'Bucking the trend': exploring schools that exceed expectations

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Declaration

I wish to submit the thesis detailed above in according with the University of Stirling research degree regulations. I declare that the thesis embodies the results of my own research and was composed by me. Where appropriate I have acknowledged the nature and extent of work carried out in collaboration with others included in the thesis.

<div align="right">Tracey Lynn Hughes</div>

Acknowledgements

If you will tell me why the fen
appears impassable, I then
will tell you why I think that I
can get across it if I try.

Marianne Moore, 'I may, I might, I must, 1909

It may be my name on the front of this thesis, but I have not been raised in the wilderness on my own. There are so many people who have helped me become the person I am today; the person who was able to write this thesis. In particular, I would like to offer my eternal gratitude to the following people.

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Abstract

This thesis outlines an exploratory study which was undertaken to gain an understanding of the factors influencing good educational outcomes in areas of disadvantage. This empirical study adopts a mixed methods and staged approach in order to: firstly, identify schools located in areas of disadvantage which achieve better than expected outcomes for their students; and, secondly, conduct case study, ethnographic research in selected schools identified at stage one. The research is framed in the Scottish policy context where a key political aim is to raise attainment, with a particular focus on narrowing the poverty related attainment gap. Furthermore, the wider global and macro context of performativity and accountability procedures are noted, alongside a critique of school effectiveness research and the 'what works' debate.

Next, the theoretical underpinnings of this research study are offered. This theoretical position draws upon the social-ecological model and the work of Pragmatist and Neo-Pragmatist thought, through the work of Mead (1932, 1934a, 1934b, 1938), Dewey (1916, 1938, 1939), and Joas (1996), to highlight the transactional nature of individuals with their environment. Subsequently, a comprehensive review of the themes emerging from academic, policy and theoretical literature are provided. In line with the theoretical position of this study, the ecological nature of schooling and education is a prominent theme.

Subsequently, the innovative mixed method approach of the first stage of the research is discussed, alongside the findings from this first stage. Then, the multiple methods drawn upon in the second stage of the research study (in three case study schools) are outlined, with reference to case study and ethnographic intent (Wolcott, 1987) research, and methods drawing upon the mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2011).

Through these three case studies, the findings detail: young people's agency and their support systems; the value of positive relational and cultural resources; and, the adverse effects of 'what works' approaches and performativity and accountability measures. Key findings which emerge from this research study include: diversity in the understanding of what it is to be successful; the importance of school culture in promoting engagement, providing a sense of belonging and empowering young people, staff and local community; and, the perils of the global phenomenon of performativity for schools which need contextualised solutions to local problems. Possibilities for future research and possible directions to promote individual voices, such as young people

and teachers, in the policy making process are then noted. However, as will be emphasised throughout this thesis, the key takeaway idea is the need to allow for more nuanced understandings of each school's unique ecological context.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research study explores the factors influencing good educational outcomes in areas of disadvantage. More specifically, the study focuses on schools located in areas of socio-economic disadvantage, which achieve better than expected outcomes for their students, and seeks to understand the factors which influence these positive educational outcomes.

Significance

Over one in five children (22%) living in Scotland are officially recognised to be living in poverty, with levels remaining unchanged since 2010/11 (Scottish Government, 2018a). Recent research, in the Scottish context, has highlighted that children born into poverty are twice as likely as other children to face developmental difficulties when they enter formal schooling. This severely damages their future educational achievement and limits their chances of fulfilling their academic potential (Save the Children and Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2014). The latest Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy statistics draw attention to the performance gap between richer and poorer areas that continue to exist across all stages of schooling (Scottish Government, 2016a, 2017a). While the percentage of school leavers in a 'positive follow-up destination' has improved over the past five years, there is still a significant gap between those young people living in the most deprived areas (87.6%) compared to those from the least deprived areas (97%) (Scottish Government, 2017b). This has led to a focus by the Scottish Government on reducing the attainment gap experienced by those living in disadvantaged areas of Scotland.

These statistics illustrate the extent of the attainment gap in Scotland, but, they do not provide the whole picture. Arguably, they hide the complexities and underlying reasons for poverty and low educational attainment. These statistics and related data sets tend to offer a view of patterns of social phenomena. However, they do not provide a multi-faceted and subjective understanding of what life is like for these children and young people living in disadvantage. Therefore, this study has looked beyond the use of solely statistical data, and even mono-method research, adopting a mixed methods approach. Mixed methods offer greater potential for understanding the social world and, in particular for this study, can provide an in-depth analysis of the concepts of socio-economic disadvantage, educational inequality and the Scottish attainment gap.

Contextual background

In 1947 the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland published a report recommending that secondary education be viewed as a lifelong process that celebrated individual excellence and achievement. The report advocated for success to be measured not by attainment in examinations, but by the extent to which the school experience '…has filled the years of youth with security, graciousness and ordered freedom' (Scottish Education Department, 1947: 51, cited in Murphy, 2015: 2). Conversely, in the years prior to the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), the education system was becoming increasingly led by targets, risk-making, and tick-box exercises which was shaped by policy guidance, the Inspectorate and Local Authorities (Murphy, 2015). Murphy (2015) comments that the current [re]turn to examinations and performative measures requires us to turn back to the Advisory Council report of 1947 to remember the focus should not be on examinations, but instead on a broader vision of what education is for. With the introduction of CfE came many distinctive features, including in the areas of: curricular structure; learning; and, the role of teachers (Priestley and Minty, 2013; Priestley and Humes, 2010) and, at first glance, a re-emphasis on the 1947 ideas. Priestley (2013) comments how CfE appears to be original, innovative and radical but, once one has taken into consideration the history of curriculum making in Scotland and worldwide global trends, it may appear to be 'a wolf in sheep's clothing' (Priestley, 2014).   Furthermore, he argues that while CfE, in theory, permits schools to develop content and pedagogy dependent upon the needs of the specific local area, and to provide for the individual needs of learners. It is debatable that, in practice, whether teachers are able to act as 'agents of change' and whether the policy ideal of process-based curriculum model fits in with short-term objectives, outlined by the Scottish Government, which suggest a more outcome-based model (Priestley, 2013).

When reading the pages that follow it is important to consider that individuals act in, and within, embedded cultural settings and understandings – other people, objects, and social meanings – with physical possibilities, normative expectations and institutional arrangements all structuring the situation in which action takes place (McGowan, 1998).   Through the adoption of an assets-based approach, which values the capacities, skills, knowledge and connections of individuals and communities, this research project explores how young people adopt situated creativity (Joas, 1996) in order to review and revise their possibilities and strategies, in relation to an emergent event (Mead, 1932). In addition, I seek to highlight the complexity, and transformative nature, of interactions between individuals, institutional structures, socio-

economic conditions, and social and cultural norms, which manifest as emergent events (Mead, 1932, 1938).

Murphy and colleagues (2015) pose questions, which they believe to be important in developing schooling, but also in creating a more democratic society. These are summarised as

- What does an educated school leaver look like?
- How should the education system balance and celebrate the diverse, and complex, needs of individuals with that of the wider needs of the state as a whole?
- Who is responsible for delivering schooling? Who is accountable?
- How do we know if our education system is achieving its purposes (ibid: 47-48)?

These questions are not ones with simple answers, but instead have complex and debated definitions – as should be expected in such a diverse and complex world. However, this thesis goes some way towards providing reminders for those attempting to tackle these questions. The key reminder is to recognise the heterogeneity of society and, in taking steps towards building a more democratic society, the need to celebrate difference and ensure participatory parity (Fraser, 2009).

Research objectives

The overarching aim of this research study is to explore which factors improve educational outcomes for young people. However, the study itself has three purposes: to identify schools that achieve better than expected educational outcomes for their students; to explore the ecologies of selected case study schools in order to understand what helps in these contexts (ecologies being the cultures and structures that shape an individual's context for action, see Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2017); and, to articulate strategies that may be used to develop strategies to improve the experience and attainment of young people. The research questions guiding my study are given below:

1. Are there schools in Scotland which serve disadvantaged communities but achieve better educational outcomes for their students in comparison to similar schools (in terms of socio-economic status)?
2. What are the within-school factors that improve educational outcomes for young people in these schools?

3. What are the out-of-school factors that improve educational outcomes for young people in these schools?

4. What are the implications for those interested in improving the educational outcomes for young people in schools?

Personal narrative

This section locates me as a researcher in order to highlight personal and professional interests in this doctoral study. However, it also brings to the foreground the idea that no research is neutral as all research, and researchers, are armed with biases and lived experiences which influence the research study.

After graduating from my undergraduate degree, I was particularly enamoured with social research and continued on to study for an MSc in Applied Social Research. Subsequently, I joined an international research organisation's graduate scheme and I was thrown in at the deep end with my work on a large-scale longitudinal cohort study of older people living in Ireland. When the opportunity arose, I jumped at the opportunity to join a social research organisation back in my native Scotland. Here, I worked on another longitudinal cohort study, this time following people not until death, but instead from birth.

At this time, I became more aware of the significance of evidence-based policy making, alongside the value of investing in young people to ensure they have the best possible outcomes. I had been toying with the idea of studying for a PhD for a number of years. I was keen to expand my research knowledge base and also push myself outside of my comfort zone. The thought of spending three years dedicated to my very own research project seemed like a blissful paradise, where I could give myself to becoming the best researcher that I could be. At a time of uncertainty at my place of employment, a PhD studentship became available at the University of Stirling. The precariousness of the labour market pushed me to further my studies, to make myself more employable, while the research proposal itself (co-written by my supervisors) felt like it was written just for me. From the outset, I hoped to use data from the longitudinal study I had previously been working on, but I was most excited about the opportunity to expand my knowledge of qualitative and participatory research methods – something which would push me out of my comfort zone.

The collaborative nature of the studentship, with Education Scotland, also appealed to me as a way to retain a link to the 'real world', and not get caught up in the world of academia. Education Scotland (2013) is committed to supporting high quality research to help inform improvement and practice. Furthermore, they have a successful track record of supporting and actively collaborating in research. Therefore, this studentship would provide me with the opportunity to work alongside those with expertise in curriculum and school development, school inspections, and education research.

Most importantly, the opportunity to conduct research in the area of the attainment gap, one which I had briefly explored through my employment, and to explore the issues from the perspective of young people cemented my desire to apply for this studentship. From this latter angle, I come from a child rights-based approach; I feel young people's views and experiences are often left out of narratives constructed by adults. I wanted to offer young people a space to share their experiences, while providing a reflexive and critical overview with help from theoretical concepts and frameworks.

I am different to many PhD students in that I did not write my original proposal, and this has been something, with which I have struggled throughout my journey. However, I have brought to the study my own experiences, my own beliefs and attitudes, a strong sense of social justice and desire for equality, and my research skills and knowledge base. These have all helped shape this research study into what it stands as today – articulated within this thesis. The themes of subjectivity, contextualisation and celebration of heterogeneity are issues to which I refer to frequently throughout this thesis.

Outline

In this thesis I set out to explore why some schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas achieve better than expected educational outcomes for their students. In doing so, and in this first chapter, I introduce the issue at hand and provide the objectives, significance and professional (and personal) interests for this research study. In the second chapter, I set the scene in order to provide a political and social context to explore the issue of the attainment gap between those from the most disadvantaged and least advantaged neighbourhoods in Scotland.

The third chapter provides a critique of the 'what works' school effectiveness research (SER) movement where I also highlight the significance of this research study in light of these criticisms. From here, the second half of this chapter introduces the theoretical framing for this study. Pragmatism, Neo-pragmatism, and the socio-ecological model are heavily drawn upon throughout this thesis, in order to help gain a better understanding of the complex worlds in which individuals and communities navigate.

The fourth chapter provides a fuller overview of the literature related to the area of the attainment gap. This covers a discussion of the multi-faceted nature of concepts, before moving on to highlight key research findings and academic literature under the sub-headings of: public policy; community; organisational; interpersonal and individual.

The fifth chapter sets out the broad methodological approach of the overall study, and also covers the first stage of the research process; both methodologically and substantively, covering the associated data and findings. This stage has been included separately within a stand-alone chapter – covering what was effectively a discrete phase designed to identify and select participant schools for the main ethnographic study – in order to best capture the complex nature of the methodology and data analysis process. Subsequently, a brief chapter provides background information on the ecologies of the schools participating in this study. An overview of the local community context is offered as a reminder that these schools do not stand alone but operate within much wider systems and spheres of influence. From here, the seventh chapter, discusses the methodology of stage two of this research process and includes: debates surrounding multi-method, case study, and ethnographic intent research; discussion concerning the research tools used in this research; and, an examination of ethical sensitivities and challenges.

The subsequent three chapters – Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten – are the data analysis chapters, which draw out key themes emerging from the data and link back to the conceptual framework of the research study. Chapter Eight considers young people's agency; Chapter Nine explores the prominence of relational resources in supporting young people to achieve good educational outcomes; and, Chapter Ten focuses on the notion of cultural resources and the importance of these for young people, staff, schools, as well as the school communities and wider society. In the final chapter, a summary of the key findings are provided. The thesis is concluded by considering the study as a whole, through reflecting and addressing: the purpose and aims; the limitations; and the implications for both policy and practice.

Chapter 2: Setting the scene

Introduction

This chapter explores the current policy context surrounding educational disadvantage, with a particular focus on efforts to reduce the attainment gap. It begins with an overview of global policy patterns, focusing primarily on the issues of globalisation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), standardised international assessments, the London Challenge and human rights law. A brief summary of pertinent Scottish policies follows, focusing primarily on the political agenda to reduce the attainment gap in Scottish education between those living in the most and least disadvantaged areas, with the latter achieving, on average, significantly lower outcomes. Finally, a commentary on how these agendas and objectives interact and, in some cases, clash, resulting in a complex context in which educational policy, and those within it, are operating is offered. As will be highlighted throughout this work it is important to keep in mind that policy development and the enactments of these policies, at all levels, do not operate in a vacuum.

In addition, this doctoral study is particularly relevant at this time when there is a primary focus from the Scottish Government in narrowing the attainment gap. There are countless policies and initiatives in place to help young people to achieve their potential and this chapter can only skim the surface. As a result, policy areas which connect directly to the research topic of narrowing the attainment gap are highlighted, as well as ones which frame the study and connect to the wider methodological and theoretical discussions and the issues examined from data collection.

Supra level policies

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that globalisation over the past 35 years has set the stage for transnational education systems and globalised education policy discourses. Globalisation refers to the increasing competition between nations in an ever-intertwined international economy where technology and advances in communication aids have joined up thinking at the global level – rather than solely at the local and national levels (Held et al., 1999). This leads to free trade, movement of finance capital, but also an increase in movement of knowledge and labour across states, which is of particular interest to education (International Monetary Fund, 2008).

In this competitive environment, the focus at a national level turns to enhancing education policies in order to further increase a state's global competitiveness (Carnoy, 2016). Lingard and Sellar (2013) refer to this trend as '…convergence…around policy settings and the economisation of education policy' (ibid: 21). Within this economisation teachers become less influential in policy making decisions which ultimately effect them, while those operating on the global stage (for example, the OECD) increasingly influence such decisions. This is despite the OECD being far removed from the ground. Arguably, as a result, teachers become objects of policy in regimes of accountability. This idea is expanded upon throughout this thesis. However, this section will refer to specific policies, at the global level, which have influenced Scottish education in recent years. This is not a comprehensive overview, but instead seeks to highlight particular reports and ideological viewpoints that have had a particular influence.

Globalisation

The Education Reform Act (ERA) 1988 which was introduced in England, led to significant changes in how schools were operated. This large-scale reform introduced the ideas of marketisation, efficiency and performativity into English schools. Indeed, Levin and Fullan (2008) refer to the ERA as '…a watershed event in the international educational reform movement'. The introduction of league tables, the establishment of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted, a government agency responsible for school inspections), and open enrolment and selection led to increasing levels of surveillance and appraisal by the state, based upon techniques from business management (Mac an Ghaill, 1992; Smyth et al., 2000) and was grounded in neoliberal political ideology concerned with the free market (Stevenson and Woods, 2013).

Priestley (2002) argues that while there have been general trends at the global education level, there has also been considerable heterogeneity with regards to 'glocalisation'. This refers to how societies retain their cultural traditions, while accepting the role of global trends – and he further advocates for globalisation not to be seen as a homogenising force. Appadurai (1996), along similar lines, suggests that 'vernacular globalisation' allows for the cultural and political context of a community to be retained while globalising flows become contextualised within these systems. In other words, it is: '…the ways in which local sites and their histories, cultures, politics and pedagogies mediate to greater or lesser extents the effects of top-down globalization' (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 65).

However, Carnoy (2016) argues that while societies retain their control over policies, they are driven to conform in order to meet specified markers of what constitutes a well-functioning and successful nation. This has led to educationalists becoming '…the objects of policy' within accountability regimes, where the focus is on the economisation of education policy (Lingard and Sellar, 2013). This is intensified by the range of international organisations, such as the OECD, which inform governments as to what the issues are which need to be addressed in their society and the most effective policy solutions (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Some argue that such organisations do not always have the highest quality or most rigorously tested ideas but are successful because of promotional strategies adopted by the 'experts' backing them (Verger, 2012). Others comment that the suggested solutions are often made to align with so-called international 'good practice' which sways policy makers towards their proposals (Edwards, 2013).

OECD

In 2006, the OECD was asked by the then Scottish Executive to investigate the performance of the Scottish school system. The report published by the OECD examiners, after their visit to Scotland, notes many strengths of the Scottish education system. However, the OECD also noted that a significant weakness of the system was the poverty-related achievement gap.

> One major challenge facing Scottish schools is to reduce the achievement gap that opens up about Primary 5 and continues to widen throughout the junior secondary years (S1 to S4). Children from poorer communities and low socio-economic status homes are more likely than others to under-achieve, while the gap associated with poverty and deprivation in local government areas appears to be very wide.
>
> (OECD, 2007: 15).

The OECD further commented in the report on the need for a broader curriculum which engaged and enabled participation in upper secondary education. For example, they noted a lack of a coherent vocational education and training system embedded within the comprehensive system. In addition, inequalities in staying-on at school rates, participation in different academic levels of national qualifications, and the pass rates within these courses were also listed as concerns.

In order to tackle the poverty related gap, the OECD review suggested five strategies:
- National priorities funding through local government compacts
- Greater school autonomy in a local government framework
- A comprehensive, structured, and accessible curriculum

- Continuous review of curriculum and teaching

- Monitoring of student destinations (ibid: 18).

Raffe (2008) offers a comprehensive critical analysis of the 2007 OECD report commenting: 'The review team appears to see curricular reform, especially in secondary schools, as the magic bullet which will abolish social inequalities' (ibid: 27). Riddell (2009) argues that the OECD report suggests 'redistribution' in closing the gap, but delimits the value of 'recognition' and 'representation'. By this, she means the OECD calls for socio-economic changes to be enacted in order to alleviate the attainment gap. However, they negate to mention the role of cultural and societal perceptions and beliefs (stereotypes, biases and stigma) within education, as well as the need for equity in participation. Riddell's critique is concerned with those learners with additional support needs and how their experiences are determined by professionals with minimal progress made in promoting rights-based discourses. However, similarities can be drawn concerning those living in socio-economic disadvantage who many regard as continually have policy done to them rather than with them (Lister, 2002; Beresford, 2016).

In 2015, the OECD published a report on the development of Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland and the emergent effects seen in quality and equity in Scottish schooling. This report acknowledged an upward trend with regards to attainment and positive destination, but a sharp fall in young people reporting liking school or feeling a sense of belonging to school (OECD 2015). In order to continue to tackle the attainment gap, the OECD recommended that education authorities:

- Be rigorous about the gaps to be closed and pursue relentlessly 'closing the gap' and 'raising the bar' simultaneously;

- Ensure a consolidated and evidence-informed strategic approach to equity policies

- Develop metrics that do justice to the full range of CfE capacities informing a bold understanding of quality and equity (ibid: 82).

The first bullet point relates to what Fullan (2004, cited in Hess, 2005) identified as raising the bar and closing the gap – in his view the key priorities that should drive change and improvement in education. This involves teachers taking on responsibility to increase the achievement of all, while helping those deemed to be underachieving to achieve 'success'. However, as Hess (2005) argues such a statement is more in line with discourses to increase efficiency, cut costs, and develop accountable states of mind, where educators are left in a

tangle of tensions. In addition, Biesta (2007) wrote that such a research informed approach cannot be relied on for telling us what will work. Research can only tell us what worked in a particular context. As he comments: 'The role of the educational professional in this process is not to translate general rules into particular lines of action. It is rather to use research findings to make one's problem solving more intelligent' (ibid: 20). Finally, with regards to the OECD report published seven years earlier, Raffe (2008) argued that a performance management approach based upon the expansion of testing would be in opposition to the aims of CfE. Therefore, curricular diversity, with breadth and depth of study, varieties in pedagogy, alongside a culture of participation and innovation would become replaced by regimes of accountability, terror and performativity (Lingard, Martino and Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Ball 2000, 2003a).

International student assessments

International student assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) have driven much of the reform discussion (Breakspear, 2012; OECD, 2013; Sahlberg, 2015). These international assessments allow for broad global comparisons which can help provide benchmarks for certain areas for policy makers. However, it can be argued that too much worth can be placed on these assessments in defining educational success (Ozga, 2009; Selwyn, 2016; Lingard, Martino and Rezai-Rashti, 2013).

In 2016, the results of the 2015 PISA tests identified declines in all assessment results (maths, reading and science) for Scotland. Although Scotland was still seen to be performing as 'average' in all these areas, it was the first time since PISA began in 2000 that no subject area was deemed to be 'above average' (Scottish Government, 2016b). John Swinney (Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills), announced upon the publication of these results that the '…data reinforces the case for radical change that the Government is determined to pursue' (Scottish Government, 2016c).

Much criticism has come from academics on how much policy makers often rely upon the PISA results (Mortimore, 2009; Grek, 2009; Goldstein, 2004). For example, in their analysis of the survey data, the OECD tends to adopt ideas suggested by human capital theory (Becker, 1964) which place populations as nothing more than human capital which gives rise to the notion of number of years of schooling as a measure of economic prosperity (Lingard, Sellar and Savage, 2014). This has been criticised for its narrow curricular focus (Tan, 2014). Furthermore, Lingard

and Rawolle (2011) and Ozga (2009) both argue that the OECD uses PISA to frame its neoliberal agenda in pressurising countries to reform their educational systems. It is also argued that the methodology is flawed from the outset in these assessments, as the mode of measuring poverty, alongside the cross-sectional approach, limits understandings of the multi-faceted view of what it means to be living in poverty and also changes in poverty across the life course (Connelly, Sullivan and Jerrim, 2014).

Furthermore, borrowing policy from countries which attain highly on the PISA tests regularly occurs, with Finland often seen as a prime example of an effective and equitable education system (Chung, 2016). However, such policy borrowing is often unsuccessful due to systems being '…embedded within a wider societal, institutional and cultural context that limits the success of transfers' (Turbin, 2001: 96). Adopting policies which attempt to create a society where everyone achieves the same outcomes is not the ideal. Instead, a culture should promote the diversity of outcomes, with these not being attributable to differences in wealth, cultural and social resources, and power (Levin, 1998). Finally, Biesta (2015) argues that adopting narrow views of education, as seen in PISA, can limit perspectives on what education is for, as it focuses on academic attainment in a select number of subject areas.

The next section will begin to explore the notion of policy borrowing with specific reference to The London Challenge. This was a policy initiative enacted in London to raise attainment through providing further support for schools in disadvantaged areas.

The London Challenge

The London Challenge was a programme of support for schools which led to a significant improvement in learner outcomes from 2000 to 2010. The primary aim was to provide all young people in London with a good, or better, education. Despite the high ministerial turnover that took place within this timeframe, the London Challenge is notable in that it attracted continued commitment to the initiative. It is noted that this strength of support and dedication to the project – to ensure it was effective and not just a short-term policy scrapped after two years – is extraordinary (Kidson and Norris, 2014). However, most pertinently, this dedicated approach was deemed a success with secondary schools in London seeing significant improvements in academic attainment, and at faster rates, than schools in the rest of England (Ofsted, 2010). In particular, the Challenge had a focus on evidence-based approaches, collaborative work between schools, developing school leadership, and encouraging evaluation process (IPPR Scotland, 2017).

Furthermore, a critical recommendation of the outcomes of the London Challenge was to ensure lessons learned were applicable to other regions of the United Kingdom. In particular, Ofsted noted: the value of between school partnerships; the use of teachers as effective agents of support who could use their expertise and knowledge to support school improvement; and, the symbiotic nature of school partnerships where '…providing support improves the provider as well as the receiver' (Ofsted, 2010: 8).

In 2015, the First Minister for Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon commented on the relevance and value of the London Challenge for Scotland's own Attainment Challenge:

> It is important we learn not just from good practice here in Scotland, but also from elsewhere in the UK and overseas, to find ways of working that have the greatest impact. I have been particularly impressed with the results of the London Challenge in transforming school performance in that city and so, while not all of it will be appropriate to Scottish circumstances, we will draw heavily on it in developing our own Attainment Challenge.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015)

However, as Wilkins (2015) argues, despite the improvements it is hard to unpick the factors which led to the overall success of the London Challenge. He comments on how improvements were seen across different schools (academics and community schools), ethnic minority groups, a range of local authority areas (which drew upon different models of governance); and that therefore no straightforward answers can be given as to what works. Kidson and Norris (2014) agree and note that within the context of wider policy changes it is hard to untangle what made a difference during this period. Furthermore, Ainscow (2015) offers a critique of the London Challenge by commenting on how Local Authorities were bypassed in order to give schools more power and say in what happened to them. However, he believes such an approach is unmaintainable, with Local Authorities being necessary in developing a sustained approach.

A rights-based approach

The international human rights system declares the state has a duty to protect, respect and fulfil human rights. Human rights are international laws which set a standard of living below which no individual should fall (Office of the High Commissioner, 2018). Therefore, the alleviation, and eradication, of poverty (and the right to education, health and adequate housing) is not just one of aspiration or moral values, but a legally binding standard (Scottish Human Rights Commission,

2015).   In Scotland, human rights are protected by the Human Rights Act 1998 and provisions in the Scotland Act 1998 – incorporating the rights outlined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) was ratified by the UK in 1976. It requires the UK to protect and respect economic, social and cultural rights, including: workplace rights; social security; adequate food, housing, clothing, health, and education; and, participation in cultural life (United Nations, 1966). However, it has not been incorporated into Scottish law, which means the rights do not have the same protection as those outlined in the ECHR (Scottish Human Rights Commission, 2018). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international agreement to protect fundamental rights of all children and young people has also not been incorporated. The UNCRC (United Nations, 1989), again while not specifically referencing the right to not live in poverty, does offer numerous rights which could be breached if a young person was living in poverty (articles 2, 3, 4, 6, 12, 24, 26, 27, 31). In addition, the UNCRC was ratified in the UK in 1991. However, as with the ICESCR, it has not been incorporated into Scottish domestic law which means courts of law do not legally have to follow it (Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, 2018). However, there are policies at the national level which adopt the values found in the UNCRC, such as: the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; and, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

Directly related to education, both the ECHR (Article 2) and the UNCRC (Article 28) asserts that every child should have the right to an education. More specifically, the right of a child to be educated in order to develop to their fullest potential is enshrined in Article 29. This commitment was directly incorporated into Scots law through the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 as result it has led to the following being implemented into policy guidance:

> …it shall be the duty of the authority to secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2017c: 16).

Macro level policies

The above sections provide an overview of supra level, transnational discourses and significant initiatives that shape macro level national policy in Scotland. I now turn to a discussion of the key macro level policies that relate to my study. At the Scottish level, there has been much change in education policy in recent years. These range from the introduction of CfE, to a commitment to reducing child poverty, alongside a pledge to lower the poverty related attainment gap, and the introduction of GIRFEC. I will discuss the rights of the child in the Scottish context, CfE, the Raising Attainment for All (RAfA) programme and within this the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC).

The rights of the child

The launch of the Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland, in 2011, sought to reduce levels of child poverty, but also improve children's well-being and life chances (Scottish Government, 2011). The strategy is reviewed and revised every three years, with the current strategy published in March 2018 (Scottish Government, 2018h). This strategy looks at how the structural inequalities of society can be changed in order to reduce poverty. A report by Naomi Eisenstadt, as Independent Advisor to the Scottish Government on poverty and inequality, commented that while there had been decreases in the relative poverty rate (14% for children and young people in 2013/14), the figures of relative poverty after housing costs (the headline measure of poverty at UK level is before housing costs) rose (Eisenstadt, 2016).

While the Scottish Government has taken steps to introduce anti-poverty strategies, focused around welfare reform, these appear to protect those already in poverty, and prevent them from experiencing a greater depth of poverty (Eisenstadt, 2016). However, as set out in the Fairer Scotland Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2016d), the Scottish Government is in the process of establishing a Poverty and Inequality Commission. This Commission will offer independent advice, and both challenge and be held accountable to the Scottish government. In particular, the Commission will have a strong preliminary focus on child poverty and will be involved in the provision of advice to the Government during the development of the first delivery plan for the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act (Scottish Government, 2017d, 2017e). This Act, introduced by the Scottish Government, in December 2017, sets statutory targets in order to reduce the number of children living in poverty by 2030, and includes a framework to aid the monitoring of progress at both national and local levels (Scottish Parliament, 2017). Such an approach does seek to be implemented in a way which incorporates and complements the rights for young people listed in the UNCRC (Scottish Government, 2017e). Similarly, the Children and

Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places duties on Ministers to keep under consideration steps which would further children's and young people's rights (Scottish Parliament, 2014).

Furthermore, a report on the implementation of the UNCRC in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2007), highlighted steps to be taken to recognise wider achievements – and move away from a focus on Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) tariff score data[1]. This would consist of a move away from an emphasis on traditional curriculum and celebrating successes in, for example, individual units and qualifications achieved through volunteering opportunities. Such a focus would also provide young people with more vocational opportunities and personalised approaches – an attempt which was made with the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).   This report was published in 2007, and eleven years later there have been significant steps made towards these recommendations, but arguably much more could be done.

Curriculum for Excellence

CfE was introduced as the new national curriculum in Scottish schools from August 2010. This new curriculum framework not only gives schools greater scope to develop their own curriculum suited to the needs of their students, but also encourages active and interdisciplinary learning. In the curriculum, four capacities have been identified to being key to preparing young people for adult life, these are: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors (Scottish Executive, 2004). Telfer (2011) writes that Curriculum for Excellence has moved away from knowledge as a gold standard, to celebrating skills and wider achievement. Thus, a broader understanding of attainment and achievement has been developed which recognises the need to provide more choices and chances for young people in Scotland – an aim that was outlined in the Scottish Executive implementation report of the UNCRC in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2007)

A competence-based curriculum like CfE is partially qualified in the ideas of Kelly (1999), who is an advocate for frameworks which develop an individual, with Kelly arguing that the purposes of education should not be seen as a means to an end. In Scotland, a competence-based curriculum was promoted by the Inspectorate. In particular, HMIe (2009) commented that while inspection evidence showed a strong education system, there was a need to develop the full

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[1] SCQF data allows for comparison of a range of Scottish qualifications. In 2007, it was used for academic exam attainment at school. However, it now covers wider achievements including National Qualifications units that are not part of full courses – or achieved through FE or work-related qualifications.

skills and attributes that underpin the four capacities '…in order to equip our young people to meet the challenges of the future' (ibid: 3).

Priestley and Minty (2013) comment that the adoption of concepts, and the structuring of education around key competencies, is part of a global trend in lining education goals up with economic aims. This trend is influenced by multinational organisations, such as the OECD (2005) and the European Union. Biesta and Priestley (2013) provide a comprehensive overview of the growing prominence of competency-based education and highlight the conflict in adopting such an approach. They note education systems focusing on competencies and capacities can result in: tick-box exercises instead of ensuring a holistic understanding of issues and ensuring good teaching practices; discussion regarding whether competence translates to performance; teaching young people how to act in concrete situations, but not allowing for transferability of skills; and, it risks individualisation with the promotion of set capacities (which turns education into an instrument of adaptation). Furthermore, Priestley and Humes (2010) note how the adoption of a competency-based education was aspirational, but '…later developments in CfE have constrained this aspiration, potentially reducing the freedom and creativity of teachers and learners, and rendering classrooms predictable, limited and uncreative' (ibid: 359). Such developments have included the introduction of a long list of Experience and Outcomes which gives 'step-by-step' information to teachers – and limits agency – and leads to '…a hybridisation of different, incompatible curriculum planning models' (Biesta and Priestley, 2013: 38).

Raising Attainment for All
In June 2014, the Scottish Government launched the Raising Attainment for All Programme. The aim of this programme is to encourage and foster improvement, and equity, in both attainment and achievement through collaboration among those invested in the educational system (Scottish Government, 2018b). Across Scotland, 24 Local Authorities and over 180 schools committed to being part of this learning community, with schools identifying their own individual areas for action, such as: literacy; numeracy; parental involvement; teaching quality; home learning; nurture; resilience and emotional well-being; and leadership (Scottish Government 2018c). The infographic (Appendix A) on Closing the Gap highlights the reasoning behind the Scottish Government's desire to reduce the link between attainment and deprivation, while connecting the programme within wider policies, and the steps being taken to support the narrowing of the attainment gap.

The programme has four stretch aims with two focused on proving attainment in literacy and numeracy at key stages (at the end of primary school and the senior phase of secondary school); a third centred on ensuring 95% of young people within each school achieve a positive destination upon leaving school; and, the final aim committed to providing leadership for improvement across the Raising Attainment for All Programme (Scottish Government 2018d).

The roots of this policy programme can be traced back to the OECD report published in 2007, where the poverty related attainment gap was first reported (OECD, 2007). Furthermore, the growing prominence of the PISA tests, and the subsequent results, have heavily influenced the stretch aims. The focus on the areas of literacy and numeracy, seen in PISA was also found in the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN). This was an annual sample survey monitoring performance in literacy and numeracy for primary school students in Primary 4 and 7 and those in S2 at secondary school. In the preceding years before it was discontinued, the SSLN results highlighted declining numbers of students achieving the expected CfE level relevant to their stage (Scottish Government, 2016a, 2017a).

The Scottish Attainment Challenge

The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) was launched in February 2015 and aims to achieve equity in educational outcomes – with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The programme was introduced to bring a sense of urgency and priority to this issue and is underpinned by the National Improvement Framework (NIF), GIRFEC, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), Teaching Scotland's Future and CfE (Education Scotland, 2018a). It is a targeted initiative, to help support students in the areas of Scotland with the highest concentrations of social deprivation. This made £750 million available to aid improvements in literacy, numeracy and health and well-being at the primary school level. However, in 2017, this programme was extended to support 133 secondary schools across Scotland (Scottish Government, 2018e).

In addition, all schools across Scotland have access to:
- An Attainment Challenge Innovation Fund (funding for creative and innovative projects at the school and Local Authority level)
- Attainment Advisors (fostering collaborative working with Education Scotland, the Scottish Government and Local Authorities)
- A National Improvement Hub (online resource highlighting how best to improve practice and increase equitable opportunities for young people)

Much of the SAC builds on a range of initiatives that were already in place to raise attainment and reduce inequality for children and young people in Scotland. An evaluation has been conducted of the Attainment Scotland Fund to assess the extent to which the aims of the fund have been met (Scottish Government, 2018f). The report comments how the SAC adopts an evidence-based approach to practice with the Attainment Advisors and National Improvement Hub both being resources schools and Local Authorities can draw upon to share ideas and successful interventions. Most prominently, both Local Authorities and Attainment Advisors commented on the perceived lack of clarity regarding the rationale for the Advisor's role (Scottish Government, 2018f).

Delivering excellence and equity in Scottish education

As previously discussed, the OECD (OECD, 2007, 2015) was influential in the introduction of many of the poverty related attainment gap policy initiatives, including the NIF. This initiative was designed to help achieve the aims of excellence and equity in Scottish education – no matter a young person's background, circumstances or additional needs (Scottish Government, 2016e). In order to do so the Scottish Government has set out six key drivers (see Figure 2.1) in their Delivery Plan: school leadership; teacher professionalism; parental engagement; assessment of children's progress; school improvement; and, performance information (Scottish Government, 2016f).
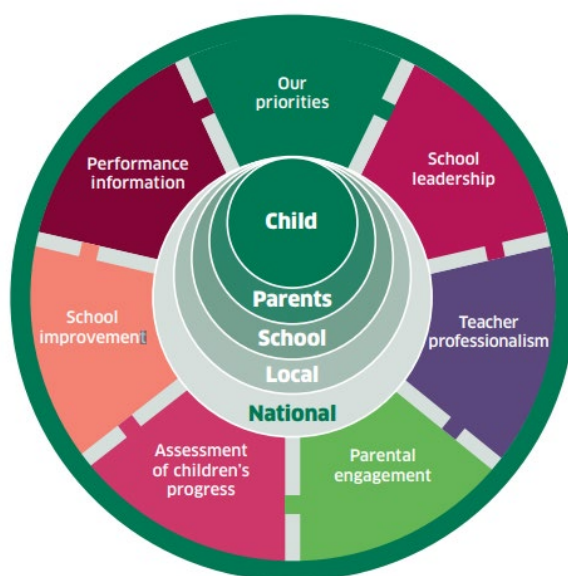
Figure 2.1 - Drivers of improvement in achieving excellent and equity (Scottish Government, 2016f: 3)

A significant element of the NIF was the introduction of standardised tests from August 2017. These assessments are in literacy and numeracy and conducted at the end of P1, P4, P7 and S3 to ensure young people are achieving the relevant CfE level for their stage (Education Scotland, 2016). However, it can be argued that the introduction of such assessment systems is in direct contrast to the recommendations of the OECD who suggested a broad range of measures to be used in evidencing improvements in the Scottish education system (see also OECD, 2013). Critics argue that standardised and data driven tests lead to facts and techniques being handed to students, rather than young people being offered opportunities to explore and experience the world (Ball, 2003b, 2008; Barker, 2010; Lingard, 2011).

Pupil Equity Fund

In December 2016, it was announced that as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Programme, 2017-18, the Scottish Government would allocate additional funding directly to schools to use at their discretion (in order to reduce the attainment gap) (Scottish Government, 2016g). The £120 million fund benefits all local authority areas with 95% of schools across Scotland being allocated funding for children and young people in Primary one to third year of secondary school (with allocations based on the numbers of students eligible and registered for free school meals) (Scottish Government, 2018e). The funding is supported by 'An Interventions for Equity' framework which has been designed in order to support headteachers make informed decisions regarding how best to select appropriate interventions and approaches for their school (Education Scotland, 2018c). This allows for the promotion, and replication, of practices and interventions that appear to be working to reduce the gap in other schools. However, this can lead to generalised standardised practices, while restricting headteachers creativity to develop strategies which work in their localised contexts (Chapman and Muijs, 2014). In addition, relying on what has appeared to work, may diminish educational practice to a technical process, rather than one based on moral values (Biesta, 2007; see Chapter Three for further discussion on the 'what works' debate).

This targeted funding strategy was borrowed from England, where the Government launched the Pupil Premium in 2011. The initial evaluation of the programme remarked that funds were being used to support activities at the micro school level which would not otherwise have been possible (Carpenter et al., 2013). In addition, The Sutton Trust (2015) acknowledged their support for the continuation of Pupil Premium funding and commented on how such funding is '…a key lever to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils' (ibid: 3). However, they note that such success can only be sustained, and is dependent upon, the extent to which the funding is

spent effectively. Therefore, they advocate for collborative working across the multiple levels of society, from policy makers, to Local Authorities, to schools (The Sutton Trust, 2015). As a result, it can be argued that the Scottish Government has taken appropriate steps to maximise cost-effectiveness in the provision of the attainment advisors and National Improvement Hub.

