would like to explore a continuum on which, at one side there is the concept of boredom, and on the other, there is the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

Boredom can be defined as a range of experiences that include “awareness of difficulty concentrating; non-optimal arousal; a negative, aversive emotional state; constraint and disrupted agency; and a perceived slow passage of time” (Eastwood, Frischen, Fenske, & Smilek, 2012, p. 487). This could easily characterise Eric’s responses to how time passed within lessons in the SCH.

By contrast, the experience of flow can be understood as an ideal mental state (Jackson & Eklund, 2004); being completely focused on an activity to a point where you are no longer conscious of time passing, feeling rewarded, content and serene when engaging with the activity and feeling in control of the task and the outcome (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Chris’ responses may suggest that he entered a flow state when he is engaged with educational activity.

Boredom appears to be a key feature of life in the SCH, according to the accounts of Eric and Chris, particularly when they are not engaged in educational activities. This seems to have an effect on their perception of the passage of time. It is pertinent here to point out that the German word for boredom is *langeweile*, which translates to English as ‘long period of time’ (Wangh, 1975). Several academics have defined boredom in terms of temporality. Wangh (1975) describes boredom as feeling that “time seems endless, there is no distinction between past, present, and future” (p. 541), whilst Greenson (1953) understands boredom as where “time seems to stand still” (p. 7).

These descriptors have been echoed by participants in several qualitative studies who have described the experience of boredom as when time is slowed, however they comment on the fact that it is due to a lack of meaningful activities to engage in (Martin, Sadlo, & Stew, 2006; O'Connor, 1967). Evidence from cognitive psychology can help to support this assertion. Time-perception models suggest that, in order to notice the passage of time we need to attend to it (Treisman, 1963; Zakay, 1992). Research suggests that, if we are absorbed in an activity we are unlikely to attend to temporal cues that we use to keep track of time, causing us to underestimate how much time has passed (Grondin & Macar, 1992; Hicks & Brundige, 1974) and that, the more attention we allocate to a task, the quicker we perceive time passing (Brown & Boltz, 2002; Chaston & Kingstone, 2004; Fraisse, 1984). Thus, the research on boredom and temporality lends itself nicely to Flow Theory's claim that, when we experience flow, time passes quickly. When we are in flow and engaged in a task, time passes quicker (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

How, then, do we maximise the time young people spend in flow, in schools and secure units? Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider and Shernoff (2003), in their study of 526 U.S. high school students, suggest that the following factors help to achieve this: the perceived challenge of their own skill is high, the perceived challenge of the task is high, skill and challenge are in correct balance with each other, instructions are relevant, the learner feels in control of their learning, and they are engaging in individual or group work rather than taking exams, listening to a lecture or watching a video. Rathunde and Csikszentmihalyi (2005), provide evidence to suggest that students are more likely to enter a flow-like state at a Montessori middle-school than in a traditional middle-school. Thus, Montessori educational values such as promoting student choice, a discovery model of learning, appropriate environments, freedom of movement, and individualised teaching may be valuable in promoting a flow state (American Montessori Society, n.d.).

This body of evidence is relevant to all of my participant responses. Eric, when he was not engaged in a meaningful activity noticed and had to "deal with" the passage of time. Chris, when absorbed in work, felt that time was passing quicker. Finally, Adam's

recollection of hard work in a mainstream school, suggests that he was too anxious to engage with, or become absorbed by, learning activities. This led to him being very aware of time passing and, due to this, it did so slowly.

#### **4.3.3: Sub-ordinate Theme: A Way to Experience Success.**

All three of my participants had educational achievements and successes that they wished to relay. These mostly related to the completion of their GCSEs. All three of my participants were waiting on the results of their GCSEs at the time they were interviewed. Whilst Eric and Adam emphasised the experience of success, Chris emphasised both experiencing success and communicating it to others. Chris saw these two things as clearly linked, his feelings of success amplified by the approval he received when he communicated this success to people that were important to him.

