

Reconsidering educational culture:

***A narrative exploration of sub-cultural differences
in mainstream secondary school pupils***

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***“When a man is denied the right
to live the life he believes in,
he has no choice but to
become an outlaw.”***

Nelson Mandela

(www.commondreams.org)

Table of Contents

1. ABSTRACT	1
2. FOREWORD	3
3. PERSONAL STATEMENT	5
4. LITERATURE REVIEW	9
4.1 Chapter outline	9
4.2 Social Justice as a basis for this study	9
4.2a Social justice: Necessary skills and dispositions	10
4.2b EPs as social justice agents.....	10
4.3 Defining culture.....	11
4.4 Development of individual cultural identity	12
4.4a Memory and narrative as mediators of identity.....	13
4.5 Development of educational culture.....	14
4.5a Schools as political institutions.....	16
4.5b Impact of educational culture on pupil outcomes	17
4.6 Schools as multi-cultural institutions	18
4.6a Schools as sites of oppression.....	19
4.7 Oppressive mechanisms	21
4.7a Cognitive dissonance	22
4.7b The role of power in oppression.....	23
4.7c Emancipatory power.....	25

4.8 Legal and professional context	26
4.9 Social justice: Facilitating action against oppression	27
4.9a Situating this study	29
4.9b Problem identification.....	29
4.10 Study aims	30
4.11 Research Question	31
5. METHODOLOGY: General Characteristics.....	33
5.1 Ontological and Phenomenological position	33
5.2 Considering alternative research methodologies	34
5.3 De-selecting Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	35
5.4 De-selecting Discourse Analysis.....	36
5.5 Selecting NA.....	37
5.5a Critical realism.....	38
5.5b Reductionism	38
5.5c Participant homogeneity	38
5.5d Relevance to culture/identity	39
5.5e Social justice, political & emancipatory effects	39
5.5f Power and oppression	40
5.6 NA: Facilitating data construction	41
5.6a Data forms.....	41
5.6b Focus groups v individual discussion	42

5.6c Structured v unstructured discussions.....	42
5.6d Number of discussions	43
5.7 NA: Transcription and analysis	44
5.7a Thematic analysis	44
5.7b Structural analysis.....	45
5.7c Dialogic/performance analysis.....	45
5.7d Visual analysis	46
5.7e Which to choose?.....	46
6. METHODOLOGY: Specifics of this study	49
6.1 Local Authority and school demographics	49
6.2 School recruitment.....	50
6.3 Pupil recruitment.....	50
6.4 Pupil demographics	52
6.5 Narrative construction	53
6.5a First discussions.....	53
6.5b Initial Analysis	54
6.5c Second discussions.....	54
6.6 Transcription code	56
6.7 Main analysis	57
6.7a Voice-centred Relational Model	57
6.8 Ensuring quality	59

6.8a Coherence.....	59
6.8b Persuasion	59
6.8c Presentation	60
7. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION	61
7.1 Chapter structure	61
7.2 Initial observations and findings.....	62
7.3 Harry.....	69
7.3a Overview	69
7.3b Education Purpose and Format.....	70
7.3c Understanding and meeting learning needs	79
7.3d School as a community	84
7.3e Staff-pupil relationships	87
7.4 Hermione	91
7.4a Overview	91
7.4b Education purpose and format	93
7.4c Understanding and meeting learning needs	103
7.4d School as a community	106
7.4e Staff-pupil relationships	114
7.5 Ron	119
7.5a Overview	119
7.5b Education purpose and format	121

7.5c Understanding and meeting learning needs	125
7.5d School as a community	130
7.5e Staff-pupil relationships	139
7.6 Answering the research question.....	145
7.6a Nature	145
7.6b Impact overview	148
7.6c Academic impact	149
7.6d Social and emotional impact	153
7.6e Behavioural impact.....	159
7.6f Caveat.....	161
8. STUDY LIMITATIONS.....	163
8.1 Pupil recruitment & demographics	163
8.2 Developing narratives	164
8.3 Narrative endurance	165
8.4 Generalisability	166
8.5 Pupil checks.....	167
8.6 Alternative interpretations	168
9. STUDY IMPLICATIONS.....	169
9.1 Implications for EP Practice	169
9.1a SEND Code of Practice.....	170
9.1b Individual pupil demographics	171

9.1c Systemic thinking	172
9.1d Challenging public narratives	173
9.1e Managing the tensions of the current EP landscape	175
9.2 Implications for researchers.....	180
9.2a Study design/empowerment.....	180
9.2b Future studies	181
10. REFERENCES.....	185
11. TABLE OF FIGURES	191
12. APPENDICES	193

1. ABSTRACT

The UK education system is built upon and perpetuates a single, dominant culture (beliefs, values and ideologies; Rahman, 2013) that reflects middle-class values (Abbot & Ryan, 2000). In contrast, pupils encounter a wide range of cultural influences. Pupils develop their own cultural identity by observing, blending and adapting a range of different cultural practices to form their own, unique cultural identities (Wortham, 2003). Thus schools increasingly serve pupils identifying with a range of diverse cultures.

Research (e.g. Rahman, 2013) has highlighted the adverse impact of cultural diversity for minority populations in education. Recognising that cultural differences can occur in *any* pupil, this study explores the cultural experiences of mainstream pupils who are not currently considered culturally-diverse.

This exploratory study employed a critical-realist stance and narrative enquiry methods. The primary analysis method was thematic, utilising the Voice-centred Relational Model (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) though structural and performance methods were also used.

Three, year-9 pupils (2 male; 1 female) attending a single, mainstream secondary academy participated in two individual discussions, exploring instances when they felt like “a different kind of person” to that embodied in school practices.

Four themes emerged (education purpose/format; understanding/meeting learning needs; school as a community; staff-pupil relationships). Differences in cultural beliefs and values were identified across all four themes. Social, emotional and behavioural impacts were noted.

Study limitations and implications for future research and Educational Psychology practice are discussed.

2. FOREWORD

The participating pupils all attended a single school and were actively invited to share stories about times when they had felt somehow '*different*.' The stories elicited are therefore inherently biased towards pupil dissatisfaction.

Consequentially, they sometimes portray the school in a rather pessimistic and negative light. It is important that this elicitation bias is acknowledged, not only by myself, but by the reader too.

Although I have no knowledge of the school in a professional capacity, the impression I generated, both from working with them and also some of the practices noted by the pupils themselves, is positive. In my opinion this school cares about its pupils and takes active steps to ensure their well-being and participation **at least as well as any other secondary school.**

I strenuously urge the reader to interpret the stories documented herein with the above caveats in mind.

3. PERSONAL STATEMENT

Recognising the role I, as author, have had in constructing this account of the pupils' narratives, in the interests of transparency, openness and critical scrutiny, I share with the reader something of my background.

I come from a "working-class" family. My mother left school with only two, low-level CSE qualifications. The primary focus of her life (as I recall) was the home and family. She took various part-time, low-paid/piecemeal jobs to supplement the family income but always ensured they fit around mine and my sister's education.

My father had a very unsatisfactory experience of education, ultimately leaving without a single academic qualification to his name. Despite this, he quickly forged a successful career with a telecommunications company. Promotions over the years saw him learning increasingly technical knowledge on-the-job and working his way up the career ladder to a more senior, technical role by retirement.

Dad is a very practical father and a great influence on me. Throughout my childhood he undertook self-directed, problem-led learning. Whether restoring scrap-heap-doomed cars or building home extensions, there was nothing, it seemed, he could not learn. This 'alternative' model of learning redefined him from the unintelligent, uncommitted fool school had labelled him into an intelligent, diligent and resourceful, independent learner.

Despite neither of my parents being particularly advantaged by their own education, they valued and supported the principle of education. They fully supported and encouraged me throughout education, but always expressed education's ultimate purpose as making me "happy" in adult life. For them (and me), education was never about maximising earning potential, gaining qualifications, going to university

or climbing the social ladder as seemed to be teachers' central focus. As I progressed through school I found it increasingly difficult to reconcile school's aspirations for me with my own.

When I opted to study maths 'A' level, teachers predicted I would fail 'O' level and considered me incapable of success at 'A' level. Having passed the 'O' level with a "lucky" grade C, staff told me (explicitly) they strenuously urged me to study something else instead. For me, however, my interest in and enjoyment of maths was my primary (only) reason for staying on to 6th form. I rejected their pessimistic assessment of me as inaccurate, being uninformed by my personal interest, enthusiasm and commitment to the subject. I obstinately refused to submit to their "better" judgement, ultimately passing with a grade B (the result of determination, hard work and commitment).

As a child, the daily news was brought into the home in the guise of the local newspaper. The language of the broadsheets of middle-England was therefore alien to me. Hardly surprising then that the increasing complexity of language demands (both in school and, later, university) made my studies considerably more difficult than appeared to be the case for my peers. Not just technical, subject-specific language but 'everyday' words in text-books and discussions left me with a sense of vague, incomplete understanding. Unable to turn to parents for assistance, dictionaries and thesauruses became (continue to be) burdensome allies, complicating and lengthening the learning process. Nothing came naturally or quickly to me. And every successive little experience like that left me with a growing sense of difference and inadequacy, only marginally subdued by positive academic feedback.

In school I soon found myself processing information in excess of my parents' understanding. Where peers could approach parents for advice, support and information, mine were unable to help me with both the direct (content-related) and indirect (process-related) advice I needed. Teachers were insufficiently approachable or available, too inclined to simply tell me to re-read the book.

Accordingly, I consider that it is *in spite of* rather than *because of* some facets of my education that I find myself sufficiently privileged by the education system to be writing this thesis. Privileged not only for my own sake (the qualification and professional status I anticipate will be bestowed upon me) but also by the insight my own experiences gave me when interpreting the existing literature, developing my idiographic understanding of it, planning the study, meeting and developing rapport with the three pupils and facilitating and interpreting their conversations. I hope the reader, like me, views my background ('bias') as also encompassing a degree of unique and necessary insight that extends rather than constrains the advancement of knowledge.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Chapter outline

This chapter begins with a brief outline of the motivational impulse behind this study before highlighting the role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) as social justice advocates. It then outlines some relevant cultural and educational processes and practices, examining existing theories and literature pertinent to the topic of sub-cultural differences in education. After proposing that educational practices are potentially oppressive to some pupils, some of the legal and professional context of EP work are considered. It ends by outlining the resultant study's aims and research question.

4.2 Social Justice as a basis for this study

This study draws upon my interest in social justice advocacy which, in itself, arises from my personal experiences of education as noted in my personal statement. It evolved from my growing awareness of the ways in which the education system seems to perpetuate a particular culture that may not adequately meet the needs of the diverse pupil population it serves and may therefore contribute to educational disaffection, under-achievement and poor emotional well-being. It explores the experiences of three secondary school pupils, positing that specific consideration of sub-cultural differences should be routinely incorporated into EP practice for all pupils.

4.2a Social justice: Necessary skills and dispositions

Lewis, Ratts, Paladino and Toporek (2011) argue that “dismantling the status quo” cannot be achieved by an unquestioning reliance on theories and practices that may, themselves, be mechanisms to support/maintain the social order. Just as we must examine and critique the values underpinning processes in education, so too must we be prepared to examine those underpinning our own practices questioning to what extent they disempower us or otherwise support existing social orders.

4.2b EPs as social justice agents

Prilleltensky (1997) observes that psychologists understand the psychological processes that contribute to oppression. Educational Psychologists (EPs) also understand teaching, learning and school systems. This combination of knowledges places them in a uniquely privileged position.

Hartas (2011) says that EPs may have an important role in facilitating substantive conversations between schools and pupils around such issues as diversity, respect and curriculum relevance. Barrett, Lester & Durham (2011) encourages (among others) “school psychologists ...should function as social justice advocates” working both for and with pupils at individual, systems and societal levels.

Lewis (2011) argues advocacy should be seen, not as an add-on, but as a natural outgrowth of our work. “Helping individuals and dealing with the social/political systems that affect them...” state Lewis, Lewis, Daniels, & D’Andrea, (2011, in Lewis, 2011) “...are two aspects of the same task.”

Many of the skills, competencies and dispositions important to advocacy work are the same skills that EPs use in their daily work. However, Lerner (1998; in Roysircar, 2009) considered that some interventions seek to teach people simply “...to cope with an oppressive reality.”

According to Prilleltensky (1997), psychological codes of ethics “primarily protect the interests of professionals” without necessarily challenging power inequalities.

Speight and Vera (2009) call for school psychology to critique the cultural values embedded within it. Similarly, Clare (2009) calls for “urgent” and “careful consideration of the ways (profound and subtle) that professional knowledge and practices further educational injustice” by failing to see and honour cultural difference.

4.3 Defining culture

Culture can be defined as “the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). For this study, I shall adopt Rahman’s (2013) notion that culture (applied to individuals, groups or institutions) is identified through the beliefs, values and ideologies espoused and perpetuated through practices and conversations.

4.4 Development of individual cultural identity

According to Fivush et al (2011) an individual's cultural identity gradually develops as a result of life experiences. Within a given culture, organised patterns of activity (cultural practices) develop to reflect a range of community norms and values. As people interact and (re)enact these practices (cultural modelling) these patterns come to be widely recognised as defining particular identities. People who follow these recognised patterns come to be identified as members of particular dominant social groups and having the particular identity they represent. In that way, people gain social capital (skills and knowledge that attract/maintain privilege; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

As people mature, they engage in a process of social identification where they develop a *personal* identity that emerges from their developing knowledge of *cultural* identities. Early theorists believed in a symbolic marketplace (Bourdieu, 1984) where people recognised signs (clothes, practices, etc.) of a range of cultural identities available, selecting and adopting the one they wanted. Such theories have since been critiqued for their failure to account for the ways in which individuals carve-out cultural identity blends to meet their unique needs and preferences (e.g. Wortham, 2003).

With the rising popularity of social-media, school pupils are exposed to an increasingly wide range of cultural influences beyond education. It follows that, as pupils' sources of cultural influences increase, inevitably, so too does pupil diversity. Furthermore, pupils can concurrently possess a multiplicity of identities (e.g. school pupil, son/daughter, friend, young adult, aspiring professional, etc.) with potentially conflicting cultural expectations.

4.4a Memory and narrative as mediators of identity

Narratives are the socially- and culturally-mediated stories we tell, particularly about ourselves. Fivush et al (2011) explain the relevance of memory and narrative to the social identification process. As we live, some things that we do are remembered and others forgotten. Some memories seem important in summarising our life experiences and are “rich with thoughts, emotions, and evaluations” (Fivush et al, 2011). These autobiographical memories include a number of self-defining memories: positive experiences, negative experiences and experiences that were turning points in the way we thought and/or behaved. In bringing together these (often diverse or contradictory) memories and making sense of them as a collective whole, we structure and order them. Meaningful links are drawn between events over time, differing contexts and cultural expectations (e.g. generalisations and explanations for changes),

Through autobiographical narratives (the stories of our lives) we communicate our memories to others. Reissman (2008) describes this process as facilitating discussion about, reflection on and, sometimes, modification to our thoughts, feelings and interpretations of remembered events so that subsequent narrations of the same story are subtly refined (co-construction).

Ricoeur (1991) used the term narrative identity to refer specifically to those narratives that communicate our identity. We can extend this concept to that of a *cultural* narrative identity that communicates our cultural identity to others.

4.5 Development of educational culture

MacMurray (a 1930's philosopher) drew a distinction between 'technical knowledge' (knowing 'what' or 'how') and 'valuational knowledge' (wisdom; knowing 'what's worthwhile') (MacMurray, 1935, in Fielding, 2012). For MacMurray, Fielding argues, education served multiple purposes (including socially oriented ones) and should be judged primarily on the characters rather than the exam results it produced.

MacMurray was deeply concerned that such human orientations were being marginalised by an overemphasis on techniques for imparting knowledge and a disappearance of the purpose of education from professional discourses.

This distinction between technical and valuational knowledge is echoed by more recent debates concerning *human capital* and *human capabilities* approaches.

Walker (2012) describes human capital approaches as focusing on the accumulation of technical knowledge and skills in a reductionist manner. By being technically knowledgeable and skilled, students are deemed to acquire the necessary 'capital' to contribute effectively to a society that rewards them (primarily through employment and remuneration), thereby creating the conditions for personal achievement and satisfaction. However, Walker claims "a strong economy ought to be a means to good lives, but not an end in itself."

The human capabilities approach recognises and strives to support a diverse range of skills and knowledge reflecting differing sources and varieties of personal achievement and satisfaction in a way that respects human diversity and dignity.

Recent educational reforms have seen an open and explicit governmental 'aspiration' to return to "high-stakes testing" (Garner, 2013) and an overt human capital agenda. The debate concerning the primacy or otherwise of human capital

over human capabilities approaches to education therefore remains highly salient and MacMurray's comments and concerns sound remarkably progressive 80 years on.

Walker and others (e.g. Chiappero-Martinetti and Sabadash, 2010) bring that debate forward, recognising that both approaches have merit and therefore something to contribute to modern education. The difficulty, she points out, is that social goals are both a long-term process and difficult to measure, characteristics that do not endear themselves to a political system seeking "quick wins."

Liasidou (2011) asserts that debates about the nature and purpose of education fail to recognise the important role of democracy in effectively engaging relevant parties in the debate. Ongoing debates around pupil disaffection, disengagement and underachievement might suggest that modern schools do not adequately include pupils in democratic processes. Support for this idea comes from (for example) Hartas (2011) who found that pupils experienced school councils as disingenuous and complained that academic content was often "irrelevant to their interests and future career prospects."

4.5a Schools as political institutions

From the above, it is evident that “schooling and politics are inseparable” (Youdell, 2011, p7). As Walker (2012) asserts, “we cannot separate economics from politics, and neither can we separate both from education models and policies.”

Movements towards academies and free-schools further a human capital approach as free-market terminology (‘choice’, ‘self-investment’, ‘results’, ‘economic contribution’, etc.) increasingly dominate political discourses about education.

Initiatives such as *‘Every Child Matters’* (Dept. for Education, 2003), more aligned to a human capabilities approach have also been quietly archived.

Citing Cormack and Comber (1996), Mercieca (2012) speak of policy documents ‘writing’ professionals and children, determining ‘who they should be, what they are to do and say, and when and how they must do or say it’ (p119). Similarly, Fielding (2012) states “through the processes of education...we come to learn what is worthy of our support and admiration, our abhorrence and rejection” (p680). Hence school “reproduces social class structures and maintains the existence of dominant cultures” (Rahman, 2013). Repetition of public discourses (e.g. the perpetuation of the concept of disaffected youth) affect “the way we think, vote and lead our lives” (Mike Rose, 2009, p. 29; cited in Walker, 2012) making it progressively harder for non-dominant ideas to gain or maintain support.

Those sufficiently well-aligned to educational practices to have been successful (the “privileged elite”) gain the necessary social capital (skills and position/authority) to influence its future (McDonnell, 2009). This can be considered ‘political induction’ and operates in two ways. Firstly, it perpetuates existing skills, knowledge, practices

and ideologies that created that privilege. Secondly, it devalues, marginalises and, ultimately, erodes alternative ones that might better-serve others' needs.

This mechanism can be seen clearly in the practice of testing academic outcomes (e.g. formalised school tests/exams). As McDonnell (2009) notes, opposition to such policies is limited because the notion of testing has become so well institutionalised. Historically-accepted alternatives (e.g. observations of practical/vocational output) have seemingly vanished from our assessment repertoire, replaced by the notion that 'objective, distant others' are better placed to make such assessments.

4.5b Impact of educational culture on pupil outcomes

If education tends to reflect one particular culture and pupils are exposed to multiple cultural influences (including those beyond education) it is perhaps inevitable that, for some pupils, cultural mismatches will arise. Questions arise concerning how and to what extent such mismatches might impact on educational outcomes. Rahman (2013) outlines some ways in which members of minority cultures may have to sacrifice their own cultural beliefs and values to achieve educational "success." She illustrates the potential negative implications of a mismatch between home and educational culture on educational attainment and/or cultural inclusion beyond school.

4.6 Schools as multi-cultural institutions

Both Clare (2009) and Rahaman (2013) identify 'biculturalism' or 'cognitive flex' (the ability of an individual to adapt and function well in two different cultures) as an influential factor in enabling minority pupils' educational success. Both also advocate that schools should develop multi-contextual approaches to learning, providing supported opportunities for minority pupils to develop skills to 'negotiate' differences and function well in *both* home and school cultures. However, such an approach fails to question the legitimacy of dominant cultural values in education and the extent of their alignment to wider societal ideals.

Clare is clear to draw a distinction between multi-contextuality and acculturation, the latter requiring one to abandon one's own culture and assume the majority culture, the former requiring adaptation on the part of *both* cultures. Without such advancements, Clare argues, children from non-dominant (non-elite) cultures must choose between adopting another educationally-acceptable identity that could threaten their own cultural identity (Rahman, 2013) *or* maintaining their own cultural identity. Such arguments allude to the oppressive nature of education.

4.6a Schools as sites of oppression

The term 'oppression' may conjure-up, for many, a picture of overt, deliberate, often physical restriction of liberty. However, a dictionary definition speaks of "prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority" that includes "mental pressure or distress" (Oxford Dictionary, 2013). Thus, oppression need involve neither physical nor overt cruelty. Neither need it be a conscious process.

Freire (1972) considered that oppressors "act upon men to indoctrinate them and adjust them to a reality which must remain untouched" (p66). He also considered:

...it is not the [situations that limit men] in and of themselves which create a climate of hopelessness, but rather how they are perceived ...whether they appear as fetters or as insurmountable barriers.

The UK education system can be viewed as indoctrinating pupils in a particular, unquestioned (and unquestionable) set of ideologies or sub-culture over a prolonged period at the expense of others. For 11+ years, children attend schools that perpetuate the notion that success is (and should be) measured by individual academic gain since this will increase one's career options and earning potential. Whilst alternative successes (e.g. contributions to collective learning, musical or sporting success and community work) are often encouraged, they are predominantly considered extra-curricular add-ons rather than part of the main fabric of education. Hence, successes in those areas (and their underlying ideologies) are marginalised and devalued.

Academic testing inherently generates fear of failure. For pupils who don't perform well in them, these practices can contribute to the development of self-deprecating views as they are judged successful or otherwise largely on the basis of their

academic prowess. Considered in these terms, the UK education system can be seen as oppressive to groups that do not share its culture and whose interests might better be served by a focus on alternative ideologies and practices.

Much literature considers oppression in simplistic, totalising, dualistic terms; groups are considered either oppressed or not rather than as experiencing a degree of oppression along a continuum. Liasidou (2013) argues that oppression is multifaceted, interlacing and compounded with people being concurrent members of ingroups and outgroups in different aspects. It has been argued that more sophisticated, pluralistic ways of thinking about oppression are needed (e.g. Cole, 2009; Youdell, 2011). The notion of intersectionality (an analytical approach that simultaneously considers the meaning and consequences of multiple categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage) gains significance (Crenshaw, 1989).

4.7 Oppressive mechanisms

A range of psychological processes have been identified as contributing to the process of oppression. Prilleltensky & Gonick (1996) consider that oppression is characterised by asymmetrical power relations, domination, subordination, resistance, restricted access to resources and implantation of fear or self-deprecation, though power differentials (see below) can reverse that pattern. The process of oppression, they state, is ultimately based on a strong desire to conform, fit-in or be accepted by others. People who experience oppression, they state, may internalise the situation; believing they *'just are'* somehow inferior, they come to view their subordination as inevitable. Repeated experiences of shame and humiliation erode self-confidence, further contributing to internalisation. These experiences, they point out, "need not be blatant or necessarily traumatic, small daily doses of personal devaluation usually suffice."

Thus, over time, those that do not fit with the expectations of a system may become their own oppressors, self-monitoring their thoughts, words and actions to adjust to their experiences, thereby minimising potential conflict. Drawing on the ideas of Foucault, Youdell (2011) refers to this process as "disciplinary power." Central to this concept, is Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957, in Aronson, Wilson and Akert, 2002).

4.7a Cognitive dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is “the discomfort caused by performing an action that is discrepant from one’s...self-conception” (the set of beliefs one holds about oneself; *ibid.* p174). People are driven to reduce cognitive dissonance and can do so in three ways; change their behaviour to bring it in line with their cognitions (which might include political action), change their cognitions or add further information to their existing cognitions.

Within education, a significant source of cognitive dissonance may arise from assessment and feedback, e.g. where pupils expend effort in their studies but find their performance lower than their expectations/targets or their peers’ achievements. According to this theory, dissonance can be reduced in three ways; changing (devaluing) the personal relevance of the skills, distancing oneself from people who value them or increasing one’s own ability. Thus, pupils who experience cognitive dissonance and are unable to increase their ability sufficiently to reduce it, are left with two options. Firstly, they can devalue the skills they are trying to acquire (i.e. the lesson content) or, secondly, they can distance themselves from people who value the skills (i.e. teachers/peers). In both cases, this can be seen as a form of ‘distancing’, a protective mechanism separating the self from an unpleasant situation so that the negative connotations of the situation do not also apply to the self. To the extent that this involves distancing themselves from the cultural beliefs underpinning others’ actions and skills, it can also be seen as ‘cultural-distancing.’

4.7b The role of power in oppression

Power is thus a central concept in oppression. According to O'Farrell (2007), Foucault considered power relational rather than absolute; one cannot hold or exercise power except in relation to others. He considered power to be exercised at the micro-level (i.e. between individuals) but evident at all levels of society. For Foucault, power was inseparable from knowledge, both being dependant on and exercised through the other. Perhaps nowhere can this be seen more clearly than a typical classroom. As Youdell (2011) states:

Which knowledges are authorized and conferred particular status, which are silenced, and who has access to or is excluded from these knowledges, are all bound up with relations of power and are key mediators of students' participation in and experiences of schooling.
(p8).

Of course, challenging systems (and their underlying values) may ultimately bring about change to reduce/remove oppression. Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996) explain that surplus powerlessness ("feelings of personal impotence beyond and above the actual limitations") limit people's willingness and ability to attempt this. Thus the achievement of dominance in and of itself may contribute to oppression if others experience/witness repeated failure to challenge practices and develop a sense of hopelessness. Bystander passivity (non-intervention by onlookers) may "imply tacit approval" and be viewed as an act in support of the status quo (Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996), contributing to feelings of impotence and therefore serving to perpetuate oppression.

Lack of opportunities for participation in decision-making together with the undervaluation of non-dominant values add to the experience of oppression. As Messiou (2006) states:

a child can experience marginalization ... when he/she is not given opportunities for participation in the classroom and when his/her abilities are not valued (p41).