In more recent times, there have been further policy and political developments which will affect the delivery of the SAC. In particular, I will now give an overview of the Education (Scotland) Bill and highlight the developments this has for education in Scotland.

Education (Scotland)

In the Autumn of 2017 a consultation on the Education (Scotland) Bill was published. This proposed legislation aims to:

- Give greater power to schools to make decisions regarding curriculum, improvement and funding
- Give greater power to headteachers enabling them to choose school staff and management structures
- Set up new regional improvement collaboratives which will provide streamlined and strengthened support for teachers
- Build upon engagement strategies with young people and parents (Scottish Government, 2017f).

This radical reform is seen as an adoption of a more child-focused approach where the student is placed at the heart of the school system with all those interested in the learning and development of young people have an opportunity to contribute to the education system (Scottish Government, 2017f). However, while the Bill does propose greater engagement with young people, there is a reliance on 'adults' in positions of 'power', such as headteachers who are afforded to make the ultimate decision. This raises questions surrounding teacher agency, manageability of workloads, but also the agency of children and young people which is often neglected. Many of these issues will be discussed later in this thesis, particularly in the findings chapters (Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten).

Summary

This chapter has set out the contextual and policy landscape of Scottish education, with a particular focus on policies affecting young people's life worlds. Both international and national

policies have been accounted for in order to highlight how actions at all levels of society bear down on young people's lives. This discussion has provided an account of the landscape in which young people are acting and living in and helps us to develop an understanding of where young people are situated as they negotiate decision-making.

In particular, the policies and initiatives discussed in this chapter have highlighted the key policy drivers in the current Scottish education context, with regards to the Poverty Related Attainment Gap (PRAG). At present, Education Scotland believe reducing child poverty, embedding CfE, promoting GIRFEC and delivering on more equitable outcomes for young people are seen to be the key policy drivers (Education Scotland, 2018d). Furthermore, the Scottish Government, in their NIF Delivery Plan, specify key drivers for improvement in helping to achieve the aims of delivering excellence, but also equity (as seen in Figure 2.1). These areas for improvement are: school leadership; teacher professionalism; parental engagement; assessment of child's progress; school improvement; and performance information. These drivers are discussed throughout the thesis as these are themes which recurred time and time again across the data.   In particular, Chapters Three and Four cover these areas from a literature review standpoint.

These key policy areas, both at the PRAG and NIF levels, highlight the timeliness of this research due to the significance placed on this social issue. However, it also illustrates the variable context in which this research takes place. Social research cannot take place in a sealed policy bubble; therefore, the ever-changing policy context is important to bear in mind.   For example, schools were removed from the initial sample, discussed in Chapter Five, due to targeted PRAG funding to improve outcomes in these schools. It was considered that to conduct research in these schools would be atypical – and such targeted funding had the potential to bias the data.

Furthermore, as suggested earlier in the chapter with regards to increasing levels of globalisation, the question of 'where does policy interpretation and re-interpretation end?' can be posed. Top-down reform leads to the recontextualisation of policies at each stage of implementation (Apple, 2004; further discussion of this can be found in the section on public policy located in Chapter Four) and results in educational goals being dictated to educators and young people, for whom education is supposed to be (Barker, 2010). Thus, this raises questions surrounding the performance management of policies and the achievement of agency for all individuals. These themes will be discussed in the following Chapter, which explores school effectiveness strategies within the wider concept of performativity.

Yates (2013) comments that educational systems have a dual purpose of: teaching young people to act in certain ways; and, to select and sort them. At the international level, policies are seen to be influenced by neoliberalism, audit culture and governance and ultimately make communities subordinate – rather than superordinate (Labonte, 1999; Lingard, Sellar and Savage, 2014). By examining the policies set out in this chapter it can be argued that the Scottish Government is introducing initiatives to challenge, and overthrow, this view. However, it is questionable how far this can, and will change, when ultimately such views are deeply embedded in society and the institutions that form the system, such as Local Authorities.

Mead (1929) observed that 'to be interested in the public good we must be disinterested, that is, not interested in goods in which our personal selves are wrapped up' (ibid: 392). In other words, turning to Dewey (1916) we need to consider more than our individual desires and interests and focus on a common commitment that benefits the larger system – through permitting all individuals to participate in decisions that determine their fate. An example of this is Fraser (2009) calling for a just society where there is parity of participation in which young people are able to vocalise what they need in order to strive (Lingard and Keddie, 2013). These ideas put forward by Mead (1929), Dewey (1916) and Fraser (2009) will be explored further in the following chapter, where the concept of performativity in education is examined. This is interwoven with a discussion of the school effectiveness research agenda, before the introduction of the overarching theoretical ideas that frame this research study.

Chapter 3: So, what works?

Introduction

> The child can become a doctor or an artist but he cannot become everything at the same time, nor is his future path set at conception. The child exists, and there are certain basic laws of nature to which that fact corresponds. But his future is not predetermined; probability still has a role to play in this child's life.
>
> (Prigogine, 1980: 8)

The previous chapter outlined the policy context, in which schools in Scotland operate. This illustrated the extent to which schools are becoming increasingly guided by a top down structure at the supra level, as globalisation and neoliberalism strongly shape local policies. In this brief chapter, the idea of SER and broader work within the area of school improvement are introduced, both of which have been prominent within education research for a number of years. An overview of key ideas of thought within SER and the central critiques of such an ideology are provided. Then, the research study will be situated within the SER agenda and the Scottish political context in order to highlight the importance, and value, of such a study. Throughout these sections the theoretical and conceptual ideas behind this study will begin to be woven in, drawing upon the social-ecological model and the ideas of Mead (1932) and Joas (1996). From here, the value of these theoretical underpinnings will be highlighted alongside how they will be adopted within this study.

School effectiveness and school improvement

SER is used to describe research concerned with exploring differences within and between schools. The principal aim of such research is to gather knowledge to explore the links between explanatory and outcome factors, using appropriate statistical models (Goldstein, 1997). SER researchers aim to seek solutions to complex problems. For example, Hattie (2012) published a meta-analysis of 50,000 research studies and produced 'Visible Learning' – a database tool which can be used as an evidence base into what actually appears to be working best in schools to improve learning[2]. However, Hattie's work has been heavily critiqued for its flawed methodology (Bergeron, 2017), while others have criticised SER for not accounting for weak evidence and flaws

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[2] For further information, see: https://visible-learning.org/

in the research process (See, 2017). Therefore, a narrow understanding of what education is for is nurtured – and over-emphasis is placed on assessment and test scores (Gorard, 2013a) – and, schools are conceptualised as discrete non-interacting entities (Goldstein and Woodhouse, 2000; Brown, Duffield and Riddell, 1995) while the ails of society are ascribed to the failing of education and those working within the system (Hamilton, 1996).

Recent research findings from SER tend to place an emphasis on strong leadership at the school level (Harris and Chapman, 2002) and on the value of collaborative working (Chapman and Muijs, 2014; Chapman and Allen, 2006). Chapman and Muijs (2014) note that successful pedagogical practices needed to be developed, promoted and replicated, in order to generate standardised practices. However, at odds with this idea of mass replication and standardisation, they further comment that this needs to be done in a setting which empowers staff and aids the development of improvement strategies which match individual contexts.   In addition, Chapman (2015) continues to highlight the need for collaborative and joined up working: within school, between schools, and outside of schools between external agencies. He does this, while commenting on the need for an overhaul of policy beyond the education system in order to level the inequalities in society, therefore, highlighting how little can be achieved when researchers adopt the narrow focus of SER.

Fetishising performativity within a politics of blame

Twenty years ago, Slee and Weiner (1998) wrote that SER 'bleaches context from its analytical frame' and takes for granted assumptions about the purposes of schooling and what counts as an effective education (ibid: 5). In the same book, Lingard, Ladwig and Luke (1998) refer to this as an extension of a culture of performativity within a discourse of managerialism.

Ball (2003) defines performativity as:

> …a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of quality, or 'moments of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or

represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement.

Menter and Hulme (2013) augment this explanation by noting how managerialism is depicted as an enhancement of teacher's professionalism. However, the reality is often increased measures of control and reduced levels of agency. Curriculum becomes something to be delivered by teachers, with success defined by the exam results of the students that they have taught. Menter and Hulme further comment that these performative measures reduce the ability of school staff to respond to the local needs of their schools and the individualised needs of students. Moreover, Dadds (1994) argues that children and young people, as the students, become the subject of curriculum aims.

In line with the earlier questions surrounding the purposes and role of schooling and education, put forward by Murphy and colleagues (2015) in Chapter One, Lyotard argues that education should not be simply for the award of grades upon completion of standardised exams, but should provide an all-round understanding of the world for an individual.

> If education must not only provide for the reproduction of skills, but also for their progress, then it follows that the transmission of knowledge should not be limited to the transmission of information, but should include training in all of the procedures that can increase one's ability to connect the fields jealousy guarded from one another by the traditional organisation of knowledge.

(Lyotard, 1984: 52)

Ball (1998) argues SER reduces staff, teachers and school senior management, to skills and competencies. They become depersonalised, with the ecologies and complexity of schools, and wider education systems, negated. SER makes judgements and then forces these 'improvements' upon schooling – referring to what Thrupp (1998) labels a 'politics of blame'. From this position, the poverty related attainment gap becomes 'tamed' in that it narrows and equity appears to increase. However, this does not deal with the wider social inequalities and these remain thrown by the wayside as resources are focused on reductionist notions of how to best improve the lives of those in society. Further discussion surrounding the role of performativity in education, and the effects it has, can be found in Chapter 4, in the section titled 'Policy borrowing, audit culture and intelligent accountability'.

Biesta (2007) develops Dewey's (Dewey and Bentley, 1949) transactional theory of knowing to highlight the flaws and pitfalls of adopting a 'what works' attitude. He explains how education is not a process of 'push and pull' – like medicine where a patient comes in sick and the doctor cures the patient. Instead, it is a complex and open system based on value judgements. Such a view highlights how education, at heart, is a moral practice, and not a business to be managed to find the most cost-effective solutions. He further argues that 'dramatic rehearsal' (envisaging future scenarios in our mind) within the realms of SER can help tell us what may, and has previously been, possible. However, once the contextual knowledge of an environment and the situation in which actions took place is accounted for, it simply tells us what worked – but it cannot tell us what works.

School effectiveness in the wider research literature: situating the study

Problems in education are contextually situated, and therefore require unique responses. Research in education can only show us what worked in a particular situation, but it can never give us the complete answer to solve a particular problem (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). To think otherwise would result in the adoption of a 'technocratic discourse' (Lemke, 1995) where education systems are top-down and hierarchical. This leads to issues of '…how, and by whom, expert knowledge is generated (Auld and Morris, 2014).

The multitude of factors that influence education create '…a lot of noise' (Gorard, 2013a: 80) as researchers and other professionals seek to identify which factors are the most, and least, influential on educational outcomes. An Audit Scotland (2014) report has acknowledged this, in the specifically Scottish context: 'Overall, improving educational attainment is likely to be achieved by bringing together a number of linked initiatives' (ibid: 34). Therefore, the adoption of an 'ecological' approach (Fraser, 2004), for this research in particular, will aid the exploration of the manner in which relationships and social structures (also embedded in time) are understood to both shape and be shaped by young people in their particular context.

In addition, the research will acknowledge the diverse and less than homogenous trajectories of young people. It will seek to embrace the understanding that young people, while drawing upon their own creativity in action situations, are embedded in cultural settings and understandings with physical possibilities, normative expectations and institutional arrangements, all structuring the situation in which their action takes place (McGowan, 1998).

This raises the importance of subjectivity. For example, what may be significant to one young person, may not be significant to another, and in order to best understand what is important and transitional for each individual, the researcher is required to ask him/her about his/her subjective experiences, as these cannot '…simply be 'read backwards' from an adult standpoint' (Neale and Flowerdew, 2003: 196). To dismiss these considerations, their subjective experiences, and exclude their voice from the research, would result in a '…sealed policy bubble which says little about the actual lives of real children' (Holligan et al., 2014:1). Therefore, it is intended for the research design to be inclusive: through the data gathered from the young people leading and influencing the research enquiry, alongside a range of research methods to give children and young people the opportunity to have their voice heard.

Taking into consideration the temporal and cultural dimensions (Neale and Flowerdew, 2003: 192) and embeddedness of social life (Pettigrew, 1990) enables the exploration of '…the shifting interconnectedness of fused strands' (Mancuso and Cleely, 1980, cited in Pettigrew, 1990: 270). Consequently, this research also aims to highlight the role, relevance and influence of future expectations, alongside how individuals are able to construct and 'creatively' 'carry out' actions to become closer to achieving their aspirations (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Joas, 1996).

To expand upon this intention, it is only as a result of action, and as certain means become available to individuals, that they are able to discover and consider goals which had not occurred to them before. 'Thus, means not only specify goals, but they also expand the scope for possible goal-setting' (Joas, 1996: 154). Therefore, future expectations and aspirations can be external to an action, and prescribed (by the individual), but may also emerge as a result of the action (and out with the prescription of the individual), of which can be altered, or discarded (ibid: 155-156). As Elder (1998) argued: 'Individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances' (ibid: 4, cited in Crockett, 2002). These choices, result in non-linear pathways, biographies, or trajectories, which are unpredictable, fluid, individualised and complex (Kitagawa and Encinas, 2014; Miller et al., 2015).

Theoretical underpinnings

I have adopted an ecological understanding of the social world in order to see the school – which is my research site – as organic, and something which is created and re-created by those who inhabit it. This gives the school its own identity and therefore it is not seen as just a black box which ignores the individual students attending it at any given time. This further supports the argument outlined above that childhood is a life stage deserving of attention and respect. Such a view helps to erode the idea that childhood is not just a means to an end but is a stage worthy of attention in itself (Hardman, 1973; Prout and James, 1997). In the adoption of an ecological understanding, I have found similar theoretical models to fit alongside it in order to help me further understand the social world, but also help me analyse the data in which has been gathered for this study. Therefore, I turned to the works of Pragmatists, in the form of Dewey and Mead in order to explain the transactions of the social world. Their work has been complemented by the Neo-Pragmatist, Joas, whose work is primarily influenced by Mead, and the creative opportunities that individuals have when living in their environments.

Social-ecological model

The ecological approach has its foundations in the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) who created this systems theory in order to explore the development of children within the context of a very complex system of relationships that helps to form his/her environment. The systems approach was formerly introduced into the developmental psychology field, but soon the value of the ecological model was found within the areas of family policy (Bronfenbrenner, 1974) and educational practice (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). In more recent times, it has been labelled a bioecological systems theory in which the child's biology is a primary influencer in his/her development (Raffo et al., 2010) and has been widely used in research surrounding the notion of resilience (Howard and Johnson, 2000; Seaman et al., 2005) as well as educational research (Raffo et al., 2010; Engle and Black, 2008; Papadopoulou, 2012; Becker and Luthar, 2002).

However, Bronfenbrenner's approach has been critiqued for the ordering of the layers above the family (above the microsystem); one might question whether all individuals see their system in such a way and in such order (Fraser, 2004; Christensen, 2016). Furthermore, Fraser (2004) argues that placing a school within a system becomes complex when you consider what is a school, whether to include the local authority, how does school relate to neighbourhood and community, and which is subordinate to which. Therefore, Fraser employs a multi-systems approach (rather than the nested circles) which explores individual characteristics, family factors and environmental conditions. In line with Fraser's thinking, and to move away from what appears to be a rigid systems approach, I will refer to each of the layers as (see Figure 3.1): public

policy (macrosystem); community, and organisational (exosystem); interpersonal (microsystem); and, individual (individual/child).
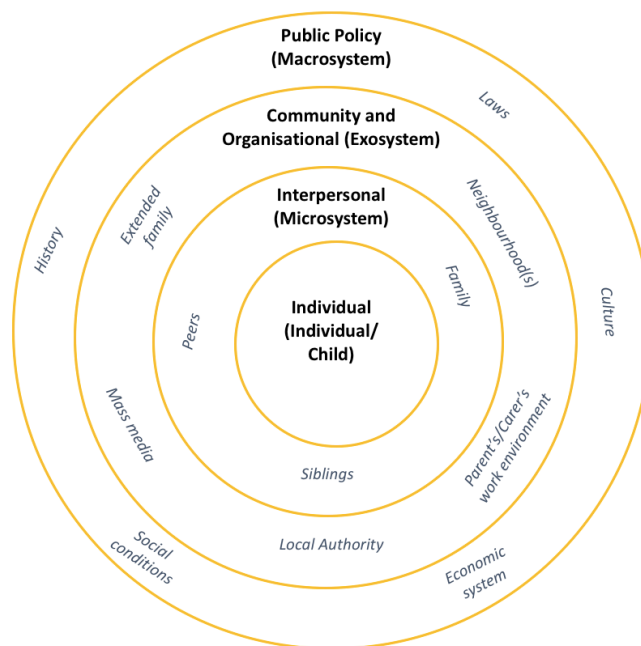
Figure 3.1: The social-ecological model (Adapted from Eisenmann et al., 2008)

Despite the ecological approach having deep-seated roots in the field of development psychology, it also has origins within Sociology. Simmel (1971) proposed that individuals are involved in many different social groups and travel across different spheres of life. Therefore, they are consistently being shaped by the different groups and the spheres they come into contact with; and because of such, it is difficult to view or experience the wholeness of a life, due to existence being so fragmented across groups and spheres. If we step away from an individual, our perspective changes to that of society (and individuals disappear). These are not two separate entities but are the same thing dependent upon distance (Simmel, 1950). Park (1936), of the Chicago School of sociological thought, was influenced by Simmel's (1971) work, and believed that life was a web in which all individuals were bound together in a large interconnected co-dependent system.

Others often refer to the intertwined environment in which individuals operate. For example, McKendrick (2014) acknowledges the importance of the environment in a child's well-being. He notes that while regional, national and even global acts may seem far removed from the everyday reality of an individual, they do bear down on an individual's life (ibid: 297). He developed a conceptual framework of factors contributing to child well-being, which highlights

the importance of context and the situated place of an individual, but also the significance of a child as an 'active agent' in the process (ibid: 296).

Social networks: a transactional approach

> …individuals act by means of their environment, rather than simply in that environment.
>
> (Biesta and Tedder, 2006: 16)

Seaman and colleagues (2005) acknowledge the value of the ecological model, especially when used alongside theories and concepts which highlight the social aspects of society. In line with Biesta's (2014) thinking that 'we are not spectators of a finished universe', but are, instead, participants in an ever-evolving world (ibid: 42), this section will discuss the value of the transactional approach. In doing so, the value of an ecological understanding of the social world, which sees relations between individuals, and levels of society, as dynamic, on-going and never static will be acknowledged (Emirbayer, 1997: 289).

Drawing heavily upon the ideas of Dewey, Biesta and Burbules (2003) further explain the transactional approach. Interactions between individuals and their environment are active. They are constantly being revised, with reality only revealing itself as a result of the activities – the doing actions – which are undertaken by an individual. In other words, reality is experienced (ibid: 10-11). Mead writes in The Philosophy of the Present (1932) that, '…we do bring our immediate hypothetical reconstructions to the test of the accepted past and adjudge them by their agreement with the accepted record; but this accepted past lies in a present and is subject, itself, to possible reconstruction' (ibid: 29-30). In saying this, Mead accepts that individuals in themselves are constructed phenomena which are cultivated through interactions with the world around them, and in which the individual is unstable and continually developing within an intersubjective process.

Within this doctoral study, the individual ranges from a young person attending the school, to young people as a collective, to teachers, to headteachers, to the school as a whole. The environment is the wider society which includes the local community which feeds into the school, as well as the wider Scottish context and wider global setting. Consequently, the interaction consists of how these 'individuals' navigate life within their 'environments' and which leads to emergence (the individual's potential future).

Hattam and Smyth (2015) comment that the traditional focus in educational research is often on habitual, unreflective actions (such as, declaring that there is an issue of social mobility in the UK). This alerts us to specific social issues, but it limits our understanding of action and the capacity of individuals to be creative (McGowan, 1998). For every event or situation has a multitude of possibilities through either: habitual actions; or, endless possibilities conceived within our capacity for creativity in action (Joas, 1996).

Joas (1996), drawing Mead's (1938) theory of emergence, makes creative activity – the improvisational responses of human beings to the concrete situations in which they are implicated – the most basic form of human action (see Figure 3.2). Rationality, intentionality, and various other matters are to be approached in terms of the situated creativity of human beings, rather than such creativity being approached in terms of abstract and, hence, ahistoric conceptions of reason, intention, and a host of other traditional explanatory categories.
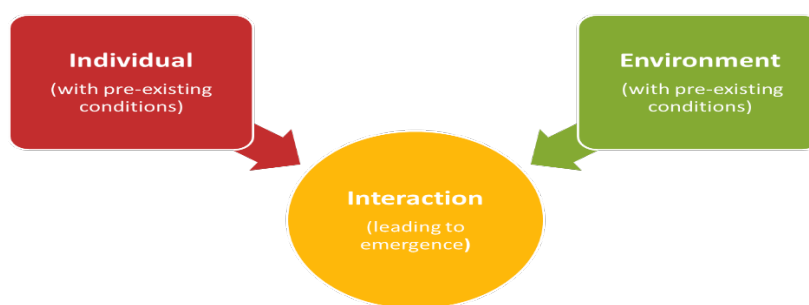
Figure 3.2: Theory of emergence (Chang, 2004)

Human action is frequently caught between acts of creativity in emergent situations and utilising unreflected habitual actions (Joas, 1996). When individuals hit a stumbling block, which calls for a situation to be redefined, and habitual action can no longer be employed, action needs to be undertaken in order to build bridges towards their aims, goals, and desires. Thus, every event or situation has a multitude of possibilities – habitual actions or endless possibilities conceived within our capacity for creativity in action. All individuals have the ability to be creative or to act intelligently based upon prior experiences. However, theories of action and work within the sociology of education all too often focus on the habitual, unreflective actions, limiting our understanding of action and the capacity of individuals to be creative (McGowan, 1998).

Joas's theory of creativity of action is drawn upon in this thesis due to the lack of research which attempts to use it. Campbell (1998) comments that despite this being significant work in the area

of a theory of action, Joas's theory fails to define what is action and creativity – and therefore, no sociologist can be in a position to apply this framework to the real world. However, in line with the pragmatist viewpoint, by which Joas is strongly influenced, I have opted for action and creativity to be defined by those living and acting in society – placing emphasis on the young people's objective reality. As Joas (1980) has commented, values are not objectively given, but are dependent upon subjective evaluation. They are products of interaction and relations.

Ultimately, this way of viewing human action offers me, the researcher, the opportunity to analyse creative acts in emergent situations within the lives of the young people involved in my study – and the potential ways in which this helps to shape their aspirations and potential later life outcomes.

Multiple lenses: a mosaic approach

The utilisation of multiple conceptual and theoretical framings is prominent throughout this thesis. In the following Chapter, where I review the literature surrounding poverty and attainment, further framings and lenses are offered – and are then developed in the data analysis chapters. This mosaic approach to conceptualisation and theory brings together multiple, disparate ideas in order to aid understanding of the social world. School ecologies are complex ecosystems with hierarchies and interrelated levels consisting of students, classrooms, teachers, senior management, schools and Local Authorities (Sharp et al., 2012). These environments require multiple framings in order to capture the complexities of these life worlds – to try and fit such ecologies into one lens would distil the reality.

Such an approach is advocated by Becker (1998) who comments that it is best to see theory as a 'collection of tricks' that allow researchers, faced with research aims and objectives, to make progress (ibid: 4). Becker continues that researchers sometimes need to understand that what they are studying is 'a mishmash of systems' (ibid: 43). If they attempt to separate these tangled webs, this can only lead to dismissal of the interconnected processes within the wider ecology. For, it is important to note: '…all the connections that contribute to the outcome we are interested in, seeing how they affect one another, each creating the conditions in which the others may be able to operate' (ibid: 41). This approach is also similar to the notion of the bricoleur who uses a theory 'to tell them what has happened in a particular situation but must dig, scratch, and analyse from different angles' in order to best understand the situation (Kincheloe, 2005: 330). In doing so, a theoretical bricolage (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) is developed which consists of diverse philosophical and theoretical lenses which supports thick

description alongside multidimensionality, social constructionism and the ever-changing nature of the social world (Kincheloe, 2005: 332).

This 'mosaic approach' is evident throughout this thesis. Mertens (1998) commented that a theoretical framework 'has implications for every decision made in the research process' (ibid: 3), while James (1907) suggests 'the trail of the human serpent is thus over everything' (ibid: 26). When a researcher carries out their study, their choices are preferences which influence every part of the research process (Morgan, 2014). Throughout this thesis I have tried to highlight these decisions, which arise from the desire to retain a sense of the complexity of the social world. More specifically, Chapter Five focuses on the methodology of the research and specifies the steps outlined and approaches utilised in order to retain the messiness and complexities of the school ecology. Furthermore, Chapter Eleven offers a considered response on the strengths and weaknesses of using this mosaic approach.

Summary

As Harris (2012) commented, SER needs to be repositioned in order to foster collaboration and links between practitioners, academics, and policy-makers otherwise all efforts will continue to remain disconnected. In addition, Lingard, Ladwig and Luke (1998) advocate for a new vocabulary in order to reframe and rethink the spotlight situated on outputs and effects. They claim this will require innovative, empirical research which provides insightful counter arguments against accountable measures of test scores and output indicators.   For, as Biesta (2007) states, '…a democratic society is precisely one in which the purpose of education is not given, but is a constant topic for discussion and deliberation' (ibid: 18). Therefore, researchers need to ensure empirical inquiry is used in an effective way to provide intelligent decision-making, and not for reasons of providing the answers.

This chapter has discussed the role of SER in educational research and how such a narrow viewpoint can lead to an insular understanding of experiences. This does not allow for heterogeneity to shine through. I then situated my research study within this context to highlight the unique structure of this research and what sets it apart from other research in a context, which it could be argued is becoming increasingly more focused on targets, performance and accountability. Subsequently, I introduced the theoretical underpinnings of this research study. The social-ecological model provides a basic framework for viewing the world around us – and in

highlighting the complexity of everyday life. The work of Mead and Joas was introduced to augment the social-ecological model in highlighting the importance of interactions (between individuals and other individuals, but also their interactions with their wider environment) and how creative action results from these interactions within an individual's environment.

The next chapter will explore the literature relevant to this research study and begin to highlight key texts within the area of the attainment gap, before situating my study further in order to highlight the value and significance of such work.

Chapter 4: An ecological understanding of young people living in disadvantage and their educational outcomes

Introduction

> There is clear evidence of a persistent attainment gap between pupils from the richest and poorest household in Scotland. This gap starts in pre-school years and continues throughout primary and secondary school. In most cases, it widens as pupils progress through the school years.
>
> <div align="right">(Sosu and Ellis, 2014: 14)</div>

This chapter draws upon the existing knowledge surrounding young people living in disadvantage and their educational outcomes. It explores the extent of research in this area, how the concepts and measures of disadvantage and good educational outcomes are understood, and identifies gaps in the research literature.

Sosu and Ellis (2014) recognise that effective initiatives are often in existence at micro levels of society (at the school level), but due to unsystematic documentation and uncertainty regarding the impact and measurement of such approaches, they often go unregistered. They explain the need for further research to enable educators to better understand educational inequality in relation to disadvantage in Scotland, and to identify effective and efficient initiatives to successfully reduce the 'gap'. However, it is important to be wary of the contextual nature of 'effective and efficient' projects, as was outlined in the previous chapter. For, '…research, in short, can tell you what worked but cannot tell us what works' (Biesta, 2007: 16).

The literature reviewed in this chapter represents work from various disciplines, countries and time periods. Research examples are drawn from Scotland, England, the United States and Australia. It is worth noting that to date much of the research in Scotland has been focused on the analysis of large scale survey data, which has its place and highlights the extent, and trends, of a particular social issue. However, such methods do not readily offer insights as to how these correlations and connections end up being commonplace – and they can exclude the voice of those with direct experience of the poverty related attainment gap, from teachers to students. In addition, there is a large amount of theoretical and empirical literature on the topic of school attainment, which this review cannot comprehensively cover. Therefore, the chapter highlights key themes using the previously identified conceptual frameworks (the social-ecological model and Mead's theory of emergence) as a structure.

In particular, this chapter is structured using the social-ecological model outlined in Chapter Three. This helps to situate the reader in the literature surrounding the attainment gap in Scotland, but it also helps to provide contextual information surrounding why and how practices at micro level come into being. This can be seen through the use of the conceptual framework, the social-ecological model, as the primary headings for the review. Structuring the review in this way permits the reader to note how each level of the social system has unique systems and structures influencing its operation. Furthermore, this structure allows for the theoretical approaches in Chapter Three, Mead's (1938) theory of emergence and Joas's (1996) theory of creative action, to be utilised. The themes which are discussed in this literature review arose through broad reading which was undertaken in the initial stages of my doctoral studies. Many iterations have been written and the final version stands as one which highlights key areas of literature which are then drawn upon in the findings section.

In conducting this literature review, initial search strategies were topic and concept based, utilising terms such as 'attainment', 'poverty' and 'education', using a range of bibliographic resources and library catalogues. After initial searches, and upon commencing data collection, the literature search was narrowed as key themes and ideas became apparent. The chapter is primarily organised following the social-ecological model outlined in Chapter Three. Therefore, this chapter can be categorised under the following headings: multi-faceted nature of concepts, public policy, community, organisational, interpersonal, and the individual. Each of the headings have sub-headings within the section to direct the reader and highlight areas of particular interest. Relevant research studies are given in each section and are discussed in relation to their significance and value, as well as their relevance to this research study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main arguments in this critical literature review and how they have helped to inform and develop this particular study.

The multi-faceted nature of concepts

Researchers do not conduct their research in '…a conceptual vacuum', but in a world that is limitless in its complexity and diversity (Ragin, 1992). This is particularly important to note when looking at understandings of concepts and how they are operationalised in practice. Often, concepts can be over-simplified in order to produce easy-to-use measures. However, this negates the complexity and multifaceted nature of the issues at hand (Blumer, 1954).

Bryman (2012) comments on the predicament that too narrow a definition imparts a straitjacket on a particular idea, whereas permitting a broad definition fails to provide a tangible starting point for our research. Blumer (1954), and others such as Becker (1998), prefer not to impose their definitions on the social world and instead focus on the exploration and understanding to be found in studying social phenomena. Becker argues that concepts often fit, but not precisely and the only way in which to develop concepts is through continuous dialogue with empirical data. This offers concepts which summarise the data, rather than concepts forced on the data (Becker, 1998). Similarly, Dewey, and other pragmatists such as James (1907) and Peirce (1878), agree that, instead of judging ideas, we should take a value-oriented approach to research and consider the empirical, as well as practical, consequences of actions (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), e.g. the effect imposing concepts on phenomena may have.

Bowen refers to the notion of 'sensitizing concepts' which are often viewed as a starting point for qualitative study. He notes that these concepts aid researchers in providing guidelines and boundaries for their research (Bowen, 2008) and further acknowledges that most research commences with such concepts whether or not the researcher has made these explicit. For '…we, as researchers, make sense of the limitless depth of the social world by bounding it with our socially constructed ideas' (Ragin, 1992: 217).

Furthermore, in line with the theoretical approach adopted in this research (outlined in the preceding chapter) it is understood that concepts are not single ontological entities. It is accepted that concepts are understood as dependent upon their situated context in time and place, and in relation to other concepts within its system (Emirbayer, 1997: 300). Thus, knowledge is constructed as a result of individuals/groups transacting with one another (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

Defining educational outcomes

In the policy context chapter, the current definition of attainment, in the Scottish context, was defined. This section will explore the alternative definitions on offer – but also other terms which can be used, including the concept of 'good educational outcomes' used in this research study.

Over twenty years ago, Hillman (1996) wrote that success can be seen in two different ways: it can be measured and used to compare individuals to a benchmark such as examination achievement; or it can be defined by individual potential and progress. However, it is impossible

to reach a consensus on what the key criteria for success is, due not only to the lack of reliable and valid measures, but also because of the variance in what teachers, policy-makers, parents and young people value as 'success' and 'education' (ibid: 114-115). As highlighted by Barker (2010), there are many variables within educational institutions and systems that shape context specific outcomes, thus, 'success is hard to account for and even harder to reproduce' (ibid: 111). In this same vein, Howard and Johnson (2000) comment that this variance should be celebrated, with what young people judge as being successful being valued and recognised. They further comment that due to an emphasis on traditional academic attainment, vocational education and work experience programmes tend to be seen as 'second class' – even though these pathways can provide individuals with a sense of achievement, well-being and future orientation.

Across the research literature, emphasis tends to be placed on positive outcomes, such as defined as attainment in examinations – which can also be seen in the key policy aim of the Scottish Government to narrow the 'attainment gap'. Fergusson, Horwood and Ridder (2005) conducted analysis on the links between IQ and later educational (post-school qualifications and degree attainment) and socio-economic outcomes (unemployment and income). While, Woods, Husbands and Brown (2013) focus on the narrowing of the attainment gap in a school located in a traditional area of socio-economic disadvantage in London.   There are others who argue that educational success promotes upward social mobility due to higher qualifications leading to higher incomes (Boston, 2013) and, educational attainment results in occupational attainment and prestige (Shanahan, Elder and Miech, 1997). This focus on scoring highly in particular tests does not inform us of how successful individuals deem themselves to be nor does it highlight how content and happy they are with their situation.

Biesta (2015) refers to the functions of education as qualification, subjectification, and socialisation. Qualification refers to the skills, knowledge and attributes gained through education, alongside the proxy measure of this as a qualification or accreditation. However, he reasons that 'qualification' does not, and should not, stand alone. The remaining functions of education, 'socialisation' and 'subjectification', are equally important and influential. Socialisation refers to the implicit and explicit, ways in which ideas, beliefs and traditions are passed on to young people, while subjectification refers to how young people come to be and act independently and with responsibility (not as objects or as a result of the actions of others). It is about becoming the individual that one can become. Biesta (2015) continues that to focus on one function would be to the detriment of the remaining two, and he argues that this is what is happening in modern society. The focus on qualification and academic attainment, he argues is

harming the sphere of subjectification, through increased vulnerability of young people in trying to obtain such goals.

In support of this argument for a need for a more well-rounded and multi-faceted view of achievement, recent research has tended to explore other positive outcomes. For example, McKinney and colleagues' (2013) research in schools in Glasgow utilised initial positive leaver destination as their measure of success; Rose and Baird (2013) highlight that focusing on educational attainment does not always lead to later success, due to the vulnerable economy, and in correlating these can lead to a 'broken promise' for our young people. In addition, Reeves (2013) comments that young people need to have the opportunity to control their own learning and have a sense of directorship in order to motivate as well as enable their agency. She argues that young people's goals should be at the forefront, and not those set by them by others – such as 'parroting phrases' given to them in order to pass an exam (ibid: 69). Such a view is in line with a 'becoming approach' (White, 2002; Uprichard, 2008), which appreciates that young people are not future human capital and outputs, but are at a stage deserving of attention and respect.

Chetcuti and Griffiths (2002) draw upon the work of Arendt (1958) to illustrate how no society can live in a state of total equality. They comment that to dream of such would be delusional and to live in such a society would result in a world where every individual is the same, with any individual seeking to deviate from the norm being defined by the difference and nothing else. They further argument by noting that instead of focusing upon success or failure in school examinations, society should consider how diversity can be accounted for and celebrated, and not merely tolerated. Chetchuti and Griffiths (2002) believe that changing the way society views standardised exams and attainment will enable young people to develop their full potential, along with a sense of authentic identity and self. This view is also echoed by Cremin and Thomas (2005), who call for fewer comparisons to be made, as making such judgements will always result in what is deemed to be low achieving and poorly behaving individuals or groups. As with Chetchuti and Griffiths (2002), they argue for an inclusive education system which honours the diversity of its population.

Defining poverty

Poverty is the umbrella term under which a range of sub-concepts can be said to fall. The official United Nations definition (below) summarises poverty in a few sentences and offers a concise understanding of what may cause someone to be in poverty.

...fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, it is a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or a clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, nor having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence and it often implies living on marginal and fragile environments, not having access to clean water and sanitation.

(United Nations, 1998)

However, a key concern is that official definitions do not capture the reality of the day-to-day struggle of living in poverty. The reality of poverty is that it affects many aspects of people's lives and limits people's access to their fundamental rights (Bilchitz, 2008). Forty years ago, Rutter and Madge (1976) commented that there should never be '...one 'right' way of considering the predicament of disadvantaged persons' (ibid: 3). Yet, it is, and always will be, crucial to consider the implications of one's chosen definition on both research and policy (Rutter and Madge, 1976). How can it be possible to describe the dimensions of disadvantage in a single numerical value, query Wedge and Prosser (1973), when disadvantage has a multitude of variables which 'pile one on to another to depress body, spirit, hope and expectation' (ibid: 19)? Poverty is a relative concept, intertwined closely with the social context of time and place (Mortimore and Blackstone, 1982; Lister, 2004).

There is a wide range of published texts surrounding the variety of concepts, and definitions, of disadvantage, deprivation, poverty, income poverty, and well-being. Unfortunately, a full and concise summary and rationalisation of all of these is outwith the scope of this literature review. Therefore, this section will be limited to a discussion of modern understandings of poverty.

Traditionally, poverty has been measured in terms of income, material and social deprivation, and, sometimes, measures of social exclusion. However, in more recent times, poverty has adopted a more multi-dimensional view in in which psychological well-being is also often considered (Waldron, 2010). There are also further measures of poverty which are more subjective (Tomlinson, Walker and Williams, 2008), such as measures which can be found in the Poverty and Social Exclusion survey (Gordon, 2006), as well as those found to be advocated by Amartya Sen.

Sen (1999) suggests we ask the question of what makes a good life. In doing so, it allows us to focus on what matters most to well-being, through understanding the opportunities needed to

live a good life, rather than focusing on an accumulation of particular resources. Sen refers to this way of thinking as the 'capability approach' which focuses not on material wants and good, but more so on people and their subjective needs (Anand, Hunter and Smith, 2005). It is viewed as a strand of welfare economics that focuses on individuals being free from external restraints and their ability to use environmental opportunities in order to best make the life they want to live (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993). However, it is important to refer to the work of Berlin (1969) who refers to positive and negative liberties. Berlin argues 'positive liberties', as advocated by the 'capability approach', enables individuals to take control of their life. However, 'negative liberties' are those which can result from an absence of barriers and constraints, such as violent crimes. Therefore, there should still be 'boundaries' within which liberties operate.

Continuing with the subjective well-being approach, in recent years there has been a call for more specific measures of poverty in relation to young people or child poverty. Ben-Arieh (2007) calls for an appropriate measure of child well-being focused on the activities and experiences of children while they are children. This is in line with Qvortrup's (1994) idea that while looking towards the future is necessary, and therefore it is important to recognise the notion of children as future adults, we should be careful not to exclude the child perspective and experience. More recently, Tisdall and Punch (2012) have commented: 'Focusing on children and young people's perspectives, agency and participation is no longer sufficient; greater emphasis is needed on the intricacies, complexities, tensions, ambiguities and ambivalences of children and young people's lives' (ibid: 259).