Eric was not particularly concerned with conveying his educational successes to everyone else, instead it was important for Eric that he was pleased with his own performance. It is clear that his time working towards his GCSEs was a period of personal growth and success.

“The first two exams, a bit nervous but then, as you get through more of them you feel confident about doing them... I think I did well in all of them” (169-176).

Here Eric is openly proud at having sat his GCSEs and, through the experience, has become confident in his abilities as a learner. Though he often talked about his successes, it was clear that it was very important for him to be seen as successful by others.

When Chris spoke about his GCSEs he appeared to experience pride and happiness at the idea of getting his results back. He saw it as a success in itself.

“If you get your GCSE results it’s a great achievement...if you want the grades that you had, even for me if I got higher than a C I would be dead pleased with myself” (64-66).

That Chris was being put in for his GCSEs in Year 10 rather than Year 11, was a particular source of pride and success for him.

“Well, I didn’t really, I didn’t think about it but when I came here, not even that long ago, just before the, just before the holidays I sat my GCSEs exams, I didn’t really expect to, but because I was finding the work that easy, obviously I’m in year 10. I was finding that work too easy so they gave me year 11 work and I found that too easy so it’s like, there’s nothing more we can give hard work because you’s on the hardest work and you’s finding it too easy so, they put me in for my GCSEs and said “well Chris, if you pass this year we’ll be super happy with you because we’ve never had a student that’s been in Year 10 that’s done their GCSEs and passed them first time” (25-32).

“My YOT worker and my family’s proud of me cus of the amount of progress that I’ve made since I’ve been here” (484-485).

In making a reference to his YOT worker and family, I felt Chris was emphasising how important it was to him that they saw him as a successful learner. This may be to help displace the feelings of guilt that Chris spoke of when he suggested that he has let his family down by being placed in the SCH (see sub-ordinate theme: Power – Resistance and Submission).

The last time Adam reported feeling a real sense of success at the SCH was “doing my GCSEs” (80), though he was less keen on predicting how well he had done than Eric or Chris. A greater sense of pride came for Adam when he spoke about his experiences on the Duke of Edinburgh course, working towards the gold award.

“Well we’ve done map reading, compass reading, plotting your route...You do...first aid training. Not like the full ambulance one, just a minor one for any accidents you’d get whilst walking. We’ve done practice expeditions, one without a backpack to get used to walking. Two with the full backpack with the full weights in it” (163-167).

I felt that Adam spoke with a great deal of pride, expressing feelings of success, about his achievements on the Duke of Edinburgh. At times throughout the interview, Adam would avoid my gaze. However, when discussing the Duke of Edinburgh course, he gave me more direct eye contact, looking proud of his achievements.

### *Discussion*

Both Eric and Adam’s accounts of experiencing success at the SCH spoke to me of the importance of self-efficacy and its relationship to learning. Self-efficacy is a concept developed by Albert Bandura (1997) and can be understood as the belief oneself has of their own ability to accomplish a task. A strong self-efficacy has been demonstrated to positively correlate with educational and career outcomes (Staples, Schwalbe, & Gecas, 1984; Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005)

Importantly, evidence suggests that self-efficacy levels are affected by how valuable individuals perceive their past achievements to be (Stevens, Olivarez, Lan, & Tallent-Runnels, 2004). Thus, encouraging individuals to understand their past achievements as important and worth celebrating, is likely to support future successes. This is especially important to consider within the context of the secure estate, where evidence suggests young people have a lower self-efficacy when compared to students in mainstream education (Allred, Harrison, & Connell, 2013). This notion is in line with my participant responses who all seemed to view the completion of their GCSEs as a positive achievement that appeared to raise their confidence in relation to learning. It is important that we put thought into how to support young people in experiencing their own successes as valuable and important.

Chris situated his experiences of achievement within a social context, through a perception that his YOT worker and family were proud of him. Here, I found self-concept theory to be useful in unpicking Chris' responses. Self-concept, which is closely linked to self-efficacy (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003), is what an individual believes about themselves (Baumeister, 1999). Carl Rogers (1959) developed the idea of self-concept, suggesting that it has three individual aspects.