Participation in democratic processes (e.g. school councils) is often considered one way to include minority groups and reduce power differentials. Echoing Foucault's assertion that the exercise of power is strategic and warlike, Hartas (2011) cautions that "in some cases participation can act as a tool for social control." Seemingly philanthropic endeavours to include children in democratic processes, she cautions, are undermined if they are disingenuous smoke-screens that abuse power by eliciting then discrediting pupils' ideas to justify adult agendas. Furthermore, without careful, ongoing consideration of membership issues (recruitment, representation, group dynamics, appeal/applicability of participation methods, etc.), even the best intentioned efforts are at risk of simply establishing new hierarchies/controls and perpetuating existing power inequalities.

4.7c Emancipatory power

But power *can* be used to positive effect. McDonnell (2009) notes that policies:

...create political institutions, interests and public perceptions that can mobilize elites and, at times, the mass public to take actions that shape future policies. (p418)

If policies can stir the public into action, they can potentially be stirred either in support of or opposition to those policies. One mechanism to arouse such action may be to draw attention to differences between their beliefs and actual experiences.

4.8 Legal and professional context

Legislation such as the Equality Act (2010) and professional guidance (e.g. the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice; Department for Education, 2014) create a lens and mood which, though undoubtedly helpful in targeting the needs of some disadvantaged members of society, may simultaneously constrain our ways of thinking about needs in at least two ways.

Firstly, defining protected groups in this way could distract attention away from groups whose needs may not yet be recognised (and therefore met). Secondly, it promotes dualistic thinking that fails to take into account the combined impact of concurrent membership of two or more disadvantaged groups.

Any pupils experiencing disadvantage who are not recognised by legal statute and/or professional guidance will thus be at a significant disadvantage and will require alternative recognition and support, perhaps through social justice mechanisms.

4.9 Social justice: Facilitating action against oppression

Optimistically, Messiou (2006) argues that although boundaries of marginalization may seem fixed, they can be traversed or changed. Thus marginalization is not a static state and advocacy may initiate the necessary processes to traverse its boundaries.

Lewis, Ratts, Paladino and Toporek (2011) outline the American Counseling Association (ACA) Advocacy Competencies model (see table 4a), conceptualising advocacy as operating at three levels (individual, systems and societal) and in two different modes (with and on behalf of others). They point out that, in many situations, it is necessary for advocates to work in both modes ('for' and 'with') and at different levels concurrently.

Table 4a: ACA Advocacy Competencies model

	With	On behalf of
Individual	Empowering: naming and addressing barriers	Client/student advocacy
Systems	Community collaboration	Systems advocacy
Societal	Public information: awareness raising	Societal/political advocacy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with policy makers/legislators • Combining individual stories with statistics to make more compelling arguments

Prilleltensky & Gonick (1996) state “the task of overcoming oppression should start with a process of psychopolitical education.” Clare (2009) and Lee & Rodgers (2009) disagree, suggesting that problem identification and definition is a necessary precursor (table 4b).

Table 4b: Two models of the stages of advocacy

	Lee and Rodgers (2009)	Clare (2009)
1	Identify the issues. Collect data about the problem.	Problem identification and agreement.
2	Identify a realistic vision and goal.	Problem analysis (consider in context)
3	Develop a collaborative action plan.	Intervention including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement, • Collective development of awareness, • Identification and articulation of plans, • Implementation in the service provision, • Implementation in social context.
4	N/A	Evaluation

As an inherent part of psychopolitical education, Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996) outline a five-stage process of “conscientization” in which individuals move from being unaware of the oppression towards being actively involved in action to overcome it (table 4c). People may be at different stages of awareness and may need differing types/levels of psychopolitical education.

**Table 4c: Prilleltensky & Gonick (1996).
Stages of conscientization.**

1	Acritical stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unaware of oppression.
2	Adaptive stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of power differentials, • Belief that the situation is immutable.
3	Pre-critical stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning the need to adapt the system.
4	Critical stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deeper realisation of the sources of oppression, • Impulse to work towards social change
5	Liberation stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oppression becomes obvious, • Active involvement in social/political action

Neither of the models outlined in table 4b is without its critique. For example, neither clarifies who is involved in problem identification. Also, both envisage the process as a linear set of operations and do not include a loop for continuing development in light of feedback from intermediate stages. Despite these limitations, they provide a useful framework for understanding the process of social justice and, as already highlighted in section 4.2, draw on many of the skills that EPs have and use on a daily basis.

4.9a Situating this study

I consider this study to fall primarily within the problem-identification stage of social justice (see section 4.2), though also encompassing elements of early data collection and analysis. For this reason, I consider problem-identification worthy of further exploration herein. I direct interested readers to the afore-mentioned studies for further exploration of the remaining stages.

4.9b Problem identification

Cameron (2006) describes problem identification as challenging “common-sense” explanations. It may begin with a “critical analysis of who benefits from current social conditions, and at whose expense” (Korten, 1995 in Prilleltensky, 1997) and will require “discussions and redefinitions of injustice” that reposition the problem as external to those experiencing its effects (Roysircar, 2009). Power dynamics need to be exposed (Clare 2009) and concepts of normality “questioned and challenged in

order to document their precarious, contextual, and ultimately political nature” (Liasidou, 2011).

According to Roysircar (2009), the main challenge at this stage is to generate a meaningful, accessible and articulate story of the ways in which seemingly diverse, disconnected injustices work together to create oppression. Walker (2012) regards this stage both as pivotal to success and dependent on the development and operation of inclusive democracies that bring “new knowledge, diverse perspectives and plural voices into debates.”

4.10 Study aims

Research on the impact of culture on educational outcomes continues to focus on differences arising from traditional markers of cultural diversity (ethnicity, religion, country of birth, immigration status, etc.). Although research in the social sciences has begun to recognise the phenomenon of sub-cultures (i.e. diversity within a single overarching culture), there is an evident dearth of research exploring the educational impact of culture for pupils attending mainstream UK schools who are not currently recognised as culturally-diverse.

International studies (e.g. Willms, 2003) suggest that “many students” may feel disconnected from school but either “suffer in silence” or withdraw from school (p56).

Since these issues are likely to affect pupils’ social, emotional and academic outcomes, it is important to develop understanding about the mechanisms that might give rise to their school dissatisfaction. The research outlined in this chapter suggests unrecognised cultural differences may have a role. Therefore, this study

aims to explore the sub-cultural, beliefs, values and experiences of pupils attending a mainstream school.

4.11 Research Question

In order to fulfil the above study aims, I have formulated the following question:

How do mainstream pupils who feel they belong to a different culture to that of the UK education system experience education?

In addressing this question it will be useful to consider the following questions:

- *Nature:* In what ways does UK education culture differ from pupils' culture?
- *Impact:* How aware are these pupils of these differences? What resultant difficulties do these pupils encounter?
 - *Educationally:* How they affect pupils' studies?
 - *Socio-emotionally:* How do they affect pupils' social and emotional wellbeing?
 - *Behaviourally:* How do they affect pupils' behaviours?

5. METHODOLOGY: General Characteristics

5.1 Ontological and Phenomenological position

This study is founded upon my belief that, although an objective reality can be conceptualised to exist, our access to it is limited by our perceptions which are both incomplete and shaped/biased by our existing beliefs (understandings) and history (past experiences). As people interact, various perspectives/understandings are shared and, in so doing, people may modify their understandings shifting towards a shared/common understanding which may or may not be closer to an objective reality. Of course, in some instances, communicative interactions may serve to polarise opinions and, again, this may serve to move understanding closer to or further away from an objective reality.

Thus, knowledge is a transient, interpreted entity, at least one step removed from reality. It is to be found in the perceptions that people share in a variety of formats, primarily through written and verbal accounts, but also through paralinguistic and non-verbal methods.

I consider this study to sit within the critical realism paradigm as described by Gorski (2013).

5.2 Considering alternative research methodologies

The aims of this study are to give voice to young people's perceptions of culture (their own and school's) so that differences can be identified and explored. The source of information for analysis is thus conversational and the methodology must accommodate this.

In choosing a methodology I rejected empiricist methodologies such as questionnaires since they do not fit with my phenomenological position and research aims. I considered three different conversation-based, interpretive methodologies: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Discursive Analysis (DA) and Narrative Analysis (NA).

5.3 De-selecting Interpretative Phenomenological

Analysis

IPA has been described as idiographic and acknowledging “the contextual and cultural ground against which data are generated” (Reid, Flowers and Larkin, 2005). Smith (2004) claims that IPA emphasises “the centrality of mentation” (mental activity) and “how participants make sense of their lived experience” making it a potential candidate.

However, researchers “reduce the complexity of experiential data through rigorous and systematic analysis” (Reid, Flowers and Larkin, 2005), a process aimed at data reduction (theme identification) and seeking points of “convergence and divergence” across participants (Smith, 2004). Thus there is an implicit assumption (participants will be in some way homogenous) which conflicts with an understanding of cultural identity as individually constructed.

Culture and oppression, both central constructs in this study, are complex, multi-faceted and overlapping. Thus it becomes important to preserve intact, as far as possible, pupils’ stories, recognising their idiographic value in highlighting how culturally-relevant school practices might have a disproportionately greater *combined* impact. Both the language (“data”) and intent (data reduction) of IPA convey a reductionist style that is inconsistent with this study’s topic and aims.

5.4 De-selecting Discourse Analysis

DA is also consistent with interpretive paradigms. However, DA focuses on how language is used.

Language (the words selected and the way they are used) is understood to influence an individual's experience and understanding of the world. Whilst this is consistent with the aims of this study, I am keen not to limit discussion to the ways that language is used to contribute to people's experiences and understandings of their world. Rather, I recognise that both the words people say and non-verbal communication devices influence people's experiences and understandings which, in turn, influence the spoken word.

Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) outline DA stating that discourse is "*a form of social action that plays a part in producing the social world*" (p5, emphasis added). Whilst they acknowledge that "different social understandings of the world lead to different social actions" (ibid, p6) I consider that DA fails to adequately attend to the *interactive ways* in which a *broader* range of social actions influence conversation development.

Whilst the precise percentage figure may be debatable and context dependent, Mehrabian's (1981) widely-accepted communication model posits that the majority of social communication is non-verbal. Thus I consider DA an incomplete way of understanding the ways social beings interact and understand their experiences.

5.5 Selecting NA

Communication with others is not a neutral activity but one in which a person seeks to portray themselves to others in a particular way. As Riessman (2008) states “No longer viewed as given and “natural”, individuals must now construct who they are and how they want to be known” (p7). A wide range of factors are likely to influence not only *what* is communicated, but *how*. These include (but are not limited to) communicative intent/purpose (e.g. argue, persuade, justify, entertain or even mislead; *ibid*, p8), the speakers’ perceptions of the listener(s) and their anticipated reactions, perceived power differentials and social/societal norms.

Riessman (*ibid*) asserts that “events perceived by the speaker as important are selected, organized, connected and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience” (p3).

What a person chooses to communicate to whom is thus time-, context-, purpose- and person-dependant. This process of evaluation, selection and communication contributes to how the story is received, interpreted and understood by the recipient (researcher) which is, in itself, further distorted by their own beliefs and history.

Riessman (*ibid*) makes the point “just as interview participants tell stories, investigators construct stories from their data” (p4).

There are a number of reasons why I feel NA lends itself well to this study as outlined below.

5.5a Critical realism

NA is interpretive and sits within the critical realist stance adopted by this study. It rejects “the twentieth-century concept of ‘objectivity’ in method in favor of an epistemological standpoint that views all knowledge as positioned” (Hammack, 2011). As Riessman (2008) states, “stories must always be considered in context” (p8).

Accepting narratives as co-constructed by multiple parties, they communicate the combined negotiated product of multiple perspectives which may or may not with varying degrees of accuracy reflect the reality of which they speak.

5.5b Reductionism

This study does not aim to reduce an individual’s experiences by comparing and contrasting elements of them to others’ experiences. Rather, each individual’s experiences are considered valuable for their idiosyncrasy. I wish to keep pupils’ stories intact, complete with the depth and richness that NA facilitates so that readers can connect with them and develop an empathic understanding of the issues raised.

5.5c Participant homogeneity

Importantly, unlike other forms of analysis, NA does not demand participant homogeneity. As this study is exploratory, seeking to uncover a concept that is not yet well understood I lack clear criteria by which to assess (and therefore ensure) participant homogeneity. Indeed, the extant literature on cultural identity development (blending) gives reason to suspect that participant homogeneity is unachievable.

5.5d Relevance to culture/identity

Cultural identity is the central topic of investigation in this study. Riessman (2008) notes “the construction and performance of identities...is central to narrative inquiry” (p137). Hammack (2011) concurs: “Personal narratives say a great deal about culture, history, and collective intention.”

5.5e Social justice, political & emancipatory effects

NA has a strong link with social justice. As Riessman (2008) asserts “speaking out invites political mobilization and change” (p8).

This study aims to elicit pupils’ voices about hitherto unexamined issues of cultural identity and diversity. It is anticipated this will highlight ways in which such issues may affect pupils’ school experience and outcomes. It may reveal unfounded assumptions underpinning educational practices, an area that has been identified as a key part of our role as EPs (Frost and Ouellette, 2004). Whilst not a direct study aim, such (new) information may contribute to conscientization and, thereby, come to be viewed as an early contribution to any resulting social justice efforts.

5.5f Power and oppression

Emerson and Frosh (2009) assert that “all psychological work requires constant examination for what it reveals of relations of power and dominance” (p5-6).

Prilleltensky and Nelson (2002) remind us that “[p]ower operates in subtle ways because it is hidden under a mantle of neutrality” (p6).

In exploring cultural differences, this study is likely to reveal otherwise hidden power differentials. Questions concerning ways in which different cultural identities may be (dis)empowered within education are likely to be raised. Riessman (2008) places issues of power at the centre of narrative studies: “The social role of stories – how they are connected to the flow of power in the wider world – is an important facet of narrative theory.”

5.6 NA: Facilitating data construction

As outlined in *Phenomenological position* (above), I understand knowledge to be co-constructed in dialogue with others. It therefore follows that data is *constructed* rather collected (Riessman, 2008) and it is that terminology that is used herein.

Similarly, the terminology of “interviews” is inconsistent with the narrative research principle of co-construction, largely due to the roles and relative power differentials it suggests. Therefore, I use the term “discussion” instead.

The following sections briefly summarise the main different data forms and ways of facilitating data construction before outlining the reasoning behind the methodological decision made for this study.

5.6a Data forms

Riessman (2008) makes the point that narratives can be found in a range of different formats including discussions (naturalistic or facilitated), archival documents (p63), actions, diaries, paintings, photographs and videos (p141). Theoretically, such sources could be used in this study (to the extent that they are available).

Naturalistic conversations could also be recorded and analysed. However, narrative methods recognise that people select different events and speak about them in different ways for different purposes and to meet the needs of different audiences. However, those sources will have been generated for different audiences and purposes. I therefore believe it more consistent with my phenomenological position to undertake interactive discussions in which the influence of context (including me) can be acknowledged and subjected to scrutiny.

5.6b Focus groups v individual discussion

I was conscious of the potential advantage of focus groups to support, extend and enrich discussions. However, aside from the limitations around purpose/intent noted in the previous paragraph, I felt focus groups might disempower or disavow some participants whose voice might be overshadowed by others or who might be quietened by a fear of rejection or retribution by other members.

This study explores pupils' thoughts and feelings about events when they felt in some way "different," perhaps distanced from or disconnected to school/peers. Thus pupils may discuss events that make them vulnerable (e.g. feelings of rejection, disempowerment or negative feelings towards others).

For these reasons I felt it was both methodologically and ethically unsound to use focus groups.

5.6c Structured v unstructured discussions

As a researcher I want to elicit conversations that meet the study aims. However, narrative theory suggests that narrators (pupils) need to be free to select the topics that *they* feel are relevant and researchers need to be willing to "give up control" and follow participants' trails of thought (Riessman, 2008; p24). Thus, issues regarding control and time availability become highly pertinent.

Narrative approaches respect participant agency (Emerson and Frosh, 2009).

Riessman (2008) promotes a flexible interview style in which the "[r]ules of everyday conversation will apply ...one story can lead to another" (p24).

Therefore, I adopted a largely unstructured discussion style. However, a degree of compromise was necessary and prompts were used where necessary to help minimise digression and keep discussions succinct and relevant to the research aims.

5.6d Number of discussions

Riessman (2008) asserts that “it is limiting to rely only on the texts we have constructed from single interviews” and “it is preferable to have repeated conversations” (p26). For that reason, I met each participant twice. This allowed time for preliminary analysis of first discussions and determine areas of interest for greater exploration in the second. It also gave opportunity for participants to hear and respond to my tentative interpretations. It is recognised that, even with two discussions, participants may generate stories worthy of additional exploration in further discussions, however university-imposed time constraints necessitated a fixed number of discussions.

5.7 NA: Transcription and analysis

Recognising the role of the transcriber in methodological decisions regarding transcription conventions, Riessman (2008) considers that transcription and interpretation (analysis) should not be considered as two distinct stages. For that reason, these issues are considered together herein.

Riessman (2008) outlines four different transcription and interpretation conventions; thematic, structural, dialogic/performance and visual analysis. Each reflects a different “theoretical commitment” producing “different narratives” and leading to “different interpretations” (p50). There is no universally agreed way of conducting analysis (ibid; p13) or undertaking transcriptions (ibid; p28).

5.7a Thematic analysis

Riessman (2008) asserts that this form of analysis “arguably, the most straightforward and appealing in applied settings” (p53). Under this convention, focus is primarily “on *what* is said, rather than *how*, *to whom* or *for what purposes*” (ibid; p54).

Riessman notes that, transcriptions tend to eliminate common features of speech, such as dysfluencies and interviewer utterances (ibid; p57) and that researchers appear to “disappear from writing” (p58).

5.7b Structural analysis

This form of analysis focuses on the structure of the story told; how the narrator tells the story and for what purpose (Riessman, 2008; p77). Riessman outlines two main ways of thinking about structure. The first (ibid., pp. 81-92), devised by Labov and Waletzky in 1967 looks at the functions of language (e.g. how words are used to orientate the listener, explain and evaluate). The second (ibid., pp. 93-100), devised by Gee in 1985, focuses on the form of language (prosodic features, stanzas, pauses, gaps, intonation, metaphor, etc.) and the way in which these devices are used (e.g. to convey emotions). Riessman cautions that the level of detail necessary for transcription can render narratives unreadable to the inexperienced reader (ibid; p103).

5.7c Dialogic/performance analysis

Dialogic/performance analysis focuses on the actions of the narrator. It pays close attention to the influence of the researcher and other environmental factors. It is based on the belief that, as social beings, we act out who we are, though this may contradict the words we speak. Thus, the way a person presents themselves (perhaps subconsciously) through their actions and some vocalisations (e.g. “aha”) tells us something about that person beyond what they (consciously) choose to say in words.

Within this convention, the investigator becomes a visible presence in the transcription and analysis, with their utterances and actions noted too.

5.7d Visual analysis

Riessman (2008) notes a move towards visual means of communication for narrative analysis. In this convention, participants create visual images (e.g. photographs, art, videos, etc.). Riessman (2008) asserts that, in the same way participants in traditional narrative research make decisions about what to discuss (and how), participants in visual narrative research make decisions about what to portray visually and the best way to do it.

5.7e Which to choose?

Undoubtedly, to answer the research questions, I need to identify themes in the pupils' narratives. For this reason, thematic analysis will be my primary analysis method. Recognising each pupil's story as unique and valuable in its own right, the primary aim will not be to look for themes across pupils' narratives, but to look for themes *within* each pupil's individual narrative. However, it will also be important to look at areas of convergence between pupils, as these may highlight matters that have broad relevance to the wider pupil population. Therefore, between-pupil analysis will also be used.

As stated in '*Phenomenological position*', I am interested in pupils' total communication including, not just the words spoken, but how stories are told, to whom and for what purpose. I do not therefore want to limit myself to thematic analysis and will consider using the other forms of analysis (outlined above) as supplemental approaches, where to do so seems appropriate and meaningful. Riessman (2008) endorses this approach stating "the four approaches to narrative

inquiry...” (thematic, structural, performance and visual) “...are not mutually exclusive; in practice, they can be adapted and combined. ...I encourage students to innovate and transgress the borders” (p18).

However, although visual analysis could potentially make a useful contribution to this study, video-recording can be more psychologically intrusive than audio-recording. Also, producing readable, meaningful written accounts of visual information is very time-consuming and requires additional, specific consent that may create an additional barrier to self-conscious teenagers’ participation. Therefore practical and ethical considerations prevented its inclusion herein.

6. METHODOLOGY: Specifics of this study

This chapter explains the particular details of the methods, materials, participants and narrative-analysis methods employed in this study.

6.1 Local Authority and school demographics

The LA in which the participating school is situated serves an area nationally recognised as socially- and economically- deprived. In the 2011 census (ONS, 2016), a higher than average number of households were classified as deprived in one or more dimensions (employment, education, housing, health and disability). Almost thirty percent of households in the Local Authority (LA) were recorded as having no qualifications compared to twenty-two percent across England and Wales despite a considerably higher than average percentage of residents being UK born (95% locally, 87% across England and Wales).

The participating school is an Academy serving approximately 1,000 pupils. Its latest OFSTED report (2014) records that the proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium and/or with a statement of SEN or at School Action Plus were “well above the national average.” At the time this research was conducted, the school was not buying-in the services of the LA’s Educational Psychology Service and I did not have an existing relationship with the school.

6.2 School recruitment

I was introduced (by the Principal Educational Psychologist in the LA where I was on placement) to the above secondary school Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO). The SENDCO expressed initial interest in taking part.

I was interested in the SENDCO's initial response to my invitation:

"Oh! But we don't have a very diverse pupil population." (Disappointedly).

I think that reflects the way professionals (and probably the wider public) perceive diversity (as linked to religious beliefs, ethnicity, geography of birth, immigration status, etc.) and not as a within-group phenomenon.

At a subsequent setup meeting, I explained the study in greater detail, left copies of the information sheets and consent slips for the school to review at leisure and invited questions. The school subsequently confirmed that they were happy to participate.

6.3 Pupil recruitment

I met with approx. 25 pupils in two small, combined PHSE classes to introduce myself and the study to them following the format of the pupil information sheet (appendix 12.1). As PHSE classes are delivered in tutor-groups, this eliminated any ability bias. I gave each pupil a copy of the pupil information sheet, pupil consent form and an envelope for parents containing parental information sheet and consent form (appendix 12.1-12.2). I then invited questions in 3 ways:

1. Speaking to individuals/small groups within class,
2. Meeting pupils outside the classroom in a quiet area,
3. Via email.

Pupils were invited to self-select on basis of the question “Do you feel like a different kind of person to the kind of person school wants you to be, expects you to be or is trying to make you be?”

This approach generated a good amount of interest on the day, with several pupils choosing to speak with me. However, ultimately only one pupil returned appropriately completed consent.

The SENDCO (who coordinated responses) volunteered to suggest a handful of pupils accessing learning support that she considered might be both suitable and interested/willing to take part. This was not undertaken because:

1. those pupils may feel ‘targeted’ and defined as ‘different’ (potentially, in an emotionally harmful way). This would contravene my ethics approval.
2. it could introduce an additional source of bias.

Instead, I attended the school one further day and approached as many of the whole group of year-9 pupils who accessed learning support as possible. I met with these pupils in small groups, introducing myself and the study using the same approach and resources as previously.

Across both sessions, three pupils expressed interest and returned appropriately completed consent forms; all three participated. A further pupil returned parental consent but had not completed their own.

6.4 Pupil demographics

Throughout this study, I have chosen to refer to participants as pupils rather than participants. I feel the latter dehumanises them to some extent and runs counter to narrative research principles.

Three year-9 pupils took part in the study; 2 male, 1 female (hereafter known as Harry, Hermione and Ron). All three indicated on the demographics questionnaire that they were white, British. One pupil appeared confused by the form and also ticked “white and black Caribbean”. My impression and experience of being with the pupils was that they were all white, British. It appeared that one of the pupils mistakenly thought (s)he had to tick a box in each section.

All three pupils had attended the school since the beginning of year-7. As narrative construction took place towards the end of year-9, they had attended the school for almost 3 years.

Two pupils were members of the school council. Two had or were attending extra-curricular, career-relevant, experiential learning opportunities arranged through the school. All three pupils completed both sessions (see transcripts, appendices 12.6-12.11)

6.5 Narrative construction

6.5a First discussions

I met all three pupils individually in a small room near reception. These rooms are a suitably neutral space reserved for small meetings, not routinely used by school staff and/or pupils.

The SENDCO met pupils and brought them to me at pre-arranged times (designed to minimise impact on their studies).

After introductions, continuing verbal consent was gained and the demographics questionnaires completed (appendix 12.3). Pupils were reminded of their right to decline to answer questions or withdraw from the study.

All discussions were recorded on a Dictaphone with a back-up also being recorded on a mobile phone app. Pre-prepared blank life-history grids were not needed as conversation flowed well with all three pupils. Pre-prepared prompts were also not used because I found:

- Freed from the necessity to make notes, I was able to immerse myself fully in the conversation,
- I quickly established a good rapport with the pupils
- Our good rapport seemed to help pupils relax and speak freely.

6.5b Initial Analysis

After initial discussions, I transcribed the conversations and undertook some brief analysis (appendices 12.4-12.6)

Immediately after those first sessions, I was initially rather disappointed. I felt that some pupils had little to say and had a singular focus on a narrow aspect of their educational experiences. However, subsequent analysis quickly revealed that they had much more to say than I initially recognised and that their discussions were in fact very rich and insightful.

Some common themes (within and between pupils' narratives) quickly emerged. I also noted some themes that were particular to the individual pupils. At this stage, I did not attempt to reduce the number of themes, opting to keep my analysis rather raw and minimal. This enabled me to better check my interpretation of the pupils' underlying meaning without introducing complex language or concepts that might confuse or disempower them.

6.5c Second discussions

Second discussions were used primarily to check pupils' agreement with my initial analysis. This led to a less conversational style but was important in establishing the extent of pupil (dis)agreement. Honesty, including disagreement (where applicable), was explicitly encouraged.

It transpired the level of pupil agreement was very high. I attribute this, at least partially, to sharing similar experiences at school myself (see positionality statement), placing me in a strong position of empathy and understanding.

However, I note pupils are likely to find it hard to disagree with adults, even when explicitly invited. Although I felt I had established a suitably convivial relationship with all three pupils this was, of course, still in its infancy. I felt that Harry found

disagreement particularly difficult and note a lack of disagreement in his discussion.