In addition, with growing austerity, alongside steps taken to mitigate the risks experienced by austerity policies, there is growing concern over the numbers who are vulnerable to welfare cuts (Haddad, 2012). Austerity is defined as the reduction of government budget deficits, through spending cuts or tax increases, during adverse conditions in order to reduce public expenditure (McKendrick et al., 2016). Austerity in the UK is presented by the centre-right as a 'necessary evil' while the left-of-centre believe it to be 'an ideological assault on the fabric of society' (ibid: 455). Turning to Scotland, the effects of austerity can be seen in 2014-17 with, once housing costs had been taken into consideration, one million people each year deemed to be living in poverty (Scottish Government, 2018a).

Furthermore, much educational research tends to illustrate that many educational trajectories are governed by logics of linearity (and therefore influenced by the surrounding societal structures, such as the cyclical inter-generational nature of poverty and social class). However,

adopting such an approach often hides the heterogeneity of the processes behind the outcomes (Hills, 2015). Through a narrow focus on the reproduction of history, an individual's life stories are often seen to be devoid of action, creation, and resistance (Giroux, 1983). Such approaches not only dismiss the individual motivation or persistence of an individual, for example, the young person's resilience (Aronson 2001) or ability to 'hang in' (Smyth, Down and McInerney, 2010), but also negate the possibility of an 'acceptance' of their situation – a realistic and pragmatic view of what is attainable in light of the resources surrounding them (Walther et al., 2015). In addition, Becker and Luthar (2002) assert that research often focuses on the negative outcomes of disadvantaged youths, instead of uncovering the factors, influences and interventions which enable some young people to achieve good outcomes, as this research study seeks to do. Therefore, in line with a move from the deficit approach of critical sociology to a more assets-based approach, academics should, where possible, consider the opportunities afforded to young people, rather than focusing solely on their current provisions: '…marinating a dual perspective…of well-being and well-becoming' (Ben-Arieh, 2007: 9). This may result in more complex measures of poverty, but through doing so may provide useful insights into debates on cause, effect and experiences of child poverty (Roelen and Gassmann, 2008).

Educational measures of poverty in the UK

In Britain, a commonly used measure of poverty is Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement (Gorard, 2012). This is a statutory benefit available to children and young people from families who receive other qualifying benefits. Beckett and Wrigley (2014) refer to FSM as '…only a crude 'proxy indicator' of poverty/disadvantage', as almost half of all students living in economic hardship are not entitled to FSM. For example, they note lone parents whose career development may be interrupted as a result of parental responsibilities, or those living in areas with a '…lack of opportunity and a sense of hopelessness' who are '…compounded' by their situation, may not be adequately represented by FSM (ibid: 222). Pirrie and Hockings (2012) continue this argument by acknowledging that FSM does not consider inconsistencies in take-up levels, e.g. parents/carers may lack knowledge regarding FSM or may not wish their child to take FSM, as a result of the potential stigma attached to it. However, they have also observed that at the school level, deprivation impacts upon attainment and they continue to use FSM as a proxy for deprivation.

Despite the criticism identified above, several influential studies and publications, in the field of education still draw upon FSM as a proxy indicator for poverty and note its wide usage as a measure of socio-economic conditions of a particular school population (Strand, 2014a, 2014b;

Audit Scotland, 2014; Muschamp et al., 2009). Alternatively, some research studies have opted to combine FSM with other indicators – such as the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and Staged Intervention (entitlement by students to support with their learning) (McKinney et al., 2013). This is in spite of an acknowledgement that there is a significant correlation between FSM and SIMD, e.g. the higher the proportion of FSM in a secondary school the higher the SIMD figure and vice versa (McKinney at al. 2012). Recent statistical analysis conducted by Hinchliffe and Bradshaw (2015) identified a similar correlation, in that similar secondary schools 'stand out' when using either measure of deprivation (FSM or SIMD), suggesting either indicator (FSM or SIMD) may be used for analysis.

Public Policy

> …nations as well as individuals are competing in terms of human capital and, it is argued, will reap the rewards of investment in education and training. Government aspirations for the education system are formalised in the target-setting and accountability systems.
> (Rose and Baird, 2013: 157).

There are many critics of educational policy who note that policy and policy makers do not recognise the ways in which young people are deeply affected by their experiences (Reeves, 2013; Holligan et al., 2014; Yates, 2013), such is their level of engagement with school, the influence of peer groups and the attitudes of family members towards work and education. Reeves (2013) has pointed out that, while at face value the concepts adopted within the Curriculum for Excellence appear to be progressive, such as the notion of the successful learner, ultimately, these end up being oppressive in practice due to translation and mis-translation by those who make and interpret policy – including teachers, headteachers, local authority personnel and academics. Holligan and colleagues (2014) continue this idea by noting that the neglect of modern life (of the contextual environment) by policy makers results in a sealed policy bubble which ends up saying very little or being of little use in the actual lives of young people. In order to best understand how to reduce gaps in educational attainment and the resulting outcomes, we need to appreciate how children connect with society today and the communities in which they live. Yates (2013) has pointed out that curriculum should be there not to determine pedagogy, but to set up a direction. For, to be meaningful young people need to have access to different knowledge and dispositions, dependent upon their differences. However, essentially, policy needs to work towards defeating all inequalities in society, including the deeper rooted one of socio-economic poverty.

Short-term objectives versus long-term aims

It has been noted that the best way to eradicate inequalities in educational attainment would not be to narrow the gap in education, but to eradicate poverty and inequality itself. Making change in schools help in the short-term and benefits young people, to an extent. However, in the long term, the out-of-school factors play a key role which requires the Government, and its policy makers to overhaul society (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010; Raffo, 2011b; Connelly, Sullivan and Jerrim, 2014; Machin, 2006). Due to the complex ecological system, and the interconnected relationships between young people and their family, school and social contexts, there needs to be efforts at all levels to tackle issues of equity – with national policies aimed at developing a fairer society being at the forefront (Ainscow et al., 2012; Chapman, 2015).

Policy borrowing, audit culture and intelligent accountability

Chapter Two provided a brief overview of the role of globalisation, the OECD and international assessments in shaping current national policies. These arguments are further developed in Chapter Three, with reference to SER, by looking at the flaws of performative and accountability-based systems for education. These debates are more deeply examined in this next section, exploring some of the ideas in greater detail – while highlighting the flaws of a move to such neoliberal approaches.

Morris (2012) discusses how educationalists, especially comparative and international educators, tend to avoid identifying transferable features of successful schools in other countries. If they do suggest a transferable initiative, they express caution in doing so. However, international agencies, such as the OECD, political think tanks and consultancies, remain committed to identifying practices which can be borrowed from successful systems (ibid: 90). Three cases, which tend to do substantially well in PISA, are Finland, Shanghai and Hong Kong. Here numerical measurements and statistical evidence highlight student performance to be exceeding expectations. Thus, policy solutions which are enacted in other contexts can be said to be based on objective and scientific evidence. However, the contexts of these geographical areas, which may well help them to succeed, are dismissed. For example: Finland has very little cultural diversity; Shanghai is very urban and there are discrepancies over student participation; and, parents in Hong Kong rely heavily upon private tutoring (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014: 163). As Steiner-Khamsi (2014) concludes, standardised comparisons in global and international student achievement studies have become a powerful policy tool in order to generate, or block off, reform. As a result, leaders in these league tables are seen to show 'best practice'. However,

discussions surrounding comparative education systems should involve examination of the local and national situated contexts, alongside the effects of increasing globalisation and neoliberal discourse (Takayama, 2009; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010).

It may be suggested that these statistical and performative measures lead to an 'audit culture' (Power, 1997) and a philosophy within policy-making based upon '…policy as numbers' (Lingard, 2011). Reductionist methods are employed, where the only supposed logical basis for undertaking educational reform is based upon who did better or worse and the need to improve test scores (Lingard, Sellar and Savage, 2014: 725). The works of Lyotard (1984) and Giroux (2003) are both frequently cited within this area of literature to highlight how performativity and accountability procedures breed a 'culture of terror', which leads to indiscrete comparisons and unfair judgements, ultimately leading to a means of controlling individuals, and wider groups of individuals (e.g. the whole school system). As argued by Ball (2006), who draws upon the work of Lyotard (1984), performativity through judgement and comparison gives way to means of incentive as well as control. Thus, '…the performance… [of educational institutions] serves as a measure of productivity or output or displays of quality' (Ball, 2006: 144).

As Lingard (2010) further comments, schooling produces human capital which is deemed essential in ensuring global competitiveness of the nation, thus making schooling and policy making within education an economic process where the intention is to maximise the quantity and quality of outputs (ibid: 136). The market, the schools along with the students, parents, teacher and community in which they are situated, become subordinate, rather than superordinate (Labonte, 1999). Centralised bureaucratic educational performativity targets result in enterprise-oriented institutions, when schools might otherwise aim to be local community, and neighbourhood institutions. Such schools would recognise and celebrate their unique context alongside respecting and giving voice and governance back to the community (Raffo, 2011a: 338). Therefore, resulting in participatory parity (Fraser, 2009) within the education system which offers all individuals greater opportunities to participate in society on an equal footing.

Inter-generational cycles: mis-framing

Fraser (2009) not only discusses participation of parity in relation to the social world, but also recognises the building blocks needed to ensure such a society, of which redistribution, recognition and representation are key. A pertinent question, which Fraser says must be asked, is whether a community makes decisions and rules in accordance with, and fair representation

of, all its members. If not, this misrepresentation can lead to misframing which wrongly excludes individuals and groups from the chance to participate and results in an unjust society. As explained by Whitty (2010), there is an established focus in the British sociology of education on the supposed failures of the lower classes of society – with the focus primarily on how education policy and reform, as well as society as whole, tends to favour middle class children (ibid: 30). Such arguments can be seen in the work of Power and colleagues (2003), Ball, (2003b) Reay (2006), and Thomson and Hall (2008), with Reay concluding that the attainment gap has not narrowed over the years and '…the more things change the more they stay the same' (Reay, 2006: 304). Machin (2006) further develops this by noting that a lack of focus in reducing the attainment gap leads to a reinforcement of income disparities and cements inter-generational cycles of disadvantage.

Much work in the Scottish context focuses on the analysis of large scale datasets, primarily the Scottish School-Leavers Survey (SSLS). There have been a number of publications in this area exploring: the curriculum (Croxford, 1996); attainment (Croxford and Raffe, 2007; Howieson and Iannelli, 2008; Raffe et al., 2006; Playford et al., 2016); and post 16 participation (Howieson and Semple, 2003; Howieson and Iannelli, 2008; Raffe, 2003). However, in light of the implementation of CfE and a pledge from the Scottish Government to narrow the attainment gap, SSLS is no longer relevant, nor up-to-date, in providing evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of the current education system. In addition, the quantitative dataset encounters the weaknesses of most quantitative research in not allowing for individual experiences to shine through.

Community

Building upon the ideas presented above, regarding mis-framing and misrepresentation, those living in socio-economic disadvantage are often faced with stigma and stereotypes. Terms such as 'benefit scroungers' (Beckett and Wrigley, 2014: 219), 'the poor', 'welfare dependent' (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2013: 301), 'skivers against strivers', 'dishonest scroungers against honest taxpayers' and 'undeserving and deserving' (Hills, 2015: 1) are used to define those living in such communities and come laden with negative connotations. Lister (2004) has stressed that those facing disadvantage often do not have their voices heard, with judgements and assumptions repeatedly made behind their backs: '…[the poor] are frequently talked and theorised about but are rarely themselves in a position to have their thoughts published' (ibid: 2).

Through the fostering of these shaming stereotypes, it is argued that society produces a self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968) – for, if an individual, states something as true, and the wider community or a group of individuals agree it is true in practice. We live in a culture which has proven (by way of history) to operate on a consensus, as much as on a correspondence theory of truth (Wiley, 2003).

Self-fulfilling prophecies can also be present in the classroom, as seen in Rosenthal and Jacobsen's seminal study in the 1960s and are found in modern research literature (Farkas et al., 1990; Howard and Johnson, 2000; Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon, 1998; Smyth and Wrigley, 2013). Self-fulfilling prophecies refers to when societal labelling enforces stereotypes onto students (Caldas and Bankson, 1997). These labels can be performative in that they generate negative stereotypes and lower expectations, resulting in falling achievement. This is what Steele and Aronson (1995) refer to as 'stereotype vulnerability', as the biases and assumptions of an individual or group impact on how an individual perceives their own abilities. In order to remove the negative effects of assumptions, biases and stereotypes, there is no simple solution other than reducing stigma surrounding the idea of poverty, those who do not continue on to university, or those who do not attain traditional academic grades. This will be returned to later in the section on interpersonal relations. However, it is worth noting that the phenomenon where stereotypes and assumptive statements are placed on disenfranchised communities – that do not have the power at an institutional level to popularise counter-narratives (Salzer, 2000; Gorski, 2011) – is often used by more powerful communities (wealthier communities) who popularise a false narrative in order to justify their own privilege. These sorts of 'misperceptions and missed perceptions' have the potential to further widen disparities and inequalities in society (Gorski, 2012).

On the other hand, a sense of togetherness, in which a school is located within a particular local community – and their history and context celebrated – helps to develop a sense of equality (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010: 4). In addition, it can be argued that rather than documenting the mismatch in school and community cultures (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), academics and professionals should encourage dialogue which addresses the unequal relations between schools and communities (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). In this environment, knowledge can be generated which aids the development of classroom, and pedagogical practice at a local level – creating pedagogies which are contextualised and connected to the life worlds of the young people in a particular school. Ainscow and colleagues (2012) acknowledge that those inside schools need to work with those outside of schools in order to improve outcomes. Families,

communities, employers, community groups, universities and public services can all play a role in encouraging positive experiences and enriching the lives of young people. In order to do this, Ainscow and colleagues (2012) argue that schools and local organisations need to coordinate a coherent strategy, which enables partnerships to be nurtured and multiplies the efforts of those from inside the school. However, as already highlighted, society is not split into levels easily, as each level is intertwined and co-dependent upon the other (Park, 1936). Thus, policymakers and the Government need to act as enablers, which may permit developments at a more community-based level, as well as disseminating good practices (Ainscow et al., 2012)

Organisational

It is noted that teachers are often '…objects of policy, rather than the subjects' (Lingard, Hayes and Mills, 2003; 401) with educational policy being done to teachers rather than with them. Ball (2006) refers to how teachers are seen as technicians, with a role to deliver a standardised and reductionist curriculum in a policy environment motivated by market, management and performativity (Ball, 2003a). This denies them of their sense of professionalism as well as their voice. By focusing on teachers and teaching in this manner, the contextual influences which effect student performance are silenced. Teachers are expected to be '…director, set designer, the curtain, the backdrop, and the prompter; as well as the electrician, and the audience' (Malaguzzi, cited in Rinaldi, 2005: 27). However, as González, Moll and Amanti (2005) have noted, teachers require opportunities for more meaningful experiences with young people and their families. For, as Wayne and Youngs (2003) have commented, teachers should be seen as the 'system's principal resource', instead of merely actors in an environment of prescription and 'pedagogies of poverty' (Haberman, 2010). Additionally, teachers need the opportunity to engage in critical thinking and participate in a constructive dialogue that challenges their misperceptions (Hinton, 2012). Engaging teachers in working with families would extend their understandings and would provide them with the tools to become effective teachers (Riojas-Cortez and Bustos Flores, 2009), while Kiyama (2010) notes that extending this to all school personnel, in understanding the context within which they work, is becoming more commonly found in research which adopts a funds of knowledge approach.

A funds of knowledge approach is one in opposition to deficit views of groups or individuals; instead they are seen as assets which contain valuable knowledge and experiences (Zipin, Sellar and Hattam, 2012). Funds of knowledge are described as '…those historically accumulated and

culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household functioning and well-being' (Moll et al., 1992: 133). This approach places value in all knowledge and experience – and not just those deemed valuable by dominant groups or individuals in society. In an educational sense, an example can be seen in Chapman and Muijs's (2014) who call for the replication of appropriate and thriving practices across the school network, but with authority and power at the local level. They believe this will develop improved and creative strategies, in order to suit the individual contexts of each institution. Therefore, the young person, the student, is given a voice in their learning or, as Biesta (2010) has suggested, they become 'speakers' provided with 'a starting point – not a conclusion' (ibid: 550) and given political agency.

There are other factors which are deemed to be effective in raising attainment at the organisational level. This includes strong school leadership which will be discussed in the following section.

School leadership

School leadership is often cited as a key component in influencing student achievement (Harris and Chapman, 2002). Leithwood and Seashore (2012) noted that '…to date we have not found a single documented case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership' (ibid: 3, cited in Woods, Husbands and Brown, 203: 23). Similarly, the Audit Scotland report on Scottish education published in 2014 identified that leadership is central to raising educational attainment. This not only refers to central education departments, but also headteachers, and individual teachers. These then influence a variety of other areas including teacher development and parental-school relationships (Audit Scotland, 2014). The key traits associated with effective leadership are understood to be determination and resilience (Woods, Husbands and Brown 2013), as well as the development of 'embryonic teacher learning communities' (Lingard, Hayes and Mills, 2003: 419).

However, McKinney and colleagues (2013), while identifying the importance of effective leadership, noted that further research is required to strengthen the findings between leadership and good educational outcomes. Barker (2010) goes further, arguing that there is no evidence as to headteachers being able to raise levels of performance: 'at best, leadership explains no more than 3 to 5 percent of the variation in student learning' (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, cited in Barker, 2010: 9). Perhaps, it is therefore best to reiterate that it is often very difficult to specify which practices contribute to an effective school – and the importance of context in each circumstance (Nash, 2001).

Teacher beliefs

Biesta, Priestley and Robinson (2015) comment on how teachers can become confused about their role in the school context as a result of '…a mishmash of competing and vague ideas' (ibid: 636). They believe external policies, systems and structures imposed on teachers create educational change, which lacks defined philosophical underpinnings and also inhibits collegial working. They support the need for wider discussions surrounding the purposes and meaning of education, to help teachers orient their thinking towards the future (and rely less on the here and now of current initiatives which constrain agency). They believe this will enable teachers to engage in professional dialogue as well as orient practices in the classroom to the wider purposes of education. Biesta, Priestley and Robinson (2015) further argue that the imposition of ideas (on teachers) is often without context and teachers are: left to interpret policy; adopt the technical language of policy documents; and thus their agency cannot be achieved and wide variation can occur across local authorities.

Atkin (1996) has developed a values and vision based approach to school development. She comments that at the heart of the process should be the identification and confirmation of the key values and beliefs of a particular community. From there, these form the basis of developing guidelines (principles) and action points (practices). This process not only gets to the 'heart of the matter', but allows for a move away from top down policy approaches to bottom up ways of operation, which empower and support communities. Through, discussion with schools and communities, policy makers can be influenced and present policies that are informed and can be of use to communities – while allowing for communities to make informed decisions in light of what they know based on the core values and beliefs of their local community. Therefore, policy makers move away '…from dictating from the top to co-ordinating and supporting from the centre' (ibid: 5).

Interpersonal

Interactions are often seen to be the foundation point for all meaning-making in our lifeworld. Simmel (1896) commented that society is but nothing more than interactions arising among individuals. Similarly, Crossley (2006) observed that all tasks involve a 'complex web of interdependencies'. The value of interactions, within the school and classroom setting, is frequently cited as being one of the most influential factors in a young person's educational pathway (Parsons, 1959; Bernstein, 1996). These interactions include those in the classroom

between teacher and student, as well as those between school and parents or local community. Wrigley (2006) called for more research on the cultural messages transmitted in the classroom through teacher voice as well as on their biases and assumptions. Almost ten years later he still calls for the careful observation of the 'interactive trouble' between the competing expectations, perceptions and assumptions of teachers and students (Wrigley, 2014). Similarly, Flecha (2011) comments on the literature that highlights the role of power and the influence it can have in some educational institutions more than others. Flecha differentiates between dialogical relations (associated with agreement and understanding) and power relations (fuelled by symbolic or physical force) – with young people more likely to learn in environments which adopt relations influenced by the former. Returning back to the idea of stereotyping and misperceptions, Campbell's (2015) research into the biases in teacher judgements of students' ability highlighted that children can be stereotyped from as young as seven. Furthermore, these generalised assumptions can arise from everyday experiences and interactions (see section on Community). Campbell (2015) calls for a need for greater teacher collaboration, in which ideas and practices can be shared, thus allowing for professionals to support and challenge one another in a system of constant dialogical development. Barker (2010) continues with this theme of stereotyping and the negative effect it can have on children young people. He comments that as young people garner self-awareness, their experiences (social and cultural) provide them with the raw data to assemble a subjective construction of themselves and their lives. Thus, upon reaching secondary school, values are internalised and the glass ceilings limiting their future aspirations have been accepted. However, Schoon (2001) observed that when attempting to understand the development of careers across the life trajectory, we must account for not only the contextual factors, but also the individual – and their ability to make choices.

Social capital, cultural capital and reproduction

Social capital is often used to describe the relationships between people. Bourdieu saw it as a host of relationships, actual or virtual, that an individual (or social group) may possess (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Due to his interest in social hierarchies, he used this concept to explain how inequalities were reproduced. One aspect of his theory of capital was that he noted those in higher classes were able to reproduce their advantage due to their social connections (or social capital), while those in disadvantage lacked such resources. Other sociologists have since adopted the term and re-defined it. Coleman adopts a more optimistic approach of social connections and defines it as resources which are useful to the cognitive and social development of a young person (Coleman, 1994). Putnam (1996), extended Coleman's work by acknowledging the different the types of connections. He defines social capital as features of a social life

(networks, norms and trust) that enable individuals to act together more effectively in order to pursue shared aims and objectives. He further distinguishes between bridging (bringing people together across different social groups/communities) and bonding (reinforcing social identities and maintaining homogeneity) (Putnam, 2000). Field (2003) concisely illustrates how all three definitions of this concept have their strengths and weaknesses – something which is outwith the scope of this review - and recognises the value of these theorists in bringing into the limelight how networks and shared values operate between and for individuals and groups.

Critics of social capital theory argue that it is based on a deficit-approach, of what communities or individuals do not have (Zipin, Sellar and Hattam, 2012; Rios-Aguilar et. al, 2011). Zipin and colleagues consider how social capital discourses turn communities into holistic unities with common aims, geography and social-structural positions. The ability for dynamic change, as well as appreciating the value in all knowledge and experience, is dismissed (Zipin Sellar and Hattam, 2012). Similarly, Rios-Aguilar and colleagues (2011) advocates for research which explores the dynamics and complexities within social networks (rather than focusing on what individuals and groups are presumed not to have). They argue such research will aid the understanding of how relations are constituted amongst individuals, but also at wider society and how social structures play a part in defining and cultivating social relations. Labonte (1999) noted that that social capital does not exist – in that social ties are constantly being constructed as a result of our own doing. Therefore, it is a process, and not a thing to be objectively measured.

Cultural capital is less commonly used in sociological research, but refers to the historical, materialised and structuring logics of society (Zipin, Sellar and Hattam, 2012; Sullivan, 2007). In other words, it refers to how certain cultural values, beliefs and traditions are more valuable, and placed higher in society, due to the dominant cultures dictating what is worthy (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011). For example, Willis (1977), in Learning to Labour, writes that it is through symbolic manipulation of knowledge and skills that dominant groups ensure success – leading to the reproduction of groups in society. In the school setting, this can be through: authority structures; curriculum policies; or, linguistic use (Lareau, 1987). Sullivan (2001) illustrates how cultural capital can have an effect on attainment, but it only offers a partial explanation and clarification is required upon what constitutes as 'cultural knowledge'.

In contrast to the proponents of social and cultural capital who find these concepts useful tools for understanding discrepancies in educational achievement, Ogbu and Simons (1998) strongly argue that membership of a particular group does not define whether or not an individual will

succeed or fail – thus, young people should be treated as individuals. It has also been acknowledged that young people, although they may be seen to lack capital, in any form, they may have strong compensatory resources, such as strong network ties (Connelly, Sullivan and Jerrim, 2014).

Significant others

Brookover, Thomas and Paterson (1964) identified that young people, when asked who was important in their life, were most likely to mention at least one parent; with peers (alongside teachers) also being noted as the most frequently cited subjects. Gorard (2013b) comments that: '…pupils learn about what society is like through their lives at school' (ibid: 80). Baker and colleagues (2014) augment this theory through their discussion of the importance of young peoples' interactions with their teachers and the weight young people attach to their parents' views of subject choice. As their findings lend support to the tradition of research focused on the influential role of significant others, in the shaping of young people's aspirations, and lives, they suggest: '…research should continue to examine the more specific ways in which they shape students' orientations to the future' (ibid: 538).

Morrow (1999) remarked on the limited number of studies which had previously sought to explore the influence of friends and peers (including within paid or unpaid work, and activities – within and outside of school) on a young person's life.   However, in the past 15 years, research on peer groups and friendship circles has grown (Vincent, Neal and Iqbal, 2016; Lubbers et al., 2006; Papapolydorou, 2014; Gutman and Vorhaus, 2012) and they are now regularly seen to be an important aspect of young peoples' lives. In particular, socialising with friends is seen to be pivotal part of the school experience with young people viewing schools as a 'social centre' rather than a 'learning centre' – with the potential to foster opportunities to develop social skills (Howard and Johnson 2000).

Across the life course, friendships are not stable, they evolve through time, and tend to have a growing significance during adolescence (St. Clair and Benjamin, 2011). During the primary years of schooling, friendships are often associated with having fun together; while, in the secondary years, peers are seen as sources of support, trust and respect, and often have an increasing influence on individuals (Wylie et al., 2008). A recent study highlighted the influence bullying and negative peer relations had on a young person's life (Banks and Smyth, 2015). These can be particular detrimental during adolescence when there are heightened concerns regarding status and the (re)negotiation of more 'adult' practices, statuses and expectations (Cuconato and

Walther, 2015). Additionally, Dupriez et al., (2012) identify the potential negative influences of peers, as the 'Big Fish Little Pond Effect'. This is when individuals compare themselves to peers performing at higher levels to them, and come to undervalue their own achievements, leading to lower self-esteem and belief in their ability to achieve. However, Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) discuss the importance of friendships as a protective factor against negative outcomes. They refer to positive relationships which can enable individuals to feel more secure and at ease in life. 'So, as well as the potential to be each other's worst rivals, we also have the potential to be each other's greatest source of comfort and security.' (ibid: 201).

Collateral learning

> Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only that particular thing he is studying at the time. Collateral learning is the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future. The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning.

> (Dewey, 1938: 48).

The concept of collateral learning was coined by Dewey and mirrors the ideas which are embodied in the modern day concept of the hidden curriculum: '…the structure of schooling as opposed to what happens in school' (Illich, 1971: 8). Proponents of the hidden curriculum refer to the negative by-products or unintended outcomes of schooling (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). However, collateral learning allows for the focus to be placed on the negatives as well as the positives of what happens in practice compared to what is supposed to happen in theory. What forms the basis of Mead's and Dewey's work and, indeed more broadly, the work of pragmatism and neo-pragmatism, is the need to take in the whole picture which gives us a moral philosophy to follow as we proceed to explore and better understand societal issues and concerns. 'The moral question is not one of setting up a right value over against a wrong value; it is a question of finding the possibility of acting so as to take into account as far as possible all the values involved' (Mead, 1938: 465).

The individual

> We do not merely spectate a society or participate in it. We are in it, we are it. And one of the ways in which we experience this being in society is through our sense of belonging or lack thereof. A focus on belonging can thus offer a window into studying the

complexities of the interrelationship between change on both the personal and the social level.

(May, 2011: 375)

As illustrated in the previous section, and through the theoretical approach interwoven throughout this study, human interactions are an essential part of human life. Interactions not only allow for the emergence of consciousness, the mind, a world of objects, and an understanding of humans, but also enable us to possess selves, and conduct ourselves in everyday acts (Mead 1917). It is important to remember, as emphasised by Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994), that it is only once all individuals and contexts that comprise the educational setting are considered in concert, that we gain a comprehensive appreciation and understanding of the embeddedness of social life. This section will focus on the individual, the young person, and highlight how the intersubjective process of interaction fosters the development of a social identity and self. This will draw heavily upon Mead's theory of emergence and Joas's creativity of action which is outlined in the theoretical underpinnings section.

Research conducted by Save the Children and Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (2014) asked young people what they think they need to be successful in life? The following responses were deemed the most essential factors to doing well in life: having a home (91%), an education (88%), their basic needs met (86%), and a supportive family (81%). Perhaps, of interest, within the survey results, more young people in S3 (91%) and S5 (92%) considered education to be a key factor compared with those in S1 (82%) (ibid: 11). The former year groups highlight the transition of young people to adulthood – where they start to engage in career guidance, make school subject choices – and where the importance of the future, aspirations, and ultimately, education, are defined (Kintrea, St. Clair, Houston, 2015). It is important to consider young people's agency and their desires and intended future actions. Raising attainment in the sense where each and every individual has equitable opportunities to achieve the same potential, regardless of wealth, status, power, resources or possessions, is desirable. However, as Levin (2003: 5) argues: '…the aim of public policy cannot and should not be equality in the sense that everyone is the same or achieves the same outcomes – a state that appears to be both impossible and undesirable.' Therefore, we should consider how young people reflect and act in relation to the structural and societal forces around them, in order to interact, negotiate and co-ordinate their actions in order to make their way in the world.

Young people are not just being influenced by those individuals, groups and environments around them. They are also active humans who engage with and make sense of the world around them. As Papadopoulou (2012) comments: '…they are consumers, but at the same time creators, of culture' (ibid: 577). Just as they can be altered or modified by society, they too can generate new interactions which impact on their environment. They are not solely customers or clients who have things done to them. They have personalities, attitudes, resources, interests, beliefs, experiences and abilities which shape the world around them (Barker, 2010).

In their study of youth transitions in London, Kitagawa and Encinas (2014) draw heavily upon Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) conceptualisation of temporally-oriented agency, framed within the iterative, projective and practical-evaluative (past, present and future). As with Joas's work on creativity of action, Emirbayer and Mische acknowledge the active role of the individual in situations, as well as being guided by Mead's work on emergence and time which is vital for conceptualising and engaging with the notion of agency (Hitlin and Elder, 2007). Uprichard (2008) and Cuconato and Walther (2015) also utilise this conceptualisation in explaining how young people transition through their life course. In addition, Biesta and Tedder (2007) have further developed Emirbayer and Mische's work, augmenting it with an ecological understanding of agency.

However, despite the success of Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) work on agency, in this study, Joas's (1996) theory of creativity of action is drawn upon due to the lack of research which attempts to apply it as a theoretical framing to aid our understanding of the social world.. However, due to this lack of research application, further theoretical framings are utilised in order to provide further support and weighting to the conceptual ideas of 'creativity of action' that Joas's puts forward. As the thesis proceeds, I have utilised Lister's (2004) typology of agency, alongside Joas's work, in order to give greater theoretical framing to how agency can be acted upon and exercised.

Lister's typology was developed in order to explain the agency exercised by those in poverty (see Figure 4.1). This framework was developed by Lister to help better understand how people act in order to overcome the structural factors working against them. As with Joas's theory of creative action, this typology takes steps towards understanding creativity in action moments with Lister commenting: 'Survival in the face of oppression and deprivation is helped by a belief in the ability to exercise some measure of control over one's own life, however limited' (ibid: 126). These forms of agency are based on everyday actions as well as more strategic aims and cover personal

actions as well as more collective actions. Lister categorises actions of individuals, and not the individual, as 'getting by', 'getting out', 'getting back at' and 'getting organised'. These can be defined in the following ways, in order to be applicable to this study (and this will be illustrated later in Chapter Eight):

- Getting by: These are the coping strategies a young person adopts in order to 'get by' in day-to-day life including drawing upon their personal and social resources

- Getting back at: Channelling anger and despair at their present situation in order to resist societal and institutional norms.

- Getting out: This entails the individual seeking a route of their present situation via established routes, such as FE and HE.

- Getting organised: The collective response of a group of individuals which adopts a strategic and political stance.
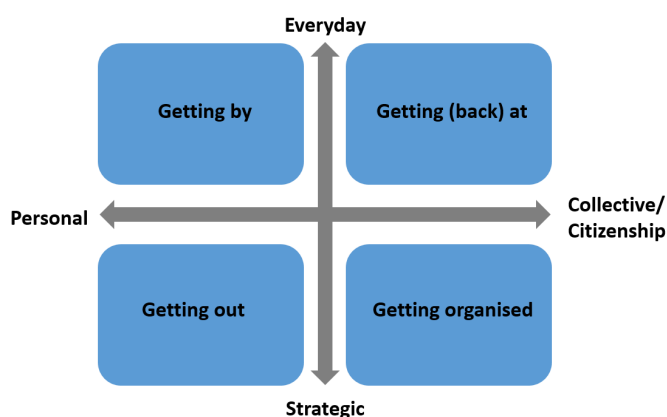
Figure 4.1 Taxonomy of Agency (Lister 2004)

Clark-Kazak (2014) acknowledges that Lister tends to equate the political aspects, within the taxonomy, with resistance and negative actions. She responds that political activity should not be demonised, but instead we should focus on understanding young people's decision-making roles across their specific contexts – and acknowledge that political activity can be constructive, as well as destructive.

Summary

In this chapter, several research studies have been highlighted and summarised in order to highlight the many ways in which education, educational policies, and the correlation of poverty

with low academic attainment all interrelate. Much of the literature focuses on the issue of the attainment gap in education, with particular emphasis on theorising this gap through the application of Bourdieusian concepts. More specifically, the literature addressed in this chapter emphasises how significant an area this social issue is. It is not just concerned with education, nor is it solely impacting on young people – it has significant consequences for the multiple layers of society and for all those individuals and groups within these layers. This research study will develop this notion more to explore how the various levels (individuals as well as groups) of society interact with one another and how, on the surface, issues can appear to be related to a particular group but tend to be much further reaching than this.

Three case study schools, located in Scotland, will then be explored to gain a better understanding of their ecologies. This will include a particular focus on the experiences and perspectives of young people in order to highlight the diversity in the lived experiences of young people. In doing so, the social-ecological model and the work of Mead, Dewey and Joas, as discussed in Chapter Three, will be drawn upon to further highlight the complexity of everyday life and the importance, and significance, of interactions. As a result, the research questions are as follows:

1. Are there schools in Scotland which serve disadvantaged communities but achieve better educational outcomes for their students in comparison to similar schools (in terms of socio-economic status)?
2. What are the within-school factors that improve educational outcomes for young people in these schools?
3. What are the out-of-school factors that improve educational outcomes for young people in these schools?
4. What are the implications for those interested in improving the educational outcomes for young people in schools?

The next chapter will take significant steps towards interpreting the first research question through the exploration of both qualitative and quantitative data in order to gain a well-rounded understanding of which schools, located in disadvantaged areas of Scotland, appear to be achieving good educational outcomes for their students. In this chapter, the methodological approach for this stage is provided, as well as the data analysis and findings. Thus, the methodology chapter in Chapter Seven concentrates on stage two of the research where the 'why' of these schools achieving better than expected outcomes for their students is explored.

The decision to structure this thesis in such a way was made in order to emphasise the discrete phases of the research and their differing purposes – and to ensure the processes and steps undertaken, and the reasons for doing so, are transparent.

Chapter 5: Investigating which schools exceed expectations: a mixed method approach

Introduction

This chapter will outline the broad methodological approach adopted in this research study, as a whole. I highlight the staged and sequential nature of the research, discussing the advantages of such an approach, before presenting the specific methodological approach and the findings for stage one of the research, which will seek to answer my first research question: to identify if there are schools in Scotland which serve disadvantaged communities but achieve better than expected educational outcomes for their students.

Alongside this, I will illustrate the careful consideration, sensitivity and thought taken in the selection of the analysis of statistical data. In doing so, I will document how these processes were constructed – in order to encourage an air of 'open data', or transparency (Gayle, Connelly and Lambert, 2015). According to Mead, regarding creativity within action situations:

> You cannot lay down in advance fixed rules as to just what should be done. You can find out what are the values involved in the actual problem and act rationally […] with reference to all interests that are involved: that is what we could call a 'categorical imperative'.
>
> (Mead, 1934b: 388).

I will draw upon student-level administrative data and attainment data held by the Scottish Government.   The secondary dataset is explored using descriptive statistics and linear regression analysis. However, I also draw upon qualitative sources of information to ensure a complete picture for each school deemed to be achieving better than expected. I will outline these steps below – and present the analysis of these data too. Furthermore, I will highlight the flaws, limitations, but also the possibilities which this method of doing exploratory research offered me.

I have included this as a stand-alone chapter, which consists of both methodological discussion and findings, in order to emphasise the innovative methods undertaken at this stage.

A staged research approach: study design

In line with the pragmatist framing of this research study, I intend to challenge procedures and assumptions regarding the definitions and methods of measurements to the concepts of relevance, academic attainment and disadvantage. This ideal follows the notion that one studies the areas of interest, drawing upon whichever methods are relevant (Creswell, 2003). After my criticisms of a 'what works' approach to education and SER, what lies at the heart of pragmatist research methodology is a 'what works' tactic. However, unlike the research which was critiqued (along with the idea of large-scale reform based upon success in small scale initiatives), this approach to research methodology advocates pluralism and for the design to be best suited to purpose – within the skillset of the research and limitations of the research environment.
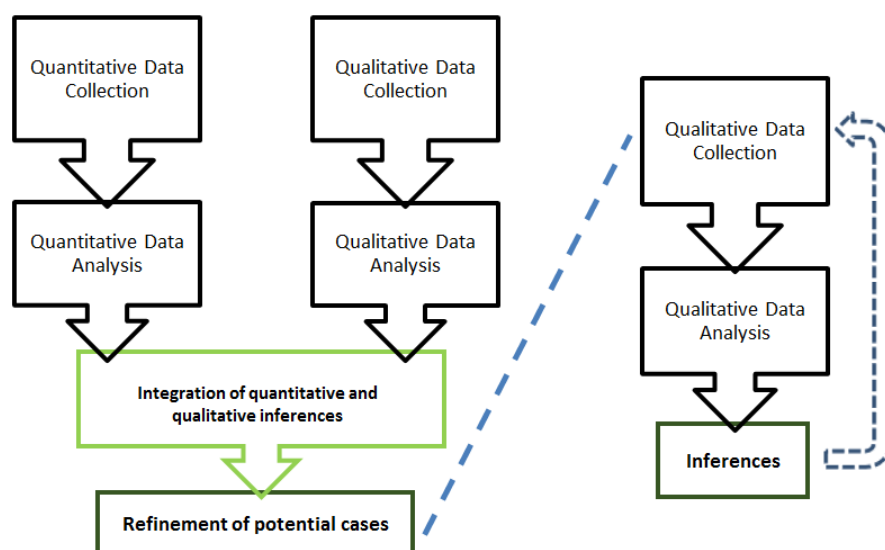
Figure 5.1 A sequential mixed analyses (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998)

The research design consists of a quantitative-qualitative sequential mixed analyses (see Figure 5.1) in which '…multiple approaches to data collection, analysis, and inference are employed in a sequence of phases' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998: 15). The first findings from stage one enabled me to select potential case study schools, while the second stage of qualitative data collection focused on the fieldwork located in three case study schools. This second stage adopted the notions of ethnographic intent (Wolcott, 1987) and a mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2011) – which will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

In Table 5.1, I simplify the two stages, and also introduce the phased research approach adopted in stage one and two (stage two and its related phases will be discussed further in Chapter Seven).