- Self-image, the view the individual places on themselves.
- Self-esteem, the value the individual places on themselves.
- The ideal self, what the individual wishes they were really like.

Rogers (1959) suggests that, for an individual to self-actualise, their self-image and ideal-self have to be congruent and overlap. Argyle (2008) argues that congruence is primarily environmentally situated, relying on four main factors:

- How others react to us.
- How we compare ourselves to others.
- Our social roles (in this case Chris' social role may be heavily influenced by his incarceration).
- How much we identify with other people.

Post-modernism has implications for Rogers' (1959) theory, as it claims that the 'self' is a social construct (Gergen, 2011). In this light, self-actualisation becomes a discursive narrative that individuals construct for themselves in order to gain understanding. It is, thus, illusory and not real (Hertler, Krauss, & Ward, 2017). However, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the responses of my participants show that they experience the self as real, something that can be worked upon and something that can be improved (see sub-ordinate theme: A Bespoke Curriculum). Due to this, I think that Rogers' (1959) theory is useful to consider in this instance.

By situating Chris' responses within self-concept theory, I am able to emphasise the importance of Chris' relationships with others. When Chris spoke about being first placed in the SCH, his responses were characterised by a sense of guilt and the feeling that he had let down his loved ones (see sub-ordinate theme: Power – Resistance and

Responsibility). At this point, his ideal-self and self-image were likely to have little congruence, due to this negative self-appraisal and potential self-identification with the social role of young offender. However, the positive reactions he experienced from his family and YOT worker are likely to have supported him to reconceptualise his self-image as more in line with his ideal-self, helping him to experience success. To me this underlines the importance of adults in Chris' environment, supporting him to recognise and celebrate his achievements.

#### **4.4.0: Quality in Research**

Here I will re-consider Yardley's (2008) guidelines for quality in research. I will do this to evidence the ways in which I fulfilled each guideline, after completing my analysis.

- Sensitivity to context.

By engaging with Langdrige's (2007) reflexive (See Appendix G) questions both before and after the completion of this research, I became highly aware of the social and environmental factors that influenced my thinking. During my interviews and throughout my analysis I was highly aware of the way participant experiences were co-created through the double hermeneutic. I was also aware of the limits of my interpretations; that they are not the true experiences of my participants but instead my interpretation of their interpretation of their experiences.

- Commitment and rigour.

Over the course of completing this thesis I read widely about phenomenology and IPA. My interviews were informed by my work as a trainee educational psychologist, employing various techniques to put my participants at ease and encouraging them to think deeply about their responses. My analysis was informed by experts in the field of IPA (Langdrige, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). Finally, I shared my thesis with my research tutor and several of my peers, who gave regular and constructive critical feedback in order to help me maximise the rigour of this research.

- Transparency and coherence.

In my results, I ensured that I prioritised my participant responses and used them as a clear basis for my assertions. The use of reflective boxes throughout my results also helps to give a level of transparency to my thinking. The ordering of my participants' responses into super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes gave the results a clear structure and coherence.

- Impact and importance.

As I mentioned in my previous consideration of these guidelines, I believe that this research has impact and importance because it listens to the often-overlooked voices of young people in the secure estate. In the Conclusions chapter of this thesis I outline clear ways in which this project can positively impact on educational psychology practice and I hope that these implications for EP practice have both impact and importance.

#### **4.5.0: Conclusion**

This chapter has both presented the results of my interpretative phenomenological analysis and a discussion of these results, based on engagement with relevant literature. In doing so, I explored the following research question:

*How do three young people, detained or placed in custody, experience education within a secure children's home?*

An analysis of my results led to the development of three super-ordinate themes: Nurture, Control and the Utility of Education. Their sub-ordinate themes were presented in conjunction with quotes from my participants. These sub-ordinate themes were then explored further in my discussions, supported via an engagement

with relevant academic literature. Finally, I re-considered Yardley's (2008) guidelines for quality in research to reflect on how I had fulfilled them.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### 5.0: Conclusion