Harry presented as a pupil who was quite suggestible and this is likely to have bearing on his approach.

6.6 Transcription code

Whilst transcribing, it became apparent there were a number of factors relating to the articulation and timing of discussions that had significance in interpreting the spoken words recorded (hesitancies, stuttering, interruptions, etc.). As I wished to use an eclectic mix of analysis methods outlined in section 5.7, it was important that my transcription codes included conventions for recording these. The transcription code evolved during the transcription process in response to those needs and in recognition of the need to support the interpretation and understanding of excerpts by readers who have not had the benefit of listening to the recorded voices. Table 6a (below) summarises those codes.

Table 6a: Transcription codes

Code	Indicates	Example
<u>Underscore</u>	Two people talking at the same time	Researcher: So getting good grades is important then to be able to Pupil: Definitely, yeah. Researcher: do that?
Bold	Emphasis or stress on a particular word or phrase	"What is it that's so good about it then?" or "She told me I had to do it ."
...	Pause in speech	"You feel more like ...the right kind of person in that environment."
//	Change in content of direction of speech	"they'll go up to my //Miss Umbridge"
(text)	Speaker actions, Speaker mood/tone, or Note of events happening	(nods) (thoughtfully) (Tannoy sounds)

Whilst some codes (especially underscores) may break flow in reading, I felt that they were too significant to exclude. In particular, pupils' interruptions when clarifying my suggestions added important weight to their ensuing agreement which was often a simple "yeah" or "hmm hmm" that, in written format, would not otherwise convey the level of agreement I felt they communicated.

6.7 Main analysis

After completing all six discussions, I began the main analysis using an intuitive, thematic analysis approach but quickly became dissatisfied with this.

My intuitive, thematic analysis approach felt rather superficial. I wanted to respect the value and worth of the pupils' conversations and adopt a more thorough, structured approach. However, I did not want anything too structured as I wanted my analysis to be led by the pupils' dialogue. I did not want to impose a methodology based on experiences of others' narratives generated for other purposes that might conflict with that aim.

6.7a Voice-centred Relational Model

During this phase of my research, I became aware of the Voice Centred Relational Model (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, *in* Hesse-Biber, and Leavy, 2006). This is a data analysis method that "...is designed to open a way to discovery..." of "...the inner world of another person" (ibid, p3). It recognises people have 'polyphonic voices' that simultaneously communicate different meanings and are "...always embodied, in culture, and in relationship with oneself and with others" (ibid, p3), making it ideally-suited to this study. It offered an appropriate balance between externally-imposed structure and flexibility to respect pupils' meanings and intent.

Through an iterative process of grouping similar ideas from the pupils' narratives together, four themes were identified (see section 7 below).

The model suggests researchers re-read transcripts multiple times, each time examining them from the perspective of a different theme. Using a different colour for each theme, important words and phrases are underlined and interpretative comments made alongside. As a single utterance can be significant to different themes concurrently, they may be underlined multiple times.

Since I conducted my analysis electronically, multiple underlinings in different colours was not possible, so a 'clean' version of each transcript was produced and analysed separately for each theme.

After making initial notes about content and meaning alongside the transcripts I added comments about para-linguistic and non-verbal communication strategies where that seemed relevant to the messages being conveyed verbally (e.g. emphasising or contradicting). I also noted some pertinent discursive strategies (repetition, etc.) that appeared important in properly understanding the meaning of the pupils' discussions.

Short examples of that analysis are included in appendices 12.7-12.12 to illustrate the process. Full transcripts are also included in electronic format for interested readers.

An analysis of pupils' "I-statements (use of the first-person) as recommended by Brown & Gilligan (1992) was not undertaken. This decision reflects the different nature of pupils' discussions in this study compared to other narrative studies. In particular, these pupils seemed to engage in a much higher level of sense-making than typically encountered in other studies where participants' narratives are more rehearsed, developed and refined in conversation with others prior to the study. Since these pupils' uncertainties and inconsistencies were already very apparent through other linguistic devices (e.g. hesitating and phrases such as "*maybe*" and "*I suppose you could put it like that*") I felt this technique added little to the analysis.

6.8 Ensuring quality

In scientific study, validity, reliability and generalisability are important factors used to assess the quality of studies. Riessman rejects such notions, endorsing instead coherence, persuasion and presentation as more appropriate ways to judge a narrative study (Riessman, 2008, pp189-191).

6.8a Coherence

Coherence refers to whether the narratives hang together meaningfully or have gaps and inconsistencies. Riessman states “the model assumes a single, rational speaker with a discourse plan, which does not fit many applications” (Riessman, 2008, p189).

Since this study is exploratory and pupils are discussing the topic in new ways, often for the first time, this study may be one of those ‘applications’ where coherent narration by participants is an unrealistic expectation. Instead, through my analysis and interpretations, I shall attempt to make sense of any gaps and inconsistencies, creating a more coherent narrative interpretation, thereby aiding reader confidence.

6.8b Persuasion

Riessman states:

*“persuasiveness is strengthened when the investigator’s theoretical claims are supported with evidence from the informants’ accounts...”
and “interview segments that include contexts of production (including audience) are generally more persuasive”*

(Riessman, 2008, p191).

This study includes excerpts from pupils' narratives in the main body of the document and full transcriptions in the appendices to aid with persuasion. Both include as much information regarding context (including my comments) as possible. A personal position statement and reflective boxes outlining my background and thought processes are also included to increase transparency.

6.8c Presentation

Presentation decisions such as transcription codes are an important consideration in narrative research as they can aid (or hinder) readers' understanding.

Consistent with Mehrabian's model of communication (Mehrabian, 1981) this study includes researcher comments, participants' hesitations and dysfluencies, interjections and over-talking as these all contribute to communication, adding important meaning, weight and clarity to pupils words.

7. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

7.1 Chapter structure

Emerson and Frosh (2009) state:

“[t]here is an inevitable movement back and forth between the activities of transcribing tape to text, and developing understandings...” (p.39).

That was certainly my experience whilst undertaking this study, making it hard to determine where transcription ended and analysis began. Decisions about how best to represent the narratives in written format were informed by my analysis and emerging understanding of the significance of various utterances in a cyclical process where resulting adjustments to transcripts also led to greater analysis and understanding of the discussions recorded. Indeed, even in writing this chapter, I found myself revisiting and subtly modifying my analysis.

Consistent with Emerson and Frosh’s assertion (above) the traditional chapters of ‘findings’ and ‘discussion’ are combined, replicating the lived experience of research, removing unnecessary duplication and leading to improved ease of reading.

7.2 Initial observations and findings

I had no overt reason, either from meeting these pupils or chatting with them, to consider any of them culturally diverse in terms of the Equality Act (2010) or the SEND Code of Practice (Dept. for Education, 2014); they all appeared outwardly to be typical, white, British pupils in a school serving a predominantly white, British population. One (Harry) had some apparent difficulties with English and, given that my recruitment pool included pupils drawn from learning support, may have had some language-related special educational needs. Otherwise, they appeared to be typical pupils in a typical mainstream school struggling with matters typical to many others of their age. Yet, as discussed below, it was apparent there were considerable differences between the beliefs, values and ideologies (culture) they aligned themselves to and those they seemed to experience in school.

Through the transcription and analysis process, four key themes and 15 sub-themes emerged. These themes (summarised in tables 7a-7d, below) form a useful conceptual framework within which to consider the research question.

Table 7a: Education purpose and format

Sub-theme	Transcript Excerpts
Pupil-centred education	<p>...I wanna go in the army, I wanna get, like ...C grades, B grades, A grades and if ...if I can, try to get an A*. So ...the regiment office down Diagon Alley can look up my grades and my past. P1/I1:514</p> <p>It comes down to what sort of person [pupils] want to be and what subjects really suit their needs with what they want to go on and do. P3/I2:378</p>
Relevance to adult-life aspirations	<p>...what's the point ...if it's gonna come nowhere near my, you know, choice of what I do in my future? P2/I2:151</p> <p>...I had to do textiles for one year. I have no interest in sewing, you know. I wanna be a midwife. P2/I2:152-154</p>
Home-school inconsistencies	<p>it's confusing. You're being told one thing by obviously your parents You listen to your parents. And then teachers and 'cos you don't do it they threaten to speak to your parents. P2/I2:603</p>
Managing the learning environment	<p>Cos like I've finished my work and ...I wanna go on the next task but I can't go on the next task 'til she's finished with the naughty ones. P1/I1:073</p> <p>you're like behind cos everyone's messing around ... P2/I1:101-102</p>
Mastery, progression and achievement	<p>I wanna make sure I've understood it before I'm trying to comprehend more things. P2/I1:025</p>
Collaborative learning	<p>We should, like, be in groups. So each group learns about a different topic and, err, can research about the topic and feed it back to the class. P1/I2:495</p> <p>Cos then you can help each other. Cos I'm sure there's more than one person who doesn't understand it. P2/I2:545</p>

Table 7b: Understanding and meeting learning needs

Sub-theme	Transcript Excerpts
Accurate assessments	<p>...apparently, according to school, I can't cope with the lessons... But I can cope. P1/11:526-528</p> <p>And they're presuming it's me not listening but they don't take in that I might not understand it. P2/11:009</p> <p>I feel under-estimated. P3/11:170</p>
Nature of support	<p>...if I've done a task ...I go tell the teacher, she's like "Improve it." Like, I've already improved it. P1/11:038</p> <p>...if I don't like understand what the teacher's said ...the TA can tell me again ... re-interperate what the class teacher's saying. P1/11:151-157</p>

Table 7c: School as a community

Sub-theme	Transcript Excerpts
Harmful social hierarchy	<p>The older kids, they think it's funny to pick on the year 6s. you get all these older years, like, just like looking at you ... And then they'll barge past you ... you gotta like kinda keep your head down. P1/11:450</p> <p>...people that are put at a gold and a bronze target ... There's a bit of tension between them, ...they feel they're not as good as them, because they're not put at the same levels ... P2/11:292-294 P3/11:083</p>
Democratic principles	<p>I'm in the [school council] ... Half of em just give me, like, crap. ...Just mouth off: "You can't tell me what to do." P1/11: 438-439</p> <p>I feel sometimes the students with, that aren't in the [school council] do feel sort of ... a bit conflicted, maybe a bit neglected ...missing out on the opportunity to have some sort of say ... P3/11:063-067</p>
Protecting emotional wellbeing	<p>Every single day you wake up like really early and you're like "Oh, 100% straight away, first lesson at nine o'clock." And you're like "Urgh! Give me a break!" P2/12:508</p> <p>...my mum didn't do too well in school but she's still, you know, she's still got a good job ...school make you think you're not going to be able to get that. P2/12:755</p>

Table 7d: Relationships

Sub-theme	Transcript Excerpts
Power	<p>And she [teacher] told me it's like "Hermione, you have no choice. You have to do it..." P2/I1:124</p>
Holistic, empathic and respectful relationships	<p>they did [year-6 transitions] when I had to go away with the cadets... the other guys had to apologise that I wasn't there to help... P1/I2:330-347</p> <p>...we've got our own minds. You can't just ... treat us like we haven't. P2/I2:281</p> <p>I feel like people [pupils] should have more freedom in choosing what they want to do. P3/I2:414</p>
Genuineness, honesty and integrity	<p>...Miss Burbage went last year "Oh, when you go into year 9 we'll send a TA up to help you in English." Still waiting and ...they haven't sent one up to me. P1/I1:008</p> <p>They don't care, you know, how you're doing, as long as you've got a certain grade at the end of this topic. P2/I2:206</p>
Availability and accessibility	<p>...I haven't, like, had time to go through ...to my head of house who does the options cos she's hardly in. And she's always busy and Mr Flitwick's always busy as well. P1/I1:548</p> <p>...I feel like it's always me that doesn't understand it and I said this to my teacher and she just moaned at me. P2/I1:120-121</p> <p>I feel like ...the students who ...are...like, expected to do better get a bit more attention ...Rather than giving the attention to the people who they don't think can do so well... P3/I1:185-186</p>

These themes are used to structure the remainder of this chapter. In each case, I begin with an interpretive overview of the pupil's narrative. I am conscious that I have applied adult language and rather political concepts that might, initially, surprise or startle the reader and seem 'false' or incongruent with the language and thinking of that age group. However, I feel this interpretation is necessary to empower the pupils' voices and the following, detailed exploration will enable readers to recognise them as accurate re-presentations of the pupils' own thoughts and ideas.

At the end of the chapter, comparisons between pupils are considered in relation to the overarching research question.

7.3 Harry

7.3a Overview

Harry was a member of the school's student council. He was also attending a school-facilitated vocational learning experience in the army cadets and wanted to join the army after leaving school. He believed education should be more directly preparing pupils for adult life and career ambitions than he experienced. Although he recognised the importance of good exam grades, this was firmly and explicitly linked to army entrance requirements.

Harry disputed school's assessment of his academic ability, feeling they underestimated his ability. He considered paucity and inadequacy of adult-support and inadequate management of classroom behaviour limited his learning and were therefore major contributors to this.

Harry believed school should operate as a cooperative community but felt that the social environment was neither conducive to nor promoted socially-collaborative patterns of peer interaction.

Within the classroom, Harry valued more practical and collaborative learning activities but experienced education as predominantly language-based and focused on independent learning.

7.3b Education Purpose and Format

7.3b(i) Pupil-centred education

Harry expressed a strong motivation to learn. However, that motivation was inextricably linked to his career ambitions.

...I wanna go in the army, I wanna get, like ...C grades, B grades, A grades and if ...if I can, try to get an A. So ...the regiment office down Diagon Alley can look up my grades and my past. P1/I1:514*

He expressed mixed feelings about whether school supported his adult-life aspirations. When asked the question directly, he considered that they did:

*Linda: ...do you think that school ...**knows** that [English is so important to you]? And ...Do you think that they ...**meet** your needs...?*

Harry: Yeah. P1/I1:490-491

However, the experiences he narrated conflicted with that assertion, suggesting a lack of clarity on this issue. Staff-determined option restrictions were felt variously to support and impede his career ambitions:

Well we've chose our options but ...I can't choose geography next year. It's pushing me up to do extensions and that ...so I can go, like, do maps and that. P1/I1:496

*I won't be picking Modern Foreign Languages cos it isn't on my options forms but ...if I **do** get through to the army and they put us somewhere ...and I don't know **how** I'm gonna speak that language.*

P1/I1:521-522

Here we see that his thoughts are embryonic, emergent and sometimes contradictory. His language speaks simultaneously of autonomy and exercising choice (“*we’ve chose*”; “*I won’t be picking*”) and of disempowerment (“*I can’t choose*”; “*it isn’t on my options form*”). His sense of determination, choice and control is in direct conflict with his experiences in school; although the decision-making process is positively-framed (“*options*”), in reality, those options are substantially constrained (helpfully or otherwise).

Of course, by channelling his learning efforts in school in other directions (e.g. a greater focus on maths and literacy) these restrictions may help him avoid potential academic failure and improve his chance of achieving the core qualifications necessary for entry to the Army. However, as Harry does not recognise this, he is not able to fully process his experiences and reconcile them to his feelings, thoughts and wishes.

There is a discernible conflict between the language of choice teachers use and the reality of the situation that Harry’s articulated experience.

I am reminded of my own experiences of year 10 options. For me, like Harry, subject options were included or excluded on the basis of teacher judgements, prior achievement and school administration/timetabling constraints (e.g. staff availability). Thus my choices, though ostensibly exercised (at least, at some level) was significantly constrained.

Harry’s ideas about what school’s aims are/should be and how school should operate to achieve those were heavily influenced by his experiences beyond school, particularly those in the cadets:

*Like, I know a guy. He's in the army and ...he was telling me what th,
this, the school should be doing, and teaching me. P1/I2:444*

Cadet staff have (helpfully) suggested the importance of the core subjects to Harry:

*...when we went to Nurmengard last weekend, our sergeant
(Sergeant Moody) went "the more impor"// "the most important things
you need is maths, English and science to go into the army."*

P1/I1:366

However, Harry appears not to have fully recognised the significance of this advice. He remains keen to study subjects that he perceives as more directly oriented towards his career. Potential misconceptions about the relative 'value' of some subjects (e.g. French) over others (e.g. maths and science) may be influencing his subject preferences.

We see the need for an open, honest, two-way dialogue between Harry and school, perhaps also including Cadet staff, to explore the relevant significance of various academic subject options, his potential for success within them and his learning support needs. It is possible that, unless Harry is empowered to actively explore these issues with staff, develop an appropriately nuanced understanding and *negotiate* a satisfactory (to Harry) outcome, he may not develop a sense of purpose, ownership and responsibility in relation to his ongoing studies. He may also spend his remaining time in the school feeling ignored, disrespected and disempowered, reluctantly coerced into studying subjects for which he lacks motivation and that he might perceive as meeting staff needs rather than his own.

Compounding the matter further, we see that Harry feels there is no way to address the problem. From his perspective, staff are too busy to make time for him to discuss his options with him:

...I haven't, like, had time to go through ...to my head of house who does the options cos she's hardly in. And she's always busy and Mr Flitwick's always busy as well. **P1/I1:548**

Using Freire's terminology, Harry's problem (options) becomes an insurmountable barrier; he experiences oppression.

Having been personally privileged by education, my use of the term "oppression" is not without personal tension. Being presently employed in a professional capacity within the education system, I believe strongly in the power of education to emancipate pupils and enrich their lives/prospects. However, I also recognise (have experienced) limitations imposed by education's practices (see personal statement) and recognise the subtle, unwitting ways it can oppress some pupils.

Harry does recognise the importance the army places on English. However, he perceives school's failure to properly support his learning in this area as having a direct detrimental impact on his career aspirations:

...if I don't get hardly any help in ...English or if [the TA's] not there I can't like, thingy [succeed in it]. **P1/I1:367**

We should not underestimate the significance of this. Cadets is an experience facilitated by school and highly relevant to Harry's aspirations to go into the army. Although school are facilitating this for him (ostensibly valuing him and his aspirations), their perceived failure to support him in English (as endorsed by cadets) negates that, communicating a lack of commitment to Harry and his career aspirations (values) and creating mental distress.

Harry recognised other factors restricting pupils' opportunities to contribute to decision-making regarding course options:

...I'm busy with the primary team going out to the primary schools, working with year 6s [a school council commitment]. **P1/I1:550**

Compounding this problem, Harry also felt teachers failed to communicate the rationale for decisions they had made. Consequentially, he was unclear about the basis on which his year-10 options had been determined:

Harry: *Cos they've put, put me on the yellow path ...way. Like ...instead of like the green or the blue pathway.*

Linda: *And you need to be on the green or the blue to be able to do it [French]?*

Harry: *Yeah.*

Linda; *OK. So how did they determine whether// which pathway you was on?*

Harry: *Through ...I think through my lessons.*

Linda: *OK. But you're not sure?*

Harry: *No.* **P1/I1:540-546**

7.3b(ii) Managing the learning environment

For Harry, poor classroom behaviour management was often a barrier to the appropriate support that he felt he needed (and valued) from the class teacher:

Cos like I've finished my work and ...I wanna go on the next task but I can't go on the next task 'til she's finished with the naughty ones.

P1/I1:073

I'm just like that [hand-up] for about 15 minutes while she sorts the other pupils out ...And after my arm gets dead I have to put it down.

P1/I1:197-199

Harry actively dissociated himself from those “naughty” peers:

*There's good ones and then there's bad ones and she's concentrating on the bad ones and then ...like, me and the good ones is like ...you're concentrating on **them**...*

P1/I1:051-052

...we wanna get onto our next task. And we can't 'til the naughty ones catch up.

P1/I1:056

Having dissociated himself, Harry notes that teachers seem to prioritise their needs over his, giving them more time and attention:

...I can't go on the next task 'til she's [teacher] finished with the naughty ones.

P1/I1:073

And if one of the good ones ...they're like stuck and we put our hand up she's still speaking to the ...naughty ones and we're just like that all the time.

P1/I1:067-068

Harry clearly communicates a belief that school should manage the learning environment more closely. He considers that teachers should:

...go through the consequences dead quick, try to get rid of all the naughty ones...

P1/I1:124-125

From Harry's perspective, the teacher's response (diverting her attention to the "naughty" pupils) is problematic in two ways.

Firstly, it places Harry hierarchically below the naughty pupils. Spending more time with "*naughty*" (less-deserving) pupils diverts time away from well-behaved (more-deserving) pupils and might suggest that those naughty pupils are more valued as people by the teacher. Thus, *as a person* Harry appears less valued by the teacher, a position that clearly conflicts with his own beliefs.

Secondly, it communicates a disinterest in (or lack of commitment to) Harry's learning needs and/or career aspirations, creating/reinforcing the belief that his needs and aspirations are not valued by school either.

Harry notes that other teachers adopt different approaches to behaviour management that he finds more helpful:

*Maths, Mr Binns ...we, erm, he puts a task on. If the naughty ones are naughty he goes through the **consequences** ...And it's quicker for them to ...get the naughty ones straight out of the classroom so we can concentrate...*

P1/I1:090-092

In getting the disruptive, “naughty” pupils out of the room quickly, Mr Binns not only improves Harry’s access to learning, but communicates greater value for Harry, his learning and his aspirations:

***Harry:** Like the other day, I think it was yesterday, most of the boys was being naughty so they all got sent out. I was the only boy left.*

***Linda:** And did that make that lesson work better for you?*

***Harry:** Yeah.*

P1/I2:170-176

7.3b(iii) Developing a sense of mastery

Harry clearly values and believes he benefits from opportunities for practice and overlearning:

*And I feel like more **better** [in cadets] cos ...usually if I’m ...like struggling with my march I can go to one of the captains and they can take me away and help me do practice.*

P1/I1:342

As educational professionals, we recognise the demands and constraints under which schools operate, notably assessment-based targets, that necessitate (from current educational perspectives) pace and progression. Here we see the alienating socio-emotional impact this has, from a pupil perspective.

7.3b(iv) Collaborative learning

Harry clearly valued support in his learning and, where adults were not able to give that, was happy to receive it from his peers. He felt that school should be a supportive community in which pupils worked collaboratively to support their learning:

Harry: *...if like they've finished and I get stuck a little bit I can ask them [friends] and they can help me.*

Linda: *So you end up getting help from your **peers***

Harry: *Yeah.*

Linda: *instead?*

Harry: *As well.*

P1/I1:207-211

We should, like, be in groups. So each group learns about a different topic and, err, can research about the topic and feed it back to the class.

P1/I2:495

Drives to promote independent learning permeate professional guidance (e.g. OFSTED, 2013). In contrast, Harry values education as a cooperative endeavour. For him, education's patently 'honourable', common-sense practices conflict with his own ideology, simultaneously marginalising his own beliefs and values and reinforcing a diametrically opposed alternative.

In order to succeed in education, we see Harry adapting to and operating within school's ideology, not his own in a process of acculturation.

7.3c Understanding and meeting learning needs

7.3c(i) Nature of support

Harry reflects on what effective classroom support is for him:

*Like ...if I don't like understand what the teacher's said, I can tell the TA to go **ask** her again. And then the TA can tell me **again** so I can crack on with my work. **P1/I1:151***

With further exploration it became evident that simple repetition in itself was unhelpful; he needs TAs to re-interpret (simplify) language for him so that he can access materials and understand instructions/expectations:

***Linda:** OK. So is it just about having a TA to **repeat that** to you because you haven't **heard** it? Or is it about the TA helping you to **re-interpret** what the class teacher might be saying*

***Harry:** Right reinterp*

***Linda:** in different words?*

Harry:** re-interperate what the class teacher's saying. And then if I **do** get stuck the TA can help me. **P1/I1:152-157

Here Harry can be seen to unwittingly demonstrate his need for help with the language demands of the classroom through his apparent unfamiliarity with the term 'reinterpret' which he repeats inaccurately. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, he seems to feel let down by school and their failure to provide consistent, reliable TA support

for this. Pupils who struggle with language are likely to find it hardest to articulate their opinions in a way that is taken seriously (and therefore to exert themselves).

I am reminded of my own difficulties accessing language in education where I too encountered difficulties accessing language (see personal statement).

Language is a powerful tool. Pronunciation and language complexity (word choice, grammatical structures, etc.) undoubtedly communicate status and culture, highlighting, reinforcing and perpetuating differences. As pupils progress through education, the language they encounter increases in complexity. Throughout his discussions, it is evident that Harry struggles with the finer nuances of English language as evidenced by his stutters, false starts, mispronunciations and grammatical inaccuracies. Pupils who struggle to keep pace with escalating classroom language demands are likely to feel increasingly left-behind, unable to access new learning, increasingly disempowered and socially/culturally excluded or distanced from peers, staff and the education system.

Harry makes an explicit distinction between how he feels in Cadets and school:

Like, I'm a different kind of person in [cadets] than I am in English.

P1/I1:317

He attributed this sense of difference to the different nature and higher level of support he felt he received in cadets:

*And I feel like more **better** cos ...usually if I'm ...like struggling with my march I can go to one of the captains and they can take me away and help me do practice.*

P1/I1:342

Here we see (perhaps unsurprisingly, given his apparent difficulties with language) Harry's focus on, enthusiasm for and value of concrete, practical

learning activities. This is reflected in his beliefs about what format adult-support should take in school:

Like if we're writing a story and we can't ...think of an opener she'll [the TA], like, help us think of an opening and we, whatever she says we put in our own words. **P1/I1:177**

*Like they're [cadets] ...training us. Like, if we **do** wanna go in the army, training us to be like **proper** soldiers.* **P1/I1: 356**

Linda: *...So what you really want is to do lots more practise.*

Hands-on things

Harry: *Yeah.*

Linda: *rather than more reading and talking and explanations*

Harry: *And more writing.* **P1/I2:129-132**

Sadly, Harry does not feel that enough practical learning opportunities are provided:

Harry: *...it's better first them showing us and then we know what we're doing.*

Linda: *Ok. Ok. And is that something that happens **much** in school?*

Harry: *It's happening more in science now.* **P1/I1/140-142**

TA support was clearly important to Harry because he felt the class teacher was generally less aware of and/or able to meet his needs and insufficiently specific in their guidance:

...cos the teacher speaks that quiet ...and I...and then the class gets noisy and I can't hear what she's saying. **P1/I1:013**

Linda: *I sensed that you thought teachers should use **words** that **you** understand rather than expecting you to use words that they understand but you don't.*

Harry: *Yeah.* **P1/I2:264-265**

...if I've done a task they try to// and then I go tell the teacher, she's like "Improve it." Like, I've already improved it. **P1/I1:038**

Linda: *...So she's asking you to improve your work but not giving you a suggestion about how to do that.*

Harry: *Yeah.* **P1/I1:043-044**

In providing inadequate, infrequent practical learning opportunities and inconsistent, inadequately responsive TA support, school undermines the value of that support and, by extrapolation, Harry's values.