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Stage	Phase	Phase name	Source/Method
1	1	Quantitative data collection	Scottish Schools Online trend data[3]; School Meals Data; SIMD (intermediate geography level); Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (SNS) - analysis of categories not included in the SIMD[4]
	2	Qualitative data collection	HMIe school inspection reports[5]; discussions with key informants[6]
2	1	Familiarisation	Observations; informal conversations
	2	Beliefs and attitudes in understanding and defining achievement	Group discussions and task based activities with young people; semi-structured interviews with staff; task-based interviews with young people; observations
	3	Personalisation of fieldwork	Group discussions and task based activities with young people

Table 5.1: A phased research process

Multiple methods

The research study as a whole adopts a multiple methods approach in order to answer the research questions. This refers to any research where more than one method is used. However, the first stage (the identification of case study schools) used mixed methods, drawing upon a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative methods. In contrast, the second stage (the in-depth case studies) adopts multi-method research utilising multiple qualitative methods (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

The use of multiple methods allows me to explore the complex and interconnected cultural, historical and social ties of societal and individual life. More specifically, my contribution aims to offer '…higher quality datasets that are easier to analyse' rather than a focus on complex methods of statistical analysis, which can contribute to exclusivity, and obscure, technical language (Gorard, 2008: 12). Triangulation has been utilised in order to generate a holistic

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[3] This data is no longer available online since Education Scotland has now begun using Insight as a benchmarking tool.

[4] This data is now published on statistics.gov.scot as SNS is no longer maintained.

[5] It is crucial to note that HMIe reports were often out-of-date with reports often being 5 or 6 years old. However, these reports provided a useful starting point and discussions with key informants allowed for a clearer picture of the current situation in schools.

[6] Key informants were drawn from HMIe, Education Scotland, Local Authorities, and academics. These sources provided up-to-date and contextual information regarding specific Local Authorities and schools.

understanding of the context – as qualitative data allows the researcher '…to enrich and brighten the portrait' (Jick, 1979: 609). Jick (1979) further argues that triangulation strategies allow data to come together to show convergence within the analysis and in the findings.

Mixed methods

Focusing now on stage one, the value of mixing and integrating two paradigms, the qualitative and the quantitative, helps us to better understand the world (Maxwell, 2010). As Becker (2014) has identified, '…statistical analysis gives us the inputs and outputs, but 'intervening pieces of machinery stay stubbornly hidden' (ibid: 62). Statistics and data sets cannot offer us the processes and the steps which enable something to happen – this is what the qualitative methods bring to the table. However, at the end of the day, and in line with a pragmatist ideal of getting things done, it can be argued that we should focus on the 'the craft, the fun, the importance and the humility of research'…'[for] there is just no time to waste on meaningless complications and the cod philosophy of the q-word paradigms' (Gorard, 2010: 19).

The sample: data limitations

It is important to note that initial analysis for identifying secondary schools was conducted in early 2015, using only schools where at least 20% of the students in that school year (2013/14) lived in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland. This resulted in a sample of 150 which fell to 99 upon removal of schools with missing data and denominational schools. Denominational schools were removed due to literature which suggested 'faith' was a positive influence on achievement (Lareau, 1987; St. Clair and Benjamin, 2011; Lacour and Tissington, 2011). So, to discount this factor, and explore other reasons for higher than expected attainment, I removed these schools.

The purpose of data analysis at this stage was purely one of identifying schools for follow-up and in-depth fieldwork. Time restraints and the need to begin ethics applications and contacting gatekeepers restricted the analysis which could be done at this time. It was subsequently intended for further analysis to be completed using an all secondary schools dataset to enhance this chapter and develop the analysis. However, the dataset received in 2017 did not include the key variables used in my original dataset and subsequent analysis (SCQF tariffs and attainment results for the end of fourth year of secondary school). Although this analysis does use a small sample size, the narrow focus on schools in disadvantaged areas helps to highlight – at face value – which particular schools are exceeding better than expected. In addition, by not being reliant on the statistics, and highlighting the value of a mixed methods approach to identifying schools

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(utilising key informants and HMIe reports), it further cements the notion that mixed methods can offer us a more nuanced view than mono method research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Measuring concepts

In order to define and then attempt to measure multi-faceted concepts (such as attainment and poverty) researchers are almost encouraged to act in a 'shamelessly eclectic' manner (Rossman and Wilson, 1991, cited in Gorard and Taylor, 2004: 158) – determined by the aims and objectives of the research study and in order to exploit the strengths of particular methods to be employed, and minimise the weaknesses of mono method research studies (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this section I will outline how I sought to define 'disadvantage' and 'good educational outcomes' for the purposes of this research study.

Exploring disadvantage: first steps

In Chapter Four, I offered a conceptual overview of the literature surrounding poverty and attainment. I narrowed in on commonly used poverty measures within educational research highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of such approaches. Here, I will highlight the intended measures for this particular research drawing upon the data to explore why I have done so.

As previously mentioned, in Britain a commonly used measure of poverty is FSM entitlement. This is a statutory benefit available to children and young people from families who receive other qualifying benefits. Some academics critique this as a measure (Beckett and Wrigley, 2014; Pirrie and Hockings, 2012), however it has been widely used by many more (Strand, 2014a, 2014b; Audit Scotland, 2014; Muschamp et al., 2009). Therefore, due to ease of accessibility I have primarily drawn upon FSM as a proxy for socio-economic deprivation. I did consider utilising SIMD but I was unable to gain access to the raw data and thus only had access to the SIMD datazone categories. As displayed in Figure 5.2, a correlation exists, in the dataset used in this research, between the proportion of students receiving FSM and those living in deprived areas of Scotland (SIMD). In addition, I, like McKinney and colleagues (2013), have also opted to develop a more multi-faceted measure and understanding of disadvantage, which I will outline in greater detail below.
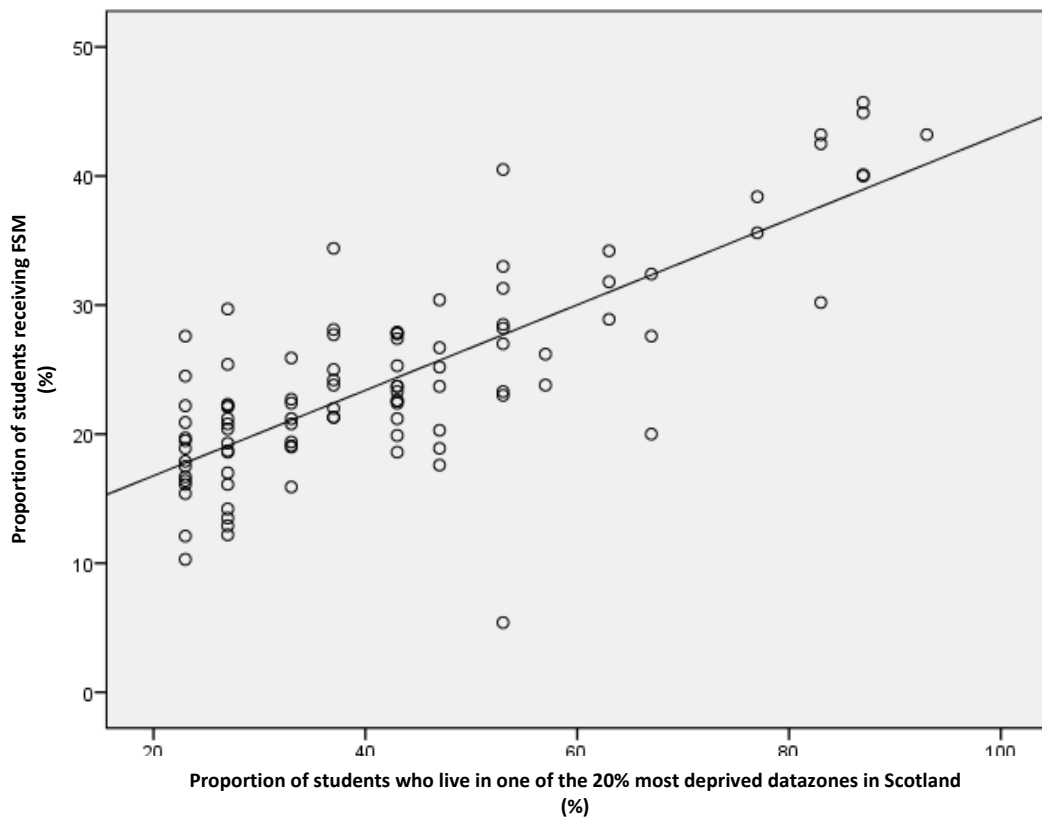
Figure 5.2: Correlation of FSM and SIMD

Exploring good educational outcomes: what is success?

In the earlier literature review, I also covered the concept of educational success and how this can be best measured by statistics. Questions this threw up included: Is there a best measure? Do each and every measure favour some and disadvantage others? Therefore, I took a non-traditional and eclectic approach to defining achievement – in this research I refer to good educational outcomes as a way to step aside from the divide, and debate, between achievement and attainment (outlined in Chapter Four).

The measurement of attainment often focuses on the grades achieved by young people in their senior years of schooling – the 'qualification' of individuals. However, these measures neglect the 'socialisation' and 'subjectification' aspects of education (Biesta, 2009). However, in line with my desire to take a life-course perspective (Elder, 1994), to acknowledge young people as continuous beings (Uprichard, 2008), and to acknowledge the subjectivity of what it means to be successful (see discussion in Chapter Four surrounding the 'capability approach') I am interested in not just the attainment of 'x' grades, or entry into university. Instead, I am concerned with the range of opportunities available to young people which can suit their individual aspirations. To expand upon this, it is a person who achieves their desired aims. Therefore, success is ultimately

whatever the individual wants from their life, what makes them happy, whether it be academic achievement, wealth, family, love, or fame.

Furthermore, in line with the socialisation, subjectification and qualification of young people, I was keen to explore schools that were less 'enterprise-orientated' and more 'neighbourhood-orientated'. In other words, I wanted to find schools with recognised, celebrated and respected the needs of those in their community (Raffo, 2011a). Schools which promoted positive factors and embraced the 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al., 1992) and 'opportunity of structures' (Roberts, 2009) available to them.

Therefore, in the quantitative data available to me, significant weighting was placed upon the positive destination of school leavers. This data is produced annually and is based on a follow up of young people who have left school the previous school year. The exercise includes asking young people about their reported destination upon leaving school – with a detailed analysis of positive (further education, higher education, employment, voluntary work, and training schemes) and negative destinations (unemployment). In being reflexive, it's important to note that positive leaver destination statistics could be skewed by out-of-school factors - such as the availability of employment, training, Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) opportunities in the local area. This was explored in the case study research that was conducted and further analysis of this can be found in the subsequent chapters.

Data characteristics: shamelessly eclectic

In Table 5.2, I outline the multiple types of data that I collected to ensure a rounded interpretation of what is a school that is 'bucking the trend'. Column one states the phase within stage one, column two contains the methods adopted at this phase, and column three details the outcomes of each of these phases.

Phase	Source/Method	Outcome
Quantitative data collection	Scottish Schools Online trend data; School Meals Data; SIMD (intermediate geography level); Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (SNS) - analysis of categories not included in the SIMD	Numerical data
Quantitative data analysis	Data imputation; data screening; IBM SPSS Statistics v21; linear regression	Descriptive statistics; Frequencies; Missing data; Outlier identification; linear regression; scatterplots
Qualitative data collection	HMIe school inspection reports; discussions with key informants	Text data (documents and notes from meetings)
Qualitative data analysis	Coding and thematic analysis (within case and across case)	Codes and themes – similar and different
Integration of results and formulation of inferences	Interpretation and explanation of the quantitative and qualitative results; refinement of potential cases	Potential cases

Table 5.2: Data used in stage one

Exploring poverty and attainment: the detailed account

Quantitative

In the first phase, I collected a range of publicly available, student-level, administrative data and attainment data held by the Scottish Government. This was deemed the most substantial, informative and reliable for conducting subsequent analyses on (see Hinchliffe and Bradshaw, 2015, for greater discussion of potential data).

After data imputation into SPSS, I conducted descriptive analyses using SPSS, for example frequencies and cross tabulations. The aim of the descriptive analyses was to give a broader understanding of attainment and disadvantage across Scottish schools on which further exploration was to be based. This thinking is in line with Black's (1999) belief that descriptive statistics 'can be quite revealing, providing insights that would not otherwise be apparent' (ibid:46).

Linear regression analysis was also conducted with scatterplots generated in order to display the relationship between FSM and a range of good educational outcome variables. The line of best fit, bisecting the scatter plot data, helped to illustrate the trend between the two variables, or sets of data. This allows for the reader to see which schools are achieving better than expected results for their students (cases located above the line of best-fit and highlighted by green dots in the scatterplots, see for example Figure 5.2). In the charts presented later in this chapter I have also highlighted schools which are not achieving as expected, in order to highlight some topical debates and arguments surrounding the use of statistics and the limitations of certain variables.

The quantitative analysis process

As highlighted at the start of the chapter, data analysis originally commenced with all Local Authority secondary schools in Scotland, where at least 20% or more of the student population resided in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland (based on SIMD). Subsequently, denominational schools were removed from the sample. There were also a small number of cases with missing data which were also removed from the sample. Each of these cases was located in a remote, rural location, and the data was not publicly available due to small student roll numbers which would make young people potentially identifiable in the data. The process described above resulted in a sample of 99 potential cases.

Schools were anonymised and randomly assigned a numerical value from 1 to 99. School attainment data was aggregated over a three year period (2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13) in order to minimise the potential effects of year on year variations. As a result of the time restraints and data access limitations, I was unable to aggregate initial leaver destination across the same period. Thus, leaver destination is based solely on the 2012/13 school year. In the dataset, there were also authorised and unauthorised absences (by year group, as well as school overall), and staying on rates.

However, in this study I do not intend to view 'staying on' at school as a good educational outcome. It does not tell us if a young person is benefitting from the education system, and to see this as a positive variable would dismiss those young people who leave school at 16 to participate successfully in FE, employment or training schemes (such as apprenticeships). Drawing upon work by Richman, Bowen and Woolleey (2004), students may stay on for S5/S6, but may not be able to take part in ways most effective for them to gain skills and experience necessary for their future trajectories. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) noted: 'The problem is not simply to keep educationally at-risk youth from dropping out but, more importantly, to provide

them with educationally worthwhile experiences' (ibid: 75, cited in Richman, Bowen and Woolleey, 2004: 135). For similar reasons, I have also not included absence rates as a variable. Instead, I explore the links between lower staying on rates and higher school absence rates for schools in disadvantaged areas in stage two of this research study.

In the dataset, positive leaver destinations are given as a total percentage. However, there are sub-variables which include all leaver destinations. These sub-variables were heavily explored in all phases of this stage. However, due to the small proportions from each school under certain destinations (for example, volunteering or unemployed and not seeking employment) the number of young people in these categories is unavailable.

In some of the charts presented below I provide the proportions of young people in various destinations, such as FE, HE. However, it is important to note that all these destinations hold the same weighting in that they are regarded as being seen as positive. A particular destination viewed by society as not so successful may result in improved longer-term outcomes for a young person. For example, FE may have less stature than HE within some social groups, however to view FE as less positive than HE would be demeaning for those in this destination. As McKinney and colleagues (2012) note, for those young people living in areas of disadvantage, employment can be a key means of achieving improved outcomes in their life.

Qualitative
Documentary analysis and the use of key informants were key supplementary methods for furthering the identification of schools which were doing better than expected. Information was gathered from seven key informants while documentary analysis was conducted on schools which were repeatedly appearing in the data analysis as 'bucking the trend'.

Document analysis refers to a qualitative research method, in which documents are interpreted by the researcher in order to give voice and meaning around a particular topic (Bowen, 2009). For this, I referred to HMIe reports that could be found online alongside official school documents, such as handbooks and other related documents that were often available via school websites. Beuving and de Vries (2015) comment that when using documents in such a way the researcher needs to be wary of dramaturgy. The researcher should remain critical and objective and separate the self-presentation of such documents from their descriptive content. Bowen (2009) adds to this by noting data from documents should not be considered '…necessarily precise, accurate, or complete recordings of events that have occurred' (ibid: 33).

Due to the need to strive for anonymity of schools selected for study in this research project, I have chosen not to include quotes from HMIe reports or from their official school documents. Instead, I outline themes to which I gave significant weighting when reviewing a school deemed to be doing better than expected. This will be further explained later in this chapter.

Seven key informants were selected based on the understanding they would be specialists in their area (Tremblay 1957) and know in particular which schools were doing better than expected. This helped narrow down the sample of 99 schools further – alongside the data analysis. Informants were drawn from HMIe, Education Scotland, Local Authorities, and academics. These interviews were relatively unstructured, with no interview schedule, and instead relied upon framing the conversations around the primary research question for this stage, of which schools are achieving better than expected. This approach to interviewing key informants is advocated by Tremblay (1957 and Bernard and Colleagues (1986) where the use of grand tour questions (Spradley 1979) and probing questions on the informants responses (Burgess 1982) are utilised. This results in key informants serving as 'tutor or guide', aiding the identification of topics of concern and helping the researcher discover what questions are important (Bernard et al., 1986).

As I have stated above, I also drew upon the use of key informants to help ensure up-to-date information, as well as to offer triangulation, as: '…no single item of information…should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 283). Silverman (2000, 2001) would argue that triangulation should never be used to outweigh the flaws of another method nor should it be used in order to provide a complete picture of the issue under study. However, Seale (1999) argues quality matters in research and that in order to provide a high standard of research, researchers must provide a strong case in order for others to find arguments and conclusions convincing. Thus, adopting multiple methods in this stage, as well as within the study more widely can increase the confidence we have in our conclusions (Bryman, 1988).

Integration and inferences
The phased approach of the research which I adopted in order to give a more rounded view of schools exceeding expectations was particularly beneficial in triangulating results. This became apparent during the final phase, the integration of results and formulation of inferences, which allowed for a deeper exploration of the quantitative data and gave me the opportunity to ask

questions of the data. This was also particularly useful when I came to speak to key informants, for I could seek clarification regarding particular nuanced changes in a particular school's attainment levels. This process allowed for the '…linking, elaboration, completeness, contrast, comparison, and the like' (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009: 305) which mixed methods and triangulation can offer us as researchers.

Descriptive statistics: student and school composition

The following section provides a description and summary of the data. This consists of numerical data from the administrative dataset.

The vast majority of schools had 20-45% of its students living in one of the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland (64 schools), which can be seen in Table 5.3. This leaves 44 schools in Scotland, where at least half of the students, or greater, are living in one of the most deprived areas of Scotland.

	Frequency	Percent (%)
20 - <25%	15	15.3
25 - <30%	17	17.3
30 - <35%	9	9.2
35 - <40%	9	9.2
40 - <45%	14	14.3
45 - <50%	7	7.1
50 - <55%	9	9.2
55 - <60%	2	2.0
60 - <65%	3	3.1
65 - <70%	3	3.1
75 - <80%	2	2.0
80 - <85%	3	3.1
85 - <90%	4	4.1
90 - <95%	1	1.0
Total	98	100.0

Table 5.3: Proportion of students living in one of the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland

In Table 5.4 we can see that of the 32 Local Authorities in Scotland, 22 have schools where at least 20% of students are located in one of the most deprived areas. Glasgow City Council has the most frequent occurrences (18) within the dataset, followed by North Lanarkshire (10) and City of Edinburgh Council (8). The Local Authorities which have no occurrences are: Aberdeenshire; Argyll and Bute; East Dunbartonshire; East Lothian; Midlothian; Moray; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council); Orkney Islands; Perth and Kinross; and, Shetland Islands. It is important to note there that although schools in these areas do not meet Scottish Government definitions of deprived areas, there is often still poverty in these areas which these statistics obscure.

Table 5.4 also displays where the schools in this sample are located using the Scottish Government's 6-fold urban/rural measure. The vast majority of schools (87.7%) are located in urban areas with only 6.2% schools in rural areas. The utilisation of SIMD often diminishes the issue of poverty and deprivation in rural areas as these tend to be more spatially dispersed.   I took this into consideration when speaking to key informants (which will be discussed later in this chapter), but accessibility of rural areas for this type of ethnographic research study also limited the inclusion of schools in rural areas. The FSM variable was used as proxy for socio-economic deprivation in this study – and was the most commonly used variable. The lowest percentage of young people in a school receiving FSM was 5% and the highest was 46%. The average percentage of young people likely to be receiving FSM in a school was 24.31%, with a standard deviation of 7.9 (S.D., a measure of how spread out numbers are). A breakdown of FSM categories can also be seen in Table 5.4.

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Local Authority		
Aberdeen City	3	3.1
Angus	2	2.0
Clackmannanshire	2	2.0
Dumfries & Galloway	2	2.0
Dundee City	6	6.1
East Ayrshire	6	6.1
East Renfrewshire	1	1.0
Edinburgh City	8	8.2
Falkirk	2	2.0
Fife	7	7.1
Glasgow City	18	18.4
Highland	3	3.1
Inverclyde	2	2.0
North Ayrshire	6	6.1
North Lanarkshire	10	10.2
Renfrewshire	5	5.1
Scottish Borders	1	1.0
South Ayrshire	1	1.0
South Lanarkshire	6	6.1
Stirling	2	2.0
West Dunbartonshire	3	3.1
West Lothian	2	2.0
6-fold urban/rural measure categories		
Remote rural areas	3	3.1
Accessible rural areas	3	3.1
Remote small towns	2	2.0
Accessible small towns	4	4.1
Other urban areas	35	35.7
Large urban areas	51	52.0
Proportion of students receiving FSM		
0-5%	1	1.0
6-10%	1	1.0
11-15%	6	6.1
16-20%	24	24.5
21-25%	32	32.3
26-30%	18	18.4
31-35%	6	6.1
36-40%	4	4.1
41-45%	5	5.1
46-50%	1	1.0

Table 5.4: School and student composition

Correlations and discussion

Figure 5.3 displays the proportion of students in an initial positive leaver destination, by the proportion receiving FSM. It illustrates the extent of the attainment gap in education – and one can only expect that once schools in more advantaged areas are added in, this gap becomes even more apparent. Most schools are clustered around the line of best fit in the chart. The mean proportion of young people in a positive leaver destination is 86% with a standard deviation of 5.1. However, there are schools which are outliers – in that they achieve low numbers or achieve higher than expected number of young people in a positive leaver destination. Two schools participating in my fieldwork achieved significantly better than expected outcomes for their students with regards to the proportion of young people in a positive leaver destination. Schools in this category are highlighted in green on the chart.
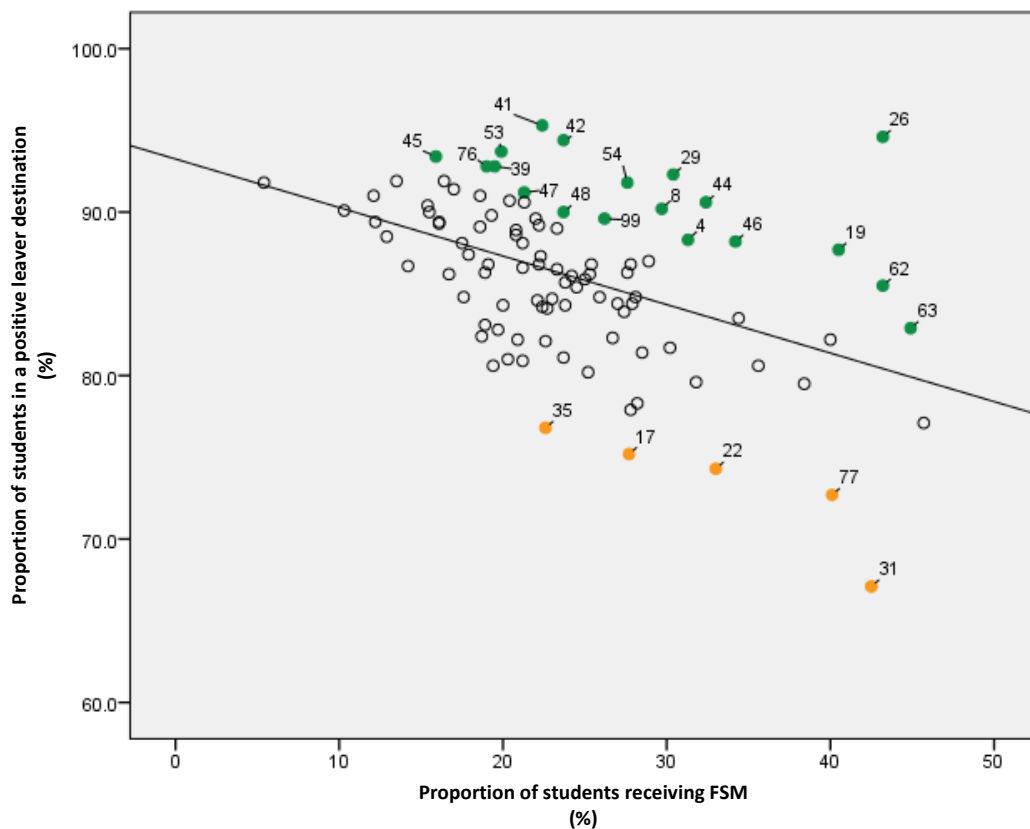
Figure 5.3: Proportion of students in a positive leaver destination, by proportion of students receiving FSM

As these data are publicly available, I do not wish to give an in-depth analysis or point out individual schools, as I do not wish to breach ethical guidelines. Moreover, my intention is not to point out which schools need to 'improve'. However, it is worth noting that many schools that achieve a higher than expected number of positive leaver destinations are based in urban locations. Therefore, it could be implied that there is potentially a greater choice of options

available to these young people. For example, varied training and voluntary schemes, greater choice of colleges and universities, and more employment opportunities – with less need to move or travel.

Figure 5.4 displays the trend between the proportions of students attending HE, by the proportion of students receiving FSM. The line of best fit declines sharply as FSM numbers increase – and this is much more apparent than in the first chart (Figure 5.3). Schools tend to be clustered around the line of best fit with some quite significant outliers in both a 'positive' and 'negative' direction. The lowest proportion of young people attending HE is 9.8% while the highest total is 53.3%. This results in a mean of 28.6 (S.D. 8.3). There are 6 schools missing from this chart due to low numbers of young people progressing onto HE (and including such data could make schools and/or students identifiable in the data).
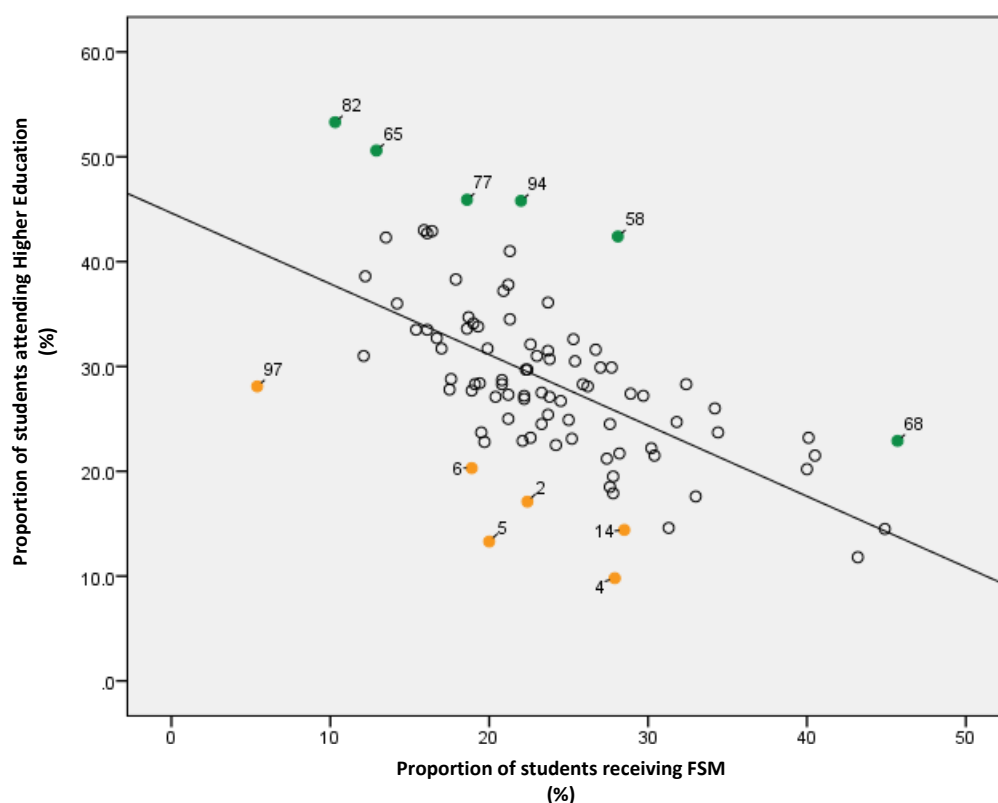
Figure 5.4: Proportion of students attending Higher Education, by proportion of students receiving FSM

I have marked 6 schools in this chart which are 'bucking the trend' and sending more young people to HE institutions than what should be expected of them. On the other hand, I have selected 7 schools which have fewer than expected young people progressing onto HE (these are the amber dots). This chart is particularly interesting and has implications for the need for a greater understanding of rural poverty in Scotland. Furthermore, it highlights, and raises

questions surrounding, the focus of particular urban cities receiving significant amounts of funding, and help, to narrow the attainment gap. All schools achieving higher than expected numbers in HE are based in the Glasgow area, while the majority of schools sending fewer than expected young people on to HE are located in the North of Scotland. Links can be made here regarding limited access to HE for young people in deprived areas of the North of Scotland. This includes transport limitations as well as financial costs as they are more likely to need to move from home. This also brings to our attention a very different type of deprivation from how SIMD and FSM entitlement defines deprivation.

The proportion of students moving on to FE, by the proportion of students receiving FSM can be seen in Figure 5.5. The line of best fit illustrates there is a positive trend between these two variables. However, the schools are much more widely dispersed in the chart than previously seen in the HE chart (Figure 5.4), with a wider range. For example, the means are similar (28.6 for HE and 29.4 for FE), but there is much wider dispersion as seen by the standard deviations (8.4 and 6.8, respectively). 97 schools out of the 98 in the dataset are included in this chart – 1 school has a low student roll and due to low numbers progressing on to FE, these numbers are not available because of the risk of identifying individuals.
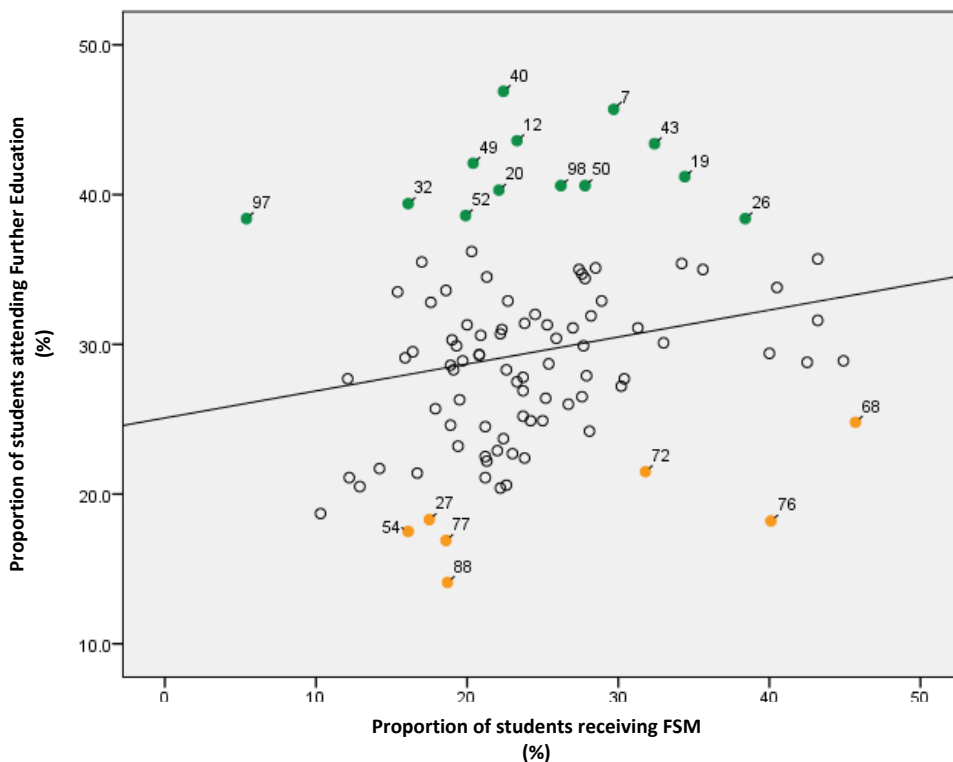
Figure 5.5: Proportion of students attending Further Education, by proportion of students receiving FSM

In Figure 5.6, we can see that there is a small upward trend towards a rise in FSM being correlated with higher numbers of students opting for employment as a leaver destination. However, this is very slight, and many schools are clustered around the mean of 23.3% (S.D. 5.7). It is worth noting that only 83 schools are included in this chart, as 13 schools had low numbers of students progressing on to employment (which would make individuals identifiable) and 2 had no students at all progressing into employment. Schools, according to the Scottish Government's 6-fold urban/rural measure, which fall into remote rural, accessible rural and remote small town are more likely to have higher proportions of their young people moving on to employment. As discussed with reference to Figure 5.4 and FE, this may be due to the lack of post-school educational (both FE and HE) opportunities available to them. So, it raises questions of deprivation and how to define it, when there is accessibility deprivation which effects their life choices (see Eisenstadt, 2017; Pavis, Hubbard and Platt, 2000; Cloke, Milbourne and Thomas, 1997).
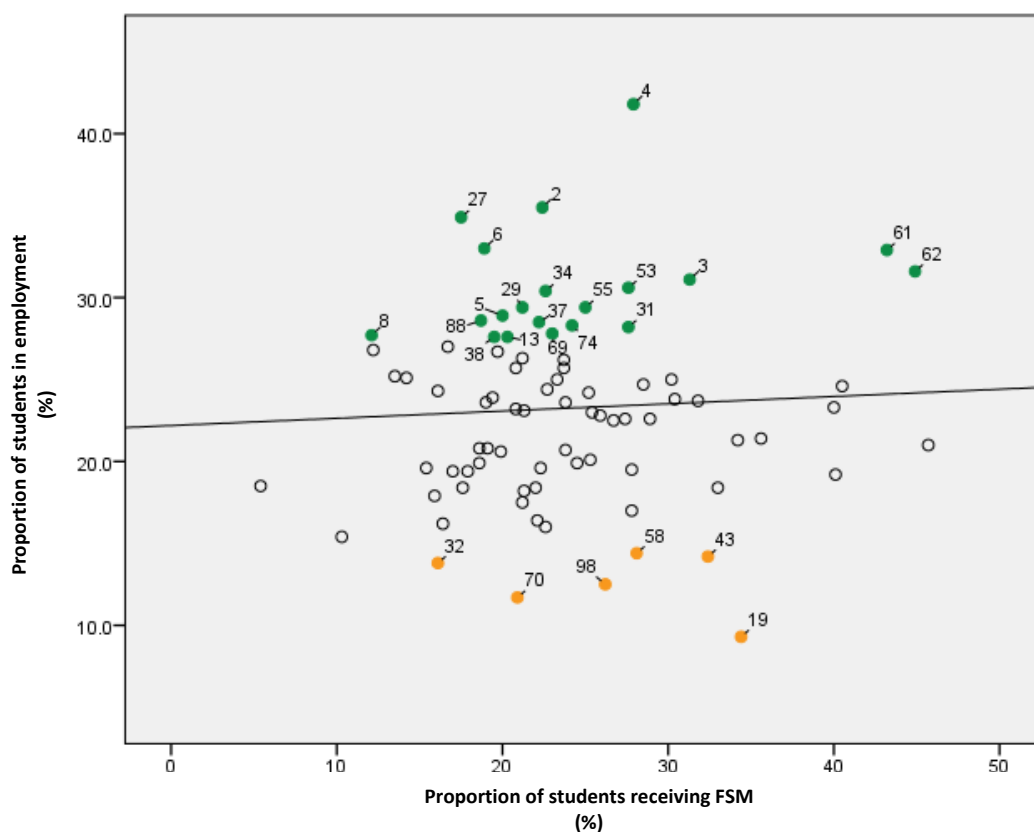
Figure 5.6: Proportion of students in employment, by proportion of students receiving FSM

In Figure 5.7, we move to exploring the links between traditional measures of attainment and disadvantage. This chart illustrates the negative and significant link between the proportions of students who receive 5 or more awards at level 5 (SCQF level National 5) by the end of S4, by the proportion of students receiving FSM. The highest proportion is 62% with the lowest being 0%

90

with no students attaining 5 or more awards at level 5. The mean is 25.6% (S.D. 9.6). The majority of schools are clustered around the line of best fit, with a handful of outliers.
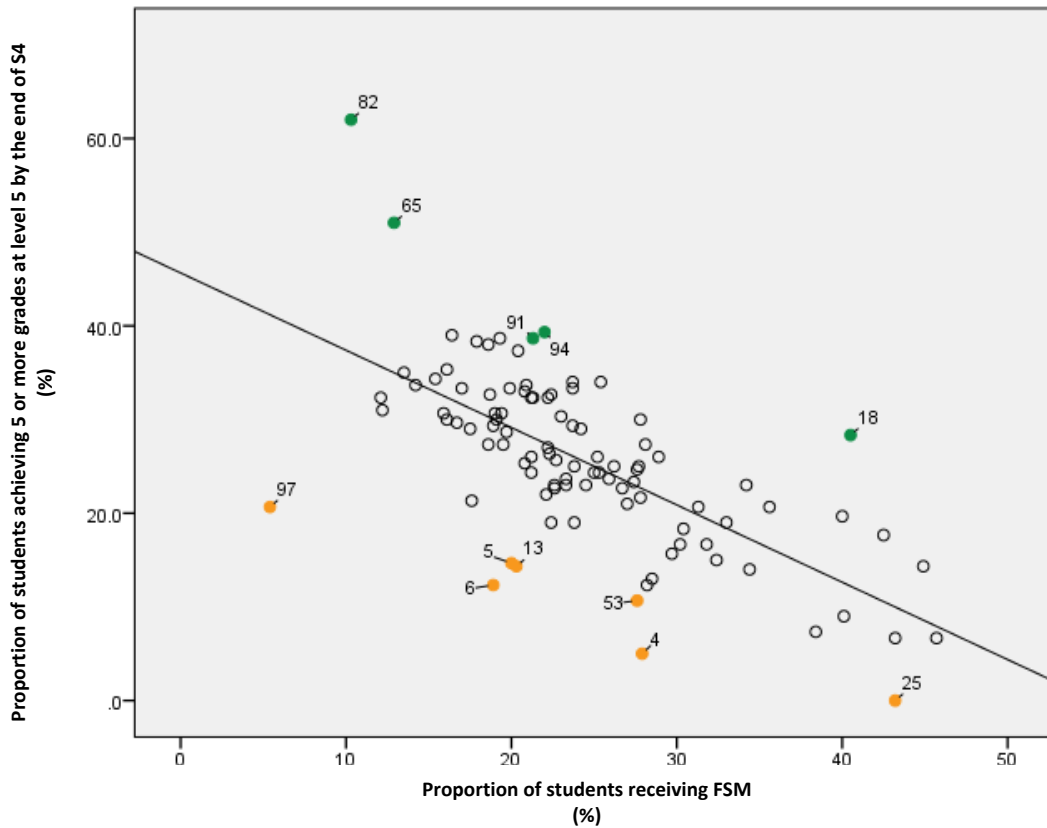
Figure 5.7: Proportion of students achieving 5 or more grades at level 5 by the end of S4, by proportion of students receiving FSM

Figure 5.8 displays the proportion of students achieving 3 or more awards at level 6 (SCQF Higher) by the end of S5, by the proportion of students receiving FSM. A similar trend as seen in Figure 5.7 can be viewed, with students less likely to achieve these grades as FSM proportions increase. The maximum proportion within this data is 44.3%, while as with Figure 5.7 the minimum value is 0% with no students within one school in the dataset achieving 3 or more awards at level 6. The mean for this dataset is 17% (S.D. 8).
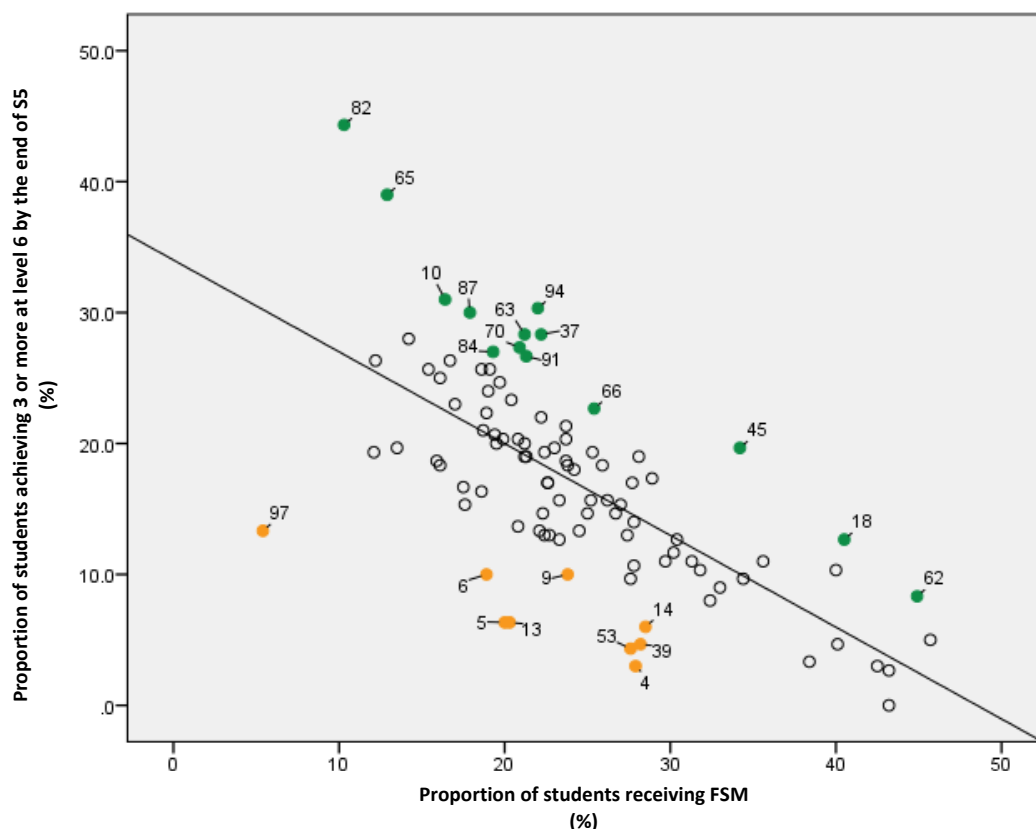
Figure 5.8: Proportion of students achieving 3 or more grades at level 6 by the end of S5, by proportion of students receiving FSM

Next steps: narrowing in on schools exceeding expectations

The next steps of the identification of potential case study schools process took a more subjective approach. I have listed these steps below.