This doctoral thesis has used IPA to explore the following research question:

*How do three young people, detained or placed in custody, experience education within a secure children's home?*

Three super-ordinate themes were generated: Nurture, Control, and The Utility of Education. Within the super-ordinate theme of nurture, three sub-ordinate themes were highlighted: A Bespoke Curriculum, Relationships and Attachment in the SCH and Alienation in Mainstream Education. Within the super-ordinate theme of Control, the following sub-ordinate themes were developed: Feeling Trapped or Contained, Resistance and Submission, and Enforced Yet Meaningful Engagement. The Utility of Education had three sub-ordinate themes: Yields Meaningful Rewards, A Way to Pass Time, and A Way to Experience Success.

In concluding this thesis, I will consider the limitations of this study, recommendations for further research and recommendations for educational psychology practice.

### 5.1: Limitations

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has limitations in its inability to be generalised. My interpretations of each participants' experiences of education in the SCH are specific to the time-space of this piece of research. I am unable to claim transferability and, importantly, would not want this piece of research to be misinterpreted as generalizable by others.

Here I would also like to acknowledge Langdridge's (2007) concerns around IPA's focus on language, potentially making it hard to participants who struggle with articulation.

My participants would often be able to describe events or environments, but found it difficult to expand on how these events or environments made them feel. This meant that, at times, my work had to be quite interpretative. Whilst I hope that my transparency, reflexivity and reflectivity ensure that my interpretations were based on a set of logical thought processes, and understood within the academic literature, it might have been helpful to help participants scaffold their responses in some way. However, as mentioned in my methodology, scaffolding the interview may have led to further abstraction, making the double hermeneutic harder to access.

One clear limitation that I feel needs addressing is my participant cohort. Due to my opportunity sampling, I was unable to access a female participant or a participant from an ethnic minority background. IPA does not seek to generalise experiences, and thus would have been only able to make exploratory suggestions regarding the potentially unique nature of the experiences of females or ethnic minorities within the secure estate. However, I still feel that a more demographically varied participant-base would have allowed me to explore a more diverse range of experiences for a possibly richer analysis.

I think that the process of clustering themes within IPA can also be considered a limitation as it is likely to abstract from the specific and unique experiences of my participants in its focus on developing themes across participant responses. Due to this, I have taken care to focus on the idiosyncrasies of each participants' response within each over-arching theme. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge that, without a thematic structure, my analysis may risk becoming chaotic and inaccessible.

Another limitation is my reliance on psychological (and some sociological) theories and concepts within my analysis. It could be argued that such concepts act as a barrier, abstracting away from participant meaning-making. In order to combat this, I have aimed to unpack and engage with each theory in such a way that I hope leads to a more nuanced and analytical understanding of my participant's responses. Furthermore, I hope that, through the use of reflexive boxes I have acknowledged my

interpretative lens and presented a transparent understanding of my knowledge base and how it has helped me interpret participant responses.

## **5.2: Recommendations for further research**

Working towards this thesis, I had several opportunities to consider further research linked to my work. I have outlined these recommendations below:

- Further IPA research into the experience of education within the secure estate could take a larger population or a wider demographic participant group including greater gender and ethnic diversity. Further IPA research into this area could also focus on a different SCH or another aspect of the secure estate (e.g. youth offender institutions).
- I would be interested in exploring the range of discourses used by adults working in SCHs. I am particularly interested in the ways in which justice-based discourses interact with education-based discourses, and how they influence each other.
- Participants in this thesis appeared to place importance in their negative experiences of mainstream education. Due to this, I think that an IPA study should be done working with both young people at risk of entering the secure estate, currently engaging in mainstream education and young people re-entering mainstream education after being placed in the secure estate. I would hope that this would give us insights into supporting young people who find mainstream education hard to access in the hope that we could suggest protective factors to keep young people out of the secure estate.
- There are several examples of illuminating studies that focus on student voice (see: Baroutsis, McGregor, & Mills, 2016; Bourke & Loveridge, 2016; Groves & Welsh, 2010). However, these studies do not explore the specific experiences of marginalised students or those at risk of permanent exclusion, and therefore, have little to say on how to resolve such problems. As young people at risk of permanent exclusion are more likely to enter the secure estate, such

research would be relevant to this study (MORI, 2004). Future studies may wish to focus on the lived-in experiences of marginalised students to seek greater understanding into how feeling lost in a large class, or feeling cold and anxious in an exam room, makes young people feel. This would then allow educationalists to make adaptations that could help improve the negative experiences of mainstream education that some individuals feel.