7.3c(ii) Accurate assessment of pupils' needs

Harry disputed the accuracy of teachers' judgements of his ability:

*...apparently, according to school, I can't cope with the lessons...
But I **can** cope. But they think ...I'm ...not **capable** of ...doing*

P1/I1:526-528

From Harry's perspective, this 'inaccuracy' arose from two factors that affected his ability to maximise his learning potential, both of which he felt school overlooked in their assessments.

Firstly, school had, both historically (in French) and on an ongoing basis (e.g. in English, as above), failed to provide the right staff and/or support, restricting his opportunity to progress:

And I'm coping now in French, cos I've got a new French teacher.

P1/I1:558

Secondly, (some) teaching staff failed to manage the behaviour of other pupils:

...it's ...wasting ...most of the lesson time ...cos we wanna get onto our next task. And we can't 'til the naughty ones catch up.

P1/I1:055-056

7.3d School as a community

7.3d(i) Democratic principles

Harry clearly valued democracy and pupil participation, as evidenced through his role in the school council. He believed school should function as a democratic community but felt the school council, of which he was a member, lacked the respect of other pupils:

*I'm in the [school council] and w// I go round different houses to
...collect the voting sheets in. **Half** of em just give me, like, crap.
...Just mouth off: "You can't tell me what to do." **P1/I1: 438-439***

Harry appeared to relish the idea of exerting control over others:

*Like, if// I wanna go in the army when I'm older ...so they're treating
us like proper soldiers. You know, like proper com, commanders.
And they're giving us, like, experience to **rule** the squad... control
the squad. Tell them what to do. **P1/I1:339-341***

***Linda:** And I think you actually quite like telling other people what to
do.*

Harry:** Yeah. (laughs) **P1/I2:199-200

Initially, this seemed to potentially conflict with his desire for democracy and community spirit. He explained that it was important to him that power and control over others was based on democratically-established principles, agreed and respected by all members:

Harry: [if someone is not happy with the rules] ...*they should go to their sergeant "This rule should be done. This rule should be done" ...all that ...and then someone else could come along and go "No! That's wrong. That's wrong." And then there's a massive// then the plan all goes wrong and then ...that's it.*

Linda: *Okay. So it's important that there are rules*

Harry: *Yeah*

Linda: *but people should be able to say what those// or have a say*

Harry: *Yeah.*

Linda: *in what those rules are.*

Harry: *Yeah.*

P1/I2:216-222

*...if they've agreed, they've gotta **stick** to it.*

P1/I2:230

7.3d(ii) Harmful social hierarchy

Harry expressed dissatisfaction with the way that people interacted with one another in school. He felt that school should be a respectful, caring community and articulated his own community-spirit:

*I'm doing the induction days this year ...cos **we** don't want the year 6s to feel this school's **bad**...But it's the older students ...they think they're clever. And tell 'em to F-off for the year 6s. **P1/I1:457-459***

He felt there was a lack of adult support to facilitate this but was optimistic that this would change next year:

*The older kids, they think it's funny to pick on the year 6s. And ...Miss Hooch ...has told us who hasn't got relatives coming to tell them to go away. But we know we're gonna get ...**rubbish** ...and ...**swearing** ...thrown at us so... can't do much things.*

P1/I1:450-453

Next year ...The teachers are gonna come out and ...stand with us so in case we get any grief off 'em. And they'll just tell 'em to go away and instant C4 [detention] 'em.

P1/I2:401

Democratically established, but rigidly and consistently applied rules are important to Harry. He observes school to also hold similar values, as communicated through the behaviour management (sanction) system. However, an apparent failure by some staff to implement it led to inconsistencies which both directly (through their disruptive impact on learning) and indirectly (by devaluing and marginalising the underlying principles) communicated a lack of respect for both Harry himself and his values.

7.3e Staff-pupil relationships

7.3e(i) Holistic, empathic and respectful relationships

Harry felt that school should be a respectful community, taking a broad, holistic view of pupils incorporating their other interests, needs and commitments. He perceived his commitment to SET had been an obstacle to his participation in the year-10 options process and expressly voiced his dissatisfaction with school's inattention to this:

Linda: *So school should recognise that other things that you do
outside the classroom and outside school*

Harry: *Yeah*

Linda: *are important too. So things like cadets. And you was talking
about doing the year 6 transitions [in SET]?*

Harry: *Yeah. But I'm// they did it when I had to go away with the
cadets.*

Linda: *Oh. Yeah! So they didn't time that?!*

Harry: *'cos they ...no they didn't realise that ...two of us had to go
away to Wales to go adventure training. P1/I2:336-341*

Evidentially, Harry values a broad range of social and practical activities. For him, those activities are of equal, if not greater, value than and traditional, classroom-based learning. Yet he experiences school as disrespecting and overlooking his commitments, even in school-facilitated ventures. Thus school devalues and marginalises other forms of learning that might better-meet Harry's needs.

Harry experiences conflicting messages regarding the value of pupil participation. The school clearly wishes to include pupils in decision-making at both a systemic

(school council) and individual (year-10 options) level. However, by failing to take a holistic overview and accommodate his council commitments, their actions contradict that message, disempower Harry and express different values to Harry's own. They also suggest that extra-curricular activities (cadets, school council activities) are not considered part of the main fabric of education devaluing and marginalising them.

We are reminded of Hartas' (2011) finding that effective school councils must be seen *by pupils* to be honest, genuine bodies. Here we see the importance of them also being fully-integrated into school systems and routines.

7.3e(ii) Staff genuineness, honesty and integrity

Harry opened our first conversation by telling me he felt let down by teachers' broken promises:

Harry: *Yeah cos they went last year Miss Bur ...Miss Burbage went last year "Oh, when you go into year 9 we'll send a TA up to help you in English." Still waiting and ...they haven't sent one up to me.*

Linda *OK. And that was supposed to happen at the beginning of year 9?*

Harry *Yeah. And now they're doing it at the beginning of year 10 now.*

P1/I1:008-010

This unmet promise left Harry feeling let down by a school that did not recognise/share his values:

Linda: *I'm sensing that you feel **let down** by school because this is something*

Harry: *Yeah.*

Linda: *that you really want and you don't feel like you're getting the support.*

Harry: *Yeah.*

Linda: *So there's a sense of them not **valuing** something that's important to **you**?*

Harry: *Yeah.*

P1/I1:372-377

He explains that he now has a new French teacher who is more helpful because she is more accessible and more available to listen to him:

So if I get stuck, she comes along and helps me do it. **P1/I1:562**

The new French teacher. She can listen to me and ... she helps me afterwards what I've told her. **P1/I1:569**

Here Harry clearly communicates his value of trust and dependability. Broken promises have a direct, limiting impact on his access to education (and progress within it). But they also have a more insidious socio-emotional impact; his relationship with staff is damaged and the importance Harry ascribes to relationships is marginalised and devalued.

7.4 Hermione

7.4a Overview

Hermione was particularly eloquent and reflective about school. She was concerned with both the way school operated and the nature, content and purpose of education. Hermione considered school to have a socio-emotional as well as educational function. She was concerned that teaching should be more pupil-led, developing pupils' skills across all of those domains. However, she experienced education as being solely focused on relentlessly pushing learning at pace in pursuit of exam results, primarily for the benefit of school rather than the pupils themselves. She was troubled by a perceived lack of awareness of and/or commitment to pupils' needs, learning-related and socio-emotional, both of which she saw as impeding her learning/development.

Hermione recognised pupils as young adults with a growing sense of maturity and self-determination but felt that school did not recognise and/or accommodate this. For Hermione, school relentlessly constrained and controlled pupils, treating them as imperceptive children who lacked reflective insight, thereby limiting their development into independent young adults. Hermione felt that pupils were too often forced to study subjects which lacked interest and/or relevance to them and cited this as the cause of much pupil misbehaviour and social fragmentation within school.

Hermione believed education should equip pupils with skills and knowledge to be retained throughout life but felt school promoted short-term retention for exam success. She valued a more pupil-centred curriculum responsive to pupils' personal and career-related aspirations. Although she recognised the importance of exam

results, this was firmly based on their relevance to her life and/or career goals, something that too often was not apparent to her.

Hermione envisioned education as a collaborative endeavour in which teachers understood and responded empathically to pupils' needs within the context of mutually respectful relationships. However, she observed some (but not all) teachers to consciously and deliberately distance themselves from pupils.

7.4b Education purpose and format

7.4b(i) Pupil-centred education

Hermione expressed motivation to do well in her studies, though this was specifically for the role that would play in supporting her adult-life ambitions:

*I'd like to go to// get good grades, go to college and then university
and then be a midwife* **P2/I1:069**

Where that relevance was not apparent, she was less motivated to learn:

*...what's the point ...if it's gonna come nowhere near my, you know,
choice of what I do in my future?* **P2/I2:151**

*German it's just like, you know ...it's not// I'm not gonna go live in
Germany. I'm not ...as bothered as I am maths, English, science.*
P2/I2:054

*...I had to do textiles for one year. I have no interest in sewing, you
know. I wanna be a midwife. I don't wanna ...sew, you know, socks
and stuff. It's like, (sighs) it's just a waste of my time.* **P2/I2:152-154**

However, her belief in academic success is uncertain, compromised by her recognition that there may be alternative, non-academic ways to achieve her goals:

*...my mum didn't do too well in school but she's still, you know, she's
still got a good job, you know, she's still got money coming in ...I
don't think she finished school, she still managed to move on with
life, have children, get married, raise ...And I dunno, school make
you think you're not **going** to be able to get that.* **P2/I2:752-755**

There is a conflict between education's values (good academic grades lead to better adult outcomes) and Hermione's family's experiences (good adult outcomes do not necessarily depend on good academic grades).

In her statement '*school make you think you're not going to be able to get that*' Hermione is unspecific about what 'that' is; a good job, or a good family life. Her focus on her mum's ability to generate income, have children, get married and "raise..." (presumably, a family) suggests that family-related matters may have greater personal significance than she openly acknowledges. This alternative picture of successful adulthood may partially conflict with her stated career goals and provide a reassuring alternative life-strategy. Thus, where teachers' 'motivational' comments are perceived as highlighting academic difficulties, they may actually make her less threatening, more optimistic and non-academic alternative life-vision increasingly appealing, further *demotivating* her from her studies.

Although it could be helpful for school to explore Hermione's perceptions of her future with her, this does not appear to have happened. Thus the viability and feasibility of her ideas to go unexamined, creating a potential source of growing differences as school continue to nurture the notion of academic success as the primary or only route to a good future. Moreover, it contradicts (attempts to invalidate) her mum's experience/influence (her beliefs), communicates a disinterest in Hermione as a person *and* her future beyond school.

Like Hermione, I struggled to balance my own personal, family-life goals with the overt domination of higher education and/or career-focussed outcomes within education. I recall being acutely aware that teachers had a different vision of my future to my own, with theirs denying and marginalising the importance of family. I feel that a desire to follow one potentially conflicts with the other and a lack of recognition/support within school to manage such tensions contributed to internal psychological conflict (cognitive dissonance).

Hermione was keen to learn a broad range of skills that would benefit her in adult life but felt that insufficient opportunities for this were provided:

...if someone come up and asked me "oh, how do you pay a bill?" I wouldn't be able to tell you cos I never, you know, I don't understand. They don't tell you this. **P2/I2:054**

One day they had this// these people come in and we was doing all these life-skills things ...all the pension and how it all works and stuff ...But we only did it for one day! **P2/I2:060-061**

Where Hermione bemoans the *requirement* to study some subjects (e.g. German), she also bemoans the *lack of opportunity* to study others. The difference is clear; missing opportunities have more direct and overt relevance to her and her aspirations. Hermione appears committed to learning, but feels the curriculum content should be more responsive to her personal/career aspirations rather than inflexible and adult-led.

7.4b (ii) Teaching methods/collaborative learning

Hermione considered that she learned best through practical and cooperative learning activities but felt that too few opportunities for this were provided:

I think if they spread [teaching] out more and did more things that are interactive and ...more with your friends and groups and stuff rather than them putting you in groups **P2/I2:538**

Cos then you can help each other. Cos I'm sure there's more than one person who doesn't understand it. **P2/I2:545**

Hermione: ...it gets on top of you too much. "Oh I don't wanna go to lessons cos we'll be writing again."

Linda: You'd prefer to do ...more of the practical, hands-on type learning...

Hermione: Yeah. Not enough of that happens at all. **P2/I2:551-553**

I feel like, I feel like I learn better that way [practical activities]. I know some people, some teachers do it but others, I don't think I've ever ...done anything but writing or copying down. You just think "oh, it's gonna be the same every lesson." ...And it usually is.

P2/I2:557-559

During the process of transcribing, I became aware of the way in which I used statements, rather than questions, to confirm pupils' thoughts. I acknowledge that this might sometimes come across as rather deterministic or 'leading.' However, I draw the reader's attention to the timing of pupils' interjections (before I completed my statement), often adding greater clarity and precision to the information I was proposing. This, I think, reveals the level of conviction with which pupil's communicated their agreement and which I sensed 'in the moment' with them.

Note in line 553 Hermione does not simply confirm her agreement with my suggestion, but adds greater clarity ("*not enough of that happens*") and emphasis ("*at all*"). Hermione clearly feels that written forms of teaching permeate her education, but considers she learns better in more practical learning activities. We do not know how accurate that assessment might be, whether it reflects preference (i.e. value) rather than efficacy. However, in the absence of any variation in and/or assessment of alternative teaching styles, this perception, correct or otherwise, is given opportunity to grow and, with it, differences of beliefs and values (pupil-teacher) are able to develop and intensify.

7.4b (iii) Sense of mastery, progression and achievement

Hermione feels that teachers' desire to move through the curriculum at pace limits opportunities for repetition, practice and overlearning, compromising pupils' opportunities to develop a sense of mastery:

*I'd rather them, instead of doing all exams in one week they could spread it out, you know, so ..it's more time to **revise** and get confident, rather than all being in one week.* **P2/I2:137-138**

Through her use of the word "confident" she clarifies that she desires a slower pace not simply for an easier life, but for the emotional impact that revision (overlearning) would have (i.e. sense of mastery). This is clearly something that Hermione values that affects not just exam revision, but day-to-day learning:

*...they're trying to teach me **more** stuff and I'm still, like, 10 lessons behind everyone else.* **P2/I1:021**

I wanna make sure I've understood it before I'm trying to comprehend more things. **P2/I1:025**

Cos it's easier to remember what you understand. **P2/I1:265**

if you're not understanding it ...then you can't really progress **P2/I2:120**

She explains her father has told her:

... “No! Just spread it out” you know “slow down. If you’re cramming all this in what are you gonna understand?” ...I’ve always been brought up to take your time and understand it and then you’ve got this concept you can use in other parts and aspects of lessons.

P2/I2:584-585

Lack of opportunity to develop that sense of mastery is clearly a source of great frustration to Hermione and a perceived barrier to her ongoing education. She experiences education as limiting, rather than maximising her learning potential. Given her own values (pace of teaching rather than depth/quality of learning), it is easy to see how she perceives school, in its rush to get through topics, to hold different values to her.

It would, perhaps, be easy to suggest that schools have a short-term focus on surface aspects of learning (e.g. recall of facts and figures). But this is not substantiated by the cumulative and analytical nature of the curriculum; it is in schools’ interests to promote a longer-term retention of learning to aid comprehension (as opposed to ‘simple’ recall), subsequent teaching and exam performance (on which schools are ultimately assessed). This is utterly consistent with Hermione’s own goals, though she does not appear to recognise this; the actuality of small, daily experiences in the classroom communicate a conflicting message.

Like Hermione, I found the pace to be too fast at times and at odds with my personal goals (internalisation of learning). I too struggled to remember abstract, academic learning for which I lacked practical experiences on which to ‘pin’ it. I too found it

hard to recognise that my educators may have shared my goals, but were constrained by externally-imposed deadlines and targets. In recent studies, three factors helped me manage this:

- (1) stronger, overt curriculum relevance to my own goals
- (2) greater control of curriculum content
- (3) realisation that the end of compulsory learning led by others was looming.

None of these three factors seem to apply to Hermione and I wonder to what extent teachers expressly stating their constraints might build empathy and bridge cultural differences.

7.4b (iv) Skills for life

Hermione valued learning. She was keen to ensure that she was able to reap the benefits of her time and efforts by retaining and carrying her learning forward into her adult life:

*Cos if you're more **solid** then you know you've got it for **life** ...you might **forget it** after school. Like, my mum's done that. **P2/I1:056***

However, this was something she did not see school as achieving for her:

*...that's what they say. "Oh, school's" you know "preparing you." But I don't think it does. **P2/I2:624***

It's not preparing you for adult life if you're ...sat doing algebra.

P2/I2:628

Hermione clearly has strong ideas about what skills and knowledges are pertinent to her adult life and, therefore, what she feels she should be learning about in school. School's persistence in delivering a curriculum she

perceives as irrelevant to her adult-life aspirations suggests that school holds differing values to her (i.e. pure, academic learning). Because the link between acquired skills/knowledge and her envisaged future (career, domestic life) appears indirect, obscure or absent, learning seems irrelevant and therefore likely to be forgotten which conflicts with another of her values (life-long retention of learning).

7.4b (v) Managing the learning environment

Hermione felt that, like her, most pupils had clear ideas about what kind of work they wanted to go into after school even though they may not know exactly what job that would be:

...they'll know roughly like// they're gonna be like "Oh no. I'm not gonna wanna be a fireman or, or I don't like children, I'm not gonna do this. They know kinda what they like and they don't like at least!

P2/I2:155-157

She attributed a lack of curriculum relevance to pupil disengagement from learning, poor classroom behaviour and potential underachievement (her own and others'):

*you're like **behind** cos everyone's messing around and you can't ...say "oh no, I don't understand it" [to the teachers] because they're too busy with these like naughty children that won't, like, **listen**.*

P2/I1:101-102

That's everyone's attitude. They're like Oh, I'm not gonna need them [subject exams] so what's the point? So then they don't do [work], mess around and people that might need [the lesson content] never get on.

P2/I2:169-170

We cannot know to what extent Hermione's speculations about other pupils' thoughts and actions may be accurate or otherwise, but school itself clearly creates a shared social and cultural arena for pupils to interact. An understanding of social intercourse (especially conversation) as a means of *co-constructing* narratives and knowledge implies that Hermione's speculations of her peers will be more accurate than any that I or the reader, might proffer in contrast.

Hermione clearly believes that effective behaviour management is an important prerequisite for learning. Teachers' perceived failure to manage behaviour hinders Hermione's learning, simultaneously devaluing her and her needs.

Although my ideas about my career aspirations were not as well developed, as Hermione suggests, at school I too had clear ideas about which subjects were of interest/relevance to my goals and under-performed in subjects that lacked interest/relevance. Although my behaviour was generally very good in school, I too was drawn into low-level, disruptive misbehaviour.

7.4b (vi) Home:school inconsistencies

Hermione noted that home and school had different messages about education and learning:

*it's confusing. You're being told one thing by obviously your parents
You listen to your parents.*

P2/I2:603

For Hermione, the messages from home held more weight and credibility. She sensed that her parents' knowledge and advice was more in line with wider society's cultural beliefs than schools':

Hermione: *times have changed. You know you've got to ... keep up.*

Linda: *And schools haven't kept up.*

Hermione: *Obviously. Yeah.*

P2/I2:612-614

Hermione's use of the word "*obviously*" is interesting. It both strengthens her agreement with my proposal and positions school as falling behind, overlooking the 'obvious'.

In defining school as behind the times, Hermione creates both a temporal and ideological difference. School is positioned simultaneously as both the understudy (falling behind) and the causational root of that difference. The responsibility for change is firmly placed with school rather than pupils and families. Ideologically, perhaps, Hermione positions school as subservient to the needs of the community but considers school has a rather omnipotent belief that the *pupils* (members of that broader community) should be subservient to *school*.

I am reminded of my own experiences as a school pupil where family and school beliefs and values differed, e.g. regarding the purpose of education (personal happiness v employment success).

7.4c Understanding and meeting learning needs

7.4c(i) Accurate assessments

Hermione felt that school failed to properly understand pupils' needs rendering teachers unable to give the support necessary to maximise achievement:

*And they're presuming it's me not **listening** but they don't take in that I might not **understand** it.* **P2/I1:009**

*...It's like I'm not **getting the support I need**. Like I feel my friends feel like that. That's why they're moving schools.* **P2/I1:044-045**

As a direct consequence of teachers' failure to understand and satisfactorily address her needs, Hermione tells us she is “..not **getting the support I need**...”, her use of emphasis highlighting the strength of value she ascribes to adult support (and therefore learning). Lest I do not appreciate the real significance of this, she expands, telling me that, in her view, a failure to recognise and address this problem is also leading (or at least contributing) to other pupils leaving the school, the ultimate expression of cultural distancing. Hermione made it clear that this was affecting her attitude to work:

*...if I keep putting my hand up then I feel awkward. So now I've just got to this thing where I **don't**. And I'll be, like, I just **sit there** do you know in silence and just try and work it out myself.*

P2/I1:014-015

Teachers are perceived as lacking competence (“they don't take in that I might not understand it”) and diligence (“presuming it's me not listening”). This barrier is viewed as insurmountable. She has given up putting her hand up and, with it, all

hope of addressing the problem. Hermione self-monitors and adapts her behaviour to minimise her distress (cognitive dissonance reduction), unwittingly contributing to her own oppression.

Given that Hermione seems to find interactive (scaffolded) and practical learning more effective, this strategy of self-reliance appears ill-fated, probably ineffective and damaging to her future prospects and self-esteem. The teacher may come to view her as disengaging from learning which may, in turn, further polarise them, magnifying Hermione's understanding/belief that the teacher does not understand and/or is not motivated, able or willing to meet her needs.

7.4c(ii) Nature of support

Hermione felt teachers were insufficiently attentive and supportive to her and other pupils, preferring to devote their time and energies to a sub-group of ("golden") pupils:

*...if there's a child that has ...I don't know, that normally does the **work** they'll go up// they'll help them, hundred p// and you know, always like the **golden child**. You know, **always pick them** and stuff.*

P2/I1:373

Hermione suggests this conferring of 'golden' status on pupils is a rather arbitrary process based on momentary observations of classroom behaviour and success measures which are crudely and inaccurately taken as indicators of commitment to the subject:

*Whereas this child sat at the **back, can't do it**, cos maybe they was talking one day when they **shouldn't** have been. You put your hand up and they just **assume** that, oh, you wasn't listening so you won't understand it. So you won't listen to **them** so they **blank** you, walk straight past...* **P2/I1:374**

*...she just **assumes**, cos we're all **lazy** and, you know, we can't be bothered to sit there for an hour a night **remembering** it, rather than oh we might not **understand** it. So therefore it's **harder** to remember it.* **P2/I1:263**

Even when Hermione was able to gain support, it was neither responsive to her underlying needs nor adequately sustained. She illustrates with an example from German lessons:

...they'll say the odd like, oh, you know "we'll translate another word" but they, like, get fed up. **P2/I1:012**

*It's definitely something bigger. It's not the odd word cos, you know, the odd word, it's not hard. But it's **starting** the sentences, it's trying to **work out** what they're meaning...* **P2/I1:019-020**

Having been compelled to study lessons that lack relevance to her and struggled to gain the teachers support, her reluctant (enforced) capitulation is impeded by teachers' apparent unwillingness and/or inability to recognise, understand, prioritise and address her learning needs. Hermione sees a teacher that rewards (values) pupils she perceives to be more committed to the subject, but considers that perspective subjective, biased by potentially biased assumptions.

7.4d School as a community

7.4d(i) Harmful social hierarchy

Hermione recognised a problematic, age-based social hierarchy that she felt was abused by older pupils:

*you get all these **older years**, like, just like **looking** at you giving you this weird **look**. And then they'll **barge past** you or ...they'll sit there **talking** about you, ...so you gotta like kinda keep your head **down**.*

P2/I1:292-294

*they feel like oh because they might, you know ...go out drinking at the weekends that they're all this **mature person**. So they're like, already like ...two steps **above** you are.*

P2/I1:300

Hermione then, experiences school life as a series of interactions where her dominant mode of interaction (with both staff and peers) is enforced submission. My experience of interacting with Hermione was that she was a socially competent young person who would, under more favourable circumstances, take a more central and vivacious role in social intercourse. Spending significant time in her daily life being forced into a more passive and rather cautious role, holding back for fear of retribution is likely to have a long-term damaging effect on her self-esteem.

Hermione didn't feel that school staff understood what impact this social hierarchy was having on pupils:

I think school thinks oh, it's just today it'll blow over.

P2/I1:316

Linda: ...you see it as something bigger and more

Hermione: Yeah.

Linda: **enduring**, you might say.

Hermione: *Definitely.*

P2/I1:320-321

The timing of her interjection here is significant. Before I had time to complete my sentence adding the word “*enduring*”, Hermione was keen to agree that this is something bigger than school staff think. But more than just agree (“*Yeah*”) she adds emphasis (“*Definitely*”).

Hermione bemoaned a lack of teacher awareness and commitment to addressing the problem, highlighting that it was often left to other staff with less authority who were, therefore, ineffective:

*Say if something was thrown in the **canteen** it'd always be thrown at the younger years because **they** won't say anything. If someone pushes in front of the line, say it was a year 10 and I didn't **know** them ...I don't say things...They've probably got a little group of friends. They're gonna come and have a **go** at me. **P2/I1:311-312***

*And there's only dinner ladies that will say “oh stop.” But then they'll carry on. They just do it **every single day**. **P2/I1:328-329***

Hermione's frustration with the situation is clear; she emphasises that these problems are commonplace (“*they do it **every single day***”) and therefore staff should be more aware and committed to dealing what she sees as a big problem, not the trivial misdemeanour that school communicates through its failure to address it. Interestingly, however, Hermione acknowledges that younger peers engage in problematic behaviours too:

and year 7s do it. They run all over the [canteen] tables. P2/I1:332

Thus the social capital (age-advantage) she perceives she should have gained is eroded; she is subject to unchecked provocation from younger pupils too.

Hermione felt it was unlikely that a hierarchy of some sort could ever be eliminated from school:

...you can't stop it completely but there must be something they can do. P2/I2:469

However, she also recognises a more positive, protective side to it:

Linda: *So it's not so much the fact that [a social hierarchy] exists, but it's the way that people ...use it.*

Hermione: *Yeah. They use it like to like their advantage against others. P2/I2:472-473*

you've gotta have someone to look out for you P2/I2:477

Hermione considers school should be a community of people who are building ties and working with and for one another rather than competing against one another.