- A points based system based on whether a particular school was an outlier on a chart or not. If so, they were awarded 1 point – with positive leaver destination having double weighting (2 points) due to the desire for this research not to focus solely on academic attainment.

- HMIe reports were considered alongside the quantitative information – with key themes noted. Schools which celebrated wider achievements, had positive networks alongside collaborative and partnership working, and a positive culture were given greatest weighting.

- Key informant interviews were used in order to find out more about the schools which were coming through in the quantitative/HMIe data as those exceeding expectations.

It is worth noting that, before speaking to the majority of key informants, I decided to remove a Local Authority due to accessibility and gatekeeping issues. Further schools were removed due

to inaccessibility (travel) from Central Scotland. This reduced the sample considerably, however it left a potential 10 schools (located across 6 Local Authorities), with the possibility to participate in the research, allowing me to eventually obtain access to 3 case study schools. For these particular schools, neighbourhood statistics were also explored to provide more in-depth information on the areas surrounding the school (such as, crime statistics, unemployment, death rates) and I took initial visits to explore the areas to understand the feel of an area and witness first-hand what the community was like (such as, thriving/flourishing, graffiti, type of housing).

The points-based system is flawed in that it is simplistic and removes the complexities of school ecologies which is significant to this research study. However, it helps to draw together a large range of complex data analysis and permits me to synthesise these in order to locate schools to conduct stage two of the research in. Furthermore, I wished to not get too caught up in the data. Therefore, I relied heavily upon the documentary analysis and key informants to give me greater context around each individual school. One particular quote from a key informant captured my intended use of the statistical data, and also the need for more critical exploration of the data itself:

> The data doesn't give us answers though. It only permits us to ask intelligent questions. We need to interrogate and sift through the information given to us and speak to the people who work on the ground day in and day out.
> Fieldnotes, Key informant interview, March 2015

The documentary analysis primarily consisted of thematic analysis. Regularly recurring ideas were indexed and coded in order to identify key themes and patterns. Therefore, I was principally focused on the product of the document and not in the processes of its production (Coffey 2014), while keeping in mind that the documents analysed are social artefacts which are embedded in cultural ways of telling (Esin, Fathi and Squire, 2014).

The multiple techniques used to identify potential case study schools afforded me the opportunity to gain a wider understanding of whether these schools were, or were not, producing better than expected educational outcomes for their students, with regards to wider achievement (and not simply attainment in exams). As a result of these explorations, and conversations with a key informant, a further Local Authority was omitted due to expected targeted funding to alleviate 'the attainment gap' during the fieldwork period (this would skew results as schools in this area would be receiving greater resources than the other schools in the

study). This left 3 Local Authorities containing 5 secondary schools, from which, I would conduct my eventual case study research in 3 secondary schools. The 3 schools which took part were selected based on the grounds of accessibility, both in relation to gatekeeping and travel.

From this selection process, I conducted research in two of these schools across two Local Authorities, Montgomery Academy and Forestside High School (pseudonyms are used when referring to schools and individuals in this research study). Contact was made with two schools in another Local Authority. However, by the time fieldwork was due to start they were no longer able to participate. Therefore, I explored the data for this particular Local Authority (from which I had already undergone the gatekeeping process) to locate my third school, Rosepark High School. This third school is less 'disadvantaged' in terms of SIMD levels than the schools which were initially selected, but the student population is much more diverse as is explained in Chapter Six.

Lies, damned lies, and statistics

Mixed methods research offers opportunities for researchers to widen understandings of concepts and attempt to develop holistic measures. However, and most significantly, it helps to broaden the world view of the researcher and encourages him/her to more deeply question the social world. It encourages the researcher to think about the values of methods, but also the relativity of the social world. For while '…the world [that] comes to us from the past possesses and controls us. We possess and control the world that we discover and invent' (Mead, 1923: 247).

It is important for researchers to consider the impact of the methods and tools that they use in their research, but also to carefully define their concepts. There is a widespread belief that statistics, and statistical analysis, offers objectivity and technicality, while, other forms of data analysis – primarily qualitative – are more subjective and impart very little technical knowledge. However, as argued by Gorard and Taylor (2004), and as illustrated in this chapter, statistical analysis relies upon judgements and non-technicalities just as much as other forms of data analysis. For, '…every way of telling about society does some of the job superbly, but other parts not so well. You can't maximise everything' (Becker, 2007: 285).

Therefore, and considering the ever-changing complexity of the social world, there is a need for researchers to recognise that '…business as usual will not lead to effective use of research to

address wicked problems, problems for which time for solutions is running out' (Mertens, 2015: 5). Mixed methods offers the opportunity to delve deeper into understanding the social world – and gives rise to the development, and use, of new and innovative thinking in helping researchers to explain the issues of today. However, it's also similarly just as important to not get caught up in the values, and even the methods and technicalities, of mixed methods. By doing so, we limit, and undermine, what research is for (Symonds and Gorard, 2008).

The following chapter provides an overview of these cases, the schools participating in this research, in order to give contextual background regarding the ecologies in which this data gathering took place.

Chapter 6: The school context

Introduction

This short chapter will provide an overview of each of the three case study schools which were involved in this research study. Mead (1934a) comments that in order to understand what is going on, we must take something as a 'dynamic whole', with no part being considered or understood by itself, because social acts and actions are a 'complex organic process' which go beyond the actions of one particular individual or social group (ibid: 6-7). Furthermore, '…all of the past is in the present as the conditioning nature of passage, and all the future arises out of the present as the unique events that transpire' (Mead, 1932: 33). Put simply, Mead is suggesting that an understanding of the present cannot take place without looking back to the past. Thus, the future only becomes available out of the actions undertaken the present. Therefore, this chapter is pivotal in setting the scene in which this study took place and in highlighting the ecologies of the schools that took part in the research.

As this study is concerned with how each school is embedded within a wider context, there will be discussion of the wider political and social context at the time in which the gathering of data took place. I will then describe the school context, focusing on the location, size, staffing, and general profile of the school itself, as well as referring to the wider local community. This information has been drawn from observations, government reports (such as HMIe inspection reports), and statistics (school-level, as well as official statistics for the local area).

Scottish policy context

I conducted my fieldwork over a period of 14 months, between October 2015 and December 2016. Major policy milestones relevant to this study, which were announced prior to the commencement of fieldwork, included: the Raising Attainment for All programme; the Scottish Attainment Challenge; and, the publication of the OECD report on 'Improving schools in Scotland'. However, during fieldwork and after the completion of my fieldwork, many more initiatives and changes have been introduced. These include: the Pupil Equity Fund; the Scottish Attainment Challenge Advisory Group; the launch of the NIF; and, the establishment of an International Council of Education Advisors.

Further information regarding these specific policies can be found in Chapter Two. However, it is worth noting again that this is not a definitive guide to initiatives and policies that have been enacted to try and close the attainment gap in Scotland. To do so, lies outwith the purpose of this thesis. Instead, I have tried to highlight the political and policy environment, in which this research has taken place, and what influences have led to the current situation in Scotland.

Montgomery Academy

Local area

Montgomery is located in a small town surrounded by agricultural land with the town itself unusually containing large areas of public, open space surrounded by woodland. The population is just over 20,000 with the vast majority of the residents being born in Scotland and identifying as Scottish (rather than British) – much higher than the Scottish average statistics. Those aged 16-17 years of age are less likely than the Scottish average to be in education, with three quarters being in education. Furthermore, a third of those aged 16 to 24 face unemployment (higher than the Scottish average). There are no major employers in the town, outside of the public sector, with many workers commuting to the nearest city. There are two schools within the town and one college. The town has five of the most deprived datazones (based on SIMD) in the Local Authority area – and these are situated in the nearby vicinity of Montgomery Academy. A concern for the Local Authority, regarding the local area, is the issue of rural disadvantage.

School context

Montgomery Academy is a non-denominational secondary school in Scotland covering the six years of secondary education. The student roll stands between 500-1000 young people. Students are primarily from the local area surrounding the school, with the majority of young people walking to school. There are approximately 60 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers. According to school census statistics, a third of students live in 20% of the most deprived datazones in Scotland and over 3 in 10 students are entitled to FSM. The school does particularly well in ensuring young people place in a positive destination upon leaving school, with over 90% in the school year prior to the commencement of fieldwork. Furthermore, the majority of these students end up in FE or HE – with the number attending FE institutions significantly higher than the Scottish average.

The school's vision values respect, happiness, equality, and citizenship while the school motto hints to permanently progressing, as individuals, but also as a wider community. Of particular

significance is the role of parental and wider community involvement. Throughout the school handbook the need for school, parents, community and the wider society, to work together to best prepare young people for life (during, but also beyond compulsory education) is noted time and time again. The school inspection report is vastly out-of-date, but it is suggested the community partnership of the local area is something to be commended in ensuring a vibrant learning community. In addition, Montgomery was part of a school improvement initiative in 2013 which supported the need for school-to-school networking and cross-agency partnerships in order to foster innovative ways of working and improvement across all systems (Chapman and Hadfield, 2010).

During my research

The school was very busy, the design of the school with narrow corridors and many various 'wings' to the building, gave it a very enclosed and claustrophobic feel. The Headteacher was supportive of the research, as was the Deputy Headteacher who became my main link. However, they were both very busy and as a result my time spent with them was limited to catch-up meetings at the end of each day spent in the school. In particular, the research update catch-ups were often interrogatory, with them hoping to find out what the young people had been saying that day. Senior management used walky talkies to communicate with one another and heads of the departments, and there were codes which were used to ensure the appropriate action was carried out. For example, a young boy misbehaved in class and the teacher asked for a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT), as it was a code red.

During lessons, the school was very quiet. The staffroom was rarely used by staff – even at break and lunch. One particular department tended to use the staffroom because they did not have a big enough staff base – and these were the teachers I spent the most time with. They were welcoming and easy-going, freely talking about problems with the school or troublesome young people, as well as engaging in critical debate regarding education policies (primarily raised in relation to discussion around my research). At lunch, staff appeared to eat lunch in their staff bases, while young people ate lunch in the dining hall or left the school grounds to go home for lunch or to purchase food from shops out with the school grounds. Both students and staff were often unaware of my presence which raised questions regarding ethics and informed consent (this is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven).

I spent a significant amount of my time observing classes. The time that I did spend with young people was often limited to one 50 minute period. Therefore, explaining the research and

ensuring those participating understood what taking part actually looked like consumed a significant amount of this time. As with all the participating schools, I sought reassurance regarding parental consent (and if this was gained for the young people that I spoke to) and I was assured by the SMT it was obtained.

The school building had benefited from significant refurbishment in recent years with almost all staff having their own teaching room. The walls were frequently decorated with young people's work and the tables and chairs were primarily organised into groups of 4 or 6. Each faculty had their own set of laptops which students could use. However, during my time there it seemed these often did not work when their use was required. For example, I encountered many students having login problems and being unable to logon until 45 minutes into the class. In addition, if a student had a faulty laptop they were sent to hand these over to the technician and obtain a replacement laptop – which also significantly ate into teaching time for these students.

Forestside High School

Local area

The town in which Forestside is located has an approximate population of 50,000 and is situated on the coast in a former industrial and manufacturing town. The town centre has many dilapidated buildings, lacks greenery, and suffers from inaccessibility and as a result low footfall (further compounded by a rise in out-of-town retail parks). The majority of the population are white and identify as Scottish (higher than the Scottish averages), while a quarter of the community live in rented accommodation from the Council (significantly higher than the Scottish average). For young people, 8 in 10 of 16-17 year olds are in education, but in the larger community 3 in 10 individuals have no qualifications. Many people work in the service and public sector in the town and surrounding areas. In the locality as a whole, 3 in 10 lived in one of the most deprived datazones in Scotland – with the North of the town (in which Forestside is located) containing the majority of these zones.

Context

Forestside is a non-denominational secondary school in Scotland covering the six years of secondary education. The student roll is under 500 young people and there are under 50 FTE teachers. Over half of the students live in one of the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland and 4 in 10 young people are eligible for FSM. Almost 90% of young people are placed in a positive destination within the first 6 months of leaving school, with 70% of these in either FE,

employment or training. The inspection report from HMIe comments how: staff work together to meet the needs of every young person; the school provides a positive environment which stimulates, motivates and encourages young people to learn; and, this results in an environment where students are keen to learn and achieve.

The school website states that the school's aims are: student development; increasing the availability of opportunity for students; and, partnership and collaborative working with external agencies. The webpages are user friendly and holds a wealth of information which highlights transparency and a desire to engage and collaborate. Topics covered in easy to find sections on the website are: curriculum choice forms; proposal for the intended school plans for use of the Pupil Equity Fund; and, numerous documents on behaviour policies and management.

During my research

The Headteacher and SMT were all very welcoming and enthusiastic regarding my research. However, other members of staff appeared somewhat hostile to my presence. I was frequently treated as an 'outsider' and regularly asked if I was posing as a school inspector. As a result, I spent the least amount of time in this school. Although I was acting ethically, and I am not from HMIe, the potential anxiety and stress I could have caused teachers led me to rethink my research strategy. However, these feelings of suspicion and hostility on the part of the school staff is a significant research finding and one I refer to throughout this thesis.

Rosepark High School

Local area

Rosepark is located in a large Scottish city therefore I will describe the context of the local area in which the school is located. The area has a history of heavy industry, and suffered from deindustrialisation and depopulation. In recent times the local area has under gonea significant amount of regeneration resulting in a multi-cultural and diverse community. There are places of worship for a variety of religions, many food stores specialising in country specific food (e.g. Chinese, Polish), a growing range on independent cafes, bars and restaurants which add to the vibrant community, and numerous galas and festivals (organised by the local community) held throughout the year to celebrate the cultural diversity of the community. There is a distinct feeling of community and a sense of individual identity, separate from that of the city itself, as a result of the long and varied history.

The area has a high population density and is popular with young professionals due to low rental costs. The population of 30,000 are more likely to live in apartments/flats and to be renting (private or Council) compared to the Scottish averages. The statistics from the 2011 census highlighted just over 72% residents were British born, with the vast majority being born in Scotland. This leaves almost 30% being born outside of the UK.

What is of particular relevance when considering Rosepark, and its wider context, is the varied background of those who attend Rosepark. The community is diverse in relation to: ethnicity; country of birth; language(s) spoken at home; and religion. However, it is also diverse, when one considers household income and general affluence. Redevelopment, gentrification and affluence sit alongside issues of social and economic deprivation, unemployment and social exclusion.

Context

Rosepark is a large school, typical of an inner-city comprehensive, which has approximately 1,000 students and just under 100 FTE teachers. It is co-educational, non-denominational and covers all six years of secondary education. There are a large number of English as Additional Language (EAL) speakers and over a quarter of students live in 20% of the most deprived areas in Scotland and similar numbers are eligible for FSM. Positive destination figures were just over 85% with most going into employment, HE and FE. The Headteacher has been in position for a number of years and, from my observations, he took a lot of pride in the diverse and inclusive nature of the school. The school values align with the Four Capacities underlined by CfE in developing young people who are: successful; respectful; self-aware; and, resilient.

In the most recent HMIe report it was noted that: staff were committed and the majority had contributed to curriculum development and improving learning and teaching; the school had well-established links with a range of external partners; effective support was offered for those with additional needs, such as EAL, education welfare, and ASN; young people were positive regarding opportunities for wider achievement; and, young people had a sense of the school being a community, with parents also commenting on the strong links between Rosepark and the local community.

During my research

From my first meeting with the Headteacher to discuss participation, and arrange fieldwork dates, I felt very welcomed and his enthusiasm for the research area was apparent throughout my time at the school. It was also the school, in which I spent the longest period of time – with

all three phases of my sequential ethnographic research being conducted at Rosepark. I was requested to sign in at the school office during my visits to Rosepark. Due to the variation in my days, and also the rooms I used for interviews and group activities, I was often met by a member of the SMT, who would check in to see how I was getting on and would quickly show me to where I was supposed to be. I was not given an access card, so I was often reliant upon other teachers giving me access to restricted areas (for example, accessing doors leading back to the main building from the temporary classroom units located at the side of the school) or I would need to walk back round to the main entrance. During lessons, the school was quiet with very few young people, or staff, walking around in the corridors. The staffroom was rarely used during lessons, nor at lunch time, but was heavily used during break when staff tended to sit in small social groups (mixed-subject) and catch up about their lives outside of school. At break, coffee and tea were served alongside a selection of snacks (at a cost). In a section of the staffroom there was a 'library' with a wide range of books on education and a table filled with various leaflets and flyers related to specific areas of teaching like STEM subjects or ASN or staff wellbeing. At lunch, staff tended to eat in their classrooms or in their subject bases, while young people ate in the dining room or left the school to one of the many local shops/takeaways. The school day commenced at 8.30am and finished at 3.15pm. Every morning began with tutor group (10 minutes) before the day was divided into six periods of approximately 55 minutes each. The school building was of an unusual design, and a one-way system was in place to minimise congestion at the end/start of each period. During my time at Rosepark, the vast majority of students respected this rule and often moved promptly between classes. When I was observing classes, and moving around the school with students, they often engaged in inquisitive conversation with me asking more about myself. Sometimes I was used as a threat to other students. For example, a young person would point out to other students they passed in the corridor (usually older and a family member, i.e. older siblings) that they should watch their language or behave otherwise I would give them into trouble. At both break and lunch time there was a senior management presence in the hallways, with both staff and prefects partaking in a rota to supervision lunchtime.

The classrooms in the school tended to be in need of repair or decoration. Desks were quite often covered in graffiti and carpets had chewing gum tread into them. As previously mentioned, some classrooms were located in temporary units due to the expansion of the student roll over the years. All classrooms had whiteboards and projectors and tables and chairs were primarily organised into rows with students sitting in pairs. The walls of each classroom varied depending on the subject taught and also the interests of the teacher. The science classroom was filled with

posters of the natural world and numerous plants which gave a feeling of 'life' to the classroom. The religious and moral studies classroom's wall was filled with student work covering various religions, important figures in history, and philosophical debates. In addition, most classrooms tended to have multilingual signs in the classroom. These were predominantly in English, Mandarin Chinese and Polish.

Summary

Research does not take place within a vacuum. Instead, research and the gathering of data is done within unique and ever changing social and political contexts – with conflicting agendas (Ragin, 1992). It is messy and relational as it operates within a wider ecosystem (the ecological context). This ecosystem contributes to the problematic situation – the attainment gap – and if we dismiss, or ignore, the environing conditions we risk focusing on simply defining the problem rather than understanding how it works and how we can resolve or better understand an issue (Becker, 1998). This contextual chapter describes each of three case study schools and offers a contextualisation of each school to better understand the environment in which they are situated.

The next chapter provides overview of the data collections methods undertaken at stage two of the fieldwork and discusses the approach to analysis as well as the ethical issues that were encountered. Stage two of the research explored in-depth, the ecologies of Montgomery Academy, Forestside High School and Rosepark High School, in order seek an understanding as to why these schools were achieving better than expected. This stage was iterative in design – based upon exploration, analysis and refinement across multiple phases once in the field.

Chapter 7: Exploring schools that exceed expectations: a multi-method approach

Introduction

In Chapter Five, I provided an overview of the research steps undertaken at stage one to identify potential schools in which to undertake exploratory research. The previous chapter, Chapter Six, introduced these selected case study schools to the reader. This chapter will focus on the methodological process involved in the data collection and analysis of stage two of this research study. All aspects of the research design and process are documented, with justification, and a reflexive commentary offered throughout. It accounts for the case study design and use of 'ethnographic intent', before moving on to discuss the phased approach to this stage and the specific methods used. Ethical considerations and reflections are addressed.

Multiple methods

Chapter Five outlined the multiple methods approach of the research study and referenced how stage one adopted a mixed methods approach, drawing upon a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative methods. In contrast, the second stage (the in-depth case studies) described in this chapter adopts multi-method research utilising multiple qualitative methods (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

Morse (2003) defines multi-method research designs as those conducted with two or more research methods, with results triangulated to form a whole. Brewer and Hunter (2006) comment that the imperfections found in each method can be compensated for in the use of other methods. Thus, the multi-method approach allows for complementary methods to be utilised alongside one another in order to strengthen the data that can be gathered (see Chapter Five for a wider discussion surrounding the benefits and value of triangulation). Punch (1998) notes that qualitative researchers frequently draw upon multi-methods, especially those adopting an ethnographic approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) further this argument by noting how qualitative research is inherently multi-method through the deployment of a range of interconnected methods in a bid to gain a better understanding of the subject matter at hand.

It is important to note that, in line with the Pragmatic framing of this thesis, the methodological approach is 'problem-centred' (Creswell, 2014). In doing so, the emphasis remains focused on

developing a greater understanding of the research problem, the poverty related attainment gap in Scotland. Therefore, the pluralistic methods which are discussed below were selected based upon their ability in helping to better understand the problem (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In line with Lamont and Swidler's (2014) thinking, I intend to move away from methodological tribalism in order to highlight that each methodological technique does not have agency. In other words, the success of a method depends upon what is done with it and what it is used for. Each method of gathering data can be useful, the issues lie in appropriate research questions, and the ways in which each method is applied. An overview of case study research and ethnographic approaches will now be given, before the phased nature of this stage two research is outlined in greater detail.

Case study: a real world perspective

There is much discussion on what qualifies as a case study. Yin (2014) comments that case study design is not set in stone. The design should be flexible and allow for modifications based on discoveries during data collection (a belief which is in line with the falsification characterisation of the case study). It is a methodology which gives structure to inquiry. Flyvbjerg (2006) states to define a case study would be misleading and over-simplify the matter at hand. Conversely, Stake (2005) argues that the case study is not a methodology, but is a choice of what is to be studied by the researcher. Creswell (2013) takes both these views and accepts them – a case study can be the object of study, as well as a product of inquiry. This is the view that will be adopted in this research as the schools in this study are the objects of study, but adopting such an approach has also given structure to the process of inquiry.

Creswell (2013) defines a case as a 'bounded system', with Stake (1995) noting that the attributes of such a system would be that it is '…a specific, a complex, functioning thing' as well as an 'integrated system' (ibid: 2). It is a choice of what is to be studied (on the part of the researcher) and it is bounded by time, and place (Stake 2005). Therefore, in this research study the case refers to each of the three schools identified at stage one of the research process: Montgomery Academy, Forestside High School, and Rosepark High School.

Yin (2014) argues that case studies offer a holistic and real world perspective of particular social phenomena. He further notes that it is particularly suited to explain the how or why of such circumstances. Flyvbjerg (2006) augments this idea by highlighting the closeness of case study research to real-life situations. He continues by arguing that research utilising case studies present a 'virtual reality' to the reader in which the reader is then able to explore and enter this

reality inside and out (ibid: 238). In particular, and of interest for this particular research, Wrigley (2014) advocates for case studies which spend sufficient time in a school to highlight the contextual and situational factors at play within a school.

There are common misconceptions surrounding case study research. It can be deemed too subjective, with the issue of researcher bias being high, resulting in issues surrounding findings being ungeneralisable (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 219). However, as outlined in this section, case studies have their merits and values, just like any other method. Stake (2005) suggests that the value of the case study lies in it highlighting a particular social phenomena in a particular setting and that generalisations can lead to readers seeing the phenomena more simplistically than they should (ibid: 23).   Flyvbjerg (2006) believes that it should be possible to generalise using a single case, but, on the same lines as Stake (2005), he acknowledges that generalisation is often over-valued, while the power of a single example is often underestimated. Flyvbjerg (2006) suggests that we should aim for case studies which are different things to different people, enabling people to add their own interpretation to the study.

Moving to the notion that case studies can be nuclear and inward looking, Inglis (2010) highlights how their study of the micro world can offer a link to the macro world of structural forces. Cases offer clues and episodes, which, when pieced together with suitable theories, helps to connect the micro and the macro worlds. Similarly, Thomson (2009) has noted that individual cases acknowledge the local cultural and historical context, while also recognising that individuals, and their thinking, connections and interactions, are '…a key that unlocks the operations of the social' (ibid: 20). These particular strengths of the case-study approach align well with the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Three. The social-ecological model promotes exploration of the social world at both the micro and the macro levels – as well as the relationships and interactions between the multiple levels of the social system. Thus, utilising the social-ecological model, alongside a case study approach, allows for the interconnections between the multiple levels of the social world to be acknowledged.

Flyvbjerg (2006) suggests that case study research contains a bias towards verification of the researchers' preconceived beliefs. However, he strongly argues that falsification, not verification, is what characterises case study research, while, commenting that bias, and subjectivism are issues every researcher needs to be aware of, and account for, no matter their research design or methods they employ. As Ragin (1992) noted, it is impossible to do research in a 'conceptual vacuum' (ibid: 217).

Case study research also lends itself particularly well to mixed methods research. The researcher seeks to generate a sound understanding of the case itself, and in doing so the researcher should utilise all methods possible in order to leave no stone unturned. Mixed methods allow for complementary data, and further lends itself to the notion that case study research is characterised by falsification in that the researcher adopts various methods to explore a number of different perspectives (Yin, 2014).

As a result of the great amount of flexibility offered by case study research, it has been argued that it is a weak sibling of other more rigorous research approach, such as statistical methods (Yin, 2014). However, adopting such a view fails to recognise the strengths and value of case study research, and also dismisses the limitations of statistical research – for every approach has its strengths and weaknesses (Stake, 1995). Therefore, in recognising the strengths of such an approach, I also need to consider the drawbacks. Case study research has been adopted previously as a catch-all design to justify research which does not fit within traditional frameworks (Merriam, 2009) and there has been inconsistency in its application (the flexibility it offers can sometimes be too open, especially for less experienced researchers) (Thomas, 2011). In addition, as a result of the flexibility, studies may lack rigour if the researcher allows his or her bias, and does not recognise this, to filter into the direction of data collection, analysis, and conclusions (Yin, 2014).

Ethnographic intent: a phased approach to a culture studying culture

Ethnography can be defined as '…the study of a culture-sharing group and its members' core values and beliefs' (Creswell, 2013: 119). It is inward looking in that it aims to uncover knowledge regarding a particular culture. The researcher seeks to understand another way of life, or how another system works, from the 'native' viewpoint (Spradley, 1980). In other words, '…ethnography is a culture-studying culture' (ibid: 13) where the researcher slowly becomes more and more familiar with the social puzzle in which they are studying (Barley and Bath, 2014).

The flexibility of ethnography, in studying and understanding the social world, is often situational, in that the length of time and methods employed vary between studies and researchers (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004). Hammersley (2006) raises concern over this temporal variation in that the research can suffer from sampling issues, generalisation, and failure to recognise the cyclical, variable and fluid natures of an area of study. Furthermore Becker (1996) has asked: why do we study the lived experiences of other when the experience is right there to be seen? And, why do

we celebrate the thick description and detail of ethnographic accounts when that's all it is as the full reality may never be fully understood? In his own words, '…full description is a will-of-the-wisp' (Becker 1996).

However, Corsaro and Molinari (2000) argue that ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, are a valuable means of exploring the dynamics of social processes prospectively, for they enable researchers to 'walk alongside' their respondents and capture the flow of their daily lives. In addition, the adoption of an ethnographic approach gives strength to the understanding that we, as researchers, have an ethical obligation to honour the social, cultural and historical context of the lives and lifeworlds that we study (Robinson, 2014; Christensen, 2004).

Moreover, along with the aforementioned limitations noted above, ethnography can often be difficult to resource with regards to time and cost – and can come with considerable access limitations (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004). Therefore, there can be value in adopting ethnographic approaches, rather than engaging in true ethnography, as a method. In doing so researchers can gain an understanding of a context and the processes in which shape, and are shaped, by the context. In orientating research towards interpreting culture(s), this allows the researcher to focus on the research and the key aims of the study, while minimising concern over the methodological matters of what really is ethnography. Wolcott (1987), who advocated for the approach of research with 'ethnographic intent', comments that to make the ethnographic process explicit is almost as problematic as making culture explicit. He advocates for an 'intent' approach because:

> …the essence of fieldwork is revealed in the intent behind it, rather than the label itself… fieldwork is a form of enquiry in which one is immersed personally in the ongoing activities of some individual or group for the purposes of research. Fieldwork is characterized by personal involvement to achieve some level of understanding that will be shared with others.
>
> (Wolcott, 1995: 66)

In addition, it is important to remember that ethnography does not determine the truth, but instead offers multiple truths which are apparent in life (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995). It is through the interactions with the researcher that we can be gain insight into how people build social connections, face uncertainties, and see first-hand how understanding and interpretation arises – and can change over time (Mead, 1917, 1934a). For the present can be seen as the true

locus of reality as it is in a constant state of emergence. It is only through the present that we make sense of the past and the future (Mead, 1932). However, as Flyvbjerg (2006) noted regarding case studies and the ability for them to be anything to anyone, so too can ethnographies. Ethnographies help the reader to better understand the traditions and culture of what has been studied – and how these can be linked in to wider society. This aligns with the conceptual framing of this thesis, the social-ecological model, which places understanding interactions between the micro and macro at its heart. As previously noted, life can be seen as a complex web in which all individuals are bound together in a large interconnected co-dependent system (Park, 1936).

However, in line with discussions that arose in Chapter Three surrounding SER, it is important to note that although ethnographies and case-studies help us to better understand the social world, they do not point us towards what is the best way to move forward or what should be done in order to see improvement across society.

For this stage of the research process, a phased approach was adopted, in order to build upon developing themes from the fieldwork (with analysis occurring concurrently alongside the fieldwork). This enabled the participants to guide the research. In addition, it permitted particularly interesting themes to be more closely followed up, in order to gain a deeper understanding as to how these particular schools were achieving good educational outcomes for their young people. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I will discuss this phased approach, referring briefly to the schools and outlining the phases and the methods undertaken at these phases.

Schools

Table 7.1 provides information on the schools which took part in stage two of the research. More specifically, Table 7.1 outlines which phases, of stage two, the school took part in. Further details regarding the contextual nature of each school in given in the following chapter. Furthermore, it is important to note throughout this thesis that to further protect the confidentiality of schools and participants, all participants, and others they refer to within our interactions, have been given pseudonyms, and, identifying characteristics regarding the location of each school have been removed.

Pseudonym	Phase one (Familiarisation)	Phase two (Beliefs & Attitudes)	Phase three (Personalisation)
Rosepark High School	✓	✓	✓
Forestside High School	✓	✓	
Montgomery Academy	✓	✓	

<div align="center">**Table 7.1: School participation at each phase of the research study**</div>

The tables below outline the methods I took during each phase of this case study. Each table highlights the methods used and includes the reasoning, types of data produced and the analytical process which followed from that data collection. In the later section on data analysis in this chapter I provide a further breakdown of the methods utilised, which schools these methods were adopted in and the amount of data produced from such methods.

Phase one: Familiarisation

Barley and Bath (2014) advocate for researchers to include a period of familiarisation into their research, prior to officially starting fieldwork, in order to enhance the quality of data collection at later stages. Adopting a 'familiarisation' period such as this, considers the process of ethnography as similar to that of working out a puzzle or a jigsaw – one which requires continual reflection. I chose to adopt this approach in order to build relationships with the gatekeepers and potential research participants, but it also gave me the opportunity to familiarise myself with, and come to understand, the day-to-day processes within the school itself. The first phase, and familiarisation period, is outlined below in Table 7.2.

Method	Aim	Nature of data	Analytical process	Research question
Observations (S3-S6)	Understanding staff attitudes – and helping to formulate an understanding of the setting (familiarisation)	Field notes	• Exploring individual experiences (particular scenarios where the transactional framework and ecological understanding of agency can be seen) • Thematic analysis of recurring ideas.	(Q2 and 3) What are the factors that improve educational outcomes for young people in such schools?
Informal conversations with a range of members of staff				

<div align="center">**Table 7.2: Phase one of the research study**</div>

Phase two: Beliefs and attitudes, in defining and, understanding achievement

The second phase of the case study research involved following leads from the first phase, as outlined in Table 7.2. Table 7.3 displays what methods were utilised, the tasks and aims of such tasks, the nature of data collected and how these were analysed.

Method	Task	Aim	Reasoning from phase one	Nature of data collected	Analysis	Research questions
Interviews with young people (based upon task-based activities)	Network discussion – focused around who is important and why.	• To explore the importance of social networks in young people's lives • Their understanding of the purposes and values of education	• Community culture and social ties (cultural and relational) appear to be of significant importance. • However, what value do young people place on these? • Are their views of education (what it is for, its purposes, the values) in line with those around them? • Collection of physical data	Field notes, audio-recordings, photographic copies of the tasks completed by the young people (e.g. network maps)	• Exploring individual experiences (continued from phase one) • Exploration of relational networks • Thematic analysis of recurring ideas	(Q2 and 3) What are the factors that improve educational outcomes for young people in such schools?
Teacher (and other key members of staff) semi-structured interviews	Discussion of themes arising from the research with young people	• To explore views and understandings of attainment, achievement (deficit/asset views), and the purposes and values of education	• Arising from conflicting data (surrounding the statistical data at stage one) and how procedures are carried out (from observations and informal discussion at stage two, phase one) • Collection of physical data	Field notes and audio-recordings	• Thematic analysis of recurring ideas	
Observations	Following S1/2 year groups (totalling 2 school days, per year group, per school)	• Are policies/beliefs actioned in practice?	• Arising from conflicting data (surrounding the statistical data) and how procedures are carried out (from observations and informal discussion) • Exploration of the community and school cultures – are these a reality?	Field notes	• Analysis of official school documents alongside the observations (comparative)	

Table 7.3: Phase two of the research study

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The third, and final, phase of the stage two research was carried out in one case study school, Rosepark High School. This was due to accessibility issues at other schools and it permitted a deeper exploration of ideas and themes that had emerged from the interviews and observations in phases one and two at this school. Below, Table 7.4 presents the methods which were utilised, the tasks and aims of such tasks, the reasoning for exploring these aims, the nature of data collected and how these were analysed.

Method	Task	Aim	Reasoning from phase one and two	Nature of data collected	Analysis	Research questions answered
Group discussion/ activities with young people (who took part in the task based activities)	To expand upon ideas raised in the first group discussions	• To explore the importance of key themes (community; ideas of success; HE) • Gain further insight into their understanding of the purposes and values of education	• Community culture and social ties (cultural and relational) appear to be of significant importance. What what value do young people place on these? • Are their views of education (purposes and values) in line with those around them? • Collection of physical data which provides a greater understanding into why this school is 'bucking the trend'	Field notes, audio-recordings, photographic copies of the tasks completed by the young people (e.g. card sort, recipe for success)	• Exploring individual experiences • Exploration of relational networks and the nature of social networks • Understanding notions of success • Thematic analysis of recurring ideas	(Q2 and 3) What are the factors that improve educational outcomes for young people in such schools?
Group discussion/ activities with young people (not previously taken part in this study and across different years)	To further explore themes arising from the previous group discussions	• To explore views, and understandings, of attainment and achievement • Gain further insight into their understanding of the purposes and values of education	• Arising from conflicting data (surrounding the statistical data) and how procedures are carried out (from observations and informal discussion) • Collection of physical data	Field notes and audio-recordings, photographic copies of the tasks completed by the young people (e.g. card sort, recipe for success)	• Understanding notions of success • Thematic analysis of recurring ideas	

Table 7.4: Phase three of the research study

Methods

The majority of data were collected through the use of interviews, group discussions and task-based activities. These were conducted primarily with young people in the selected schools, but also included interviews with teachers and senior management. I also kept field notes, in which I recorded observations and interactions, and a research diary, which included my thoughts and emerging ideas. The observations in this study were used to immerse the researcher in the surroundings, but also allowed for the discovery of the new and unforeseen (Croghan et al., 2008).