### **5.3: Recommendations for Educational Psychology Practice**

I acknowledge that the data I have collected is idiographic, and therefore I am unable to generalise. However, I think that my participant responses have raised several important and relevant issues for educational psychologists to consider when working with young people in the secure estate, to see if the experiences of my participants are felt more widely in the secure estate. A consideration of participant responses and the data generated through writing this thesis leads me to recommend the following suggestions for EP practice.

- EPs should place student voice at the heart of their work in the secure estate. As has been observed by several academics, the voices of young people in the secure estate are often overlooked (Lane et al., 2002; Tam et al., 2007). By eliciting student voice EPs can better place themselves in a situation where they can act as an advocate for that young person. The incorporation of student voice into educational reform has been shown to improve the outcomes that were identified (Bourke & Loveridge, 2016; Yonezawa & Jones, 2007). Furthermore, Mager and Nowak (2012) in their systematic review of the research on student voice, argue that students who are encouraged to participate in, and co-construct, their school lives are going to have improved life-skills and feel a greater sense of citizenship.
- Classic psychological theories on education, relationships and motivation can still be understood as relevant today. It is important to acknowledge postmodern critiques of these works, however their focus on factors such as

positive peer and teacher relationships, self-belief, interest and effective differentiation are still valuable to consider.

- EPs to consider interest as a key motivational factor in education, as the literature suggests (Corbiere et al., 2006; Jansen et al., 2016), in order to engage students who do not enjoy education. Research around interest could also be used to challenge prevalent didactic teaching methods if they are felt to be having a negative effect on pupil engagement (DfE, 2010; Lundström, 2015; TES Reporter, 2016).
- EPs need to consider how to support the relationships and attachment needs of young people within the secure estate. This should particularly focus on how to ensure that the beginning and ending of relationships within the secure estate are managed well. Relationships between peers, between student and teacher and between student and key worker should all be considered vital influences in how young people experience life and education in the SCH.
- EPs should focus on the importance of the lived-experience of young people both within the secure estate and within mainstream education to better understand how to support their needs. It is important to acknowledge embodied experiences (e.g. feeling successful, lost, scared, or uncomfortable) within school environments. Within this focus of embodied experience should be a consideration of temporal experience and how the subjective experiences of the passing of time can both positively and negatively affect the way in which young people experience their schooling.
- EPs should consider the psychological effects of confinement on young people within the secure estate. Claustrophobia, fear of being confined in an environment with others, homesickness, and isolation should all be considered key potential negative influences on a young person's experience of life within a SCH.
- EPs to consider how issues of control and resistance-to-control affect both staff and students in the education system. It may be helpful to adopt a facilitative role that seeks to overcome unhelpful control-resistance dichotomies in the secure estate in order to promote greater collaboration.

- EPs to further explore whether limitations on freedoms within the secure estate can lead to positive educational engagement. Importantly, EPs should consider how to support students within the secure estate to develop the resilience and sense of psychological safety needed to acclimatise effectively to the more controlling environment of the secure estate.
- EPs to explore how to develop links between the secure estate and employers. As employment was a key aspiration of each of my participants, this could be something felt more widely by students in the secure estate. A focus on adapting the curriculum to ensure that job-skills are developed, potential in-reach visits from employers, and a careers guidance counsellor could all be valuable for young people in the secure estate.
- EPs to explore how the educational successes of young people within the secure estate can be shared with both staff and others outside the secure estate (e.g. family, newspapers, the local community).

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