Despite the problems that social times seem to be causing, Hermione values more time in the school day for social interactions:

*Cos we have now 5 minutes less off dinner and break ...But then we get moaned at when we're talking ...when we should have that five minutes at the beginning of lessons. Instead of waiting like for the end of what **should've been** break to catch up with your friends and stuff, they're just straight on to the lesson. P2/I2:433-435*

The importance of social relationships to Hermione is evident. However, her statement “*to catch up with your friends and stuff*” suggests a focus on developing and/or maintaining *existing* friendships rather than forging new ones and building the collaborative, caring community that she appears to covet. As Hermione explained she had recently moved house (“*I’ve moved house so it’s harder to go out*”; P2/I1: 273), this may reflect her current social situation rather than suggesting a lack of genuine commitment to a more collaborative social setting.

7.4d(ii) Protecting emotional well-being

Hermione began by explaining that she felt school was too pressured:

*...I feel like **all this pressure** is coming on* **P2/I1:008**

Every single day you wake up like really early and you’re like “Oh, 100% straight away, first lesson at nine o’clock.” And you’re like “Urgh! Give me a break!” **P2/I2:508**

A big problem for Hermione seemed to be that the pace of teaching was too fast for her:

you’ve got all this pressure on you and you’ve not got enough time to do it. **P2/I1:091**

*...and then they’re trying to teach me **more** stuff and I’m still, like, 10 lessons behind everyone else.* **P2/I1:021**

...shoving 10 lessons down my throat, more or less. **P2/I1:029**

*you've gotta learn all of this, this, this for next week for an exam ...
and then ...you probably won't remember it cos you're trying to
cram it in...*

P2/I2:114-116

Lest I miss the significance of this, she uses at least four discursive techniques for added impact to highlight the strength of her feelings and its emotional impact on her; emphasis (“...**more stuff**...”), enumeration (“*10 lessons behind*...”), metaphorical language (“...*shoving 10 lessons down my throat*...”) and repetition (“this, this, this”).

Hermione’s use of the phrase “*more or less*” is also interesting, suggesting a degree of (partially-retracted) exaggeration. However, she does not fully withdraw her statement and appears committed to the underlying principal of disempowerment.

Hermione begrudged the impact that pressure from school was having on her wider (social/family) life. I asked her what things were important to her in life:

*Well, some of these might not **apply** to me, but having a good, you know, **social life**. So being able to **have a break** from all these **tests** and everything and just going out with **friends**. Cos I don't do that anymore, you know. I've got **too much stuff** at school...*

P2/I1:270-272

*And then there's obviously getting good **grades** as we keep getting
...like, **spoon-fed**.*

P2/I1:274

Through her use of the phrases ‘*shoving lessons down my throat*’ and ‘*spoon-fed*’, Hermione positions herself as a passive and overpowered receptacle of an education over which she clearly feels she has little control.

Note how Hermione distances herself from some of the things that are important to her and attributes the cause of this to the volume of work she has to complete (“I’ve got too much stuff at school”). For Hermione, school seems to be gradually taking over her life, both directly and indirectly. Time required for schoolwork demands increasing amounts of her time, directly limiting relaxation time. Indirectly, Hermione loses pleasure and abandons hobbies/interests she used to enjoy, in the process, unwittingly compounding the problem:

*I was doing this **cadet** thing at school but then I **quit** that because I felt like I couldn’t **cope** and I couldn’t **keep up** with German ...*

P2/I1:143

*I used to do **karate** but I had to **quit** that. I did it for 6 years and I had// I feel like I **had to** quit it cos I was losing interest. I’ve lost interest in stuff I used to like.*

P2/I1:161

She explains that this is both out of character and an obstacle to her personal goals:

*I wanted to do [cadets] because of, you know, the **first aid**. And it would help me out [with midwifery].*

P2/I1:159

“I don’t’ normally quit at things”

P2/I1:176

We see Hermione proactively or reactively, consciously or otherwise, making personal sacrifices that she considers support her learning. This compromise in personal values is hugely significant, both personally to her and, if recognised, school too. Sadly, however, by relentlessly pushing Hermione to do more and better in those subjects for which she has made those sacrifices teachers communicate

disrespect for and/or unawareness of her commitment. This interpretation is reinforced:

*we had to do this like **résumé** thing, you know, of why you wanted to **do** it, and they didn't// like some of the stuff I **wrote** in there was quite like you know I'd **really enjoy** you know all the **experience** and everything. But then when I suddenly just like **dropped**, I was **hoping** someone'd **notice**. Not in like an **attention** way, obviously, but I was hoping that someone'd **notice** and be like "Oh Hermione, " you know "what's going on? Why, why have you just **quit like this?**"*

P2/I1:174-175

I asked her if she thought teachers recognised that personal sacrifice:

Probably not. No. I would be very surprised if they did... **P2/I1:150**

Perceived failure to consider her résumé (hear her voice) compounded her disappointment, communicating disdain/disinterest in Hermione's reasons for quitting, her career goals and her as a person.

Hermione felt school damaged pupils' self-esteem by overly focussing on and being unduly pessimistic about exams:

*...I feel like I'm being held back because ...I don't know, maybe I got a grade less than the person next to me. So that means I'm not gonna get far in **life**. That's the way she **worded** it for me. And I was just like ...**again** ...**thanks** for that, you know. A **boost** of confidence!*

P2/I1:196-197

*...my mum didn't do too well in school but she's still, you know, she's still got a good job ...school make you think you're not **going** to be able to get that.*

P2/I2:755

Potentially small differences in test/exam results are seen to have great implications for Hermione's aspirations. Contrasting the efforts she is making in her studies to teacher's comments (which seemingly portray negativity and impending doom rather than positivity and optimism), she concludes that it is a hopeless situation; despite her efforts, she just cannot 'make the grade'.

Far from motivating her to study harder (which we can presume was the teacher's intention), the comments demotivate and distance Hermione. Her use of sarcasm directs my attention to (and may be a mechanism to protect her from) the emotional impact.

7.4e Staff-pupil relationships

7.4e(i) Power imbalances

Hermione was particularly troubled by the lack of voice, power and control that she felt pupils had over their studies:

*And she [teacher] told me it's like "Hermione, you have **no choice**. You **have** to do it. You don't have a **choice** in this." And I was like ...I was **shocked**. Just by the way she said it I was like, ooff ...you know. I felt it was just been thrown in my **face**. **P2/I1:124-125***

*...you know children, they don't like being told what to do. But the way she told me I **had to do it** ...She made me feel like I had no other choice, even though it's **my** options. **P2/I1:130-131***

Hermione recognises pupils' developing maturity and is "shocked" by the teacher's attitude. She asserts that, when staff assume control over pupils this both disempowers and, unwittingly, stifles pupils' learning potential:

*our teacher she said she's gonna choose our// what papers we do [in our test] ...I don't think it should be like that. Because what if you want to try and, she's maybe not seeing that. ...Even if we want to push ourselves, we're still stuck on the four to six when everyone else is five to seven and above. **P2/I2:286-292***

We see Hermoine returning to the notion of pupils being treated like children, disrespected and belittled, being told what to do with little, if any, say.

Hermione considers staff to use power subversively too, e.g. attempting to engage parents as tools to further pupils' subordination:

...cos you don't do it [follow teacher's instructions] ...teachers

threaten to speak to your parents.

P2/I2:603-605

Interestingly, in her focus on teachers' impact on pupils, Hermione overlooks the way in which this practice inadvertently *undermines* teacher authority in two key ways.

Firstly, by 'calling-in the reserves' in this way, *teachers* appear to feel distanced from and disempowered by *pupils*. Secondly, if Hermione's previous assertion is correct (that parents beliefs and advice differs to school's), then this strategy would be counter-productive.

Considered in isolation then, teachers' tendency to speak to (i.e. gain support from) parents should communicate their sense of disempowerment. However, Hermione does not recognise this. Seemingly, a wider range of experiences have influenced Hermione's thinking, creating a bias of interpretation. Thus, she senses a combined oppressive impact that is perhaps greater than the reality of the situation. We are reminded of the overlapping nature of oppression (Liasidou, 2013).

7.4e(ii) Holistic, empathic and respectful relationships

Hermione recognised good teacher-pupil relationships as a fundamental prerequisite for teaching:

You can't just assume ...you've gotta like be in with them ...get to know them to know what they prefer to do, how they like to do it, at what pace.

P2/I2:230-232

She felt pupils should be able to expect empathy and respect from teachers:

It's like, you can tell when your friends are a bit like, oh, a bit, having a bit of an off day. So surely it should be the same with teachers.

They've had like two or three years. And they, they've had you most days.

P2/I2:333-335

She considered teachers missed ample opportunities and paid insufficient attention to developing relationships with pupils:

*...I feel like it's **always me** that doesn't understand it and I said this to my teacher and she just moaned at me.*

P2/I1:120-121

Some [teachers] just don't make the effort ...It's just, I dunno, I feel like they just choose not to.

P2/I2:343-345

Hermione's use of the terminology of 'choice' is interesting. More than simply failing to meet Hermione's learning needs, she considers staff make conscious decisions over how they interact with pupils. In 'choosing' not to develop relationships with pupils, staff communicate a belief that pupils should be kept at a distance (socially and emotionally) that opposes Hermione's own.

Hermione recognises her increasing maturity but feels this is not recognised in school:

*I'm ...getting **older** ...in a couple of years I'll be **leaving** school...*

P2/I1:192

...we've got our own minds. You can't just ...treat us like we haven't. You can't think for us. We have to think for ourselves.

P2/I2:281-282

They're just assuming they're [pupils] the same as they was two years ago in year 7 ...you've matured. You're through two years, you know.

P2/I2:373-376

Hermione contrasts this with her experiences at home:

I mean mum, she'd be more understanding. She'd have more, a little bit more respect. Surely you should expect that from some, more or less stranger.

P2/I2:700-701

At a time in pupils' development (teenage years) when they are grappling with their emerging personalities and pseudo-adult status, issues of maturity and relative power are clearly of huge sensitivity and significance. I speculate that her experiences beyond school may be very different, with her parents having greater respect for her growing maturity and self-awareness. More than simply agreeing with my suggestion, Hermione adds further emphasis with the word "*Definitely*" before returning to the notion that teachers actively choose to ignore pupils' preferences and disempower them:

Definitely. School just, I dunno, they just forget about it. Like, oh, you'll be fine. You don't get to make your own life choices in a way.

P2/I2:716-721

7.4e(iii) Staff genuineness, honesty and integrity

Hermione felt that staff were disingenuous, focussed on their own goals (grades and test results) rather than working in the best interests of their pupils:

they're more bothered about how it looks on my grade ...than me understanding it.

P2/I1:034

They don't care, you know, how you're doing, as long as you've got a certain grade at the end of this topic. So they can move onto your next one.

P2/I2:206

She also felt that teachers were too ready to deflect poor test results as pupils' apathy or indolence without acknowledging the way their own actions may contribute to pupil underachievement:

*Like my maths teacher, she said to me, she said "Hermione, **you're** predicted a **below D** cos **you're** not putting effort in, **you're** not listening, **you're** not asking questions." She says "**you're** not paying attention."*

P2/I1:195

7.5 Ron

7.5a Overview

Ron aspired to be an actor in the future, describing himself as a creative, sociable person. For him, these core values were both unrecognised in school and actively devalued, marginalised by school practices.

Ron was highly concerned with equality, fairness and democracy, values that he did not feel school practiced or promoted. He valued social structures that recognised, nurtured and rewarded the broad range of interests and talents that a diverse population enjoys, recognising the value that each brings with it, not only for individuals, but for wider society too.

Ron considered school had a sociocultural as well as educational role and should function as a model for wider society, endorsing and practicing harmonious, inclusive ways of understanding diversity and interacting with one another within the context of a more equal society. However, he observed school to maximise pupils' individual differences, thereby promoting an academically-biased and unjust social hierarchy where those pupils fortunate to be (initially) classified by teachers as high-achievers became increasingly privileged over time, both academically and socially.

Ron was concerned that academic targets were inaccurate, too narrowly-based and inappropriately applied. In particular, he felt pupils' intrinsic motivational factors (interest, commitment, etc.) were not taken into account. He recognised pupils as maturing young adults and felt they should have a greater say in what they studied.

Ron felt school should teach pupils skills to prepare them for their future careers in a more pupil-centred curriculum; failure to recognise and accommodate pupils' developing maturity and personal reflexivity not only led to inappropriate teacher-derived targets that limited, rather than supported, pupil learning, but perpetuated delivery of a curriculum that was irrelevant to pupils' needs and interests.

In an effort to voice his concerns and effect change (for himself and other similar pupils) he had joined the student council. However, finding the council's processes unsatisfactory (replicating the existing social hierarchy, ineffective and lacking sustained commitment), he sadly resigned his position during the course of this study.

7.5b Education purpose and format

7.5b(i) Teaching pace/progression

Ron believed school should be an egalitarian enterprise, aiming to foster equality by minimising the attainment gap. However, he saw school as *maximising* the attainment gap:

*I feel like ...the students who ...are...like, **expected to do better** get a bit more attention ...Rather than giving the attention to the people who they **don't** think can do so well...* **P3/I1:185-186**

*I think they're focussing on trying to push stu// like, **higher** students **further**, rather than trying to keep us all **together** and trying to, // get, get us **all** to go up at the same **pace**, sort of thing.* **P3/I1:188**

Ron noted a difference between the values and ideologies espoused by primary and secondary schools:

You get that sort of thing in primary school. The classes all get taught the same thing. And it's not diverse// it's not split up.

P3/I2:071

It is apparent that Ron has found the transition to secondary school teaching practices increasingly difficult as he witnessed greater pupil segregation and ability-streaming that conflicted with his values.

7.5b(ii) Pupil-centred education

Ron spoke at length about the core subjects (English, maths and science). He felt these subjects, so central to the curriculum, reflected the priorities and interests of others beyond education rather than pupils:

*...things, like, different occupations out there, or people who maybe are **employing** people, or things like that, maybe take into account English, maths and science, personal// er, like, yeah, they take 'em more **seriously** because they're the main subjects. **P3/I1:128***

He felt that pupils should have a greater say in negotiating a pupil-centred curriculum tailored to their *own* interests and adult-life aspirations. I asked him how schools should decide what to teach pupils:

*Really, I think it depends on the person. That, sort of, it comes down to what **they** [students] **want to do** in life. **P3/I2:378***

*I feel like people [pupils] should have more **freedom** in choosing what they want to do. **P3/I2:414***

Ron felt that pupils would vary in when they were mature enough to have the insight to make those decisions and schools should be flexible to accommodate individual differences:

*I don't really think it's an **age**. I think it's when people are **ready** and feel they're **mature** enough to decide where they want to go within life and decide what they want to do. **P3/I2:397***

In section 7.5b (i) (above) Ron asserted that education should be teaching pupils to a common standard at the same pace; his ideas here conflict with that. If school responded individually in this way pupils would embark on different courses at different times, creating the very conditions that could exaggerate rather than minimise individual differences.

Ron's thoughts and ideas are clearly embryonic, not fully formed, at times inconsistent and/or contradictory. This, perhaps, reflects the limited opportunities adults facilitate to elicit pupils' thoughts and allow them to consider/discuss such matters. I feel it raises important questions about the extent to which our understanding of and interactions with pupils deny them (1) status as politically-minded citizens, or (2) opportunities to develop their political identities.

Ron aspired to work in the performing arts. He was more interested in doing practical, creative activities than theoretical, written ones:

*...I'm more of the drama and music sort of place, where it's more
active...* **P3/I1:033-035**

*...I want to go to **college**, get some sort of education within theatre...*
P3/I1:363

Linda: *...you **value**, perhaps, doing **performing** things a little bit
more than, perhaps, **writing** things?*

Ron: *Yeah, definitely.* **P3/I1:372-375**

However, Ron felt practical, creative subjects lacked prominence and gravitas in schools:

Linda: *teachers should recognise and respect ...the fact that **less** academically-able pupils have their **own** skills and talents. They might not be the skills that teachers admire, or try to teach, but they are still valuable and important...*

Ron: *Yeah.*

Linda: *Yeah?*

Ron: (laughs) *I agree with all of this. (surprised) P3/I2:046-049*

*...like maybe things like physical education as well, they should all be ...**appreciated** more by the school, I think. P3/I2:196*

For Ron, schools' failure to include and recognise dramatic achievements within the main curriculum and fabric of the school communicated a difference of values.

I found Ron's surprise interesting; he appears surprised to find himself agreeing with my suggestion even though it is just my reflection on his previous discussion with me. Perhaps this is indicative of his broader experience of interacting with adults in education; that it is distinctly unusual for adults to understand and/or validate him and his ideas/perspective.

7.5c Understanding and meeting learning needs

Ron explained that, based on pupils' performance in core subjects the school placed pupils into streams (bronze, silver and gold) which were then applied to other subjects and used for target-setting. He felt that this was an inaccurate and flawed process:

*There's no actual ...research or any **data** on the actual lesson that can put you at go, gold, silver or bronze.* **P3/I1:088**

*And I feel like some people who **don't** particularly do well in maths, English and science could exceed at maybe technology but don't get a high, a higher, erm, er, **target** for it because of ...th, they're **under-estimated**...* **P3/I1:114**

He made it clear that it was not the target in itself that troubled him, but the way it served to label pupils and the emotional impact that has:

*even if you're a bronze, you can go for a silver **or gold**. But I feel it's more like the **label** that's put on you.* **P3/I1:090-092**

*You don't get the, erm, the **target**. And I think that stirs up **feelings**. And it's more **emotions** rather than something else.* **P3/I1:142**

Although he recognised the relevance of core subjects to other subjects, Ron felt the link between core subjects and other subjects was sometimes rather tenuous making them a crude and sometimes unsatisfactory indicator of pupils' true ability:

*I don't think that it's fair that everything is based **on them**, particularly, because it doesn't necessarily show a student's actual **ability** in a certain subject and I don't agree with that sort of thing.*

P3/I1:147-148

*Students get under-estimated by the teachers of what potential they **have** because of what they've achieved in the core subjects.*

P3/I1:227

He initially rejected the idea that this affected him personally, but later acknowledged that it did:

***I am** a gold student. But I, I look at it at a **different** pupil's perspective.*

P3/I1:102-105

*...it sort of applies to **me** because my targets are based on what I get in English, maths and science, mainly English. Er, where I'm not **good** at that sort of thing, but I am good at **drama** and it's **affecting** the way, the way that I **feel** compared to other people. **P3/I1:168***

*I feel under-estimated. I feel like people don't **realise** wh, and don't **tap** into what people can actually **achieve** when they **try**...*

P3/I1:170

Ron objected to the unbalanced and exclusive focus on core subjects in isolation without taking into account other sources of relevant information, especially pupils' own interest and motivation for particular subjects. Ron felt that pupils had valuable personal insights and could therefore make a valuable contribution to the decision-

making process. However, he considered that teachers did not recognise this, relying instead on their own, incomplete perspective.

Ron was troubled by that way that academic targets not only shaped, targeted or constrained pupils *work tasks*, but also served to define *pupils themselves*, often in potentially damaging ways:

when I am silver and I am bronze, and there are other people that are gold. And they are going for better things. And they are getting praised. And they are getting all this attention from the teacher. I don't feel like I can achieve as much. I don't feel like I'm good enough, basically.

P3/I1:278

Here Ron demonstrates how targets not only dictate work levels but serve to define people, his emphasis on the words “*I am*” clarifying this. The emotional impact of this practice is both explicit and profound (“*I don't feel like I'm good enough*”).

Ron does not speak specifically about his experience of transition from primary to secondary school. However, this is a potential source of his dissatisfaction. Pupils who might have developed an understanding of themselves as high-achievers may struggle to adjust if their ability is suddenly ‘down-graded’ on transition where they are compared to more pupils, some of whom may outperform them.

Ron initially denounces the issue of labelling as not applying to him, describing himself as a gold student but then later concedes it might also apply to him. Perhaps this symbolises the emotional significance of the matter to him personally.

Ron noted that targets frequently ran counter to teacher aims, demotivating pupils thereby limiting (rather than developing) their achievement:

Linda: ...so the bronze pupils perhaps don't want to achieve
academically

Ron: They don't feel that they **need** to... **Because** of their target.

They feel they've hit that and then that's it. **P3/I1:218-223**

*So, I was left with a bronze and a silver, sort of in the middle, and I wasn't necessarily going for the **gold** that I th, that I thought I could **achieve** because they didn't think I could achieve it.* **P3/I1:-239**

*...I feel like **more** students are put **lower** than **higher** because of the **sets** as well.* **P3/I1:272-273**

Ron's use of emphasis on the word "because" is telling. He emphasises a directional and causal link; teacher-set targets restrict pupils' effort/commitment to learning, not *vice versa*. Thus, targets are seen as self-fulfilling prophecies; teachers underestimate pupils' ability, therefore they set low targets which then demotivate and limit pupil progression.

Extending the argument, teachers then quote poor pupil attainment (grades) as evidence that their ability assessments were justified and accurate. This reinforces existing assessment procedures, simultaneously devaluing and marginalising pupils' more optimistic self-assessments. Future pupils' self-assessments are then "justifiably" disregarded, potentially perpetuating the injustices, quietening and stifling successive generations.

I am reminded of my own experiences regarding maths, entering 6th form. It takes a very strong character to disagree with teacher assessments and much determination to fight against their perceived wisdom, especially given the power differentials encountered. Thus, opportunities to challenge the validity and accuracy of existing assessment practices are minimal. This seems to be a classic example of where people advantaged by the system they are in become blinkered by it, unable to see its potential flaws.

7.5d School as a community

7.5d(i) Harmful social hierarchy

Ron recognised a problematic social hierarchy among pupils. He felt that targets facilitated antagonistic peer comparisons, thereby playing a key role in creating and perpetuating this:

Ron: *And I also think that people that are put at a gold and a bronze target ... There's a bit of **tension** between them ... they feel they're not as **good** as them, because they're not put at the same **levels** as them. Yeah.*

Linda: *... So there's a bit of a hierarchy going on?*

Ron: *Sort of, yeah.*

P3/I1:083-085

*There is one person, like, he's a **gold** student, and he feels he's **better** than others and he's tries to put that **out** there. And he says "Well **I'm** a gold student. I can do this. And you're only bronze or silver, I// you can only do **this**." And he sort of puts himself **higher** than others. Because of that.*

P3/I1:241

He felt that targets should not be a matter for public consumption:

*when teachers **announce** what levels we've got ... obviously students will go up and put them **against** each other ... But that's not necessarily the stu// the **school's** fault.*

P3/I1:340-341

Erm, when it comes to privacy I don't mind sharing things with family and I don't mind being open with them. But when it comes to friends it's, it's different. It's a sort of different setting.

P3/I2:323

Ron felt the hierarchy was also recognised and perpetuated by differential staff attitudes towards pupils:

*Erm, the teacher possibly has some sort of liking to the gold students. Maybe if they want something done they'll ask a gold student cos they think they're more **capable**.* **P3/I1:097**

Linda: *So there's a **sense**, is there then, that they don't...that they don't earn the same **respect** of the teachers? Get the same **privileges** from the teachers?*

Ron: *Maybe don't get as much...responsibility. Maybe don't get as much, erm, ...oh I don't know how to explain it. It's, it's*

Linda: *Recognition, maybe?*

Ron: *Yeah! Recognition, possibly. Yeah.* **P3/I1:108-111**

Compounding the problem, Ron did not think that staff recognised the social and emotional impact targets have on pupils:

*I don't think they know that what they're **doing**, what...how they **set things out**, erm, affects students and their behaviour **towards** things.*

P3/I1:251

He attributed this to the sporadic and surreptitious way in which the hierarchy operated:

*I feel it's just some sort of **conversation** that students **have**, like...*

One student thinks they're better. The other student disagrees.

*There's some// they have some sort of **talk** and they have some sort of **tiny argument**. And then it just **fades out** 'til it happens again.*

*But I don't think the teachers are **aware** of that because it's not **constant**. But it **does** happen still and I **don't** think it should.*

P3/I1:261-263

He would like to see an education without targets but did not feel that would not wholly eradicate the problem:

*I feel there's **different** sorts of ways students ju, **judge** each other and have some sort of competitions whe// and I feel like bronze, silver and gold is just **one** of them.*

P3/I1:351

For Ron, targets functions as an intractable and insurmountable barrier to the social harmony and pupil equality he values so highly. Although Ron felt the social hierarchy could not be totally eradicated, he considered school could and should play a more active role in minimising its impact by fostering more positive peer interactions through appropriately-focussed recognition and reward systems:

Linda: *They're [teachers]...recognising and rewarding other pupils for other things that tend to be more, academic?*

Ron: *Yeah.*

Linda: *But not necessarily recognising and rewarding pupils who are being kind to other people and thoughtful about other people.*

Ron: *Just the basic things. Yeah.*

P3/I2:119-122

Ron's reply is telling; rather than simply agree with my suggestion, he adds further clarity and weight ("*just the basic things*"). Consideration and respect for others is a fundamental basic. That this is being transgressed without staff recognition and/or reproach compounds the problem for him; if people don't attend to the basics (the foundations upon which the education system is built), then all else emanating from it is rendered dysfunctional, unpalatable and inconsistent with his beliefs and values.

7.5d(ii) Democratic principles

Ron valued democracy very highly. As a member of the school council (Student Engagement Team; SET), he sought to apply democratic principles in school for the benefit of the pupils:

It's a majority thing. It's what people want, I guess. Then it's what should be carried out.

P3/I2:089

His belief in the value of democracy appeared to emanate from his experiences at home:

...my family try to sort of cater to everybody's needs. But if, if the majority of people want to do something and the others not// want to do something else it's, it's usually goes with what the majority want to do.

P3/I2:337

However, Ron cautioned against overreliance on democracy, recognising a need to protect minority interests:

Ron: *...it depends on where the point is actually coming from...*

Linda: *So it depends on the topic we're thinking about.*

Ron: *Sort of how it affects every, every person. Yeah.*

Linda: *So there could be times then when it's not about **lots** of people wanting it. It could still be important even if it's only one or two people.*

Ron: *Yeah.*

P3/I2:091-095

Ron initially expressed pride and confidence in SET as a representative and powerful pupil body:

*I feel like within the student engagement team you have some sort of leadership role, some sort of responsibility to be a, erm, **role model** ...to other students. ...And with the student engagement team we also, like, have the **power** to change what happens within lessons, maybe what happens, erm, over ...periods of time...*

P3/I1:061-062

*I'm actually gonna become a **leader** of it soon.*

P3/I1:294

However, he harboured some underlying frustrations about SET's demographics and representation:

*...the teachers are more ...on board with whatever **he** [the leader] goes with, rather than what **I** say.*

P3/I1:013

...he's [the leader] more like a, erm, a smart sort of individual. He, he's with all the people who like **exceed** at different lev, er, at different things. **P3/I1:018**

my sort of clique-type thing ...well, we're just random people to be honest.[laughs]. ...We're friends with anybody. Just people who, we like their personality, friends, and, it's just ...hard to explain.