In this study, in line with Berger's (2015) thinking I have adopted the approach of being a stranger in a strange land. I have not studied at secondary school for over a decade, I was not brought up in the age of social media, and I was brought up in community which faced little socio-economic disadvantage. In addition, lives are so individualised it is almost impossible to comprehend the situation of each individual – and to do so would be discourteous to the complex journeys that each individual embarks (Hammersley, 2013). Furthermore, it has been noted that the 'ignorance' of the researcher and the expert position of the researched is noted as being an empowering experience (Berger and Malkinson, 2000). In addition, with concerns towards bias and objectivity, being unfamiliar with the specific experiences of the young people in this study encourages the researcher to approach the research in fresh and innovative ways, pose new questions, and be open to divergent directions. I also adopted the role of 'interacting observer' (Weick, 1985), acknowledging that my presence would influence the situation – and events and/or interactions could have played out differently if I were not there (Nespor, 1997). This process, while acknowledging the work of Mead (1932) and the social-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fraser, 2004), was enlightening for the researcher in not only aiding their understanding of the social and cultural worlds of young people, but also in developing their research craft. In addition, it also gives young people the opportunity to have their voice heard and valued (Nespor, 1997).

Researcher toolkit: a mosaic approach

Interviews are often used to elicit a deeper understanding of social phenomena through an exploration of the participants' insights and perspectives (Brinkmann, 2013). In this study, semi-structured interviewing was utilised with members of staff and young people. Staff were selected by me as a result of informal conversations that had arisen. Young people were selected at random by the school on the basis of those students who had obtained parental consent. The interviews with young people tended to be less structured as our discussions arose out of the

drawings/maps generated – otherwise known as graphic elicitation (Bagnoli, 2009). Appendices H and I display the interview tools that I used when speaking to the teachers: the interview schedule alongside news headlines which were used to encourage debate and discussion. It was found that the interview often gave a less formal, and more outward looking (less focus on the school) feel to the process which appeared to ease both participant and researcher.

Many of the formal interactions, the interviews and group discussions, with young people involved some element of task-based activities. These comprised: social network maps; worksheet completion; card sorts; graphic elicitation; and discussion surrounding vignettes. I adopted a toolkit - or 'mosaic' approach (Clark and Moss, 2011) - for my study in order to gain different perspectives and insights into the lived experiences of the young people. Drawing on multiple, and diverse, sources of data gave the young people different opportunities to express themselves and also aided engagement in the research. By providing individuals with various ways to express their thoughts and experiences, also led to me being provided with opportunities to begin to understand the complexity of the school ecology which was key to the theoretical framing of this research study.

Social network maps

The social network, or relational, maps drew upon the work of Bagnoli (2009) and Bridger (2013). Bagnoli (2009) adopted an approach with little structure. She offered the young people a basic scaffolding: to place themselves in the middle of the sheet of paper and show the important people in the life. This gave the young people the opportunity to construct their own representations of the relationships around them. In these maps, they were also allowed to include important objects and role models. Bridger (2013) adopted a more structured method, utilising the original ideas of Roseneil (2006) of concentric, and pre-drawn, circles to illustrate a map of relationships.

In this study, I adopted an approach similar to Bagnoli (2009), I asked young people to place themselves in the middle and show me what/who is important in their life (including fictional individuals and important objects). I also offered the young people free rein to map out these relations however they wanted: they were able to draw, create a mind map, or simply write down the relationships. However, I was also there to give instructions if need be and they were encouraged to ask questions or to talk about what was important in their lives. I adopted a less structured approach, as I wanted to ensure that all young people found it valuable and did not

feel constrained by what was already on the paper. These maps were used not only as stimulus in the interviews with individual young people, but were also used as data.

Examples of two social network maps drawn by young people in the study can be seen in Figures 7.1 and 7.2. Figure 7.1 was one of the most detailed maps that was generated, while Figure 7.2 was one of the less detailed maps. However, in the follow-up interview, the young person who drew the map in Figure 7.2 was able to talk in much greater detail about his map and found it much easier to talk through his thoughts and experiences. This highlights the benefits of drawing upon different methods, in order to not only capture a full picture of the young people in study, but also to enable them the greatest opportunity to have their voice heard. Furthermore, there was another social network map which solely listed people's names and sports teams – and appeared to have no order – but once paired with the interview it gave me an incredibly detailed insight into this young person's life.
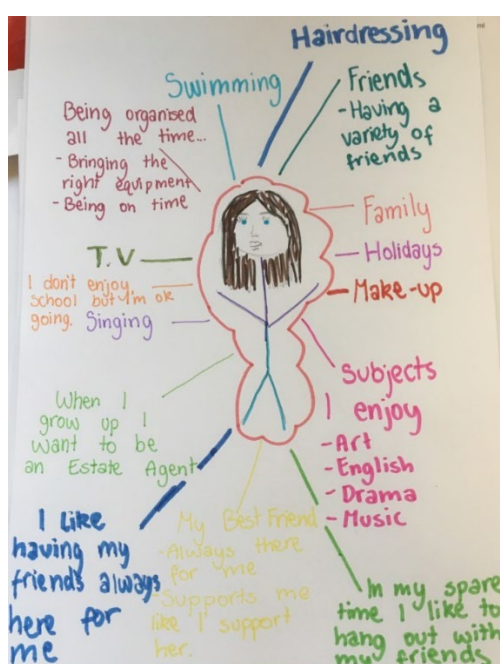
Figure 7.1: A social network map from Rosepark High School

This method worked particularly well in acting as an ice-breaker and encouraging young people to open up to me, as it gave us a starting point in which to begin our dialogue. It also gave young people a certain element of control over what was discussed, as the follow-up interview, referred to their social network map. This offered young people independence in our interactions and permitted them to bring up themes and conclude the interviews on their own terms (Christensen, 2004). Sheridan, Chamberlain and Dupuis (2011) have noted that graphic

elicitation methods give participants a more active role in research, as both researcher and researched are engaged in the interaction.
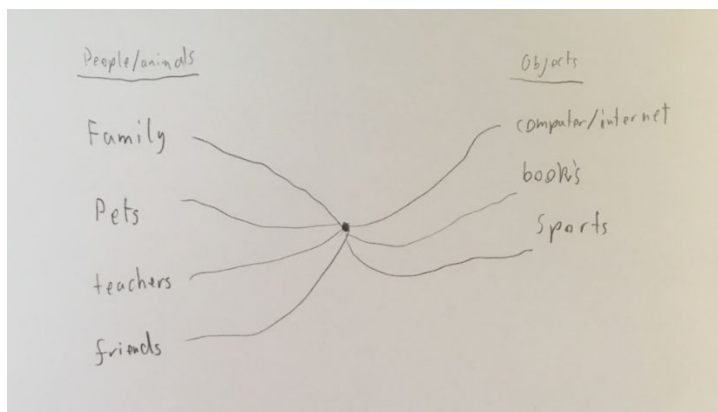
Figure 7.2: A social network map from Forestside High School

Group activities

The group discussions with young people were used to challenge or give weight to ideas that were emerging from the interview data – eliciting a range of different perspectives on the topic of interest (Bloor et al., 2004). The group participants were in the same year group (ranging from S1 to S5), so that they were at the same stage in their school career and were able to debate and discuss issues relevant to such a stage. At this second phase groups were often of mixed gender however at the third stage, and as the discussions became more focused, the researcher ensured groups were of the same gender. This was done to minimise participant harm as a result of an awareness that the topics discussed may bring up very different issues dependent upon the gender of the young person.

In the group sessions, I offered young people a range of activities which included: a card-sort ranking exercise, vignette discussion, writing down their ideas of success, and drawing/writing a postcard of their future self to their present self. I adopted the idea of 'activity oriented questions' (Colucci, 2007) in order to: offer variety; provide alternative ways for the young people to contribute to the discussions; encourage participation of less confident, or more introverted, people; and also to stimulate discussion in ways that may not have been captured through me simply posing questions. As Harris and colleagues (2015), Bagnoli (2009) and Nespor (1997) have identified, individuals need to feel an active part of the process and offering them a variety of methods to choose from can give them the best opportunity for their voice to be heard. The methods employed during these group sessions were not prescriptive. Therefore, at

times, different activities were used in different groups dependent upon young person engagement and their willingness to take part in the activities.

Appendix F contains the topic guides which were used in the first set of group sessions in phase two, while Appendix G contains the topic guide used in phase three. There are similarities between these guides. However, the second guide is slightly less detailed with more emphasis on the activities and the discussion which may arise from such activities (as a result of the range of discussion which arose during the activities in the first round of group discussions).

Card sort activity

To overcome young people's reticence at the start of each group session, I introduced a card sort activity to help break the ice and get everyone discussing what success looks like (see Figure 7.3). Young people were asked to rank each individual on the card in terms of their success. Individuals ranged from historical and sports figures, reality television stars to global leaders from politics and business.

Following Lyotard's definition of the concept of performativity, this task asked young people to 'encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgment' (Lyotard 1984: 46). It is important to note that this activity was not designed in order to encourage performance focused behaviour, but instead to encourage discussion surrounding the different understandings of success. Hence, this activity was completed with groups of young people in order for critical debate to occur. The findings of these discussions can be found in Chapter Eight.
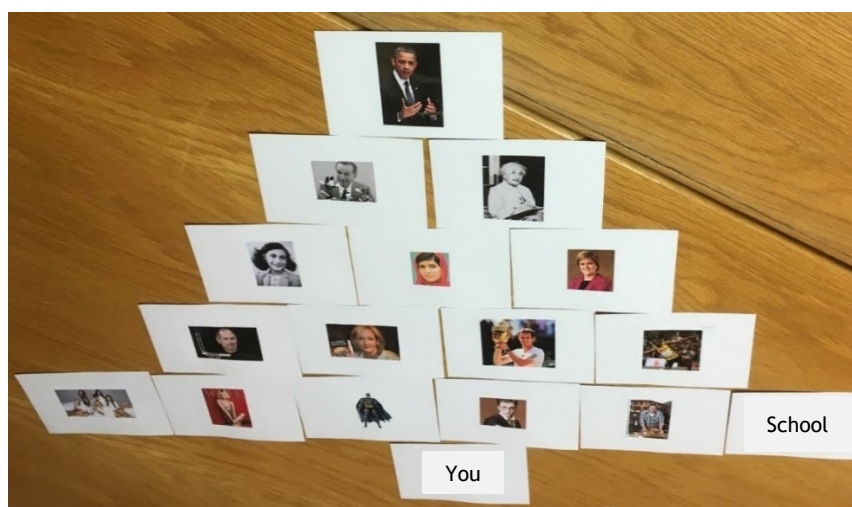
Figure 7.3: Card sort activity from Rosepark High School

Recipe for success

The recipe for success worksheet (see Figure 7.4) was introduced to me in a healthcare setting and I thought it would be a simple way for young people to write down their thoughts and to start their thinking about what 'success' means for them (and for others). Hertlein (2010) has used this approach in family therapy where it can be used for raising self-awareness and identifying strengths and weaknesses within the family unit. However, I ensured young people knew that this activity was primarily objective in that they were thinking about 'success' in wider terms of what it means to be successful – rather than focusing on what they would need to be successful. This therefore, encouraged participation in the activity and minimised participant harm.
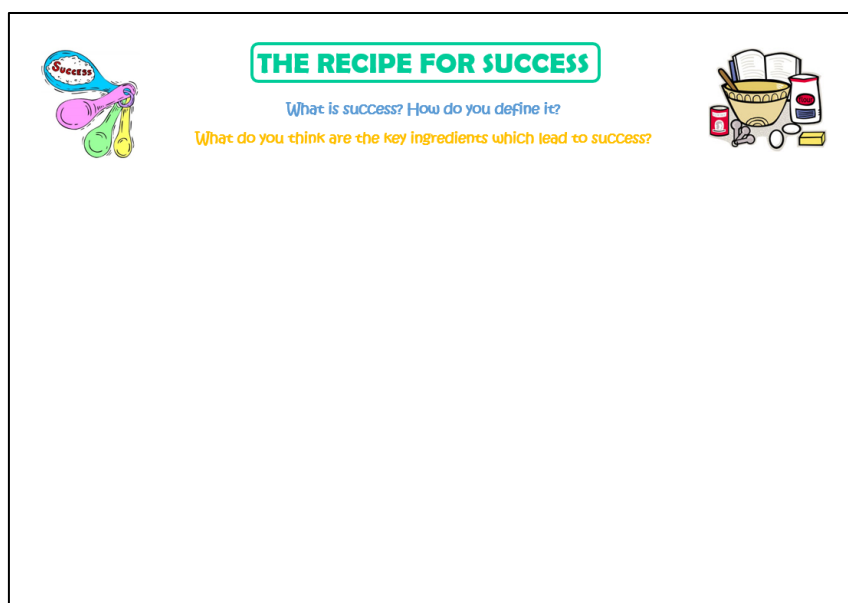
Figure 7.4: A blank 'Recipe for Success' worksheet

Lessons learned

It is important to note that some of these activities were better received than others. For example, the vignette activity (Appendix E) and social network maps were positively received, young people told me they found these enjoyable, and provided me with a vast amount of data. However, the young people often found the future self-postcards difficult to complete. They commented that they did not know where to begin with the task and struggled to think about what they would like be when they were older. One young person explained they found it easy to talk in an abstract way about the future, as in the group discussions, but struggled to think concretely about what they may be doing when they were 40 years old.

Ethics

> All educational ethnographies have a hidden history; a narrative of what really happened while doing educational research.
>
> (Mac an Ghaill, 1991: 102).

As with any study, awareness of ethical procedures, guidelines and issues was a necessity, especially because of the involvement of young people. The study adopted the guidelines issued by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) in order to minimise the risk to not only the young people involved in the study, but to the school and the community and to myself, the researcher. BERA guidelines emphasise the importance of: consent; disclosure and confidentiality; vulnerability; and the need for researchers to operate within an 'ethic of respect' (BERA 2011). Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Ethics Committee in the former School of Education at the University of Stirling, which had oversight of these processes at the time when the study was established.

This section outlines the subjectivity of the research process; procedures followed in order to gain informed consent and provide participants with anonymity; issues with confidentiality, respect and harm in group discussions with young people; and the positioning and role of the researcher from young people and school staff perspectives.

Limitations

> We must content ourselves, for the foreseeable future, with less than perfect data.
>
> (Becker, 1994: 192)

This research study is not without its imperfections. I have intended to be as upfront about this as possible throughout this thesis detailing the flaws and limitations. For example: I have commented on the limitations of the statistical data; a fully 'ecological approach' has not been adopted due to time restraints, and as a result parental views are not included in this research study; not all phases at stage two were carried out in each case study school due to issues of access; some research methods, such as the postcard activity, were not well received; and, young people were selected by each of the three schools (based on parental consent) and therefore they were not chosen at random by me as researcher and raises the issue of sample bias (with the school potentially picking the 'best' pupils).

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However, with all these limitations, I took steps to alleviate their impact on the research study. This has been done by: being explicit about the steps not undertaken (no research undertaken with parents); by noting the difficulties which resulted in differences in fieldwork (discussing issues of gatekeeper access and staff concerns over inspection); reflecting on the value of multiple research methods in order to afford young people a voice; and, accepting, as the researcher, that in order to be able to conduct research in schools that I may not have full control over the sample.

Nevertheless, it is important to say that accepting these limitations does not devalue the work and findings presented in this thesis. Instead, it is an acceptance that 'every way of doing business is good enough – for someone at some time for some purpose' (Becker, 1993). I outlined in Chapter One that if someone else had taken this research proposal this research would be very different. There can be no replicable research in its entirety as each researcher comes armed with biases, prejudgments and values.

Informed consent

BERA (2011) define informed and voluntary consent as a procedure in which participants are made fully aware of the process in which they will be engaged, including the purpose and use of the research, and agree to participate without coercion. Consent was gained from all gatekeepers, with the Headteacher giving what 'seemed' to be the final say in whether the research was going ahead or not. The school was able to give consent for me to observe all young people in the classroom during my observations. However, parental consent was required for the other research activities that young people may take part in. Parents received written communication with an opt-out slip attached (Appendix B). The letter was written by myself and adapted by the Headteacher of each school taking part in the study. The decision to make the parental consent form opt-out was recommended by the Headteacher of all schools on each of my initial planning visit. The primary reason for this was due to lack of parental engagement with newsletters and other correspondence which was sent home. Thus, there was concern over response rates if it was an opt-in slip.

I use the word 'seemed' above to refer to Headteacher final consent, as I found during much of my research that young people in the school (whom I conducted most of my research with) had not been given such disclosure or say in their involvement prior to meeting myself. I was able to discuss my research with them, what participation would look like, how it would end up being used, and if they were willing to take part. All the individuals agreed to participate in the study,

but the issue of whether they had been given sufficient time to process the information and consider the options was a concern for me. I spoke to some participants more than once, and for those I treated each meeting as a new occasion where consent needed to be agreed upon. At all times during the research project, I adhered to Skelton's (2008) thinking.

> What must remain central is the willing participation of children and young people, their safety and comfort in their participation, respect and recognition of their value to the research…
>
> (ibid: 33)

For young people, due to the time restraints (with an interview or group discussion being contained within a school period which varied from 45 minutes to 57 minutes), I opted for verbal consent. This method can be criticised for not being as reliable as written consent, so I ensured I adopted processes to ensure the young people understood the research process. As mentioned, I gained consent before each stage of the research process; and, at the end of each interview or group discussion, I reiterated the purposes of our discussion and asked whether each individual was happy to remain in the study. I also gave each individual an information sheet (Appendix C) to take away with them. The information sheet provided my university email address which gave the young people the option to ask me questions, or opt out, if need be.

Negotiating access

> …access is a prerequisite; a precondition for the research to be conducted.
>
> (Burgess, 1984: 36)

When I started this study, I was told about the possible difficulties of access to schools. Upon taking steps towards gaining access, I became further aware of the challenges that are often involved when trying to conduct research in schools. Not only are there numerous layers of gatekeeping, which are often tied up within bureaucratic procedures, but schools, and the staff within them, face increasing pressures, on their time, which limit their ability to accept research requests (Flick, 1998). In particular, the schools selected in this study were often in high demand for sites of research as a result of their unique situation. They were located in areas of socio-economic disadvantage, but were achieving good educational outcomes for their students. Thus, at times, the negotiation process often felt more like a sales pitch from me which was then met with a simple yes or no.

	2015
7 June	Initial email to the Area Lead Officer (ALO) sent along with an information sheet (see Appendix B)
15 June	Reply from the ALO to offer me her phone number, but she was currently out of the country
7 July	Follow up email sent to ALO regarding being unable to reach her on the number
1 August	Follow up email sent again[7] but also have three interested schools (later fell through) so gave up after this attempt
1 November	Re-contact ALO by email [8]
16 November	Discussion with colleague at Education Scotland (ES) who commented they would attempt to contact ALO
20 November	Re-contact by colleague at ES
29 November	Contact colleague at ES to see if they had heard back Reply forwarded from ALO with the appropriate contact at the Local Authority (LA) Email LA contact
1 December	Heard back from contact and told it would be picked up by appropriate colleague
2 December	Contact by new LA contact about ethics/research design form
8 December	Form returned to LA
	2016
10 January	Follow up with LA to see if any further forward
13 January	Hear back to say they are processing my request and would need to consult with the Attainment Advisor (AA) allocated to the Local Authority
2 February	Contacted by another LA employee to re-send form I originally sent and provide details of my ES contact[9] Replied to LA with necessary information
4 – 12 February	Follow up email sent to ALO who then makes contact with AA. On-going conversations between myself, a contact at ES, ALO and AA for the LA. The ALO responds that she will follow up with the LA.
26 February	Follow up with LA as not heard back yet
31 March	Hear back with confirmation to proceed and make contact with Headteacher at the school
4 April	Date confirmed for meeting with Headteacher on 15 April 2016
15 April	HT wishes to proceed in the new school year (August 2016)

Table 7.5: Timeline of communication in order to gain access to a school

In Table 7.5. I have provided a timeline of communication in order to receive access to a school in order to give some insight into the process which was undertaken. The process outlined below was for access to one school in one local authority. I went through similar procedures for three other local authorities. All local authorities granted me permission to contact the listed schools

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[7] At this stage, I had three promising schools. It was decided to leave this link if I didn't hear back this time and focus on the three other interested schools – as I did not want to stretch my efforts nor end up with too many case studies.

[8] Two of the previously three promising schools were unable to take part in the research so I sought out previous links I had tried to make.

[9] This email was sent with a chain of emails from 5 different individuals (Local authority staff and attainment advisor for the area).

in their area, but there were schools which turned down my request. These were often down to recent leadership changes, key staff off sick and concerns over the time involved in partaking in such a study. In considering the access negotiations, I concur with Smith (2007) who commented that they are often painstaking. I found myself spending my days trying to pitch my research to no avail. As Hughes (1971) wrote with reference to gaining access to institutions: 'It sounds horrible as if he might have to be something of a salesman' (ibid: 20). These issues are primarily out with the control of the researcher and simply require perseverance and multiple different plans for when things do not go as intended. This flexibility and sense of constant doubt is not something which sits naturally with me, but knowing I was not alone in my struggles to gain access to schools (Oates and Riaz, 2016) was a buffer to not giving up.

Furthermore, as Emond (2005) has identified, gaining access does not necessarily mean that you will get in. For example, upon entering the school, I was given little say in who would be selected to take part in the research. I observed classes, but found that the young people selected for the tasks and interviews were often the better behaved, or chattiest, individuals. However, in one of the case study schools, due to the good relationships with gatekeepers, I was able to work with them to encourage a diverse range of young people were invited to take part in the research.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Due to the detailed case study approach adopted in this study, I was aware there may be concerns from gatekeepers regarding the confidentiality and privacy of the information they provided me with. For example, headteachers could be concerned about: whose hands the collected data may end up in; how and where the data is stored; and, the risk of data disclosure, such as their school being revealed.

During my initial talks, and all subsequent meetings, with the Headteacher of the schools where I conducted data collection, I reiterated the steps I would take to protect their anonymity. For example, all schools and participants referred to in each school received a pseudonym; and the descriptive contextual overview of each case was kept relatively broad and particularly identifying characteristics were removed. For the young people, I gave an overview of use and storage of audio-recordings; how the data may be used, e.g. thesis, reports, publications; and, their right for our conversation to be private, unless there were any concerns raised regarding their well-being. This information was also detailed in the information sheets given to young people (see Appendix D).

During fieldwork, there were requests from senior staff to know what other schools were taking part in the research. Some of this was down to curiosity, but others argued it may be worthwhile knowing other schools in order for them to set up an informal partnership and learn from one another. I considered this request from one school and discussed it with my supervisory team. However, it was decided that while it would be potentially valuable for the schools to generate further networks and potential collaborative opportunities, it would not only involve time and moderation from me, but would also step out the scope of the research study. Furthermore, it disregarded a key belief arising from this research that what works does not always work in other settings and that everything has to be taken within the context in which it is situated.

Protecting the young people from harm was a key ethical consideration. I wanted the young people taking part in this research to find it an enjoyable and stress-free experience – and not one in which left them feeling exposed or hurt. I took many simple steps to aid this process: I would chat informally with participants before/after the interview and/or group discussion; I would go through the rules of the group (e.g. respect others views, don't talk at once, what we share in here is private); during the interview, if they seemed uncertain or were showing negative body language, I'd reiterate we could move on; and I offered each young person a helpline sheet which encouraged them to talk to a responsible adult if our conversation had raised any concerns. Prior to commencing my research, I thought there would be very few sensitive issues discussed with young people, but a lot of issues pertaining to mental health were raised, such as bullying, body image, pressure to do well in life, and the harm of social media.

There was one incident, approaching the end of a group discussion, where I asked the participants how positive they were about their futures. When it came to their turn, a young person discussed her abusive, alcoholic father and how he had visitation rights, with which she was unhappy. She commented that she was looking forward to being older and not having to have any contact with her father. The other participants made comments empathising with the young person, but then went back to joking around and laughing (they had been a particularly disruptive group). In this situation, I chose to end the focus group at that point as it had been made clear at the start that this group of young people did not socialise, and other interactions during the group suggested there were some tense relationships. I told them they could head back to class, but asked the young person who had raised her worries if I could talk to her. I checked she was okay, and we spent the rest of the period (ten minutes) talking about drawing, tattoos and cartoons – ensuring our interaction ended on a more positive note, than it may have otherwise been. During this time I spoke to the young person about how I felt I had to speak to a

staff member about what had happened in the group – of which she said she was happy for me to so. As a result, I sought out a member of the SMT to speak to regarding the issue. I was informed that the school was aware of this girl's home situation and were also involved in eradicating the bullying that she was facing.

Position and role of the researcher

> …any scientific statement about the world of moving bodies also had to take into consideration, in an objectivating manner, the corporeality of the observer.
>
> (Joas, 1980: 173).

The background and position of the researcher can, and will, affect what he/she chooses to explore, the theoretical frameworks adopted, the methods selected, the findings considered most appropriate or useful, and the framing of conclusions (Malterud, 2001: 438-484). Therefore, it is important for researchers to be reflexive and note at each, and every stage, of the research process their reasoning for carrying out their steps – past and present.

At worst, writing about our experiences, and woes in the field, can be seen as indulgent, narcissistic and displaying our weaknesses for all to see. However, since we cannot shed our sense of self, it is important that this self is reflected in our writings (Cesara, 1982: 2; cited in Smith, 2007: 172) - the researcher becomes part of the research (Jackson, 2011).

Young person perspective

Upon entering schools, I was very aware of how I would be perceived by the young people I would be talking to. I wanted to disassociate myself from the position of an official adult, e.g. teacher, social worker. Instead, I wished to be seen in a less powerful adult role (Emond, 2005) to encourage young people to ask questions, get involved during the research activities and volunteer information. It also aligned with my natural sense of being, in that I am not authoritative nor do I 'own' an official adult role. Thus, I would be offering young people the most authentic version of me - something I was particularly concerned with when I was asking them to divulge their life stories and experiences with me.

It has been posed that adults have no right to study children and young people's point of view. For, how can it even be possible for us to look at their reality when our outlooks and views are often so different (Eide and Wagner, 2005)? However, this criticism could be extended to the research of every individual in our society, as we do not know anyone else's reality and circumstances apart from our own. We are only an expert on our own lives. Bearing this in mind,

and in line with my desire to be reflexive, I have kept a note of research moments, primarily interactions with young people, which highlight my success at adopting the role of a less powerful adult.

During data collection, I kept a note of moments where I felt I had achieved the role of 'less adult'. These were often as simple as talking to young people about: my glittery phone cover; my colourful backpack; jewellery and fashion; art and tattooing; television shows; celebrity gossip; sports and sporting stars, such as Andy Murray; and, music. However, a regularly occurring example, which helped me feel confident in knowing I wasn't being seen as a teacher, was when I was asked if I was a teacher or training to be one. I told the young people that I was not a teacher, was not training to be one and have no background in teaching. This was frequently met by comments which suggested many of the young people had already thought this. For example: 'yeah, you don't seem teachery' and 'teachers aren't like you'. I never queried or asked for further expansion upon these comments, but the fact they had felt they could say this to my face assured me that they did not place me in the same position as they did their teachers.

In another interaction, a group of three young people, during a RMPS class at Forestside, were asking me questions about my research and why I was doing it. One of these young people (student 1) had made a previous comment about me not being very teacher like. During this exchange they told me I reminded them of a character from Harry Potter, as well as then sharing with me a particular teacher would be a less desirable character.

> Student 1: You remind me of a character from Harry Potter. The way you dress and speak. The slightly strange one.
> Student 2: Luna Lovegood! You do!
> Me: At least it's not Voldemort!
> Students 1, 2, 3: *laughter*
> Student 3: That'd be Mr. Acorn!
> All students: *more laughter*
>
> Fieldnotes, Observations, Forestside, September 2016

During my observations and shadowing of a student's timetable, the young people did not have similar interactions like this with members of staff within the school. My laughter when they commented on me reminding them of Luna Lovegood, and them then feeling comfortable enough to share who would be the 'evil' character from the school, may have cemented the fact I

was not a teacher or member of staff who would report them for making inappropriate comments. From the discussion referred to above, this conversation led us to talk about Harry Potter and films more generally enabling more of a rapport to be built. This was probably the greatest benefit of adopting the role that I did. For example, two of the young people participated in a focus group which was organised two months after I last saw either of these individuals. However, they both remembered me and spoke to me about the prequel to the Harry Potter series soon after arriving in the room.

Staff perspective: Researcher or Inspector

> Today it was arranged that all the class (of approximately 25) would complete a social network map. This wasn't ideal, but it suited the school so I went along with it (and it has given me a wider selection of maps to choose from). The third class I met with were S2 and I had a similar experience to the first S1 class where the teacher tried to takeover and lead the 'activity'…I hadn't properly met or spoken to this teacher during my visits which didn't help the situation…She told them to add colour or add more detail. I repeatedly said it was fine for the young people to do as much or as little as they wanted. I was beginning to get worried about ethics and if the data would be any good if they're not the maps young people would actually create if left to their own devices. The teacher also made it explicit that they had to do good work because I was a guest and they couldn't show the school up (she also repeatedly told the young people to be on their best behaviour since I was a guest).

> Fieldnotes, Forestside, November 2016

Smith (2007) has written about the emotional anxiety of performing during fieldwork. He notes that the stress of being on-stage, in justifying his academic researcher status and in his attempts to develop working relations with teachers, was not only discomforting, but wearying. Much has been written about imposter syndrome during the PhD student journey, but little has been written about how this can extend into fieldwork, not only through one's own perceived views, but also through the actions and reactions of those in the sites of data collection. The continual questioning of my role as researcher by school staff, their wariness of me, and the need for me to put on what felt like a façade as an expert within my area of research, in order to gain credibility, was draining and each school visit was ridden with anxieties on how not only I, but my research and its methods, would be perceived.

Emond (2005) notes that we should look to what we, as researchers, bring to the table, in terms of our skills, capacities and resources – and use these to our advantage in establishing a worthwhile research relationship. Therefore, I opted to be as open and as flexible as possible. I spoke with each teacher before entering the classroom to ensure they were aware of why I was there and also that they had no objections to me observing in their classroom. I often made a judgement call on whether to take notes during the class dependent upon the ease of friendliness and practicalities of that class, e.g. in practical subjects, like art, technical or home economics, I felt I would stand out if I was sitting scribbling in my notepad.

In particular, on my first few visits to Forestside, I was often questioned about my research. Why I was doing it? Who it was for? And, was I observing their teaching methods or not? I tried to allay these concerns by reiterating my social research and non-teaching background, and how my research was concerned with the positives of the schools and what they were doing particularly well to help young people to do so well. I often explained my research as being co-funded by a research council and Education Scotland. However, I found what Punch (1998) noted as suffering, as a result of being seen as an extension of my sponsor. The staff associated Education Scotland with the School Inspectorate and my declaration of my involvement with them often then led to questions such as: 'Are you observing us? What are you actually looking at? What role does Education Scotland have in your research?' As Jeffrey and Woods (1996) insist regarding that of Ofsted inspections in England: '…penetrate to the heart of teachers' operations and mount a continual surveillance. The teacher's self is brought under intensive and critical gaze' (ibid: 326). There was a culture of terror surrounding performativity (Ball, 2003a) – which was also embodied by myself, as a research expert. In later visits at this school, after a break of a few weeks, I found that it was difficult to make conversation with staff and the previous table, where I had sat with them all in the staffroom, was rarely used when I was sat there. In addition, my request to speak to teachers at this school was ignored by senior staff. I followed this up by email on four occasions, and once in person, but got no clear answer as to whether it would be possible. As a result, interviews with staff were not conducted at this school.

Data analysis of stage two

In total, there were: 14 field note entries (entry for each day in school); 46 social network maps; 13 semi-structured interviews with young people; 8 group discussions with young people; and, 5 staff interviews. The table below (Table 7.6) details the methods utilised, the schools in which the particular methods were used and the amount of data produced.

Method	School	Numbers
Group task-based activities and discussion	**Montgomery, Forestside and Rosepark**	**8 groups with between 4-6 young people in each group (2 each at Montgomery and Forestside and 4 at Rosepark)**
Recipe for success	Forestside and Rosepark	24 completed worksheets (16 from Rosepark and 8 from Forestside)
Card sort	Forestside and Rosepark	Completed with 6 groups (1 at Montgomery, 2 at Forestside and 3 at Rosepark)
Vignettes	Rosepark	Complete with 3 groups at Rosepark
Individual interviews with young people	**Montgomery, Forestside and Rosepark**	**13 interviews with young people (3 at Montgomery, 4 at Forestside and 6 at Rosepark)**
Social network maps	Forestside and Rosepark	46 social network maps were created (6 at Montgomery during individual interviews and 40 at Forestside during class time[10])
Staff interviews	**Rosepark**	5 staff interviews at Rosepark (4 with teachers and 1 with a member of the SMT)
Observations	**Montgomery, Forestside and Rosepark**	14 days in total were spent solely on observing (5 at Montgomery, 4 at Forestside and 6 at Rosepark)

Table 7.6: Methods used at each school and data production

The data collected consisted of field notes, which also comprised my research journal recordings, the tasks completed by young people, and the audio-recordings of interviews and focus groups. The audio-recordings from the interviews and focus groups were not fully transcribed as a result of time and cost. Instead, I opted for two methods: to frequently listen back to the audio-recordings to note themes and ideas; and developed narrative portraits, or ethnographic vignettes, of the young people that I interviewed.

Regularly listening back to the recordings helped the analysis process in that the context was not removed from a particular interesting quote or point. Whereas, if I had transcribed the audio-recordings, a quote can too easily become just another quote attached to an idea, with the

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[10] My contact at the school suggested doing the maps during class time to maximise participation for the school. I was present in the classroom and was able to assist young people if need be.

surrounding information and insights, which may contain greater detail, removed. As soon as possible after fieldwork, and after typing up my field notes, I listened to the audio-recording and typed a summary of what was said, alongside any comments regarding a change in an individual's behaviour or emotions, as well as extracts from my field notes on the rapport and ease of conversation between myself and the young person.

However, for the interviews (completed in conjunction with the social network map) 'narrative portraits', and then 'ethnographic vignettes' were crafted. The narrative portraits condensed transcripts to approximately two pages in length. This was attached to the young person's social network map and gave an overview of the key ideas and themes arising from our discussion which aided me during the analysis stage as I could refer back to this information to remind myself of what the young person had told me about their life world. McInerney and Smyth (2014) argue this method holds on to the idea that a single story can never be told, but that portraits allow for contextualisation and for descriptive accounts to be built of young people's life situations which cannot be so easily done when drawing upon selected quotes.

In addition, the ethnographic vignettes were used in the writing up of my findings to highlight interactions or events which were seen to be particularly significant or meaningful in illustrating how young people negotiate their life worlds (Erickson, 1986; Miles and Huberman, 1994). These vignettes display how young people's interactions with the multiple layers of the social world can influence, positively or negatively, their futures. Of course, these accounts will be partial since they are from the researcher perspective and are also retold through the use of my field notes and research journal, and not solely reliant upon the young person's interview. Therefore, these vignettes are intersections of the researcher's and young person's factual and subjective experiences (Urry, Sanders and Munford, 2015). However, herein lies the value of vignettes, in that they permit the reader to be co-analysts of the study (Erickson, 1986), due to the detail and richness in each account. Drawing from Jacobsen (2014), it is intended for the vignettes to pull the reader into the lives of the young people and highlight how they manage the interactions in their schooling and wider environment.

The analysis adopted in this study, in line with the rest of the study, was iterative and sequential – and coincided along with data collection – based on the work of Howard Becker. Becker (1998), drawing upon Hughes' work (see Helmes-Hayes, 2016, for a discussion of Hughes's methodological orientation), suggested that researchers should state provisional hypotheses about the phenomenon they are studying as they carry out their research. Then, they search for

situations and individuals which appear to disconfirm this case and, thus, rethink the generalisations to be inclusive of these findings. This process helps to refine the case study, in this research the school, and subsequently offers the reader a realistic representation of the complexity and diversity within a case. It also fits in with the earlier argument from Flyvbjerg (2006) who advocated that case study research is characterised by falsification.

A coding system was adopted, for fieldnote entries and ethnographic vignettes, with particular names, activities, places and words categorised under appropriate code names. During the data gathering stage these codes were regularly compared to ensure similarities and differences were noted – as well as allowing for new and emerging themes. The primary themes arising from the data were identified and situated alongside the existing literature in the area. Therefore, the similarities and differences between participants, cases (the schools) and this particular research alongside other research could be made. Furthermore, the ethnographic vignettes were analysed with the theoretical framework in mind. In particular, Joas's (1996) theory of creativity of action was utilised in order to display situations in which young people were capable of agency, the steps undertaken to do so, and the results of such action.

Summary

This chapter has detailed, and justified, the methodological approach for this research study, taking into account the theoretical positioning. Methodologically, this study adopted a mixed methods approach based upon the work in this area by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998). I outlined the case study approach adopted in this study (Yin, 2014), alongside the use of 'ethnographic intent' (Wolcott, 1987), and the research methods which drew upon the work of Clark's and Moss's (2011) mosaic approach. The chapter then outlined ethical and practical challenges encountered by the researcher – and the implications of these. Before, summarising the data analysis process for stage two of the research, which draws upon the use of ethnographic vignettes (Erickson, 1986) and iterative and sequential analysis in order to highlight the complexity and diversity within each case (Becker, 1998; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The next three chapters which follow describe the data gathered for this research study. The subsequent chapter will explore the notion of agency, how young people seek to achieve agency within the school environment and what agency looks like for different individuals.

Chapter 8: Young people, agency and support

Introduction

The previous chapters highlight the complex and tangled web of policy decision-making and enactment, as well as the difficult nature of closing the educational attainment gap, in an environment where it can be contested that what works for one school does not necessarily work for all schools (Biesta, 2007). It can be argued that young people's lives, and experiences, are often overlooked by policymakers, despite the decisions ultimately affecting their future lives (Cockburn, 2005; Hill et al., 2004).

The next three chapters present the findings of the research. They illustrate the interconnectedness of the social world and how structural and agentic forces interact in young people's lives, in relation to their school education. This is pertinent, because much policy making is done to or for young people, rather than with young people (Tisdall, Davis and Gallagher, 2008).

The following key thematic ideas are put forward in each chapter: 'Agency', 'Relationality', and 'Culture'. These are not only key to the ecological framing of this research study but also the theoretical framework of Pragmatism. Pragmatist thought suggests individuals function within, and as a result with, their environment. Therefore, individuals act (agency) in tandem with the environment (culture) that surrounds them. Furthermore, a young person's ability to achieve agency is life-stage dependent with importance placed on relationality. This is due to greater dependence on adults (Sumner, 2010) alongside living within greater constraints than adults (Crockett, 2002). As a result, relationality refers to how individuals operate by means of their environments (Priestley, Biesta and Robinson, 2015).

The findings also address the research questions outlined at the beginning of this thesis. These are as follows:

1. Are there schools in Scotland which serve disadvantaged communities but achieve better educational outcomes for their students in comparison to similar schools (in terms of socio-economic status)?

2. What are the within-school factors that improve educational outcomes for young people in these schools?

3. What are the out-of-school factors that improve educational outcomes for young people in these schools?

4. What are the implications for those interested in improving the educational outcomes for young people in schools?

This chapter outlines young people's notions of success, in order to help us best understand what is important for them in life, and begin to understand if the curriculum and education system are helping or failing them. This seeks to gain an understanding of young people's perceptions of success in order to begin to unravel if such schools are achieving positive outcomes for their pupils (from the young person's perspective). This will aid the understanding of the subjectivity of 'educational outcomes' and the also the need and desires of young people located in schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. The chapter then moves on to discuss the traits and qualities young people believe are essential in being successful with resilience and aspirations being key themes. Finally, the taxonomy of young people's agency is explored to understand the steps and processes involved in their day to day life to help them achieve a successful present and future.

What is success?

In order to understand young people's perceptions of what helped them achieve success, and positive life and educational outcomes, it was important to understand what they defined as success. This section unpacks their definitions and highlights essential traits of a successful individual as noted by young people. This is particularly poignant as understandings of success expressed by young people in this study often focused on happiness – in whatever shape or form that may take for the individual. Traits which help someone to be successful, were often psychological and focused on internal happiness and wellbeing. The young people were eloquent in their definitions of success, with Ryan, a student at Rosepark, giving a particularly insightful definition.

> I admire my great uncle as he is probably the person who taught me to be happy. To remember to be happy in life. He passed away five years ago. But, I remember him saying if you're not happy, no matter what you're doing, it's not going to be a very good

life. As long as I have a house and family I will be happy. I will have a good life…in terms of education, as long as I focus on the things I want to do and try my best then I can't complain.

<div align="right">Ryan, Rosepark, November 2016</div>

Ryan repeatedly highlighted the importance of '…being happy with what you've got – however that may look'. In the group discussion, the other males mocked his views and joked about him being overly sensitive and emotional. However, once he further explained his views, and was given the space to do so, the others agreed and started to refer back to what Ryan had said regarding the above definition of success. Across all eight group discussions, happiness was the most frequently mentioned word, when discussing success. Young people used terms such as: being happy; enjoying life; having a happy life; doing whatever makes you happy. The young people acknowledged that what constitutes success is not fixed and is dependent upon each individual's wants and desires. These views were further expressed during the thirteen individual interviews with young people and on the recipe for success worksheet.

During the card sort activity, young people often placed most value on affluence and power, when ranking which individuals were the most successful. They rarely discussed the other aspects of the individual's life (e.g. charity work, or criticisms of their everyday actions). There were particular cards that tended to provoke the most discussion, primarily regarding criticism of the individual and discrepancies among group members. These are outlined below.

Taylor Swift (American pop star) was represented in this activity and provoked a lot of discussion, regarding current negative media attention at the time of data collection. Both of the all-male groups were most critical of her referring to her as a 'slut', 'man-eater' and 'snake' and resultantly placed her low down in their hierarchy. The girls were also often critical of her, but also noted that she had done a lot for the music industry and also had provided younger females with a role model in her younger days.

The card of Nicola Sturgeon (First Minister of Scotland and leader of the Scottish National Party) often led to intense debates over Scottish independence with young people tending to have strong views on the matter. Their view on the First Minister was strongly correlated with their view on Scottish independence. Therefore, with this card they did not discuss the work of Sturgeon herself, but instead there was a focus on her political party's wider actions and agenda.

Jamie Oliver, a British celebrity chef, was met with much disdain across all group discussions. One particular quote which sums up the views of the young people was:

> …yeah, he has books and TV shows, but anyone can be good at cooking. He's just Jamie Oliver.
>
> Kaitlyn, Rosepark, December 2016

Young people felt he had not really achieved anything, despite acknowledging his multiple cookery books, television shows, and work to improve school dinners.   The Kardashians (reality television siblings) often led to discussions amongst the young people surrounding the fact they had amassed millions of pounds and were world-renowned – without having particularly done anything. Young people noted they have a lot of power, and can be deemed successful, but many believed they weren't a positive success:

> …they've just sold their selves really
>
> Chloe, Rosepark, December 2016

For this reason, young people placed them low down in their ranking system. However, there were also discrepancies among the groups of boys and girls. Interestingly, in light of the views on Taylor Swift, boys were less negative towards the Kardashians and often voiced their attraction for them with one male commenting:

> My dream is to have sex with Kimmy K. If I achieve that then I don't need anything else in life.
>
> Paul, Forestside, October 2016

On the other hand, the females would weigh up their strengths and weaknesses – and often be critical of the sexuality that the Kardashians display. Allan and Mendick (2013) discuss how female reality television stars can be epitomised as '…talentless, underserving and hence valueless'. They are seen to acquire their celebrity status, and associated success, through the use of their bodies rather than their minds. Power and Smith (2017) continue and argue, drawing upon the work of Bourdieu (1984), that consumption and tastes are shaped, and constrained by social interactions with relations of power and knowledge at the forefront. They further comment that respect, or dislike, for an individual is a form of constructive identity work where they seek affirmation from those around them, alongside a sense of cultural belonging.

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Despite young people acknowledging happiness as the best definition of success, during the card sort activity there appeared to be an importance on certain types of success. Those individuals on the cards, with an academic background or notable for revolutionising their field of work, were often rated the highest and provoked the most agreement regarding their positioning. For example, Albert Einstein, Steve Jobs, Barack Obama, Walt Disney were often featured in the top four – and were always located in the upper tiers of the ranking pyramids. This was particularly interesting in light of the discussions surrounding success as personal happiness. When I questioned their choices, the young people tended to give answers like:

> Obama was the first black President…that's surely an incredible success.
>
> Ryan, Rosepark, December 2016

> [Steve Jobs] he gave everyone in this room their phone (all participants had an iPhone).
>
> Sam, Forestside, October 2016

There were two other cards which sparked debate in the group discussions. One titled 'You' (the students doing the card sort activity) and 'School' (a picture of the school the students attended). I added in these cards in order to try and gain an insight into how young people saw themselves and to encourage thinking about wider notions of success. The majority of groups placed the 'You' card at the very bottom and commented that this was because 'we haven't done anything yet'. However, there were two groups in which the 'You' card was placed at the top – both at Rosepark High School. One comment from one group member was resounded across both of these groups.

> We have the potential do anything. We are still young. We could go on and do whatever we wanted. We could be the top.
>
> Laila, Rosepark, January 2017

The 'School' card, like the 'You' card, also tended to be placed low down in the ranking system, with reasons given as:

> Well, we're in it and we're not successful.
>
> Heather, Rosepark, December 2016

When prompted to think about their school in the wider community and what it provides them with (for example, friends, and education, a support system), there was a difference in views between the groups in two schools. In one of the groups, young people commented if their school was more modern they may feel differently towards it.

> It is ancient and falling apart whereas other schools look nice [listed some new schools built in the local area]. There are so many lame people here too…who make it not nice.
>
> Freya, Rosepark, December 2016

However, in another school, one which has recently undergone a move to a new building, there was an attachment and pride in their school. Young people, when prompted as above in the previous school about thinking about the school itself in the local community, commented that they liked the new building, especially the open plan layout, and how it was nice to have something 'new and shiny'. In one group discussion at this school a young person also commented on the community campus aspect of the school. They spoke about the incorporation of their school, a school catering for the needs of children and young people with additional support needs, and community services into one big building made it feel like something that was 'set in stone in the area, if you get it. It's ours, all of ours'.

An independent report on the Building Schools for the Future programme, which ran in England from 2004-2010, highlights that, on average new school buildings do not tend to improve attainment. However, it is possible for new school buildings to improve other wider outcomes such as: attendance; enjoyment of learning; improved safety of young people; and, provide improved facilities for the wider local community (Thomson, 2016). In contrast with the former thinking that buildings do not influence attainment, a report by Salford University found the physical characteristics of primary school buildings do affect students' learning progress in reading, writing and math (Barrett et al., 2015).   In addition, Alexander (2001) comments that design, disposition and use of school buildings can transmit educational and social values and, ultimately, reveal the philosophy and essence of pedagogy that is occurring in a particular school. For example, Monahan (2002) refers to the concept of 'built pedagogy' to explain how neat rows of desks embodies pedagogies of discipline and conformity, while open spaces with flexible arrangements exemplify pedagogies of freedom and self-discovery.

Biesta and Tröhler (2008), drawing upon the work of Mead, comment that carrying out acts successfully is what gives rise to self-belief. Through the setting of tasks for oneself, and fulfilling each stage of the task, leads to the reality of success as a whole. In other words, the individual begins to believe that he/she is capable of success as he/she starts to complete smaller tasks. He goes further by commenting that what a young person wants to do, and what he/she wants to achieve, is what leads to a powerful motive for study and application. It is through this and linking together the individual's past and present (along with the future), that a field of interest can be comprehended and lead to the conception of successful futures. Mead's view stresses the agency of the individual, while accepting they are constrained by the structural forces around them (the past and present). In *Mind, self, and society* (1934a) he demonstrates how individuals can hold the attitude of the society around them in their self: in that an individual has a life that is their own experience, but they will simultaneously hold attitudes and views brought about through their community experience. The proceeding sections will foreground Mead's ideas to illustrate how young people negotiate their present situations, while acknowledging their life histories and their perceived futures.

Resilience

Young people tended to view themselves as the main agents of their own success. The most frequently cited ideas regarding what it takes to be successful were: working hard; sticking in; never giving up; and, keeping going. These ideas suggest that young people are aware of a growing need to be resilient and determined, as well as being realistic about life – and the ups and downs. The Wordle below (see Figure 8.1) highlights the key themes arising from the discussions of what it takes and means to be successful (as gathered from the recipe for success worksheets).

Figure 8.1: A 'Wordle' highlighting key words of what it takes and means to be successful

Lister (2004) coined a term of 'getting by', which features in her taxonomy of agency (discussed in Chapter Four, as well as in further detail below) exercised by those in poverty. Getting by refers to the everyday, and seemly insignificant, things that people do in order to cope with day-to-day situations. For these young people, it appears they acknowledge life's difficulties, are not naïve in their outlook, and do not tend to have a rose-tinted view of the world.

The mental aspect of self-belief and valuing one's own unique set of skills and being comfortable with who one is as an individual were also frequently given as key criteria which helped someone to be successful. This can be connected with the idea that young people accept the need to be resilient in modern day living, but also acknowledges the importance of mental well-being. Howard and Johnson (2000) comment that resilient young people often hold all their personal achievements in high esteem, and not just those that are academic based. In their study, they note how progress was viewed in a positive light and those who made genuine improvement in their skills were often very proud of their achievements. Other traits that they found to be beneficial in developing resilience in young people were: a wide range of involvement in extra-curricular and co-curricula activities; and, a sense of connectedness and social identity attached to the people around them and the school in which they were situated.

During discussions, bullying, via social media, was often mentioned during the group activities and individual interviews at Rosepark and, in particular, raised a lot of concerns especially amongst young girls. The effect of social media on self-esteem, school work and mental well-being was a common theme. For example, in a group discussion, Freya noted that she found Snapchat (a multimedia messaging app) a good way to speak to friends and to help one another

out with their homework. This was due to the ease of being able to send pictures easily (for example, of homework questions) without having to type out a long message. However, she commented on the downfalls of using social media and the pressures she felt to continue using them.

> If I didn't use the internet and social media I'd be lost. I'd be no one. I get cyber bullied a lot – by people I know. It tears you apart. Quite often the negatives of these apps outweigh the positive. You could remove all the apps and not use them, but then they win. Your life is sorta doomed – you can't escape it so you just get on with it. You need to do things just so you don't get picked on. I need to fit the mould of others so that I can just get on with my life.
>
> Freya, Rosepark, December 2016

Kaitlyn, another group member, was also a user of Snapchat. She too was very critical of this app, and similar apps like Instagram (a photo and video-sharing social network site) commenting that:

> Pictures don't tell a thousand words. They tend to tell three words. Look at me. Am so sexy. Or, I'm so pretty.
>
> Kaitlyn, Rosepark, December 2016

When queried regarding what she sends on Snapchat, and on other social media platforms such as Instagram, she admitted she often sent selfies, but she felt like she had to so people did not pick on her for not doing what everyone else was doing. During the card sort activity, as noted above, the young girls were very critical of female celebrities who used their looks to further their celebrity status, commenting such women were 'pathetic and vain'. However, they tended to pertain that they sent selfies and used the social media apps in order to fit in so that people wouldn't judge, or make fun of, them for being different. According to statistics from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), one in four (28%) of young people aged 11-16 years, with a social networking account, had experienced something upsetting on it in the last year. Of these, issues included: pressure to look or act a certain way (14%), cyber stalking (12%), aggressive and violent language (18%), receiving unwanted sexual messages (12%), and requests to send or respond to a sexual message (8%) (Lilley, Ball and Vernon 2014). Bullying is linked to a decline in academic performance and is also related to mental and physical health problems (NSPCC, 2016). It also raises discussion around spaces and

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how the school and digital realms are inextricably linked – in which cultural and social norms, and rules, are naturally extended into these spaces (Dobson and Ringrose, 2016).

> I'm not allowed to post selfies on my Instagram. Only once I'm 14 will I be allowed to do that. I think that's fine, but others don't. I get called things like gimp or nerd or weird or gay for not posting selfies. It doesn't usually get to me unless it's a whole group at once – but that's only happened twice. They don't comment on my photos though which is perhaps unusual. They say it to me in person, at school and if they see me when I'm out of school. [Speaking about the group of people picking on here] Now, it doesn't bother me as it's not their life, but when it happened it really hurt.
>
> Heather, Rosepark, December 2016

Social media and social networking sites act as natural platforms for real life 'appearance conversations' (Meier and Gray, 2014) – which have commonly taken place by peers in school hallways and cafeterias – and could lead to body image concerns, insecurities and bullying (Tiggemann and Slater, 2013, 2014). In addition, and on a more theoretical level, ideas surrounding freedom of individuals and discussion surrounding agency can be considered in these contexts. Nussbaum (1999) comments that how we use tools (in this case, young people using social media and networking sites) is our own choosing and is an essential aspect of our right to freedom. Following an agentic discourse, she continues we are not passive recipients, but beings shaping our own lives. However, it is clear to see from this research study, and wider academic reading, that peers have a significant influence on a young person's life (Wylie et al., 2008; Banks and Smyth, 2015; Cuconato and Walther, 2015) and can ultimately be influential in how well a young person succeeds at school.

Optimism
Interestingly, during the group discussions, when asked how they felt about their futures (for example, how they felt their life may be like in 10 or 20 years), the young people in all three schools reported feeling optimistic and confident that things would turn out alright. They highlighted the uncertainty, but most were not apprehensive about their futures and looked forward to the unknown. Young people, who commented they were more worried about their futures, had previously spoken about their high ambitions (medicine, law) and high parental hopes and expectations for them. The group of boys at Rosepark were particularly laid-back regarding their futures.

Nathan: Life will end up how it end up.

Ryan: Yeah, take it as it comes. I think everything will end up okay though.

Nathan: Even if bad stuff happens, then you learn from it and good stuff is just round the corner.

Lewis: Yeah, I think I will be fine. As long as you focus on your self and how happy you are then no one can say anything about your life.

<div align="right">S2 boys group discussion, Rosepark, January 2017</div>

These perceptions were echoed in their individual interviews, with them all claiming to be excited about the lack of certainty – as well as acknowledging what could be the worst that could happen to them. However, one young girl, Laila, spoke about the pressures she felt placed on her as a result of family expectations and uncertainty regarding her ability to achieve the expected future placed on her.

Researcher: So, where do you see yourself being when you're 23 – in 10 years time?

Laila: Um….being a doctor

Researcher: Okay, so why do you want to be a doctor?

Laila: I only do it for my parents

Researcher: Are they doctors?

Laila: No, it was something they wanted to do when they were young, but they didn't have the opportunity. If I do it, and they help me to get there, then they'll be very proud of me for that.

Researcher: Okay, so do you feel like you and your parents share the same definition of success?

Laila: Everyone else feels like success is different. My family and I don't share the same, no, no. Definitely not.

Researcher: Okay, will we move on?

Laila: Can we?

[Later in the discussion]

Researcher: So, how positive do we feel about our futures?

Laila: Scared. Medicine is really hard. I don't see….at the moment….how I will do it all.

Ben: But, if you think about it…you can aim high to study medicine, and if you don't get there then you have so much to fall back on because you will still have good grades and experiences that can you get into other courses or jobs.

Laila: There's pretty much only medicine for me.

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I did not conduct an individual interview with Laila, as her parents only consented to participation in group activities. During the group discussions, she seemed to feel conflicted regarding how much she was sharing about her worries for the future – despite the group members all being part of the same friendship group. I did not wish to push this discussion, when she was uncertain and had previously asked for us to move on.   However, Laila highlights the potential negative risk of academic expectation on individuals – and this also hints towards a perceived lack of agency for Laila, in that she does not seem happy with her intended life plan. This is not a criticism towards Laila or her family, but highlights further issues found within the literature. Laila and her family are Muslim, with her parents originally from Pakistan, and research suggests that parents of Pakistani children living in Britain often view education as a means to social mobility (Shah, Dwyer and Modood, 2010) – especially in a society where being part of an ethnic minority could lead to potential discrimination (Weedon et al., 2013). This highlights further that young people are not a homogenous group. They bring their own backgrounds, values, beliefs, interests, and life experiences, which need to be considered when exploring how best to support them to ensure successful futures.

Markus and Nurius (1986) illustrate how aspirations reflect an individual's vision of their future, their potential self and often highlight what they would like to become, what they might like to become, and what they do not want to become. In order to realise aspirations, there often needs to be a lot of time, energy and resources invested – not just by the young person, but from others (their support system) too (Sherwood, 1989).   As, St. Clair and Benjamin (2011) comment: '…aspirations arise from, and are embedded within, social contexts' and are likely to change considerably across the lifecourse' (ibid: 502). Ray (2006) refers to this transactional experience as the 'aspirations window'. This conceptual window consists of the individual's cognitive world where they draw inspiration, and their aspirations, from the lives, achievements, values and ideal of those existing and acting within their window.

Young people in the group discussions at Forestside and Montgomery tended to hold much more ambitious aspirations than those young people at Rosepark. Some of the young people's aspirations from the former two schools included: architect with a mansion; a footballer for a Premier League team; backing dancer for a pop singer. James, a third year student, shared with me his love for video games, cooking and football. He saw his future career as a games developer.

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James: I'm going to end up as a games developer living in LA in a massive house with a swimming pool. I'll have a super fancy car and I can do my own thing all day.

Researcher: Yeah? What about your job as a games developer? Won't you need to do that?

James: Nah, I'll be retired by the time I'm at least 40.

James, Forestside, October 2016

James laughed a lot throughout the group discussions and during our interview. He was happy to share elaborate stories of what he may become in the future, but was unsure to share personal, day-to-day information. He repeatedly spoke about 'getting out of this town', but had no plans to get out and no definite plans to achieve his desired future detailed above. Tafere (2014) acknowledges that, while young people from less advantaged backgrounds tend to hold inflated aspirations, these do help to motivate them. He continues that their aspirations should not be reoriented in order to make their aspirations more realistic (Wellings, 1982) as by limiting children's potential for achievement may limit their future success – and impinge on their well-being and self-perceived abilities. While, Tafere writes in relation to disadvantaged communities in Ethiopia, which face different struggles (and also a very different type of disadvantage), the earlier literature from the 1980s exploring these themes in Western contexts appear to still be relevant.

By contrast, at Rosepark, occupations included: nurse; mechanic; chef; estate agent; teacher; doctor; and, chemist. Ania was born outside the United Kingdom and moved to Scotland when she was six years old. She speaks four languages and, when we met, she was very chatty and bubbly, and her enthusiasm came across when she spoke about things she was passionate about. In particular, when we spoke about swimming, dancing, hair and make-up, and her potential future career paths, she became especially animated.

I've always wanted to be one [an estate agent] for as long as I can remember. I've moved a lot and I like looking at houses and I love meeting, and talking to, new people. I can probably use my languages too. It just seems like something I could be good at. Helping people to find a home…what is not to love.

Ania, Rosepark, December 2016

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Later in the same interview, Ania commented that she wanted to help people in some way and provide people with some sort of happiness. She mentioned that she had previously considered university, but she felt people like her do not go on to university (as her parents had never been). Furthermore, she felt a university degree would not be needed to be an estate agent. Later in conversation with teachers, they mentioned Ania as an incredibly bright and intelligent girl and were in awe of her multilingual skills. St. Clair and Benjamin (2011) note that there is no such thing as inflated aspirations – but simply young people tend to hold aspirations in line with those from other sections of society (e.g. those in more advantaged areas). Arguably, in this case, Ania, holding the view that university is not for her, is a sign of wider societal stereotypes and stigmas which cannot be overhauled by those focused on reducing the attainment gap. Her acknowledgement of not requiring a university degree to proceed along a particular career path is key. There is an ever-increasing political motive to encourage young people into HE and to achieve higher participation from those in disadvantaged areas (widening access initiatives). However, there needs to be consideration given to the wider societal context and the limited possibility of social mobility within a restricted labour market – especially one in which competition is growing at an ever-increasing rate as globalisation continues to shrink the world. Thus, it can be argued that young people may well be placed at greater disadvantage if their aspirations are nurtured, and then cannot be realised, than those whose ambitions had never been raised in the first place (Mortimore and Blackstone, 1982).

Time is relative, time is subjective

Across all the schools, young people were being encouraged to consider, and develop, their personal and social characteristics. In the first and second year classes observed at Forestside there was a particular focus on this in two classes titled: Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN); and, Social and Health Education (SHE). These classes were taken by subject teachers and when asked, in passing, if they had been giving training they explained they had just been told to teach it and if I wanted more information I should speak to a senior member of staff located in a different department.

> I spoke to the teacher about ASDAN and why it was called what it was. He replied saying he had no idea and laughed, before explaining I could speak to the ASDAN lead located in another department and passed me a copy of the ASDAN book the class were working through.
>
> Fieldnotes from Forestside, September 2016

I observed two other ASDAN classes, at Forestside, and noticed similar patterns with teachers appearing uncertain of what they were actually teaching and young people disengaging from the class: disruptive and uninterested. In the ASDAN workbook I was given to look at, a key message of the initiative is to help young people develop and demonstrate a range of skills through challenges and studies and enable them to recognise, and be rewarded, for personal achievements. However, it appeared during observations that young people were not aware of these aims – and teachers had not been given enough support to fully carry out these tasks imposed on them. In the SHE class that I observed there were parallels with the ASDAN classes with teachers explaining they had not received training and often had these classes 'dumped' on them. Furthermore, young people were not explicitly told how these classes were benefitting them with young people seeing them '…as a waste of our time'. During one observation of a SHE class, there was a discussion with the teacher which highlighted these issues.

> The teacher told me she was given a workbook to work through with her class and that was that. She laughed about how when she started at the school she was given these extra subjects and was just expected to teach them, even things like SHE where she had to appropriately talk about alcohol, drugs, sex and puberty. She made a joke about how she only graduated two years ago and was not the person to be advising on sensible alcohol consumption. She laughed and joked that she was a fraud and does not feel qualified to give out life advice. In addition, she commented that she often wondered if the young people were getting anything from it as she thought the way a teacher teaches such subjects, with no training given, may be influenced by their own experiences and beliefs.

> Fieldnotes from Forestside, September 2016

The school day is constrained by a start and a finishing time. Classes are constrained by periods of time. As Hargreaves (1990) writes: 'Time compounds the problem of innovation and confounds the implementation of change. It is central to the formation of teachers' work.' (ibid: 303). Apple (1982, 1986) comments how a focus on time leads to an intensification of the teachers workload, in which bureaucratic measures lead to a rise in pressures, expectations and accountability processes, which tell teachers what they should be doing within a school – and controlling what they are doing. These methods and restraints on time restrict teacher agency, and the potential of moments of learning in the classroom, and lead to a focus on classrooms of instruction. In the above observations from my fieldnotes, there are questions surrounding the awareness of young people on the value of reflexivity in these classes and how teachers can best

supported in order to provide valuable and informative classes for young people – and to ensure mutual development of their selves. This is more pertinent when referring back to the aims and objectives of these classes in preparing young people for life beyond school, thus, raising a serious question concerning whether the curriculum is meeting the needs of young people – it may look inclusive and preparatory for young people on paper, but the reality is often very different.

At Rosepark, the system regarding personal and social education was more fluid and these classes were taken by the guidance teacher. This meant the teacher, Melanie, already had an established rapport with the young people in her class, but also encouraged students to be open with her and use her for advice as and when required. She was friendly and engaged when talking with the students. In addition, there were several conversations where she recalled previous things particular young people had told her about their lives or what they had done in the recent school holidays. She positively reinforced their behaviour by commenting on how smart they were all looking – before commenting she would like to see a few more ties being worn (and, subsequently, followed up with these individuals). In addition, and most importantly, these classes tended to be more informal with class discussions and some task based activities. There was more of a dialogue between young people, with the teacher there to encourage and foster debate. The teacher did not enforce her views, but allowed the young people to critically discuss issues around drugs, alcohol and smoking – and made a point of commenting on particularly insightful, engaged and reflexive remarks.   Thus, she led young people to share and build meaning together through authentic exchanges, allowing for engagement with multiple discourses alongside challenging asymmetrical power relations which can be commonly found in the classroom (Bakhtin, 1981).

Social connectedness

Despite their voiced agency, across all three schools, young people realised the importance of appropriate social networks and support systems. These were often wide and varied – and not just focused on the family and friends. Young people frequently commented that it was important to surround themselves with people who support, believe and encourage them. In particular, young people who tended to comment on their unstable home lives, referred to greater support systems in the form of guidance teachers, friends, other key school staff, wider family networks, and youth workers. For example, both Nathan and Freya, in their individual interviews, spoke about their home environments and the effect this had on them, while referring to key individuals who helped to support them. For Nathan this was his youth worker

and extended family and for Freya this was her guidance teacher, her friends and her best friend's mother who she commented was '…like a mum to her'.

At Rosepark, across all groups, the young people reported feeling connected with one another, as well as to particular teachers. While, commenting on aspects of their school they did not like (e.g. certain groups of young people) they noted they usually felt safe in the environment (and were more fearful of online bullying). In addition, young people all spoke highly of their teachers, in particular their Head of House. During a class in which she was teaching, the young people were the most engaged, and the atmosphere was one of ease. In the interviews and group discussions, her name was often brought up without me prompting and she was often held in high regard:

> I can go to her with anything and she'll help.
>
> Jenna, Rosepark, December 2016

> She cares – some teachers are nice but don't want to know about your life not in school. She does.
>
> Ryan, Rosepark, December 2016

> I go chat with her a lot and something happens if you talk to her [e.g. she speaks to bullies or teachers or works through the pupil's worries/concerns with them].
>
> Heather, Rosepark, December 2016

In addition, this interpersonal relationship was reciprocated by the head of house herself. In our interview she showed genuine concern for her students and highlighted her desire to work with, and alongside, the young people attending Rosepark:

> If deadlines or targets need met, that's not my worry. I'm here to make sure the pupils are doing as well as they can and are as happy as they can be at school. Our statistics may not be the best out there. We never hear our school is doing well…nothing is ever good enough…but at the end of day, I'd rather have happy wee puddings over unhappy grouches. Trying to please everyone is a hugely difficult task. It can't be done. I think you have to be not too hard on yourself, you can only do what you can do. Ultimately, I support the pupils. If the pupil is working towards the best they can be, the best they can achieve that's all we can ask. That doesn't always mean getting five Highers upon

leaving school. I have a non-attender who is taking steps to work on her behaviour and is working hard to really improve her opportunities and is about to start a work placement. She is under 16, but has poor mental health and just can't cope with school. But, the law says she should be in school so there's not many options open to her which is frustrating because sometimes school isn't the place for someone. Anyway, a work placement wouldn't seem like success to education authorities, but for her, that's massive. So, massive and I'm so proud of her.

<div align="right">Interview with a teacher, Melanie, Rosepark, December 2016</div>

Segal (1988) stresses how important a charismatic adult can be for a young person. If a young person finds an adult with whom they can identify with and gather strength from them, seemingly little gestures can go a long way to making a lifelong impact (Brooks and Goldstein, 2008). Furthermore, research has tended to prove that this adult often tends to be a teacher (Brooks, 1991). This discussion on the importance of relations and the value of significant and charismatic people in a young person's life will be continued in the subsequent chapters. However, the quote from Melanie highlights wider themes around the concept and definition of success and achievement – which are aligned with those of the young people at Rosepark – as well as highlighting the 'push' and 'pull' nature of being a teacher. Melanie tries to balance the various people invested in education, from parents, upper management, Local Authority, to Scottish Government, and ultimately chooses to focus on the young people. Again, this will be discussed further in subsequent chapters, but it is important to note the recurring themes and ideas that arose during my fieldwork and the effect these can have for young people, staff and the wider ecology of the school.

At Rosepark, it is also important to note that it was not just the one teacher that appeared to be helping to create a cohesive and friendly environment. During specially designed activities, classroom observations, as well as during break/lunch and movement in between periods, there were recurring acts and references which supported the notion of a caring and supportive nature amongst young people and between young people and staff at Rosepark. There was an active interest in the whole well-being of each individual. Young people often spoke about the particular situations of their peers, what they admired others for, and how they sought to show they cared for these individuals. During movement between classes at the end/start of each period, the young people at Rosepark also showed an interest in not just my research and what I was doing at their school, but also me. They would walk with me and include me in their

conversations and appeared to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts about teachers, subjects, school, friends, and their life outside of school with me.

Teachers' care and support, across all three case study schools, was illustrated through the attention and support given to young people during the classes, as well as through managing behaviour in a positive manner. For example, in one classroom at Rosepark, the teacher used humour to manage misbehaviour, and incorporated various learning activities which encouraged cooperative learning. At Forestside, a teacher incorporated modern day references to popular media, commented how she did not use a traditional marking scheme for homework (but instead used a traffic light marking system across all year groups) and took frequent steps to ensure student understand and learning. However, there were instances across all case studies where passing comments or pedagogy did not necessarily support an environment of support and care. This will be outlined in greater detail in the data analysis and findings chapters – especially in Chapter Ten.

The classes that were observed across the duration of fieldwork tended to be characterised by mixed ability groups which consisted of a range of interests and backgrounds. The teachers adapted well to cater to the diversity of young people. In particular, the majority of teachers adopted different teaching strategies and included a range of tasks in their lessons. Most importantly, the biggest indicator of the inclusive environment was the inclusion, and support, given to those with additional support needs. In Forestside, pupil support assistants were involved in each class and were there to give extra assistance if need be. At Rosepark, during my observations, intensive support by complementary additional support needs teachers was given to students. In addition, at Rosepark, young people, teachers and senior management commented on the inclusive nature of their school, not just in relation to additional support needs, but also ethnicity and culture – expressing the positive nature of this and how it also helped develop other young people's acceptance of wider society.

Taxonomy of agency

In the following section, I have adopted the four forms of agency developed by Lister (2004) are adopted as sub-headings and given examples of agentic moments exercised by the young people within this study. This taxonomy has often been used to highlight how young people in poverty achieve agency. A thorough overview of this taxonomy is given in Chapter Four (under the sub-

heading of 'the individual'). However, I have outlined these categories below as a reminder, while also relating them to the study of poverty and attainment to highlight how each form of agency may look like.

- Getting by: These are the coping strategies a young person adopts in order to 'get by' in day-to-day life including drawing upon their personal and social resources.
- Getting back at: Channelling anger and despair at their present situation in order to resist societal and institutional norms.
- Getting out: This entails the individual seeking a route of their present situation via established routes, such as FE and HE.
- Getting organised: The collective response of a group of individuals which adopts a strategic and political stance.

Below, I expand this conceptual framework in order to apply it to how young people acted creatively in emergent situations (Joas, 1996), and achieved agency, through their actions in order to obtain an intended educational outcome. This has become a focus of the study in that when gathering data it was increasingly apparent that each young person had different resources and unique lived experiences, which shaped how they came to be the individuals that sat before me. Therefore, I wish to highlight the diversity of experiences while drawing upon the taxonomy of agency to bring a theoretical framing while highlighting how Joas's theory of action can be utilised in data analysis. I have adopted the use of ethnographic vignettes in order to pull the reader into the lives of the young people and highlight how they negotiate the interactions in their schooling and wider environment. These vignettes have been developed from observations, group activities and interviews.

I have separated out the categories of agency and confined a scenario or action to a particular form of agency, but it is important not to see the forms of agency as standalone categories, but as a continuum. As such, young people can act within multiple categories across different areas of their life.

Getting out
Euan (Montgomery Academy)
The first ethnographic vignette focuses on the experiences of Euan. He is 17 years old, the eldest of five children, and lives at home with his mother and father. His father has been in the same company since leaving school at 16, with no qualifications, and his mother commenced

university studies, but left during the first semester of her first year as a result of pregnancy. His parents do not engage in his school life: for example, they do not attend parent's evenings or award ceremonies. In his sixth year, he is studying for a mixture of Highers and Advanced Highers and hopes to go to university in Glasgow to study optometry (he had a conditional offer).

Prior to his fifth year of school, he had been deemed by school staff to be a respectful boy with the Headteacher noting that he was: '…shy, quiet, and reserved. Never a cause for concern, but never excelling either'. However, a particular action moment, the opportunity of a work placement in an optician gave way to not only many more opportunities, but also helped Euan to develop as an individual. Euan spoke of how the experiences he gained with the optician not only gave him valuable life skills such as team-working, improving his communication skills (through customer service), as well increasing his overall confidence. In addition, Euan noted that the opportunity to shadow various members of staff gave way to a career option for him, a decision he had little direction in pre-work experience, as an optometrist.

The school noted the significant increase to Euan's self-esteem post-placement, and in informal discussions, many teachers, and Euan himself, commented that if he had not been offered the opportunity he may not be where he was today. The increase in confidence led him to apply, and be successful, for school house captain, as well as showcasing his musical talents at school shows for the first time.

Interestingly, what was evident with Euan, was that during the interview he was very self-aware that if he had perhaps not been lucky to gain this opportunity (a by chance event) he would perhaps still be drowning in not knowing what to do with his life, and still very shy and reserved, and viewing himself as lacking in skills with no abilities. So, in this scenario, the action moment where Euan applied for such an opportunity, and then interacted with the work placement, led to an emergent event which potentially has a resounding positive effect on his future life outcomes.

Getting by
Hannah (Rosepark High School)
Hannah is 15 years old and lives at home with her mother, father and twin sister. She hopes to go to university to study Human Resource Management and Business. During her interview she repeatedly mentioned key people who encouraged and supported her.

The first of these was her twin sister and her parents. She spoke of the friendly rivalry that she held with her sister which involved 'pushing and competing against one another'. But, she also referred to the support they felt between one another, in which they could call upon one another for help when need be as well embrace each other's successes. There were many anecdotal stories of her proud parents at award ceremonies and embarrassment at certificates being hung in the house. She commented that they were very supportive of her aspirations and always tried to do their best to help both her and her sister succeed.

Friends were seen to be another source of encouragement and support. Through spending a significant time together inside of and outside of school, Hannah felt that personalities, goals, and values rubbed off on one another. She also remarked that it was '…a path they are taking together' and that they help one another out – a similar relationship as to what she described with her twin sister. Hannah also mentioned the value of the school network in helping her to succeed. She found there to be a culture of mutual respect between students and school staff which made her feel respected, valued and listened to – and motivated her to want to thrive in her learning.

Hannah's experience illustrates the value and influences of interpersonal networks at various levels of the social world – friends, siblings, parents, and school. For Hannah, it is clear to see how her agency is shaped and supported by the social world. The goals she selects are made in tandem with cultural values, norms and models available to her in her social environment (e.g. the support and encouragement she feels she receives). In addition, her willingness and sense of belief in achieving her goals, as a result of such social supports, can be seen to impact on her capacity to not only guide her own thoughts, behaviours and feeling to reach these goals, but also her perceived self-efficacy. This further highlights the role of socio-cultural contexts in defining an individual's aspirations and desires: and the idea that personal aspirations emerge from a complex interaction of personal traits, situations or events, and cultural contexts. In other words, the world in which the individual is situated in is critical, as Smyth and Wrigley have acknowledged.

> Aspirations operate within a field of opportunities; they grow or shrink partly in response to the perceived possibilities of a successful outcome.
>
> (Smyth and Wrigley, 2013: 120).

Frustrated agency

Alice (Montgomery Academy)

Alice is 16 years old, in fifth year of school and lives at home with her mother and a younger brother. Alice intends to stay on at school for sixth year as she wants to achieve a good grade in maths (currently studying for a National 5 award in maths). She most enjoys physical education, plays a lot of sport outside of school and wishes to work in the fitness and health profession, perhaps as a personal trainer. During our interview, Alice commented that in order to succeed in life she must attend university, as that is what is expected of young people these days – it is the norm. However, she doesn't have the grades to achieve entry into university, but will apply for college, and then go on to university.

Alice was very critical of the amount of support young people receive earlier in their school career, with regards to being aware and knowledgeable about what an individual needs to achieve in order to follow different paths. In this discussion, she gave an example of school subject choices in which young people are asked to specialise in subjects at a young age and it is not made clear to them that these decisions may be crucial and effect their post-school destination. She noted there was flexibility to pick up some subjects in the upper years of secondary schooling, but by then it may be too late for some career paths.

It is important to note that in Alice's vignette she has exhibited a term, labelled 'frustrated agency' (Evans, 2007) in that she has been forced to accept whatever she can in order to cope with her current situation. This is not a fatalistic acceptance of her situation, for she has rationalised, and acted within the ecological context, in her reasoning to go on to college, prior to university. She has exercised agency and creativity of action in the midst of difficulties and constraints– even when ultimately uncertain of what she would study at university, and also commenting that she was aware that a university degree was not required in order to be a personal trainer.

However, what can be seen to be the most significant point arising from this vignette is Alice's insistence that a university degree is the only way '…to get places in life'. The high value placed on HE was recurring across this case study. Alice spoke of a friend, Louise, who wished to study hairdressing at a FE institution or through an apprenticeship in a local salon. However, Louise was concerned of the stigma associated with 'non-university related occupations' and was discouraged from this path by school staff, who felt she could aim higher. She has now applied to university to study psychology.

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In the United Kingdom, a university education, and a degree, is regarded as a gold standard (Musgrove, 1965) and is becoming increasingly normalised (Ryan and Lőrinc, 2018). The growing popularisation of HE in recent years has been due to widening access schemes (discussed in Chapter Nine). However, it is also part of neoliberal agendas in a bid to ensure international competitiveness and employability, with education framed in terms of the economic benefits (Brooks, 2013). Furthermore, as Sir Keith Burnett (2016) commented, HE is seen as a rite of passage, with an apprenticeship viewed upon as a lesser alternative. He continues that the rigid, hierarchical system in Britain, which also delimits social mobility, needs to be challenged and the recognition that comes with a university degree also has to be given to that of an apprenticeship. Furthermore, it is important to consider that pushing young people towards the goal of a HE may be hazardous venture in a climate of overqualified graduates (Clifton, Thompson and Thorley, 2014).

Educational policy makers attempt to narrow the attainment gap and ensure everyone has equitable opportunity to achieve the same outcomes. However, it can be suggested that policies appear less engaged in highlighting and identifying that a non-academic career, such as vocational qualifications, are on an equal footing with academic pursuit: 'learning by doing' should be valued equally alongside university education.