P3/I1:021

whereas the groups that **they** [the leader and his friends] are in, they are good at English, maths, science. **P3/I1:029**

Ron feels that these difficulties impact on the wider pupil population too:

*I feel sometimes the students with, that **aren't** in the student engagement team **do** feel **sort** of ...a bit conflicted, maybe a bit neglected ...missing out on the opportunity to have some sort of say...* **P3/I1:063-067**

Linda: ...you feel like the group of pupils you represent perhaps don't have such a **strong** voice. Not necessarily because of **you**, but because of the system you're working within.

Ron: Yeah. I suppose you could put it like that. **P3/I1:074-075**

Ron's use of the phrase "I suppose you could put it like that" may not appear to convey strength of agreement. However, I feel it reflects the fact that he is grappling with new/embryonic ideas and concepts.

Ron believed the allocation of different roles within SET tended to replicate and perpetuate school's problematic social hierarchy. Although he falls short of expressly stating that roles within SET are based on academic achievement, he does make an implicit link, contrasting the leader's academic talents with his own strengths, interests and priorities (P3/I1:021 and P3/I1:029). Thus there is a suggestion that staff value the opinions of more academically-able pupils.

Although Ron wishes to empower and promote the interests of pupils similar to him, he finds himself in a body that he experiences to further perpetuate and reinforce, rather than address, the social hierarchy that he finds so problematic. He considered that SET should be more tolerant of pupils' diversity:

Linda: *Erm. So. Pupils who practice tolerance ...that **do** respect that diversity of the pupil population and **are** welcoming and embracing of them should be **more valued and listened to** ...if school would listen to [them] it would be a benefit to the school.*

Ron: *Yeah. Definitely.* **P3/I2:170-171**

Ron framed SET in argumentative terms, seeing it as a student body with an adversarial role:

*...I feel like, results **from** [student surveys] could give me a **basis** and an idea of how people feel, like, across everything and sort of give me some sort of **argument**. Some sort of thing to go against how we actually run things now. **P3/I1:303-304***

Note Ron's use of emphasis on the word "**argument**" and the phrase "*go against*". SET does not seem to engage in the calm, rational, compassionate and democratic debate he has experienced at home, values and expected in SET.

Ron felt his role in SET both set him aside from other pupils and gave him responsibilities to other pupils:

*I'm a **little bit different** from everyone else because ...the student engagement team is meant to be a team of responsible, er, helpful students who **help** around the school and help improve lessons and things like that. ...I sort of representative **different kinds** of people within the school.*

P3/I1:007-010

His use of the phrase "*meant to be*" gives us a further hint of his frustration with SET. Consistent with his thoughts on the social hierarchy, Ron's focus is around helping others. By implication Ron finds the team to fall short of its remit in this respect. Ron sets himself apart from not only the mainstay of pupils (due to his membership of SET) but also from other members of the SET team. Later he explains:

*I'm the ver...very social, bubbly, more out-there type of person.
That's definitely me.*

P3/I1:041

Having already distanced himself from the rest of the team, by inference Ron views other pupils as less sociable, a distinction already seen in his observations of peer interactions (section 7.5d above).

Sadly, Ron didn't recognise school and SET as being as committed to the same principles and values:

Linda: *So you're very used to being able to manage that [diversity] ... and tolerate the fact that, actually, well you don't think the same as me, but that's OK ...Whereas you don't think that school...*

Ron: *I don't think that school takes it as ...ap, ap, appropriately as they should, if you know what I mean.* **P3/I2:361-366**

7.5e Staff-pupil relationships

7.5e(i) Holistic, empathic and respectful relationships

Sadly, by the time we met for our second conversation, Ron had left SET. He attributed this to its ineffectiveness:

Since we spoke I've actually quit the student engagement thing.

P3/I2:135

*...people don't go **through** with what they planned to do and it just ... seems like a big waste of time, to be honest. 'Cos we're **doing** something, we're talking about something. However it's not **affecting** anything really. So I don't// I didn't see really any point in it.*

P3/I2:140-142

Ron: *It's just the fact that we had meetings but not very **often**. So the point wasn't very ...erm, what's the word?*

Linda: *Laboured, maybe?*

Ron: *Yeah. That's it.*

P3/I2:147-155

For Ron, it was important that SET members were genuinely committed to projects, showing sustained and committed application to them. However, he didn't feel that staff shared those values. I asked him if he felt that issues raised by students were taken seriously:

*Yes and no. I feel like **when you** raise the issue they'd have some sort of understanding, they'd have some sort of **feelings** towards it, but then, as other problems come and as times goes on I feel like*

*they, they **forget** about it and the...the **awareness** of everything, it just goes down.*

P3/I1:314

Discussing his concerns about targets, I asked whether he thought he could usefully raise the matter in SET:

*... it's a yes and no sort of thing... Yes, they'd be concerned that that's what pupils **felt** like. Yeah. And no, they wouldn't **want** to get rid of it. They'd want to **keep** it so they've got some sort of system.*

P3/I1:320-323

*I don't feel like the bronze, silver and gold will **go** anywhere because I feel like **that's** the sort of thing that they **need** to base, like, levels and, er, work on.*

P3/I1:326

Ron recognises the centrality of emotions in SET. Staff seem happy to discuss pupils' concerns and show empathy for pupils. However, there is a notable absence of comment on agency and action.

Note also that Ron considers staff to lack motivation, not power in SET (they don't "**want to**" rather than *can't* change things). Ron does not recognise staff as equally disempowered by SET, though readers might assume at least partially germane for some matters. Thus, Ron sees SET as a disingenuous, ineffective process.

The timing of Ron's decision to leave SET is interesting. It is possible that my initial conversation with him heightened his reflectivity and led (or at least contributed) to him questioning his participation in it. Ron's decision to quit SET seems to have been both empowering (in enabling him to recognise and take actions to minimise his immediate dissatisfaction) and simultaneously disempowering (in the sense that

as a non-member of SET he has less voice within school to protect his interests in the longer term, thereby contributing to his oppression).

Ron valued relationships with adults based on mutual trust and respect, something he considered he experienced at home, but not in school. Ultimately, this was the reason for him quitting SET:

Linda: *...you were saying last time ...about schools being genuine and if they're going to ask for our opinion then be prepared to do something about it.*

Ron: *Exactly.*

Linda: *And that's why, you're telling me, I think ...you quit the student engagement team. Because actually you were finding that that wasn't happening. There wasn't that...*

Ron: *Yeah. That's exactly the reason.*

Linda: *that genuineness behind it.*

Ron: *Yeah.*

P3/I2:158-167

Note Ron's use of the word "exactly," not once, but twice to communicate his strength of agreement. Perceived failure to respect Ron's value acts directly to limit SET's effectiveness and indirectly to disengage Ron. In quitting, Ron minimises cognitive dissonance in the short term but unwittingly silences himself, becoming a contributor to his own oppression in the longer term.

7.5e(ii) Staff availability/accessibility

Ron felt that school staff did not demonstrate equal commitment to all pupils:

*And the teachers sort of **motivate** the gold students **more***

P3/I1:172

This difference exaggerates the achievement gap by pushing gold pupils further and simultaneously limiting educational support for lower-achieving pupils. However, Ron also believed it demotivated lower-achieving pupils and limited opportunities for teachers to develop the understanding relationship needed for effective teaching and learning:

*I, I feel like ...the students who ...are...like, **expected** to do **better** get a bit more attention ...the teachers want to **push** them. Rather than giving the attention to the people who they **don't** think can do so well, and they **under-estimate** ...I think they should give them more attention to them, them sort of people because ...they **need** it.*

P3/I1:185-186

*...the bronzes' **not** getting as much of the attention, not getting as much of the **moti**, motivation that the teacher needs to give them. I don't feel they're getting that sort of relationship that they should have between the teacher.*

P3/I1:199

Linda: *...staff should be directing more of their attention to the pupils
who are struggling, who need it most.*

Ron: *(nods)*

Linda: *Yeah?*

Ron: *You've hit that right on the head.*

P3/I2:033-036

7.6 Answering the research question

As previously stated, although overtly there was no reason to consider these pupils culturally diverse in terms of traditional understanding and legal/professional documentation, it is apparent that they were. Although as a group they shared some cultural beliefs, they differed on others, reflecting the differing cultural influences they encountered. Those differences sometimes distanced them not only from each other, but also from the education system as summarised below.

7.6a Nature

Tables 7e-7h below outline some examples of the key cultural differences these pupils communicated in school.

Table 7e: School-pupil cultural differences (Education purpose & format)

PUPILS' EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL CULTURE	PUPILS' CULTURE	EXPRESSED BY
Exclusively academic focus	More vocational focus	Harry, Hermione, Ron
Predominantly adult-led curriculum	Predominantly pupil-centred curriculum	Harry, Hermione, Ron
Independent learning	Collaborative learning	Harry, Hermione
Progression, targets & passing exams	Depth of understanding, sense of mastery and lifelong retention of learning	Harry, Hermione
Written and/or language-based teaching methods	Practical, experimental, hands-on teaching methods	Harry, Hermione
Maximising individual progression	Minimising attainment gaps, promoting pupil equality and teaching pupils to a common standard	Ron

**Table 7f: School-pupil cultural differences
(Understanding and meeting learning needs)**

PUPILS' EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL CULTURE	PUPILS' CULTURE	EXPRESSED BY
Pupils too young to make wise, informed choices	Pupils maturing into reflective young adults with clear ideas of their needs and adult-life goals. Can make wise, informed choices	Harry, Hermione, Ron
Teacher assessment and core subjects are accurate predictors of pupil potential	Pupil interests and intrinsic motivation for particular subjects should be incorporated into decision-making	Harry, Hermione, Ron
Pupils' misbehaviour is a barrier to effective pupil learning and progression	Pupils' misbehaviour results from ineffective teaching and irrelevant curricula.	Harry, Hermione
Targets motivate pupils and maximise learning	Targets demotivate pupils, limit learning and often damage pupils' self-esteem	Hermione, Ron

Table 7g: School-pupil cultural differences (School as a community)

PUPILS' EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL CULTURE	PUPILS' CULTURE	EXPRESSED BY
School rules should be prescribed by staff	School rules should be negotiated with pupils	Harry, Ron
Pupils should have a limited say in how school operates	Pupils should have greater say in how school operates	Harry, Hermione, Ron
School council should have a hierarchical structure	All members of the school council should have broadly equal status	Harry, Ron
School council members should represent the full range of academic abilities	School council members should be representative of all pupils (<i>abilities and interests</i>)	Ron
School is for academic learning	Pupils are whole beings with social and emotional needs; school should support those too.	Harry, Hermione, Ron
Teachers should distance themselves from pupils and social matters	Teachers should develop relationships with pupils and take greater interest in social matters	Harry, Hermione, Ron
Social interactions in school inconveniently restrict teaching opportunities	Social interactions in school are a valuable and important part of school life; more time should be dedicated to this	Hermione

Table 7h: School-pupil cultural differences (Staff-pupil relationships)

PUPILS' EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL CULTURE	PUPILS' CULTURE	EXPRESSED BY
Teachers have automatic status, respect and authority because of their role	Staff should earn status, respect and authority from pupils	Hermione
Staff should have power and control over pupils	Staff and pupils should share power and negotiate decision-making	Harry, Hermione, Ron
High achieving pupils are more motivated, able to learn and deserving of staff support and attention	All pupils are equally motivated and able to learn given the right curriculum in the right manner; they are all equally deserving of staff support and attention	Harry, Hermione, Ron
Education is paramount; focus on constantly challenging pupils	Pupils' emotional wellbeing is paramount. Teachers should be flexible and prepared to reduce challenge where necessary	Harry, Hermione

School and pupils seemed, at a surface level, to share some common cultural beliefs. However, the reasoning and/or strength of conviction behind those beliefs sometimes differed. For example, pupils and school both valued SET as a means for democratic pupil participation, but appeared to differ in how they felt it should operate, their degree of commitment to sustained goal-directed activity and the desirable boundaries of its powers. Thus cultural differences cannot be inferred from pupils' public words and actions that might superficially suggest agreement, consent, cooperation and shared practices/beliefs. Rather, it is necessary to explore more deeply the beliefs, values and ideologies that underpin their participation.

7.6b Impact overview

For these pupils, the implications of cultural differences appear wide-ranging and profound as outlined below.

At times, they struggled to articulate (in the traditional sense of the word) their thoughts and feelings about the events they chose to share, as evidenced by hesitations, false starts, contradictions, etc. However, in the sense that they were able to select and communicate culturally-relevant events in ways that enabled me to develop an understanding of their significance and impact, I consider them very insightful and articulate.

All three pupils' narratives illustrate a process of identity blending (Wortham, 2003). A range of cultural influences (teachers, peers, family, cadet staff, etc.) seem to be contributing to their emerging individual cultural identity, creating pupil-school differences. Harry encounters messages in cadets about what school should be prioritising/teaching him that appear inconsistent with his lived experience of school. Hermione seems to recognise in her mother's stories an alternative, non-academic route to life success that school does not acknowledge. Ron seems to value social cooperation and consideration for others' needs that he experiences at home but does not feel are valued or adequately emulated in school social structures.

Inter-pupil differences and conflicts can also be identified. For example, Ron's belief that education should teach pupils to a common standard conflicts with Hermione's belief that pupils should have greater say in deciding which test papers to take so they can maximise their individual attainment. Such differences support the idea that, despite ostensibly and demographically being members of the same broad

cultural group (i.e. white, British), pupils actually experience identifiable sub-cultural differences that problematically affect their access to and experiences in education.

7.6c Academic impact

These pupils recognised several areas where they felt conflicts between their own and school's cultural beliefs and values contributed to poorer academic outcomes.

7.6(i) Curriculum content

Consistent with previous finding (e.g. Hartas, 2011), these pupils seem to perceive some of the curriculum as irrelevant, responsive to the needs of adults rather than their own, conflicting with their own values. Ron spoke of core subjects reflecting business rather than pupil needs/interests and lamented a general lack of “appreciation” for less academic subjects such as drama and PE that interest some pupils. Hermione bemoaned a lack of opportunities to learn meaningful, valued practical life-skills whilst being compelled to study academic subjects (e.g. algebra) that she perceived as irrelevant to her adult-life goals.

Pupils clearly valued personal choice and control over their curriculum but their narratives highlighted the sometimes misleading discourse of pupil choice. We are reminded of the notion of participation being a tool for social control (Hartas, 2011). For example, Harry and Ron both spoke of pupils' year-10 “options” being constrained by teacher-derived streams/targets that they perceived as sometimes inaccurate and failing to take into account pupils' interest, motivation and commitment to particular subjects. Compounding the problem, Harry noted a lack of genuine opportunity to discuss such matters with staff.

Teachers appear to act as gatekeepers to learning, controlling (restricting) pupils' access to the curriculum and tests. For example, Hermione asserted that pupils were sometimes forced into sitting lower test papers, restricting possibilities for them to demonstrate higher ability. Both Hermione and Ron felt teachers disregarded/denied pupils' growing maturity and insight with respect to test and/or subject choices. Thus these pupils seem to feel compelled to study courses for which they have no interest or motivation (thereby emphasising their difficulties rather than strengths and perhaps limiting successful outcomes). Thus they are seemingly denied opportunities to study other subjects that emphasise their strengths and where they feel they might achieve better outcomes. Their real interests, talents and potentials are hidden and languish under-developed, not because they are inherently dishonourable or unworthy but simply because they are not included in, valued or endorsed by education.

The notion of teachers as "privileged elite" (McDonnell, 2009) restricting access to learning resources (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996) can readily be applied to the pupils' narrated experiences. Perceived inability to change the situation and limited opportunities for genuine participation in decision-making seems to create a climate where pupils feel forcibly "indoctrinated" to a "reality which must remain untouched", thereby generating feelings of hopelessness where insurmountable barriers act to oppress (Freire, 1972).

7.6(ii) Curriculum priorities

These pupils appeared dissatisfied by the way school valued/prioritised some subjects over others (e.g. core subjects over vocational subjects). For example, Harry recognised that school did not fully accommodate his commitments in cadets into school routines (e.g. year-10 options discussions) or provide support needed (i.e. TA in English) to follow his aspirations. This suggests school considers such opportunities an unimportant 'add-on' rather than a valued part of the main fabric of education. Indeed, as Ron noted, school seems to lack "appreciation" for less-academic subjects such as drama and PE.

I am reminded of my own experiences of learning to play an instrument in school. Being an extra-curriculum add-on, in order to access peripatetic lessons, I had to sacrifice attendance in core lessons where teachers frequently bemoaned my lack of commitment to the more 'important' and 'worthwhile' teaching that they were delivering, simultaneously marginalising my personal values, not just to me, but the whole class.

Such practices perhaps epitomise the notions of asymmetrical power relations restricting access to resources (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996) and education teaching pupils what is worthy and admirable (Fielding, 2012). Adopting Freire's (1972) viewpoint, we can recognise these processes as politically indoctrinating pupils into a fixed, dominant mode of thinking whilst devaluing and marginalising alternative beliefs and preferences. A lack of adjustment within school to accommodate pupils' alternative beliefs and values also suggests a process of multi-contextual pupil adjustment rather than a more balanced focus on joint adjustment (acculturation; Clare, 2009).

7.6(iii) Curriculum delivery and goals

Differences in beliefs were also noted in relation to curriculum delivery and assessment methods with pupils showing a greater affinity to a human capabilities model than they felt school practiced. For example, Harry and Hermione seemed to value collaborative learning but felt too little of this was facilitated. Harry noted a problematic tendency for teachers to use language he found inaccessible. Ron expressed some dissatisfaction with school's ideology of maximising individual learning which conflicted with his own values (educating all pupils to a common standard). Harry and Hermione both felt too little time was available for valued practice and overlearning necessary for them to develop a sense of mastery.

Ron expressed dissatisfaction with teachers' perceived tendency to give disproportionate attention and support to gold pupils asserting teachers should give more support to lower-achieving pupils who needed it more. He also suggested targets limited pupils' effort (and therefore attainment). Thus teachers are seen to marginalise pupils who are not gold stream, thereby marginalising and devaluing them. For Harry and Hermione, however, it was teachers' apparent failure to address naughty behaviour that they felt limited pupils' attainment. Hermione felt that teachers consciously avoided developing relationships with pupils, using inaccurate assumptions (e.g. laziness) to understand particular pupils. For her, resultant misinterpretation of pupils' difficulties led to missed opportunities to support their learning, thereby contributing to pupils' (unrecognised) underachievement.

To the extent that teachers' practices are led by government policies, we can see how staff and pupils alike are being 'written' by those policies (Cormack & Comber, 1996). Alternative human capabilities ideologies (e.g. collaborative learning,

developing mastery) and pupils who might benefit from them are marginalised, disempowered by an education system that does not recognise/meet their needs. Condemned (at least in part) to orchestrated failure it seems unlikely they will gain the necessary social capital to influence education's future (McDonnell, 2009) potentially perpetuating injustices for future pupils.

7.6d Social and emotional impact

These pupils recognised several areas where they felt conflicts between their own and school's cultural beliefs and values contributed to poor social/emotional wellbeing.

7.6d(i) Pressure and stress

Hermione valued a measured learning pace that would afford opportunities for overlearning and practice and contribute to a developing sense of mastery.

However, she experienced school as having a conflicting focus on (value of) pace of progression that denied her that opportunity, thereby contributing to lower self-esteem and poorer emotional wellbeing.

Hermione articulated her disappointment with teachers' apparent tendency to view her learning challenges in class (e.g. German comprehension) as laziness and/or lack of commitment with resultant reprimands and criticism. Within the context of her (unacknowledged) social sacrifices (e.g. quitting cadets and karate), teachers' comments seemed to further contribute to poor emotional wellbeing both directly

(additional workload pressure) and indirectly (e.g. sense of hopelessness, fear of failure).

Hermione clearly valued social interactions and seemed to believe school should also fulfil a social function. Time spent addressing a perceived overload of homework and revision seemed to limit her opportunities for social interactions at home. Within school, she bemoaned changes to timetables that also reduced valued opportunities for social interaction. An increased sense of social isolation therefore seemed to be developing, contributing to poor emotional wellbeing.

It seems that pupils experience small, daily doses of devaluation in school (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996) that implant fear of failure and a sense of hopelessness. In combination with a lack of opportunity to develop a sense of mastery pupils appear to internalise their situation, experiencing feelings of inferiority and oppression. This process appears to be reinforced by teachers' reluctance to develop understanding, holistic relationships with pupils that might otherwise be used to monitor and support pupils' emotional wellbeing.

7.6d(ii) Home-School inconsistencies

Hermione recognised a difference between the values held at home and those in school. Although Hermione expresses her commitment to some of schools' values (e.g. exam success, university/career aspirations), she also seems to believe in/value alternative forms of success (e.g. home/family aspirations).

Potential conflicts between these aspirations (e.g. spending time learning practical life skills versus academic studying) seem to perpetuate a human capital agenda (see Walker, 2012) and may create internal conflict (cognitive dissonance; Festinger, 1957). An absence of opportunities to acknowledge, explore and address those conflicts seems to contribute to poor emotional wellbeing.

7.6d(iii) Social hierarchy

All three pupils seemed to recognise a disadvantageous social hierarchy. Harry seemed to simultaneously be advantaged and disadvantaged by his membership of the SET. Although he seemed to value the power, privileges and responsibilities it gave him, he also articulated events where he had suffered social abuse from peers in carrying-out his duties. Hermione felt that teachers failed to recognise (and therefore address) the impact of the social hierarchy. Ron suggested this may be due to the subtle, intermittent way it operated.

Ron seemed to feel that target-setting practices contributed to the hierarchy, modelling hierarchical ways of not just classifying but defining pupils that were then carried into the social arena by pupils. Teachers' perceived failure to address misbehaviour was seemingly viewed by Harry and Hermione as maintaining social

disharmony while Ron suggested teachers' failure to recognise, reward and promote socially-inclusive interactions also played a role in this.

As McDonnell (2009) suggests, the notion of grading and testing seems to have become institutionalised, permeating all aspects of education. The pupils speak of ability-streaming and target-setting as immutable practices that have been adopted in the social realm; neither Ron nor Hermione can envisage education without them. Hermione goes further, suggesting that if targets were removed, pupils would just find some other way to create a social hierarchy.

Perceived as contributing to the problematic social hierarchy, pupils bemoan teachers' lack of commitment to address it. It seems this communicates messages of disinterest in the social aspects of school, thereby, devaluing it together with the socio-emotional wellbeing of pupils adversely affected by it.

7.6d(iv) Democracy

Both Harry and Ron expressed value in democratic principles but appeared disappointed with the operation of democracy within school. For Harry, a lack of opportunity to contribute to determining school rules as well as teachers' perceived inconsistencies with applying them seemed to be at the heart of his vexation. However, Ron's frustrations seemed to be around the way SET operated. Echoing Hartas (2011), he seemed to feel it over-applied majority decision-making without recognising or protecting minority interests, was insufficiently representative of the wider pupil population and recreated rather than challenged existing social structures. Ultimately, his decision to leave it was based on his stated perceptions

that it was disingenuous with a focus on eliciting pupils' views without genuine commitment to sustained action to effect change.

School's apparent resistance to change (e.g. Ron's understanding that school do not really want to abandon target-setting) suggests to him that school expects pupils to adapt to its fixed (dominant) culture rather than embracing acculturation. It also illustrates a sense of hopelessness/insurmountable barriers with respect to prospects of changing a practice that is perceived to restrict some pupils' learning potential.

Harry and Ron's experiences in SET illustrate the multifaceted nature of oppression. Though members of SET who experience some privileges (especially regarding expressing thoughts and ideas), they simultaneously experience oppression within SET itself (relative disempowerment in relation to other members) and in the wider school population (e.g. disrespect and abuse from peers). Thus it seems they are concurrent members of both in-group and out-groups, supporting the notion that oppression is complex and multifaceted (Liasidou, 2013).

7.6d(v) Relationships

Hermione seemed to value teachers developing a holistic understanding of pupils, respecting them as human beings with full, rich lives rather than solely objects for their edification. She bemoaned the lack of consideration given to her wider needs (e.g. her résumé), sacrifices outside school (e.g. karate) and reduced opportunities for social interaction with peers in school.

Harry and Hermione both seemed to value honesty, genuineness and integrity which they did not feel they experienced at school. Harry cited failures to honour promises

(e.g. to provide a TA) while Hermione expressed her belief that some teachers were only interested in pupils' achievements for their own purposes (i.e. meeting targets).

All three pupils seemed to recognise a difference in the way that school and the wider community view young people. Within school, Hermione seemed to feel constrained and unfulfilled by teachers' approach which emphasised her immaturity (e.g. "spoon-feeding" her, calling parents). In contrast, beyond school she seems to enjoy more mature cultural beliefs which emphasise her developing maturity. Harry seemed to recognise inconsistencies between his experiences in cadets and school, the former seemingly treating him in a more adult manner. All three expressed frustrations about the lack of respect they felt they experienced with regards to their personal insight and subject/exam choices.

Hermione and Ron both recognised teachers as having different interaction styles with different pupils. Both articulated the concept of the 'golden' (preferred) pupil who they felt gained social and educational privileges over and above other pupils. Both appeared to experience this as alienating and devaluing them as non-members of that elite group.

Thus, as suggested in section 4.2, these pupils seem to inhabit at least two concurrent identities (school child and young adult) requiring them to negotiate two differing sets of freedoms, constraints and expectations (e.g. regarding autonomy, personal agency, self-reliance and responsibilities). Differing experiences between contexts (e.g. school versus home or cadets) may heighten pupils' awareness of a preferred alternative adult identity that is not respected in school. In that context, lack of acknowledgement within school of their maturity would disempower them, creating internal conflict (cognitive dissonance) and damaging emotional wellbeing, especially where teachers are resistant to adapting their interaction style.

7.6e Behavioural impact

Collectively, these pupils articulate some areas where they had adjusted their behaviour in response to differences between their own and school's beliefs and values.

7.6e(i) Resignation and passivity

Harry and Hermione both expressed their frustration with teachers' responses to their needs. Both considered staff often didn't understand his needs, whilst Hermione suggested that some teachers tended to shout at pupils for not understanding. It seems they experienced a sense of hopelessness (Freire, 1972) and gradually internalised their situation (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996) coming to accept it as immutable. Through a process of disciplinary power (Youdell, 2011) they eventually stopped putting their hands up (seeking support). Although this successfully reduced discomfort in the short term, in the longer term it seems likely to limit their educational success and they unwittingly contribute to their own oppression.

7.6e(ii) Social withdrawal

Hermione articulates another behavioural response to the pressure she feels; quitting clubs and activities (e.g. cadets and karate). Ron too demonstrates withdrawal when he quits SET. Whilst these responses successfully reduce discomfort (cognitive dissonance) in the short term, both result in them unwittingly contributing to their own oppression. Specifically, Hermione reduces opportunities for relaxation that could protect her emotional wellbeing while Ron silences his own voice further reducing his opportunity to effect change.

However, on a more positive note, we should note that all three pupils volunteered to take part in this study. This may be a sign that they have not abandoned all hope of addressing the situation, if not for themselves, then for future pupils.

7.6f Caveat

For clarity, this study is not saying that education's dominant/existing culture is inherently "wrong". Clearly, there are a good number of pupils who do well by it and go on to do great things with their life. Many of those pupils may have been naturally-aligned to school's dominant culture. However, Clare and Rahman suggest that some may have achieved that by changing their personal cultural beliefs and values to match education's, perhaps experiencing some level of cultural alienation in the process. Others, like me, may have experienced a degree of cognitive dissonance but, strengthened by protective factors such as a stable, supportive family and good mental health, found their own ways to manage it. It is clearly important that such differences are revealed so that they can be debated and addressed for the benefit of all, perhaps addressing the emotional needs of pupils experiencing cognitive dissonance and/or identifying the protective mechanisms and strategies that contribute to success.

To what extent others' perspectives (realities) may substantiate or contradict those outlined by these three pupils herein remains to be explored. Nevertheless, consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of narrative research and the advocacy models outlined in this study, these pupils' accounts express their experiences of education and must be embraced and respected if their experience of oppression is to be successfully addressed.

8. STUDY LIMITATIONS

In any research study, various factors associated with philosophical, theoretical and practical/logistical considerations inevitably lead to limitations in applying findings to other populations and transferring suggestions into practice. The following paragraphs identify the recognised limitations of this study.

8.1 Pupil recruitment & demographics

Some pupils may have been affected by cultural differences but not have identified with the sense of difference articulated in the invitation to take part in this study.

Alternatively, they may have been emotionally unready/unwilling to articulate that by taking part. It cannot and should not be assumed that they are not affected by some of the issues discussed herein (or, indeed, others not yet identified). Future studies might address this, perhaps by using a different invitation

Only pupils in year 9 attending a single school participated. We do not therefore know about the experiences and beliefs of younger or older pupils or those in other schools or educational institutions (e.g. Further or Higher Education). Furthermore, understanding cultural identity as a unique blending of cultural influences, these narratives cannot speak for others, though some degree of overlap may be expected in view of the convergences already seen herein.

8.2 Developing narratives

A largely unstructured discussion style was adopted to avoid unduly directing or constraining pupils' naturally-arising narratives. However, a degree of compromise was necessary with researcher prompts used where necessary to minimise digression and keep discussions pertinent to research aims.

It might have been useful to explore some narratives further, though it did not seem that any of the pupils needed/wanted this. Additionally, as this would have been inconsistent with the original project proposal (and therefore contravened ethics requirements) it was not possible. Future studies might consider undertaking more discussions or spacing discussions across a longer timeframe to allow pupils to develop their understandings more fully.

8.3 Narrative endurance

This study was exploratory in nature: pupils were asked to discuss and consider culturally-pertinent matters either for the first time or in novel ways, as already acknowledged.

Consistent with a critical realist understanding of knowledge, it follows that the narratives constructed are pupils' early attempts to make sense of the events and experiences discussed. Their understanding is likely to have developed subsequently as they perhaps continue to reflect on and develop their thoughts, possibly engaging in conversations with friends, family, teachers and other culturally-influential people.

It follows that any further narratives they might conceivably construct may depict different events in different ways with differing levels of emphasis and importance.

It also follows that my own attempts to make sense of the meanings and significance of the narratives constructed is similarly subject to revision in response to peers'/readers' feedback. In that spirit, they are presented tentatively.

8.4 Generalisability

The decision not to triangulate pupils' narrative to teachers' is acknowledged as an inherent limitation of the research method adopted by this study. However, it is precisely because pupils' narratives were respected as meaningful accounts of their perspective without cross-examination that educational practices have been opened up to important hitherto suppressed critical scrutiny. Avoidance of triangulation has consciously and intentionally swung the balance of power; in silencing the voice of relatively powerful, privileged educational professionals, pupils have been actively empowered and given voice. It is an active aim of this study that the narratives herein promote critical thinking, trigger ongoing debate and highlight the need for further studies in this area.

As this study explored the experiences of only three pupils attending a single school, the findings' applicability to other pupils in other schools is unknown. However, to the extent that readers judge the analytical processes undertaken and the accounts of pupils' narratives accurate, meaningful and trustworthy, I propose that the findings provide a useful, initial framework that can be applied to the analysis and understanding of other pupils in other schools in the UK.

8.5 Pupil checks

In second discussions I note a generally low level of disagreement. Whilst this may indicate a high level of agreement, it could also potentially reflect asymmetrical power relations (pupils felt disempowered to challenge me) or insufficient time for pupils to fully develop their ideas. However, as I feel I developed empathic relationships with the pupils, I consider disempowerment unlikely.

8.6 Alternative interpretations

The critical realist framework adopted in this study indicates that the interpretations within this study represent just one among many different possible interpretations, one that is necessarily incomplete and shaped/biased by my own understandings and past experiences. Riessman (2008) makes this point when she states that “Multiple readings are potential in all narrative research ... we tend to easily assume that we know what they are saying, and alternative readings tend to get obscured, or even ignored” (p49).

Riessman (2008) also claims that “prior theory serves as a resource for interpretation” (p73). Similarly, it follows that, since researchers have an active role in facilitating, interpreting and analysing the narratives, their prior experiences are also a source for interpretation. This is fully acknowledged as a limitation of this study. Was I to review, re-present, reanalyse and reinterpret the narratives again, I might bring new experiences, understandings and biases to those processes, choose different excerpts to portray, identify different themes and develop different interpretations, as might the reader. I invite readers to develop their own interpretations based on their own experiences and knowledges.

9. STUDY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Implications for EP Practice

As it is fully recognised that the findings of this study are embryonic and that their applicability to other pupil populations has not yet been fully established, they are offered tentatively and speculatively, predominantly for private reflection and to highlight the need for further studies in this area. Nevertheless, there are some initial implications arising from it that I propose EPs should consider in relation to their work practices. Those recommendations are based on my understanding that the EP role inextricably encompasses a duty to act as a social justice advocate, as outlined in sections 4.1 and 4.7. As Greenleaf and Williams (2009) assert:

“to ignore the oppressive environmental conditions that contribute to client problems is metaphorically akin to ignoring a contaminated water supply even after scores of citizens have become deathly ill... addressing the problem would entail treating those sickened by the water and purifying the source of their illness”

(p6; emphasis in original).

9.1a SEND Code of Practice

As outlined above, pupils who hold different cultural values to those espoused by schools may experience oppression that impacts on them in many areas of the 2014 SEND Code of Practice (e.g. Cognition; Communication and interaction; Social, emotional and mental health).

EPs need to recognise education as simultaneously emancipatory and oppressive. They should ensure they do not inadvertently perpetuate any injustices pupils experience. When working individually with pupils, EPs must be prepared to pay attention to not only the 2014 SEND Code of Practice but also cultural needs such as differences in beliefs and values concerning education's content, delivery and assessment methods and goals.

This will entail eliciting pupils ideas in relation to the four themes identified in section 7.6. Useful methods to achieve this might include general relationship-building conversations, Personal Construct Psychology and resources such as *The Little Box of Big Questions* (Gersch, I and Lipscomb, D. 2016). However, each will require careful consideration with regards to their applicability to individual pupils, schools and situations. Future research could usefully explore the utility of these (and other) tools/methods or, perhaps, develop new ones.

Support to address any identified cultural differences will need to be devised on an individual basis in response to both pupil and teacher experiences and perceptions, take into account within-school and externally-imposed, immutable constraints (e.g. government directives) and be included in consultations and reports to enable all concerned to re-frame problems and jointly construct satisfactory solutions.

9.1b Individual pupil demographics

The pupils' narratives support the notion that legislative and professional guidance (e.g. The Equality Act, 2010; SEND CoP, 2014) constrain professionals' ways of thinking about culture. It is evident that some pupils not currently recognised as having protected characteristics, being culturally diverse or having special educational needs also experience unrecognised cultural disadvantage. Differences in beliefs and values concerning curriculum content, delivery and assessment methods, the format and extent of pupils' participation in democratic decision-making (at individual and systems levels), teacher-pupil relationships and the ultimate purpose of education have been identified herein.

EPs need to recognise that pupils who might not initially appear culturally diverse (on the basis of current thinking) may nevertheless have unmet cultural needs.

Discussions and assessments with individual pupils and families should therefore routinely consider matters of cultural relevance including, but not limited to, those identified herein. Suggestions in relation to this have already been made above (section 9.1a)

The cultural applicability of existing tests and practices is already commonly considered in relation to pupils with protected characteristics and communication needs. This study suggests more pupils may be affected by cultural differences and therefore EPs may need to consider such matters routinely, in relation to all pupils and the themes/issues identified herein.

9.1c Systemic thinking

More broadly, EPs need to consider cultural issues, not just for the SEN pupils with whom they work, or those with protected characteristics, but all pupils. This includes all manner of systemic work that impacts on pupils who may not currently be identified as having special education needs and may not individually or collectively have access to our services. Consultations, participation in multi-agency services, community working and training delivery may be suitable vehicles to initiate discussions and reframe their difficulties. Gently and respectfully challenging existing assumptions (e.g. that white, British pupils do not experience cultural difference) could support professionals to develop their understanding and encourage them to consider more fully the impact of such matters.

Moreover, overarching matters such as target-setting, ability-streaming, testing, collaborative learning, democratic involvement in decision-making (e.g. subject options), personal aspirations and maturity/personal agency affect all pupils, not just those with special educational needs or protected characteristics. As Clare (2009) suggests, for too long educational professionals, privileged by the education system, have seemingly been blinded to the problems that such 'common-sense' practices pose for some pupils. It is hoped and anticipated that this study will shed new light on a range of those diverse practices, trigger critical reflection on who is affected in what ways, lead to further exploration and promote discussion and further research about how to address such problems, including seeking the (cultural) beliefs and values of (all) pupils.

9.1d Challenging public narratives

As suggested by Barrett, Lester & Durham (2011) and others, this study suggests EPs need to build upon their existing advocacy role to properly address the underlying source of pupils' problems. As a professional group, EPs need to unite with each other and pupils, families and other professions to expose the nature and extent of cultural differences so the process of conscientization can begin as a first step towards social justice. In the longer term, it will be necessary for EPs to join with other professional groups as well as young people and families, to consider ways in which they might be able to work in the different manners/levels identified in section 4.7 to initiate more challenging and far-reaching national changes to the education system (e.g. through political debate and campaigns).

Together, we need to recognise existing social narratives such as “disaffected youth” as lacking balance and ask “disaffected by or from what exactly?” and “who needs to (can) change what in what ways to create the cultural harmony that will maximise pupil outcomes?”

Other questions could include:

- *To what extent does over control in education limit pupils' opportunities to develop, making errors and learning from them?*
- *When and how do/should pupils develop independence skills for their adult life? (which ones?)*
- *How should/can schools support pupils to transition from childhood to adulthood?*

In answering such questions, we need to recognise that, as ultimate beneficiaries (“consumers”) of education, the views and opinions of the young people attending it are of profound importance. Therefore real efforts should be made to ensure that it meets their needs *alongside* those of other interested parties (e.g. politicians and

business). This will involve empowering pupils' voices and perspectives (see section 9.1a) so cultural differences can be identified and ways found to engage pupils in negotiating curricula and appropriate delivery methods that meet their needs while challenging them to maximise their potential, whatever that be. It seems inevitable that there will be a transitional period of debate, mutual challenge and collective learning. This will require further research of a social justice nature (outlined in tables 4a, 4b and 4c, above) to develop the shared understanding and foster the conditions necessary for such processes to occur effectively.

9.1e Managing the tensions of the current EP landscape

9.1e(i) EP Time commitments

Having conversations with pupils to determine their cultural beliefs and values may initially appear to require additional time, making it impracticable for EPs who already feel increased pressure from the recent changes to the SEND Code of Practice and the resultant associated increase in workloads, notably in statutory work. To the contrary, in this study such questions seemed to help pupils to connect with me; they appeared more relaxed in my company and seemed to feel truly listened to and understood by a person who was genuinely interested in them. This in turn helped to establish more substantial relationships and opened constructive communication channels more quickly than might otherwise have been anticipated.

Gaining pupil voice is already a routine part of much of EP work, a requirement strengthened by the focus of the recent SEND Code of Practice changes. Indeed, schools themselves are increasingly proactive in this area, with pupil-centred reviews becoming increasingly common. I therefore suggest that efforts to elicit such information, either through conversation in consultations or through the use of questionnaires (yet to be developed) could easily be incorporated into existing practices with minimal additional time/work load implications, enhancing EP work in the process.

9.1e(ii) Traded services: Cost implications

Having argued that determining pupils' cultural beliefs and values should have minimal impact on EP time, school perceptions remain a consideration. EPs are an expensive resource who are *voluntarily invited* into schools. Schools increasingly have options to buy similar services from a range of alternative providers; LA-commissioned services, private sector companies, non-profit-making cooperatives, etc. and are therefore likely to be particularly sensitive to perceived superfluous work. This imposes additional complexity to our work where the ultimate beneficiaries of our services (the school pupils) are not the direct consumers who recruit and pay for our services. Thus, if EPs are to serve pupils well and advocate effectively on their behalf, they must ensure that the school perceives the service offered as value for money for them too, not frivolous, excessive or self-indulgent. EPs must therefore be careful to highlight the benefit to the school of eliciting such opinions from their pupils to ensure that schools perceive this as a valuable, worthwhile, cost-effective option, thereby avoiding risk of dissatisfaction, disappointment and future contract cessation.

This is not without its challenges. However the following questions may have varying influence in individual schools, dependent on their needs, challenges and circumstances. The list is not exhaustive but offers a starting point for further individual reflection.

1. How will such information impact on pupil achievement and wellbeing?
 - Happier pupils who are working in ways and towards outcomes that they themselves value are likely to be more motivated and achieve better outcomes.

- Any documented improvement in outcomes (e.g. in performance or “league” tables) may increase pupil numbers (and therefore finances) in the future.
- Pupils who are happily engaged in subjects that motivate them may be less likely to require additional teaching and/or SEN support, including EP services in the longer term.
- Gaining such information may contribute to any identified OFSTED and/or school-determined service development targets.

2. What impact might this have on teaching staff?

- Opportunities to develop more meaningful relationships with pupils may enhance their emotional wellbeing and job-satisfaction.
- This may lead to positive impacts on staff enthusiasm and commitment, CPD engagement, teaching efficacy, recruitment, staff retention and sickness rates.

9.1e(iii) Traded services/Service Level Agreements

This being a new area of research, such matters are unlikely to be at the forefront of most school's minds at present. Thus, it is unlikely that EPs will be explicitly asked to undertake this work; they will usually need to negotiate with the SENCO or other problem-holders about the nature of the work they will perform. Whilst the above pointers are helpful in this, EPs will be significantly empowered to undertake such negotiations if they are working within a service level agreement (SLA) that clearly and explicitly outlines this model of working. Well written SLAs should prepare schools in advance for such negotiations, highlighting the need to also accommodate the EPs professional and ethical requirements/commitments in their work.

However, EPs should remain mindful to the fact that the SENCO/other school staff with whom they may be working may not be aware of or have directly reviewed the SLA in person. Sensitive, respectful conversations about this when establishing new relationships (before potential conflicts of opinion arise) are likely to be helpful.

9.1e(iv) Relationships

In all of the above, the concept of professional relationship is paramount. To be helpful and effective, EPs need to work within established relationships; with schools, SENCOs and individual teaching staff, as well as pupils and their families. Pupil-centred models of service delivery may limit EPs' contact with a given school and/or SENCO and may not therefore adequately facilitate development of the suitably robust, enduring and mutually-trusting relationships required for EPs to challenge schools' beliefs, values, practices and requests. They may also limit EPs' opportunities to develop a broader awareness of an individual school's policies and practices necessary to understand pupils' concerns or appropriately challenge any misperceptions.

Within a school-allocation model of service delivery, such difficulties are minimised. However, while EPs may have opportunity to develop such relationships with SENCOs, they should always remember that they may be working with particular teacher(s) with whom they have not had similar opportunities. Such staff may require additional support to help them develop their awareness, both of service delivery methods and sub-cultural differences. Opportunities, particularly for the latter, can be found formally in INSET training and more informally in consultations. However, great care needs to be exercised to ensure that existing beliefs, values and practices are not openly critiqued or challenged, as this could alienate rather than engage staff; a non-judgemental, gentle, questioning style may be most helpful. Additional research in this area (see following section) will also be helpful in providing a robust evidence-base for the benefits of eliciting information on sub-cultural differences and adapting teaching practices to accommodate them.

9.2 Implications for researchers

9.2a Study design/empowerment

Riessman cautions against “the belief that narrative research is ‘empowering’”. That claim, she asserts, “...rests on the assumption of the healing power of storytelling” (Riessman, 2008; p199)

During the course of this study, Ron decided to quit SET. We do not know to what extent this decision might have been informed by the conversation and reflection that this study initiated for him. However, the timing (falling between the two discussions) suggests that his participation may have had some bearing. Whilst, in the short term, he has been moved to change his circumstances (quit), thereby minimising his distress (empowering), in the longer term his ability to voice his concerns and potentially influence action to resolve injustices has been reduced (disempowering).

Ron’s actions illustrate Riessman’s concerns (above), affirming that this does not always fully reflect the real experience for participants; more pluralistic forms of thinking are needed. Researchers undertaking narrative studies should be aware that narrating one’s story can also be disempowering and incorporate mechanisms into study designs to mitigate the potential for inadvertent disempowerment (e.g. offering counselling and practical advice).

9.2b Future studies

This study has focused on the perceptions of just three year-9 pupils attending a single school. Whilst it has revealed some interesting and hitherto unconsidered aspects of cultural beliefs, it has also outlined between-pupil differences in cultural beliefs and values. Thus it follows that, revealing though these narratives have been, they may not speak for other pupils in that school, or indeed, the wider pupil population in other schools or of different ages.

In order to gauge whether, in what ways and to what extent these (and other) cultural issues impact on the wider pupil population it will be necessary to undertake further studies. Replication studies could be useful to expand our understanding of the nature of a wider range of cultural differences. Once a more exhaustive bank of factors relevant to a wider population has been identified, future studies, perhaps more quantitative in nature, might address the reach, nature and extent of their impact on the broader pupil population. They may also be used to develop tools, resources and techniques that are useful to EPs and/or school staff in eliciting pupils' views. Other studies might seek to evaluate and document the emotional, behavioural and educational impact of various initiatives used to remediate those differences. Each such study will thereby contribute to a growing, strengthening evidence-base to support school and EP practice.

Of course, in this study's focus on pupil perceptions, schools' and teachers' perceptions have been excluded. Other similar studies should now examine their perceptions, highlighting and exploring differences in greater depth than permitted herein so that a more extensive understanding of the problem can be developed.

This study tentatively suggests that many more pupils than currently recognised perceive problematic differences between their personal beliefs/values and school's (i.e. are culturally disadvantaged). On that basis, assuming further studies concur, future research will be necessary to explore how cultural differences can be identified and accommodated in schools. They could also address to what extent pupils, families and, crucially, education itself might need and/or be able to adapt, in what aspects and how they might effect change in what direction. Since the answers to those questions are value-judgements (i.e. culturally-laden) it is unlikely that a single, universally-agreed solution will be either satisfactory or achievable. It follows that more pluralistic models of education delivery may be necessary that are more flexible and/or promote opportunities for multiple curricula and delivery models to run concurrently in an education system designed to meet the needs of a more diverse pupil population.

The 'failings' of pupils (and their families) who are 'disaffected' and have a 'bad attitude' towards education have been narrated extensively in recent years with a noticeable lack of exploration of education's potential contribution to that disaffection. Disaffection is a relative concept; you can only be disaffected by or from something.

Reports denouncing pupils who are 'disaffected', perhaps selling cigarettes at the school gates, fail to recognise that those pupils share some of education's values (e.g. business and enterprise skills). They are clearly not disaffected by learning per se, though they may well be disaffected by their experience of school. The question then becomes what is it about education that disaffects them? The answer, I propose, is differing cultural beliefs (e.g concerning the goals of education and its style of delivery and assessment.

***The more you refuse to hear my voice
The louder I will sing
You hide behind walls of Jericho
Your lies will come tumbling
Deny my place in time
You squander wealth that's mine
My light will shine so brightly
It will blind you because there's
Something inside so strong***

**Claudius Afolabi "Labi" Siffre
"Something inside so strong"**

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11. TABLE OF FIGURES

Table 4a: ACA Advocacy Competencies model.....	27
Table 4b: Two models of the stages of advocacy	28
Table 4c: Prilleltensky & Gonick (1996) - Stages of conscientization.....	28
Table 6a: Transcription codes	56
Table 7a: Education purpose and format	63
Table 7b: Understanding and meeting learning needs	64
Table 7c: School as a community	65
Table 7d: Relationships.....	66
Table 7e: School-pupil cultural differences (Education purpose & format)	145
Table 7f: School-pupil cultural differences (Understanding and meeting learning needs).....	146
Table 7g: School-pupil cultural differences (School as a community)	146
Table 7h: School-pupil cultural differences (Staff-pupil relationships)	147

12. APPENDICES

Appendix 12.1 - Pupil information sheet

Will anything good happen to you?

People often find it good to talk about things that upset them or make them angry - sometimes it helps to just 'get things off your chest'. Sometimes you find new ways of dealing with things. You might learn something about yourself or discover new ways to make difficult things better. But really, this research is trying to help adults understand what you like, dislike, want or need in school so they can find new ways to make school a better place for other people like you in the future.

Will anything happen to you that you won't like?

We'll only be talking so I don't think so. You might be talking about things that have happened to you in school or about things you haven't thought about before. Some things might be a bit upsetting or make you angry. You can choose not to talk about these things if you want to - that's OK. If you are upset or angry you can always talk to me or your house manager who will be able to get someone to help you...

What if something goes wrong?

I hope that won't happen! And people at my university have checked to make sure that I'm doing all the things I should to make that unlikely. But if it does you can talk to me or your house manager (who will be able to get someone for you to talk to). You can also talk to your parents - I've given them some more information on people that might be able to help.

Will anyone else know that you've been involved?

I won't tell anyone else that you're taking part. I will make sure that I don't use yours or anyone else's name in any of my reports. I won't name your school, any friends or teachers or even Xxx Local Authority. The recordings I make of our discussions might have names in it but no-one else will be able to listen to them unless someone at university needs to check what I've done. But that's unlikely and even if they do, they aren't allowed to tell anyone else about it. I will delete the recordings as soon as I finish the study and my course.

What will happen with the results of the research?

The report I write will be really long and you might find it hard to read! But if you would like to read it let me know and I'll tell you where to find it online (after about December 2015). If you would prefer, I can write a shorter report for you - just let me know.

Xxx Local Authority will want me to do a little presentation to some of the people that work there with me so I can let them know what I found out.

If my report is good enough and I find out something useful, it might get published in a journal (that's like a magazine that just has research in it). So it might be read by other professional people and university students. If so, it might mean the research helps to make school better for lots of pupils like you in the future.

What else do you need to know?

Xxx Local Authority is paying me to do my training (and this research).

People at university have checked what I'm doing to make sure that it's safe for me to do this research. If you wish to make a complaint about this study, please contact Professor Xxx on Tel 123456 or email: xxx@sheffield.ac.uk.

If you want to talk to me about this research, just ask Xxx. She will be able to contact me so I can get back to you.

Thanks ☆

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for considering and/or agreeing to take part in this study. Please keep this leaflet for your information.

If you're interested in taking part please complete the consent form, ask your parents to complete their consent from too and return them both to school in the envelope provided by next Thursday. If you have any questions you can ask me now or, if you prefer, email me at:

xxx@sheffield.ac.uk.

Linda Fisher
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Exploring the experiences of secondary school pupils.

An invitation to take part in a research study



Jan 2015

Appendix 12.1 - Pupil information sheet

Your invitation

I am inviting you to take part in a research project but **you don't have to if you don't want to**. Before you decide it is important that you understand what the research is about. Please read this information leaflet. If you do want to take part your parents will also have to agree to it before you can—I have an information sheet for them too.

Why am I doing this study?

I am training to be an Educational Psychologist and doing this research contributes to my qualification. I hope that the research will help professionals to better understand and meet the needs of pupils.

What have other researchers already found out?

Schools have their own ways of thinking and working. But some pupils may have very different ways of thinking and doing things. For those pupils school can be very difficult because to do well, they need to learn to think and work differently. Some of these pupils learn to think and work differently at school and home – they might be OK at home *and* at school. Other pupils find it too hard – they might struggle in school but be OK at home *or* struggle at home but be OK in school.

What do I want to find out or achieve?

I would like to talk to pupils who feel as though they think and work differently to school. I would like to find out about their experiences in school to find out how well they feel school understands them and offers them what they need and want. I would like to do this so that I can help professionals in education develop a better understanding of the different things that these pupils want and need. I hope that this might help schools to find new ways to help pupils like them enjoy school and do better in it in the future.

Why am I asking you to take part?

Your school has agreed to take part in this research. I have chosen to speak to year-9 pupils. Your class has been chosen.

Do you have to take part?

NO!!! Not if you don't want to. That's fine. Thank you for thinking about it though.

If you do want to, that's great – **thank you.** 😊

You can keep this leaflet. Please give the attached envelope to your parents. If you are both happy for you to take part, please sign the attached consent form and ask your parents to sign the one in the envelope then return them to Ms Xox by next Thursday (6th April).

After you have done that you can still choose not to take part any time up to 30th June if you change your mind. You will not have to give a reason.

What will happen if you do take part?

I only need four people to take part. If more than four people return both consent forms I will select four from them.

If you're selected, I will come back another day and ask you to have a discussion with me. If you're still happy to take part, I'll chat with you for about an hour. I'll do this twice, on two different days, a few weeks apart. I won't spend more than 1 hour with you at any time and it will always be in school time. I expect we will have finished our chats by the end of May.

Will I record the conversations?

Yes. I need to write down everything you say so that people can see what you said. I will not use anyone's real names and I will delete the recordings as soon as I've finished my course (that should be around November 2015).

What do you have to do if you do take part?

It's really important that you try to attend all the appointments that we agree on time. Of course, if you're ill I'll try to arrange a new time to meet you. And if you decide not to take part any more, that's OK.

Appendix 12.2: Parent information sheet

Exploring the experiences of secondary school pupils.

An invitation to take part in this research study.

Your child is being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please feel free to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you are happy for your child to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Why do this study?

I am a trainee Educational Psychologist studying at the University of Sheffield and working in Xxx Local Authority. As part of my training I am required to undertake a research study that will contribute to my qualification. I hope that the issues studied will provide useful information to help professionals better understand and meet the needs of a particular group of young people.

What have other researchers already found out?

Research suggests that schools have their own ways of thinking and working that they find acceptable and others that they do not. Some researchers have shown that schools and pupils sometimes have very different ideas about these things. This can make it very difficult for pupils to do well in school because that means learning to think and act differently. Some pupils may be able to successfully switch between the different ways of thinking and doing. These pupils may do well, both at home and at school. But others may be forced to choose between doing well at school and struggling at home *or* doing well at home and struggling at school.

What does this study want to achieve?

I would like to talk to pupils who feel as though their own ways of thinking and working are different to their schools. I would like to find out about their experiences in school to find out how well they feel school understands them and if they think it offers them what they need and want. I would like to do this so that I can help professionals in education develop a better understanding of the needs and wants of these pupils. I hope that this might help schools to find new ways to help pupils enjoy school and do better in it in the future.

Why has my child been chosen?

Your child's school has agreed to take part in this study. I would like to talk to year 9 pupils. The school arranged for me to visit and speak to a year 9 PHSE class today (Friday 17th April). Your child is a member of that class.

Does my child have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to allow your child to take part. Once you have decided please keep this information sheet and sign the enclosed consent form. If you do agree now, you can still withdraw at any time up to 30th June 2015. You do not have to give a reason.

Your child has also been given their own information sheet and consent form. Only if I receive agreement and signed consent forms *from both of you* will your child be able to take part in the study. Your child will also be able to withdraw consent at any time up to 30th June 2015 and will not have to give a reason. I have enclosed an envelope for you to return both forms to school.

Appendix 12.2: Parent information sheet

What will happen to my child if we consent?

Your child will be invited to take part in two individual discussions with me. Each session will be on different days, a few weeks apart and will not last longer than 1 hour each. At the beginning of each session your child will be asked if they are still happy to take part. It is expected that all sessions will be completed by the end of May 2015.

Will the sessions be recorded?

Yes. They will be recorded on digital audio recording equipment so that they can be transcribed (typed out in full) and analysed. The audio tapes will not be accessed by or made available to any other person except in the unlikely event that this is required through the university assessment process (e.g. to verify the accuracy of my work). In those circumstances, only university staff will have access and they are bound by data confidentiality requirements, just like me.

Analysis of the transcripts will involve examining what was said to look for important ideas and themes being communicated. All electronic audio information will be securely stored (password protected) and destroyed after the study is completed (anticipated date November 2015).

What is expected from me/my child?

Because this study is part of a doctoral training program, I have to be able to complete it within specified time limits. For that reason, I have devised a timeline and the planned sessions are being timetabled to fit within that. These sessions will be negotiated with the school to fit around your child's timetable and minimise impact on their education.

Your help would be very much appreciated in ensuring that every effort is made for your child to attend timetabled sessions punctually (acknowledging your right to withdraw). It is, of course, accepted that circumstances sometimes prevent attendance (e.g. illness) and sessions will be rescheduled where this is the case.

Should I be worried/concerned about my child taking part?

Because this study involves discussing issues around differences between your child's and their school's ways of thinking and working, it is possible that they may develop a more conscious awareness of those differences. They will be regularly reminded that they have the right to decline to answer any questions or discuss any matters that they might find distressing. I will, of course, watch out for signs of any discomfort. As an inherent part of this study, I will ensure that pupils are given information on the forms of additional support that are available to them and encourage them to make use of them if and when appropriate.

Are there any possible benefits from my child taking part?

The aims of this study are to develop understanding and awareness of the ways in which pupils think and act and the things that they feel are important in school. As such, the potential benefits of this study are in the way that education responds to any differences and unmet needs that might be identified.

Responses to studies such as this take time to 'filter through to the ground'. As such, it is unlikely that this study will have any direct benefits for your child (he/she is likely to have left compulsory education by that time). However, whilst it is not an aim or expectation of this study, some people may find it helpful simply discussing their experiences with an interested person.

Appendix 12.2: Parent information sheet

What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

If for any unforeseen reason (e.g. researcher illness) the research study stops earlier than planned, the reasons for this will be communicated to the pupils and parents involved. Procedures for securely managing or destroying any data collected will be explained at that time.

What if something goes wrong?

I trust that the study will run smoothly. However, if at any time you are unhappy with any aspect of the study please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor (details below) and we will endeavour to address your concerns. Should you be unhappy that we have addressed your concerns to your satisfaction you can contact the University's Registrar and Secretary (details below). You do, of course, have the right to withdraw if you wish.

If at any point you or your child have any concerns arising from taking part in this study, you should, in the first instant, contact the Local Authority and ask to speak to the Educational Psychologist for your school, making them aware that (s)he has taken part in this study (details below). The Educational Psychologist will be able to offer further support and advice as necessary.

Will my involvement in this project be kept confidential?

For practical reasons, staff in the school will need to know that your child is taking part in the study, though this number will be kept to a minimum. All the information that we collect about you and your child during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

In writing-up the study all names (pupils, teachers, schools and the Local Authority) will be changed to ensure anonymity. The anonymised data and resulting written report will be shared with two university tutors who are supervising the study. Ultimately the study will be assessed by two further people; a third tutor from the University of Sheffield course and a tutor from another course, both of whom are practicing Educational Psychologists.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

Once the study is completed, it is anticipated that the full report as submitted to university for assessment will be published on the internet at <http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>. This site gives free public access to a range of student research studies. If you would like to read the final report in full, please feel free to access it at the above web address. It is anticipated that the report will be available from about December 2015.

Should the findings and the standard of my interpretation be considered good enough, it is possible that the report will also be considered for publication in relevant professional journals (in shortened format). Consideration will also be given to the possibility of disseminating results through other media. In all cases, the names of your child, teachers, the school and the Local Authority will be anonymised to maintain confidentiality – you and your child will not be named.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being undertaken as part of my professional training for which I am paid a bursary by Xxx Local Authority.

Appendix 12.2: Parent information sheet

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield's Education Department's ethics review procedure. The University's Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University. Should you have any complaints about this project, please contact:

Name: Prof. Xxx Xxx
Tel: 123456
Email: xxx@sheffield.ac.uk

Contact for further information

My contact details:

Name Linda Fisher
Tel

Email xxx@sheffield.ac.uk

My research supervisors contact details:

Name Xxx Xxx
Tel

Email xxx@sheffield.ac.uk

School contact details:

Name Xxx Xxx
Tel 123456

University of Sheffield Registrar and Secretary:

Name Xxx Xxx
Email xxx@sheffield.ac.uk

Xxx Local Authority:

Tel 123456

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for considering and/or agreeing to take part in this study. Please keep this information sheet for your reference if your child is selected to take part (further copies available on request).

Appendix 12.3: Initial Analysis (Harry, P1)

Things that seem important to you

Academic learning (lessons):

- I don't want to be wasting lesson time waiting for adults to sort out the naughty kids when I could be learning something useful
- Track my progress – when I've finished I want you to know that and give me something else meaningful to do instead of waiting

Mastery:

- It's more important to take your time in learning so that you can practice things a lot and get really good at them before you move on to learn something else
- It's less important to work quickly and get lots done but not understand it so well

Means-directed education:

- What I learn in school should get me what you want in life after school
- I'm not really very interested in learning things if I can't see how they will help me after school
- Learning needs to be fun, interesting and relevant to me
- The things I learn in school should be clearly relevant to the job/career I want to do after school
- I want adults to know (and help *me* see) exactly how what I'm learning in school is relevant to my job/career

I prefer to learn by doing things rather than talking/reading about them

- what I really want is more practice, not more reading/talking/explanations
- I prefer demonstrations and practical help – they are more helpful to me than explanations

Community learning, not an individual endeavour:

- I like to learn with another person rather than work alone
- I like it when a CT or TA can help me learn but I'm happy if another pupil can do that instead
- Pupils should help one another to learn
- Teachers should get rid of naughty pupils quickly to build a cooperative community of learners

Personal agency/power:

- Teachers should give me proper access to the lessons and support I need to fulfil *my ambitions*, not *your* ideas for my future
- I like to be able to tell others what to do (*NB – potential conflict here?*)

Democratic principles:

- It's important to me that all people have an opportunity to say what the rules should be

Appendix 12.3: Initial Analysis (Harry, P1)

Understand my needs properly so you can give me the right support:

- Teachers should find out what I really need by talking to me. They should not assume they know what I need – they might get it wrong.
- Teachers should give me clear, specific and consistent instructions
 - just “improve it” isn’t helpful
 - repetition isn’t helpful, especially if you’re not consistent

Match your language to mine:

- Teachers should use words I understand rather than expecting me to use words they understand but I don’t
 - sometimes I find it hard to understand the words you’re using so that makes it difficult for me to understand what you mean or what I need to do
 - if you use different words that I understand I’ll probably be able to do better

Relationship/adult availability:

- Teachers should be available to give me help/attention when I need it – they shouldn’t get so drawn into dealing with the naughty pupils for so long that they don’t have time to help me when I need it
- Teachers should make time for me to talk to them about other things that are important to me too – they shouldn’t be so busy doing admin stuff that they don’t have time to talk about those things with me

Adult dependability:

- Teachers should stick to their word. If they say they’re going to do something, they should do it, not change their mind and let me down
- Teachers should control the pupils/behaviour in the classroom, and do it quickly so that other pupils’ bad behaviour doesn’t interfere with my learning

Dignity and respect:

- Teachers should respect me, my self-understanding, my judgement and my wants
- Teachers should not assume they know what I can and can’t do – there are some things I think I can do that they don’t think I can but they don’t let me try and that’s not right
- Teachers should respect my career ambitions: Recognise how important lessons that support those ambitions are to me and don’t let other pupils’ bad behaviour stop me making progress
- Teachers should not let other pupils be rude and disrespectful to me in the classroom or playground

Personal recognition:

- Rewards should be consistent – they should not be withheld from me because others are being naughty
- Pupils should be consistently recognised for working hard/doing well (*which? Both?*)

Appendix 12.3: Initial Analysis (Harry, P1)

Life-school balance:

- School should recognise the other things that we do outside the classroom (e.g. cadets) are important too...
- ... and make allowances for them in school (e.g. by timing events around those commitments)

Physical and emotional safety:

- pupils should be safe coming to school - school doesn't place enough emphasis on this
- school should take greater responsibility for these things than they do instead of relying on pupils to manage it themselves

Clear, fair, predictable and swift justice:

- the rules (e.g. for school behaviour) should be consistently applied to all
- school is an authority and should be more diligent in swiftly applying rules to ensure safety and equity for all
- school should not delegate its responsibility for this to pupils who lack proper power to enforce rules

Appendix 12.3: Initial Analysis (Harry, P1)

Appendix 12.4: Initial Analysis (Hermione, P2)

Things that seem to be important to you

Learning:

- It's important that I get good grades

Getting the right level of challenge:

- I don't want to waste lots of time trying to work out *what* to do – I'd rather be busy *doing* my work in lessons

Mastery:

- The amount of time pupils have to spend working out *what* to do should be kept to a minimum so that they can spend their time in school actually *doing* it (practicing) – this is a better way of learning.
- I want to be given more opportunity to practice things and learn them thoroughly before moving on with my learning
- Schools should have more focus on learning things thoroughly rather than just being able to recall/use it once for a test – learning is for life, not just an exam
- Teachers should be able to deliver lessons that are responsive to where pupils *are* rather than where someone else says they *should be* in the curriculum

Pupil-led pace of delivery:

- Teachers should pay attention to their pupils and adjust their lesson pace to pupil needs
- Teachers should spend more time helping pupils to really understand things rather than rushing through their lesson plan regardless
- Pupils should be more involved in deciding what pace their learning takes
- Pupils should have more say in when to sit their exams – they should be able to take them when they're ready rather than when they're told, even if that means studying for longer

Means-directed learning:

- What I learn in school should be relevant to/able to get me what I want from life after school

Adult availability:

- Adults should be available to give all students help/attention when they need it, not just some preferred/golden children
- Adult support in lessons should be more sustained – they don't spend enough time with pupils who need it.

Appendix 12.4: Initial Analysis (Hermione, P2)

Self-esteem/privacy:

- Pupils shouldn't have to single themselves out or openly acknowledge to their peers that they're having difficulties by putting their hand up to get help
- Schools should recognise that tests/assessments (in any form) lead pupils to compare themselves to one another. This is not good for pupils who are not achieving as well as others.
- There should be less focus on achievement and more focus on effort so that all pupils can feel positive about themselves.

Discretion/Adults as good role models:

- Staff should be careful not to say things about other pupils when they could be overheard

Pupil dignity and respect:

- Teachers should be more aware of what pupils are actually like/doing and use this to judge them, not what they *think* pupils are like/doing
- Teachers should be more tolerant of individual needs, recognising that different people struggle with different things and not just assuming that they're being difficult/lazy
- It's important that teachers demonstrate human empathy and work cooperatively with pupils (e.g. by gentle positive feedback and encouragement rather than telling people they have to do things)
- When pupils raise issues, staff should liaise with them to find suitable times to talk to them – times that work for the pupil too, not just the staff
- Teachers should respect pupils self-assessments – they should not automatically assume that they know best what a pupil can/can't do

Pupil choice/control/power:

- Pupils should be given more choice about things that affect them (e.g. GCSE options)
- Pupils should not be put under so much pressure that they feel obliged to make choices that they don't want to (like leaving cadets)
- Pupils should be listened to more: it should not be necessary to involve parents to resolve difficulties

Maturity:

- Pupils should be treated as mature young people, not children

Staff-pupil relationships:

- I believe staff should get to know their pupils better, taking an interest in us and what interests us
- Staff should be able to use that personal knowledge to recognise and respond when a pupil does something unexpected or out of character - this can be an important sign that something's wrong that needs addressing

Appendix 12.4: Initial Analysis (Hermione, P2)

Flexibility of thought:

- Staff should not have fixed ideas about pupils – they should remain open to reconstructing their understanding of pupils based on their ever-increasing knowledge of/relationship with pupils

Honesty, integrity and genuineness:

- It's important that staff are genuine when talking to pupils and parents
- Staff should be genuinely interested in pupils welfare, not seeking good grades for their own/school's reputation

Personal responsibility:

- Staff should not try to “pass-off” pupils' poor achievements as poor effort
- They should take greater responsibility for the impact poor classroom management/teaching has on pupils' performance

Fairness and equity:

- All pupils should be treated the same
- The small issues should not be swept under the carpet – they should be treated as important too

Social interaction:

- School should provide more time for pupils to interact socially

Proper assessment of needs:

- Teachers should take time to properly assess why a pupil is not making progress so that they can properly tailor their support – they should not just assume they're lazy (e.g. difficulties with remembering, not application)

Safety:

- School should manage the social environment more carefully so that people do not feel unsafe in it
- Schools should recognise and address the role an age-based hierarchy has on younger pupils' sense of safety

Optimism:

- Schools should recognise that constantly pushing pupils to achieve well in exams has a negative impact for some pupils...
- Schools should not constantly bombard pupils with messages of doom about their future – there is too much focus on exams and how negative pupils' futures will be if they don't do well in them.

Appendix 12.4: Initial Analysis (Hermione, P2)

Teaching for understanding rather than recall:

- It's more important to understand a small number of things well than a large number of things badly
- Schools should aim to teach pupils things that they will understand, remember and use for life, not just to get through the exams

Personal wellbeing/happiness:

- It's important that pupils can be happy
- Teachers should not expect 100% every day – pupils have a bad day at the office too. Schools should respect this and be flexible enough to accommodate it.
- Pupils should not be under so much pressure to do well in school/exams that they don't have time for hobbies, social-life and interests – those are important things to keep pupils happy

Appendix 12.5: Initial Analysis (Ron, P3)

Things that seem important to you

Adult dependability:

- When people start a job, they should see it through.
- Staff should keep focusing on issues (once they're raised) until they're resolved instead of forgetting it and moving on to something new (*long-termism*)

Commitment, genuineness, honesty and integrity:

- If people ask for a pupil's opinion, they should be serious about doing something with it – they should have the will to act upon it, even if it's not convenient for them.
- Empathy with our situation is not enough – actions speak louder than words – schools should be prepared to put their money where their mouth is
- If they're not willing to do something with pupil comments/opinions, they shouldn't raise false expectations by asking for them.

Adult availability:

- Staff should not favour academically-able pupils and give them more attention than others
- Staff should be available to all pupils, not just their favourites
- Staff should direct most of their attention to the pupils who are struggling and need it most

Respect, understanding and consideration for others:

- Staff should be equally ready to listen to (and be interested in) what *all* pupils have to say, even the ones that are less academically able – they have something valuable to say too
- Teachers should recognise and respect the fact that less academically-able pupils have their own skills and talents – they might not be the skills teachers admire or try to teach, but they are still valuable and important to those pupils
- Every effort should be made to nurture pupils talents, whatever they are, even if they are not a curriculum priority

Pupil equality:

- Teachers should not privilege some pupils over others. Privileges should be shared out equally among all pupils, not predominantly reserved for their favourites.
- Schools should be fostering pupil equality by trying to teach pupils to common targets/levels rather than setting varying individual levels/targets that serve to widen ability gaps

Privacy:

- Target setting should be a private matter for individual pupils and staff. Publicising them only serves to create a social hierarchy and tensions between pupils
- Staff should be aware of this and seek to eliminate it by removing public targets

Democratic principles/strength in numbers:

- I believe that the larger the number of people who say/want something, the more important it is to listen/do what they want

Appendix 12.5: Initial Analysis (Ron, P3)

Fairness:

- Rewards and recognition should focus on effort rather than achievement

Community spirit:

- People should look out for people who are getting a raw deal and do more to help them.
- Schools should recognise and reward pupils who apply this philosophy

Tolerance of diversity:

- School should do more to promote tolerance of diversity, recognising the good work being done by pupils who practice it themselves
- Pupils who practice tolerance should be more valued and listened to for the balance and broader representation of the pupil population that they can bring – this would be a benefit to the school community

Less emphasis on core subjects:

- I'm not sure I believe that English, maths and science are any more important than other subjects (if they are, schools should be making the link much clearer for pupils)
- Arts and performance subjects should be given greater prominence and/or status in the curriculum
- I believe that achievements in the arts and performance subjects are/should be just as valid and important as achievements in the core subjects or any other academic subject

Control and transparency:

- Pupils should have more power (a greater say) in what schools do and how they do it
- The role and powers of the student engagement team should be clearer and stronger

Less admin/bureaucracy:

- Schools should have more freedom to change admin procedures and record keeping to meet the needs of the pupils

Evidence/judgements based on sound, relevant data:

- Schools should be careful to ensure that there is a real link between data used to assess and categorise pupils and the purpose for which it is being used
- Pupils should not automatically be prevented from taking up one course based on their (poor) performance in another
- Teachers should recognise that pupils can be good at some subjects that they don't think they can be. Differences in course content/focus/teaching methods may have a significant impact on performance. Schools should take that into account when making decisions and be prepared to discuss decisions more openly with pupils

Appendix 12.5: Initial Analysis (Ron, P3)

Self-esteem/targets:

- Target-setting is not good, especially when targets are public. It has a negative impact on self-esteem, especially when they are made public and pupils can compare themselves.
- Schools should focus less on targets and more on meeting pupil needs
- Target-setting creates categories and hierarchies that create tensions and divisions between pupils

Appendix 12.5: Initial Analysis (Ron, P3)

Appendix 12.6: Examples of transcriptions (Harry, P1)

P1 I1: 063	Linda	And you're feeling like you're not getting the support that...	...the actions of some pupils have negative implications for others – pupils are not in this together
P1 I1: 064	Harry	<u>Like the good ones are leaving</u> thinking we're getting left out	
P1 I1: 065	Linda	Is that how you feel? That you're getting left out?	Teachers respond to those diffs inequitably
P1 I1: 066	Harry	Yeah. Cos she's put her attention to the naughty ones.	
P1 I1: 067	Harry	And if one of the good ones ... they're like stuck and we put our hand up she's still speaking to the ... <u>naughty ones</u> and <u>we're just like that all the time.</u>	The actions of some pupils have negative implications for others – pupils are not in this together This alienates pupils from one another
P1 I1: 068	Harry	So why do you think that's happening then?	
P1 I1: 069	Linda	I think cos the naughty ones are try // getting her attention.	
P1 I1: 070	Harry	OK. And how does that make you feel?	
P1 I1: 071	Linda	A bit mad.	
P1 I1: 072	Harry	Cos like I've finished my work and ... I wanna go on the next task but I can't go on the next task 'til she's finished with the naughty ones.	
P1 I1: 073	Harry	OK. So the fact that everybody else that's being naughty around you is getting her attention is stopping <u>you</u> from <u>Yeah</u>	
P1 I1: 074	Linda	<u>doing your next piece of work.</u>	
P1 I1: 075	Harry	<u>Yeah.</u> Yeah. And the good one's next piece of work.	
P1 I1: 076	Linda	OK. So what do you think the teacher thinks is important there then?	
P1 I1: 077	Harry	Why might she be going to those ... those pupils instead of you?	
P1 I1: 078	Linda	Err, try // I think she's going to the naughty ones to tell them, like, " pack it in. Harry needs his next task but I'm coming to you to tell // sorting you out and he's gonna be sat there, bored".	
P1 I1: 079	Harry	OK. So tell me then, what is it that's happening? How are you making the distinction then between the good people and the naughty people in your class?	
P1 I1: 080	Linda		

Appendix 12.6: Examples of transcriptions (Harry, P1)

Appendix 12.7: Examples of transcriptions (Hermione, P2)

P211: 068	Linda	So what are your aspirations in life then?	
P211: 069	Hermione	Well I'd like to go to // get good grades, go to college and then university and then be a midwife.	Motivated to get good test/exam results School learning should be relevant to adult life/career aspirations
P211: 070	Linda	OK.	
P211: 071	Hermione	Yeah.	
P211: 072	Linda	That's good. That's good. So getting good grades is important <u>then to be able to</u>	
P211: 073	Hermione	<u>Definitely, yeah.</u>	
P211: 074	Linda	<u>do that.</u>	
P211: 075	Hermione	Especially in obviously the main maths, English, science. But I'm doing <u>good</u> in science. Maths, I don't know if I could get any worse and English, I'm still behind but I'm working my way up. It's, yeah...	Self-assessment of ability
P211: 076	Linda	Ok. So it's not about you don't agree with them about getting good <u>grades</u> ...	Clear about value of test results
P211: 077	Hermione	<u>Yeah.</u>	
P211: 078	Linda	because, actually, <u>fundamentally</u>	
P211: 079	Hermione	<u>I do.</u>	
P211: 080	Linda	<u>you agree with that.</u>	
P211: 081	Hermione	<u>Yeah.</u>	
P211: 082	Linda	It's just about <u>pace</u> .	Schools respond to external pressures rather than pupil needs – pace of learning
P211: 083	Hermione	Hmm <u>hmm</u> .	
P211: 084	Linda	...the pace at which they're moving through things <u>that</u>	
P211: 085	Hermione	<u>Yeah.</u>	
P211: 086	Linda	<u>is just perhaps too much for you. So would // there's a question that comes from that.</u>	
P211: 087	Hermione	Hmm <u>hmm</u> .	

Appendix 12.7: Examples of transcriptions (Hermione, P2)

Appendix 12.8: Examples of transcriptions (Ron, P3)

P3 I1: 081	Ron	When, when, whenever you come into lessons you get appointed bronze, silver or gold based on, er, maths, English and science.	Staff use core subjects to set targets but this may not be accurate/fair – pupils might do less well in core subjects than they can in other subjects
P3 I1: 082	Ron	Now, people who exceed in maths, English and science are gonna get a higher target because they think that they can do as well. Whereas people who don't do so well, and maybe they exceed in that lesson, the other lesson, maybe they're put at a, they're put at a bronze target.	
P3 I1: 083	Ron	And I also think that people that are put at a gold and a bronze target are also a bit, erm... (). There's a bit of tension between them, if you get what I mean. Like they're not exactly ... // It's a bit, oh I don't know how to explain it. So, like, they feel they're not as good as them, because they're not put at the same levels as them. Yeah.	
P3 I1: 084	Linda	Same level. So there's a bit of a hierarchy going on?	Pupils should all be treated equally but targets arbitrarily create diff groups of pupils (a hierarchy). This hierarchy creates tensions between pupils (that shouldn't be allowed to exist) and gives rise to differential teacher perceptions/valuations of pupils NB – labels are "put on you"
P3 I1: 085	Ron	Sort of, yeah.	
P3 I1: 086	Linda	Yeah. So the people that are gold, are better than the people that are silver, who are better than the people that are bronze. But this is just based just on ... maths, English and science?	
P3 I1: 087	Ron	Oh, English, Maths and science target.	
P3 I1: 088	Ron	There's no actual, there's no actual, erm... er, research or any data on the actual lesson that can put you at go, gold, silver or bronze.	
P3 I1: 089	Linda	So this becomes an overriding thing. So you're either, you're either a bronze pupil, a silver pupil or a gold pupil based on your maths, English and science. And that affects what you have access to in	
P3 I1: 090	Ron	Well, not necessarily. Because, even if you're a bronze, you can go for a silver or gold. But I feel it's more like the label	
P3 I1: 091	Linda	Right, OK.	
P3 I1: 092	Ron	that's put on you.	
P3 I1: 093	Linda	So people that are, perhaps, a silver or bronze are undervalued ... relative to the people that are gold?	
P3 I1: 094	Ron	Possibly, yeah.	
P3 I1: 095	Linda	By who?	