Getting (back) at
Nathan (Rosepark High School)

Nathan is aged 14, is in his second year at school, and lives with his aunt and two siblings. Nathan loves music – playing drums, guitar and piano – as well as participating locally and nationally in rugby and football. He attends a local youth club once a week where he enjoys hanging out with his friends and playing video games. On his map of important people/things in his life, he wrote 'in general, school' and he explained that he doesn't particularly like it, but he sees the point of it: 'to do well later in life; get the grades I need to do things I want to do'. His approach, and outlook, to life appeared very mechanistic and routine – from what he wrote to the question of 'what is the recipe for success?' (see Figure 8.2). The stages in which he listed make it appear a very mundane process.
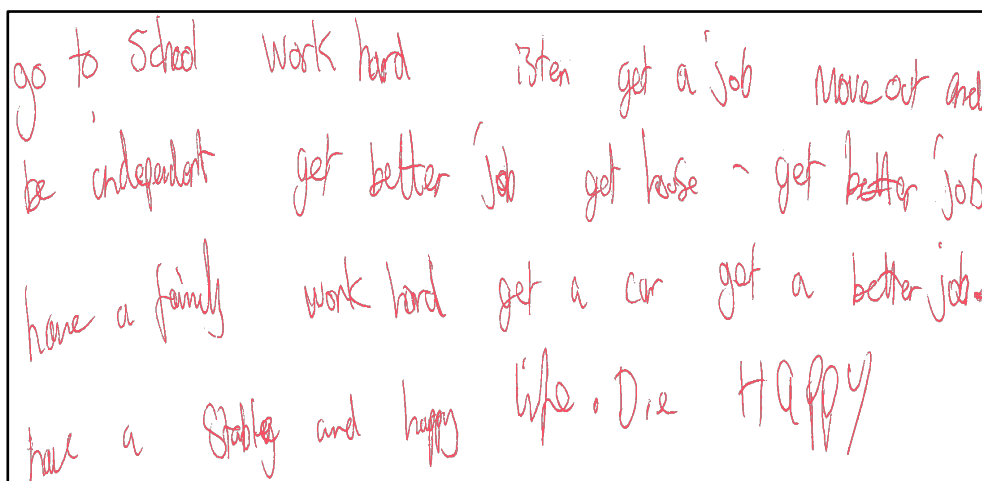
Figure 8.2: An excerpt from Nathan's 'Recipe for Success' worksheet

However, during our interview, he expressed a desire to continue playing sports, at a professional level, but comments this may not be possible due to the competitive nature (few opportunities being available) and lack of longevity in sporting careers. He is very close to one of his sports coaches, Neil, and also really admires his work in the local community with young people (this relationship is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Nine). He thinks he would love to go on to do sports coaching, and give back to his local community in some way, as '…it's made me how I am'.

Nathan appears to be situated in many of the different forms of agency. It could be argued he is getting by, getting out, and getting (back) at. I have adopted Clark-Kazak's (2014) criticism of the taxonomy as being too negative and critical – and opting to focus on the positive, and the potential, of such acts. As Patrick (2017) has noted, getting (back) at could also refer to resistance (positive included) and challenging the dominant portrayals and stereotypes of disadvantage. Therefore, I have situated Nathan in this typology to highlight his desire to give back to his local community, due to the support and encouragement he has received. He does not want to 'get out' but he wishes to show his appreciation and help to support other young people living in the community. His vignette demonstrates that socio-economic disadvantage is not a distinct negative situation and there can be positives which arise from these experiences. As noted in the literature review, rather than focusing on the mismatches between school and community cultures, and the deficits which a community or individual may lack, practitioners should turn to what they do have (an assets based approach) and how they make the most of what they do have – celebrating and recognising their achievements – while wider policies aim to alleviate their situation (Zipin, Sellar and Hattam, 2012; Rios-Aguilar et. al, 2011).

The final category of Lister's (2004) typology of agency is 'getting organised'. This entails individuals taking collective, strategic and political action in order to make change. This was the one category which was not present in the data. This may be as a result of entrenched views regarding participation of young people in decision-making – and for those who do gain participation it can often be as a result of the social, cultural and economic resources available to them. As Fraser (1997) argues: 'cultural norms that are unfairly biased against some are institutionalized in the state and the economy; meanwhile, economic disadvantage impedes equal participation in the making of culture, in public spheres and in everyday life' (ibid: 72).

Summary

This chapter has explored some of the ways in which young people navigate their environments and how they act in complex situations. It has illustrated what young people deem to be important to being successful in life. In line with these definitions, it has highlighted how there are contradictions between societal definitions of success and what young people deem to be important in being successful.

In exploring these definitions, the concepts of resilience and optimism were introduced. In particular, discussions surrounding social media – and the extent to which school life carries over to outside of school life – were pertinent within these conversations. I touched on other areas which were deemed to be valuable in developing the resilience of young people which will be unpacked in the subsequent chapters. As noted, young people were fairly optimistic regarding their future lives and their future potential. They often adopted a 'whatever will be, will be' attitude. However, there were young people who held high aspirations who felt pressure and concern at fairly young ages. These pressures were often societal or cultural and a result of out-of-school pressures.

The chapter demonstrated how time, and the limits of time, is a negotiated process for teachers and has an effect on the learning experiences of young people. Before, moving on to further explore how authentic exchanges in the classroom context foster engagement and break down power differentials (Bakhtin, 1981). This led into a discussion of the value of strong social networks for young people in order to help them achieve agency. In particular, the role of the charismatic adult (Segal, 1988) can be particularly influential in a young person's life. This builds

on the section on resilience discussed earlier in this chapter and is also developed further in the subsequent chapter.

The final section of this chapter utilises Lister's (2004) taxonomy of agency in order to analyse young people's school experiences. I use the ethnographic vignettes of Euan, Hannah, Alice and Nathan to explore how young people navigate complex situations. Drawing upon the work of Joas (1996) and his argument that we act creatively in emergent situations, we can see how agency is achieved by young people. This then enables them to obtain intended educational outcomes.

After exploration of the actions and experiences of young people, the next chapter turns to exploring the wider levels of the social-ecological model. In particular, there is a focus on relational resources. This is not just at the student-teacher interaction level, but also explores the role of school in society.

Chapter 9: Relational resources

Schools are, indeed, one important method of the transmission which forms the dispositions of the immature; but it is only one means, and compared with other agencies, a relatively superficial means.

(Dewey, 1916: 4)

Introduction

Relational structures refer to the social relations within society itself. Ultimately, society is composed of a multiplicity of these relations, which Elder-Vass (2008) refers to as '…causal interconnections and interdependences between agents' (ibid: 281). The previous chapter highlighted the agency of the young people in particular case study schools. It suggested not only how young people achieved agency, but also what agency looked like for these young people. The wider ecological context in which they are situated, the school, was discussed in relation to this highlighting whether or not the structure encourages or constrains the young people to achieve agency. The next two data analysis chapters discuss relationality in the context of the schools in this study. This chapter will highlight the value of relational resources in the form of social relations, within school but also in the wider community, and how this can aid, and encourage, the achievement of agency.

As highlighted in Chapter Eight, a young person's ability to achieve agency is life-stage dependent due to a greater dependence on adults (Sumner, 2010) and being faced with a greater number of constraints than those encountered by adults (Crockett, 2002). As a result, this chapter explores how individuals operate by means of their environments. More specifically, the following sections explore how individuals are positioned in relation to other individuals – and the emergent properties which may affect these individuals' actions (Priestley, Biesta and Robinson, 2015). This exploration draws upon the conceptual and theoretical frameworks put forward in Chapter Three. Pragmatist thought, and Joas's theory of creative action, is key to understanding the emergent properties which arise from interactions. Furthermore, the ecological model provides us with a reminder of how intertwined, and co-dependent, the multiple levels of society are upon the other (Park, 1936). Therefore, for example, teacher-student interactions have the ability to result in more than a 'creative action' by the young person, but be part of more emergent, temporal outcomes which are displayed across multiple levels of society.

Across all the schools in this study there was a common practice of promoting activities outside the traditional curriculum. This ranged from extra-curricular activities (sports clubs, arts clubs, theatre, choir, debating, pupil council, school exchanges) to co-curricular activities (Duke of Edinburgh, Saltire Awards). In the urban school there were more opportunities, as a result of their location and accessibility to greater opportunities in the area. For example, more links could be made with FE and HE institutions and work experience opportunities were greater and more diverse. However, there tended to be a lot going on at each school with varying options which could encourage each individual young person to become involved with extra and co-curricular activities. In spite of this, some key themes arising from discussions with young people and staff were that initiatives were often reactive in character, while there was a lack of awareness of opportunities by young people and activities could be used as an incentive to ensure traditional school attainment. Initiatives often arose out of a young person disengaging from school and, thus, were not used as an early form of intervention. There tended to be no succinct document which listed all available opportunities for young people and staff – thus, there is a sense of inequity regarding awareness and whether these activities are being offered to every young person. Furthermore, activities were seen to be used as incentives and/or bribes to encourage young people in areas of the traditional curriculum.

This chapter will discuss the notion that participation in extra or co-curricular activities fosters a sense of belonging in the school, but also often within the wider community. In the schools in this research study, it was a significant factor which was commented upon by almost every individual in the study (young people, teachers and senior management). The problems of such opportunities, as well as the shortcomings of such activities in practice, will be highlighted through young people vignettes. More specifically, the chapter will explore the added value that a school can offer its young people.

Learning happens everywhere

Casella (1999) claims pedagogy does not solely refer to techniques used in the classroom, but instead refers to education in relation to the everyday interactions between teachers, it's young people, schools, history, identity and both formal and informal learning environments. Casella continues that education has become border-blurring in that it can occur in many arenas: in cinemas, via computers and videogames, in museums, through travel. If a cultural view of education is adopted, we can begin to see how education has undergone 'transformation,

transgression, and change' at a community level as well as a national and global level. We take an everyday activity, and a widely known concept, and start to understand how it is taken up within public, voluntary and corporate spheres (ibid: 120). The scope of this study does not permit a thorough exploration of how education has progressed beyond the walls of traditional schooling, but this section does aim to highlight the development of extra and co-curricular activities, as a means of supporting and enhancing the educational experiences of young people.

Across all three schools, but most notably at Rosepark and Montgomery, young people were observed to be learning in multiple ways. A primary technique used at Rosepark was through relating the topic of study back to the young people's everyday lives. In the majority of lessons observed, teachers were careful to relate subjects (such as Biology, Math, English, and Modern Studies) back to students lived realities to aid their understanding of key concepts. This 'Funds of Knowledge' approach often led to increased critical debate by young people as they could identify more with the issues being discussed, rather than seeing it as an abstract issue or topic. Furthermore, Rosepark offered many opportunities for young people to become involved in their local area and the staff encouraged students to explore the history and culture of the community. A recent activity, as part of their business studies class, involved young people choosing a local business or organisation to research. This involved them: working together in groups to interview the owners of local businesses to find out the business history; volunteer with the business to gain an insight into how it operates; and, prepare a presentation to feedback to their peers about what they learned. In some cases, students were offered part-time paid or voluntary positions at the business they researched, based upon the work and effort they put into this activity.

Furthermore, across all three schools, young people regularly spoke about how they preferred to be 'doing things' rather than just sitting listening to a teacher or copying text out a workbook. Young people often listed more practical subjects as being their favourites, such as, physical education, home economics, drama, art and design, technical, and even science where they got to conduct experiments.

> I love to be doing things. I learn better. I don't like Maths, English and French. We just sit and write and listen to the teacher. I can't learn anything like that. I can't stay with it. I do pretty well in PE and technical and the teachers slag me for not doing good across all my subjects, but they don't realise some subjects are just more fun and...interesting than others.

The philosophy behind the value of the practical activity of doing in order to learn extends from the work of Dewey and his ideals behind the purposes of education. Dewey (1916) wrote:

> …[t]hey give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking, or the intentional noting of connections; learning naturally results.
>
> (ibid: 154).

This experiential approach to education, and learning, is founded upon the idea that development of an individual takes place when they are actively involved in learning – rather than simply being receivers of information. In Mead's 1910-11 lectures on the Philosophy of Education, he stressed the significance of experience in giving rise to belief, and understanding. He commented:

> …we set tasks for ourselves and if successful believe in the success of the whole…what gives reality is that we succeed in doing certain things…the more difficulty, the more of a sense of reality the success brings.
>
> (Mead, 1910-11, cited in Biesta and Tröhler, 2008: 44).

This viewpoint highlights the creativity in action, underlined by Joas's (1996) theoretical position which assumes goals are ultimately changing and evolving as newly available means arise. Therefore, individuals do not separate goals, actions and outcomes, but instead progressively transform goals and actions as they move through our lives.

> At the beginning of an action process goals are frequently unspecific and only vaguely understood. They become clearer once the actor has a better understanding of the possible means to achieve the ends; even new goals will arise on the basis of newly available means… Action is not only contingent on the structure of the situation but the situation is constitutive of action.
>
> (Joas, 1996: 273-274).

Furthermore, the ideas put forward by experiential learning which are supported by the data which has been gathered, highlights the negative influences of performativity regimes. Performativity is linked with traditional attainment and exam results (see Chapters Three and Four for greater discussion of performativity and performance management), while the learning experience outlined in the business studies class at Rosepark were set within the wider context

of developing an all-rounded young person – not simply one who becomes a statistic in a nationally agreed target.

Engagement, belonging and identity

In all three of the case study schools, extra-curricular activities and associated group identities were often seen by young people as enhancing their feeling of a sense of belonging, but also provided an escape from the day-to-day routine of school. Furthermore, they were noted as a protective factor by many young people during their adolescence. Belonging is defined by Miller (2003) as: '…a sense of ease or accord with who we are in ourselves' and 'a sense of accord with the various physical and social contexts in which our lives are lived out' (ibid: 220).   Calhoun (2003) furthers this by commenting how it is impossible not to belong to a social group or a culture, for '…identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others' (Weeks, 1990: 88). Protective factors relate to the concept of resilience which focuses on the individual motivations, their persistence and ability to 'hang in' (Smyth, Down and McInerney, 2010).

In Rosepark High School, the girls spoke highly of a recent group set up at lunch time for girls to learn how to play rugby.

> Mr Johnson set up the rugby team. That was good. We went along….not expecting much….because it's rugby and we're girls, but it's really good and I've made friends with people in years above me and it's all girls so you know we don't need to deal with the boys. We can keep fit and it's fun so it doesn't even feel like sport.
>
> Freya, Rosepark, January 2017

The girls I spoke to not only appreciated it being an all-female group, but found it positive in helping them exercise in a fun way, while learning new skills and also meeting other people throughout the school (across different year groups). Ruvalcaba and colleagues (2017) found that teenagers who participated in artistic, sporting and/or scouting groups were more likely to report higher levels of emotional intelligence – and resilience – in comparison to those who did not participate, or belong, to another type of social group. This gives weight to the notion that participation in social groups can aid the positive development of young people.

In addition, a lot of students in the younger years of Rosepark commented on how frequently they swam and their general enthusiasm for swimming. Rosepark is fortunate enough to have a swimming pool located within the school, which may give some explanation for how frequently this was mentioned. However, it is important to note that four young people commented on how they built upon this in their time outside of school. These young people were members of a local swimming club and they all told me how they had joined this club only after started at Rosepark.

> Ania: I am part of a swimming club. I recently joined after learning to swim two years ago. I like that and I go with my best friend which is even better
> Researcher: Ah, a few people have mentioned swimming and swimming clubs…
> Ania: It's probably because we have a swimming pool here and there's a lot of people who I know from school who are at the swimming club. That sometimes makes it still feel like school, but it's more fun.
>
> Ania, Rosepark, February 2017

Referring back to the discussion on built pedagogy in Chapter Eight, it was suggested how the design and use of school buildings can communicate social and cultural ideals as well as cultivating an atmosphere of shared experiences and a culture of togetherness (Monahan, 2002). The popularity of the swimming club and swimming as a sport was mentioned frequently in interviews and group discussions – with one boy who did not swim commenting he sometimes felt left out, as all his friends were part of the swimming club. Others, who attended this club, spoke about becoming friends with people they had not previously spoken to before, as well as getting the opportunity to speak to people in different school years. It could be suggested that activities like these, in which social groups that do not usually interact can bring a shared sense of identity and belonging which leads to a strong school culture alongside pride in their school.

Most students that I spoke to at Montgomery Academy were not forthcoming regarding their participation in extra-curricular activities. I was frequently informed by staff (teachers and senior management) that there were many opportunities for young people. However, when I spoke to the young people regarding these opportunities, and their experiences of them, they often stated no involvement in such activities.

> Researcher: What would you like to see more of?

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Jill: There ain't enough focus on jobs and apprenticeships….or, like, opportunities out there which are available to us or which could sway us into different routes, if you know what I mean?

Chelsea: Yeah, like I want to know more about what's out there. What can I do? We know the typical jobs like nursing, teaching and stuff, but there's so much more.

Researcher: Okay, have you ever heard about stuff you can get involved in to sorta explore what else is out there?

Chelsea: My sister does cool stuff and she's in S3 [Chelsea's sister is taking part in Lift Off which is explained below], but they tend to pick people for stuff. It depends if you're lucky.

Niamh: We're clearly not lucky or they've lost hope for us.

S4 female friendship group discussion, Montgomery, January 2016

The above discussion is insightful in highlighting a lack of awareness about opportunities. However, the language used by the young girls also suggests a sense of frustration or disappointment at not being selected to take part in extra or co-curricular activities. Phrasing it as some being lucky and them not to be picked because the teachers have given up on them is concerning, when they are at a crucial age of their educational journey. At the end of their current school year would be the first opportunity for all four girls in this group to leave. Although they all noted they would like to stay on until at least fifth year of school, this cherry-picking style of selection for participation in extra-curricular activities does not provide an equitable environment for young people. In addition, it also raises questions regarding how young people are selected. Do staff pick based on perceived potential, with those deemed to be less able or showing less potential – those who should be receiving the same amount of support – left to their own devices?

At Montgomery, staff told of the possibilities for work experience and college participation, through close links with employers and colleges in the local area. For example, a young girl had expressed an interest in jewellery making, upon finishing school, and school staff were able to help her get a place to study this at a college in a nearby city for one day a week – as well as still attending school, and studying traditional, academic subjects. This afforded her the opportunity to gain wider exposure and experience to jewellery making, as well as further developing her skillset. In addition, the case study of Euan highlighted in the previous chapter, and the success story of this opportunity, highlights that there were students and staff working together to help achieve success. However, much of the onus was left to the student – and little support or

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advice appeared to be offered in ensuring those struggling or less outspoken were getting their voices and aspirations heard. Further discussion surrounding discrepancies in thinking, attitudes and beliefs, between staff and students will be examined in the next, and final, data analysis chapter. Below is an excerpt from my field notes, concerning a discussion with a support member of staff, which highlights – further – the gap between staff-student thinking.

> I met the careers advisor today. She spoke about working with S1s to produce CVs and what not, but I recall a comment a young person made in a group discussion this morning about the ridiculousness of asking S1s to build a CV when, at that stage, they have little use for one and they'd prefer this to be done in later years. I ask if further support is given regarding CVs once students come to applying for post-school destinations. She says this is not followed up – but that the students know where to find her.
>
> Fieldnotes from an informal meeting with a member of staff, Montgomery, January 2016

The member of staff believed strongly that there was no need for a top-up on how to do a CV and later stated that young people could find out how to produce one on their own if they used the internet. This 'laissez-faire' approach suggests that she believes young people can take ownership of their futures. Thus, affording the students the opportunity to be agentic. It can generally be argued that we know ourselves best. So, who better to make decisions regarding our futures than ourselves. However, social networks and social support have been suggested by young people in this study (see the previous chapter and the discussion on young people's agency) as a positive influence effecting a young person's educational outcomes and school experience – and highlighted as a key in promoting self-confidence and resilience (McKinney et al., 2013). Individuals do not act alone in their environment; they act by means of their environment. Through support, agency can be achieved, but without such support it can result in the denial of cognitive and relational resources. This risks low morale among young people who feel unsupported and overlooked – potentially resulting in lower achievement and disengagement with education.

Furthermore, at Montgomery, there was greater emphasis on accredited routes that sit outside the formal structure of traditional subject-based school qualifications, such as the Duke of Edinburgh, the Saltire Awards and SQA accredited certifications in volunteering skills and

leaderships. In particular, 'Saltire'[11] was the most frequently mentioned. This is a Scottish Government youth volunteering award which has been developed in order to recognise and reward young people (aged 12-25) who volunteer in Scotland. This initiative was first mentioned by a S3 student during his participation in a widening access to university scheme (further information regarding this scheme can be found in Chapter Ten). Below is an exchange between one of the Lift Off (a widening access to HE initiative which works with targeted secondary schools within a regional area to inspire young people on to HE) co-ordinators and a student during the breakout sessions.

> Sam: It's important not to just focus on grades, but also wider
> achievements…like….sports, extra-curricular stuff, Duke of Edinburgh, or Saltire.
> Lift Off co-ordinator: And why is that? Why do you think it's important to explore other stuff?
> Sam: I dunno, because we're told it is.
>
> Fieldnotes from from Montgomery, January 2016

This exchange highlights an issue which was recurring across my fieldwork at Montgomery in that young people were told wider achievements, outwith the traditional curriculum, were valuable and essential to success at school, but were not given reasons as to why this was so. Examples which displayed this thinking often referenced Saltire, ASDAN (a personal and social development class), and SQA accredited courses.

> We're forced to study for an award in leadership in S5, but it'd be good if we could use this time as study periods to study for other subjects we might be struggling with or need to do well in, like for exams. It might help those of us who don't have time to study at home or no space or lack of computer and stuff.
>
> Julia, Montgomery, January 2016

> I observed a leadership class today which is compulsory for all in S5/6. This class, and the leadership volunteering also goes towards the Saltire award. I spoke to some young people. A group of girls were on the events committee and were fully aware of the value of this activity. They noted the class helps them to see it's not just about

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[11] See the following weblink for more information: https://saltireawards.org.uk/parents/saltire-overview/

The language chosen by the young people, such as 'forced', 'having to do the course', and 'not seeing why they had to be here', highlights a lack of awareness regarding the value of such endeavours. It also suggests a sense of the curriculum as something that is done to students, rather than experienced by students. As I noted in my fieldnotes, there were some young people, a minority, who were self-aware, but these tended to be the students progressing on to university who saw the value in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities as a way to make applications for university and future jobs stand out. Whereas, other students, who were not as engaged in school and not preparing for university, but could benefit most from such accreditations and awards, were being left in the dark regarding the value of such courses. Greater awareness of such accreditations would not only further help ensure positive destinations, but also aid the development of self-esteem and self-confidence for students through the highlighting of their strengths, and also their successes.

I spend period 4 observing an ASDAN class. I ask the teacher what ASDAN stands for and what the class is about. He tells me he doesn't actually know much about it – he just works through the workbooks with the students – and that he was told to teach it when he started. All he knows is it's organised by someone up in Science.

Fieldnotes from an informal conversation with a teacher, Forestside, September 2016

These examples (from Montgomery and Forestside) suggest the lack of student awareness regarding their involvement in co-curricular activities and the transferable skills that such opportunities offer is not the fault of teachers, but instead lies with the higher levels of senior management and Local Authority. In the Teaching Scotland's Future report (Donaldson, 2010), it is acknowledged that most of the continued professional development that a teacher undertakes is organised at a Local Authority level, but in recent years, it is being devolved to schools. However, in this case study of Montgomery Academy, teachers often felt they were not supported in order to fulfil their requested duties. As Priestley and colleagues (2011) note, in their research on educational change in The Highland Council, in-service training can be poor

quality and also run by someone who is much removed from the real world of teaching. It suggests innovation overload and a lack of sense-making in schools when new curricular policies are introduced. Priestley and Minty (2013) discuss levels of engagement with curriculum change and refer to first order and second order engagement. First order engagement refers to whether or not educators agree with the 'big ideas' of a curriculum, while second order engagement is used to describe how the curriculum fits with the educators underlying beliefs and values (and if there has been an engagement with the underpinning ideas of a curriculum). They note that while many teachers welcomed CfE (first order engagement), there were many issues regarding the purposes and philosophy of CfE and a divergence between CfE and teachers own personal beliefs and values regarding education (second order engagement). Priestley and Minty (2013) advocate for greater opportunities for teachers to come together to engage and make sense about the new curricular and pedagogic ideas, thus creating a space for dialogue and a 'collegial culture where innovation is encouraged and where teachers are enabled to act as agents of change' (ibid: 50).

These examples also relate back to wider arguments surrounding performativity cultures. Referring back to Niamh and her statement that 'we're clearly not lucky or they've lost hope for us' regarding participation in Lift Off (a widening access to HE initiative), it can be suggested that targeted approaches can be detrimental to students who are not selected to participate in initiatives. Niamh and her friends 'joked' about being forgotten or teachers having 'lost hope' for them, but these discussions also raised pertinent policy issues surrounding the selective nature of initiatives in order to ensure the targets are met in getting young people from such areas into HE. This is an area for further academic research and one I explore further in Chapters Ten and Eleven.

School as community, community as school

McDermott, Raley and Seyer-Ochi (2009) argue that class labels are produced, and reproduced, as a result of social interactions. They comment that school failure appears to correlate with poverty and they make a call for researchers to explain why this is so. They further explain that young people are often deemed to be a problem. Parents are seen to not care about their child's education, while residing in neighbourhoods in need of regeneration, and are deemed ignorant as to what the world could offer them. The authors further highlight how studies, which try to contradict such deficit views of young people and poverty, often fail to do so.

Researchers, attempting to highlight the assets that these young people have, often still dichotomise through the framing of their arguments. Ultimately, McDermott, Raley and Seyer-Ochi (2009) stress the need for researchers to explore the day-to-day actions, and interactions, of young people's lives, while simultaneously broadening our research interests to the '…traffic of people, goods, and ideas that shape the sensuous lives of neighbourhoods – into their 'inhabitus' (Varenne and McDermott, 1998 cited in McDermott, Raley and Seyer-Ochi, 2009: 106). It can be suggested that if an ecological viewpoint is not taken and, we view young people or their neighbourhoods as isolated incidences, then we can mistakenly build rigid and defined borders. In reality, these boundaries are more porous and are much more interconnected than this.

In all three schools there was a shared theme of the importance of the local community. Staff frequently highlighted how valuable the community was for the school and its students, but also how the school contributed to the local community. However, as already noted in this chapter, this did not always align with students' opinions of the school and there were also disadvantages to the school being closely aligned, and linked, with the local community. In this chapter, I typically use the phrase of the school being embedded in the local community. This expression is used to highlight the inextricable links between school and community – which operate both ways and result in a strong sense of identity and culture. Rosepark was where the positive effects of such networks and relations were most apparent. In particular, an example of this is best illustrated through the experiences of Nathan – a young boy who struggled at school but was talented in sport and music and was heavily engaged with activities outside of school.

Nathan (Rosepark High School)

In the previous chapter, Nathan's ethnographic vignette highlighted his community links, but also his admiration for the people who lead the sports/activities/groups in which he participates – to the point where he wishes to follow in their footsteps, so that he can give back to his community.

What was not mentioned is that Nathan does not do well at school. Prior to interviewing Nathan, I heard comments like, '…good luck with him', '…he's a handful', '…you never know how you're going to get him', and '…when you hear he's in the class you're covering, it makes you want to cry'. Most of these off the cuff remarks were said in a lighthearted way, but it hints towards preconceptions of a young person and focuses on the negative aspect of bad behaviour and inattention, rather than looking to what can be done to help and support. Despite this,

Nathan was the most forthcoming about his experiences and led our conversation. He spoke about acting up in class – primarily because he liked to be doing things rather than sitting and writing or listening – and also about his home life (which he described as 'unusual') and close relationships with his siblings and cousins, as well as his admiration for his aunt who works incredibly hard to provide for him and the others in their house.

As previously highlighted, he plays multiple instruments – and attends lessons for these – and participates at both a local and national level in rugby and football which involves rigorous training regimes and highlights his level of skill in, as well as commitment to, these sports. He also attends the local youth club and the youth worker, Neil, was frequently mentioned during our meetings – as Nathan also knows him through rugby training as Neil is a coach with the local youth rugby team. Neil has connections with the school in that he comes in one day a week to work with young people who are have difficulties relating to their social, emotional and behavioural development (SEBD). During our interview Nathan tells me of how he found out Neil was working in the school and started to visit him in on the days he was in. After discussions between Neil, Nathan and guidance staff, it was agreed that although he did not fall into the SEBD category he would be permitted to work in the youth worker resource area on the days Neil was in if he so wanted. Both Neil and Nathan's guidance teacher commented on how this benefitted Nathan as it gave him less distraction and allowed him to concentrate, while still receiving help when needed. In addition, it also helped the learning of the other students in Nathan's classes who were often disrupted by his behaviour. In particular, staff at Rosepark spoke highly of Neil and his work with pupils.

> He is a real asset to this school. A real asset. He's fantastic. He works alongside the pupils one-to-one. They get the time we can't give them in class to talk about their problems…but also can offer them emotional support and advice when something isn't going well at home or outside of school in general. He can listen, he can support and really he just gives them a chance to feel like they're wanted and belong when they come into school.
>
> Interview with a teacher, Anna, Rosepark, December 2017

Relating back to the theoretical ideas put forward by Joas (1996) and Mead (1932), we can begin to see how interactions – and situated creativity – led to various actors achieving agency. In an action situation, the moment where it was to be decided if Nathan should be able to attend the resource area, the guidance teacher, Neil and Nathan all played a role in ensuring a revision of

possibilities to meet the novel situation (that Nathan was able to attend despite no SEBD due to his rapport with Neil). This vignette also relates back to the wider chapter title of relationality and the notion of belonging. It suggests how school can be so much more than simply a place of formal learning and exams, but how it can also be a reparative process where individuals can connect and develop a common sense of identity to those from diverse backgrounds.

In all these moments of creativity, it is important to note that individuals and the situation itself are embedded in cultural and societal structures that position individuals, and groups, in relation to their prior experiences and desired futures. Thus, there are numerous possibilities, with each offering varied orientations towards the future, but also permitting us to view past actions as multiple (McGowan, 1998).

A small community maintaining disparities and inequalities

At Forestside, the community played a role in helping staff feel a sense of belonging and attachment to the school. Staff often mentioned the value of being part of a small community and how positive it was for young people. However, this was not brought up in discussions with the young people. Of course, this may be because young people were unaware of the value of such a community, or did not, at this time in their life, place much emphasis on it.

> The teacher speaks of the small community feeling at the school and how it's good for students as teachers can build up close relationships with them over the years – and each young person becomes well known by many staff in the school. Later in the day I meet with a member of senior management, who again highlights this community feel to the school. She comments how many of the students' parents also attended the school and there's a pride in the local community – despite the socio-economic circumstances. In addition, she continues by adding on that most young people will never go on to leave the area and that I'll find very few have experienced life outside the town the school is located in.
>
> Fieldnotes from Forestside, September 2016

As can be seen the teacher emphasised the positives of and potential for, close social support mechanisms for young people. However, the member of senior management, while trying to highlight the disadvantage faced by young people attending the school, illustrated how such close-knit communities may disadvantage these young people. Kintrea, St. Clair and Houston

(2011) acknowledged this, in relation to a community in Nottingham, when exploring the influence of place on educational attitudes and aspirations.

> The students never really leave. People joke that the furthest the people in this area have been is the town centre because there are generations of families that have lived here for years.
>
> Informal conversation with a member of SMT, Forestside, December 2016

Kintrea, St. Clair and Houston (2011) comment, as was suggested in my own observations, that young people who spent a lot of time in their home neighbourhoods – in which their school, Forestside, was located – acquired a sense of insularity and did not travel much outwith their local area. They further continue by observing how in such communities there tended to be a lack of awareness surrounding routes to success; for example, there appeared to be no/little knowledge regarding the connection between school achievement and jobs that are deemed to be of a high status in society. At Forestside, one teacher outwardly spoke from a similar viewpoint.

> Today at lunch the teachers were making fun of students. It was quite disheartening. There was a boy who came to the staff room to try and talk to a teacher about studying to become a teacher. All the teachers at the table agreed he would never go anywhere in life and should just give up.
>
> In my observations this afternoon, one of the teachers from the lunch discussion, was taking this class. She seemed genuinely intrigued by my research and we had an interesting discussion around the concepts of attainment and achievement. However, this simmered out when she commented that some students are just not worth bothering about as you know as you know early on they'll just end up on the dole and there's nothing stopping that!
>
> Fieldnotes, Forestside, September 2016

The sharing of these views hints towards the use of performative labels in the classroom. These are labels which generate negative stereotypes and lower expectations for such students resulting in low achievement (Steele and Aronson 1995). This is not a criticism of the individual teacher who made this comment, nor is it one of Forestside, as the setting in which this interaction took place. However, it is a criticism of wider society, where individuals and social

groups often draw upon false narratives in order to maintain social order and maintain disparities and inequalities (Gorski, 2012).

Every school has its problems

Similar themes to those found at Forestside were also found at Montgomery. Staff highlighted the community aspect of the school, while also commenting on how disadvantaged the area is and how generations of families have been taught at the school.

> Teacher: Every school has its problems, and it's not like we're doing great with attainment, and there's [sic] problem pupils. But, there is a strong school ethos around here compared to my previous school. It's different, friendlier, relaxed. It's probably due to the small community here in the town and also everyone knowing everyone else. You can't walk down the street without seeing someone you know.
> Fieldnotes: The teacher highlights how the school has a culture of honesty and is forward-thinking. They face up to the disadvantage faced by the school and proactively deal with it. She highlights how many young people wish to leave the local authority area after leaving school, but many end up remaining here.
>
> Fieldnotes from informal conversation with a teacher, Montgomery, January 2016

The school motto highlights a sense of togetherness and being proud of the school's, but also the wider community's and individual's, background and identity. While, there are many criticisms of Montgomery in this chapter, it is worthwhile noting that young people did feel part of a close network and felt attachment to the school. However, this was mostly attributable to their sense of belonging to the town itself and their pride in the local area. Young people often spoke of their longstanding attachment to the town (in terms of prior family members going to the school) and what they liked about the town itself.

Disparities: equity or privilege

A Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) report, reviewing of evidence on whether educational attainment can be raised by changing parental and child attitudes and aspirations, identifies extra-curricular activities as those activities that are offered alongside the traditional school curriculum. These may take place on school grounds, and be organised by the school, or they may be organised by other organisations and/or may be completely separate from the school. The report suggests activities can fall under three main categories: non-academic activities;

study support' and, multi-strand extra-curricular activities (Carter-Wall and Whitfield, 2012). A review of interventions to raise educational attainment conducted by JRF found evidence that a range of extra-curricular activities, both academic and non-academic, can lead to improved attainment. While there was strong evidence for improvements in attitudes, it is unclear as to how and whether these improvements can also be seen in increased educational attainment. However, it was noted that those students entitled to FSM are more likely to obtain benefits from study support (and perhaps other extra-curricular activities); this has been found in not only research conducted in the UK, but also the USA (Cummings et al., 2012). Good extra-curricular activities which broadened students' horizons were seen by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) as being key to countering disadvantage through the production, and reinforcement, of positive attitudes and aspirations.

However, social class status is reproduced throughout generations, not due to young people seeking to live the same material lives as their family, but because access to extra-curricular activities, physical places and social networks are inextricably linked to social class (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Lareau, 1987; Reay, 1998; Willis, 1977). Therefore, the saying 'it's not what you know, but who you know' rings true in defining who is able to access particular economic, educational, political, and social opportunities (Jones and Vagle, 2013). While schooling and the right to an education is a universal benefit for all children in Scotland, it can be argued that it is a universal benefit with powerful structural mechanisms which privilege and exclude and, ultimately, does not function in a universal manner (Connell, 1994). Boston (2013) highlights how financial resources can not only benefit young people in the form of access to high quality child care and attending high achieving schools, but also through participation in school trips, extra-curricular activities, holiday programmes and other beneficial out-of-school activities. In each of the schools, there were many activities which required a certain amount of economic resources.

The cost of extra-curricular activities: false hope and expectation

At Rosepark, a school exchange was offered to students with a school in Japan. When the organising teacher asked how many young people were interested in such an opportunity, the vast majority of students raised their hands. However, no mention of costs was given. All young people in the year group were given the chance to watch a video made from last year's exhange trip.

When asked if there was interest (post-video), the majority of young people put up their hand. However, I was left wondering about the cost and in a school located in area of socio-economic disadvantage….I spoke to the teacher about the costs of a school trip to Japan and she replied the young people paid for it themselves and it wasn't cheap. I asked if they did fundraising activities to help the young people in anyway and she said no, other than for the visa…..seems a bit exclusive

Fieldnotes from Rosepark, October 2016

Later in the day, in the staffroom, I seized the opportunity to ask the teacher further questions about this exchange trip and it came to light that young people fund the trip themselves. There is some fundraising done by all the students to go towards travel costs, but otherwise young people are left to their own devices to source the finances for the exchange. On the surface, this exchange offered young people a once in a lifetime opportunity to expereince another culture and way of life. However, in reality, this exchange was not offered on equitable grounds. By asking students if they would be interested (without highlighting the vast costs of the exchange) could lead to false hope and expectation. Furthermore, such exclusive trips can be seen as an unsubtle marker of differences in wealth among young people and their peers.

This was also brought up in discussion with teachers at Forestside where links with Malawi have been forged – and senior students are offered the opportunity to visit Malawi, but are left to source the money by themselves with little support. Similar concerns have been raised in recent research conducted across Britain, with one in five (22%) of young people saying they have missed out on a school trip because their family are unable to afford it (Children's Society, 2014). While, Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (2015) found young people who missed out on a school trip felt isolated and excluded; they were missing out on social aspects of schooling, and disappointed or annoyed at their family for not being able to afford the trip.

Reactive practice: ensuring a positive destination for young people

At Montgomery and – to a lesser extent at Forestside – the co-curricular activities were used primarily for those disengaging from education and resultantly had the associations of stigma and being a lesser alternative than FE/HE. As Lacour and Tissington (2011) state a school needs to effectively co-ordinate cross-curricular activities to ensure they integrate well into the traditional curriculum and provide students with meaningful experiences. Particularly, in Montgomery, co-curricular activities were used to ensure a positive destination. They were not

necessarily aimed at maximising the learning potential of a young person and were often seen as a last resort to ensure the positive statistical outcomes.

> I attended a Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) meeting today. Senior management and staff who had volunteered to participate were in attendance. It was made explicitly clear that young people needed to attain a positive leaver destination to ensure the school achieved its targets…I spoke to the Deputy Headteacher who explained they use at-risk matrices for young people deemed to be 'at risk of a negative leaver destination'. From the completion of the risk matrix comes an action plan for each student to ensure a positive leaver destination is in place for that young person once they leave school. Do they really care about the well-being of the individual and what is best for them? Or is it more about assuring their percentages look good? Or, is it simply a double-edged sword?
>
> Fieldnotes, Montgomery, January 2016

At Montgomery, my fieldnotes are scattered with references to, and concerns for, the double meaning behind practices I had observed. It often appeared to be good, and creative, practice on paper, but once I found out more about the practices in action, they appeared to be more results-focused in ensuring the school met accountability and performative targets. It could be said that these schools were acting within a culture of performativity. In particular, in the subsequent chapter, I detail this through the ethnographic vignette of a young girl called Katie. At first glance the vignette appears to suggest a co-operation between student, school, and the wider community. However, it can be argued that the school was using the co-curricular activities as a way of bribing Katie into remaining engaged in education.

At Montgomery, there was a sense that co-curricular activities were actually viewed in a negative sense. These opportunities to complete courses at college or gain work experience were often used on a reactive basis, for example, to target student non-attendance. Therefore, young people were not aware of such opportunities and activities unless they were specifically targeted by staff to ensure they were kept engaged in schooling. These co-curricular activities became an incentive, or bribe, to students to encourage them to attend school, pass certain school subjects, and, as mentioned above, ensuring the school meet their positive destination targets.

Summary

This chapter has explored the role of relational resources in fostering and enabling, but also disabling, agency and creative thinking. The chapter refers to the relational resources as the 'causal interconnections and interdependences between agents' (Elder-Vass, 2008: 281).

A school is not just the traditional curriculum outlined by neoliberal agendas, and the extra and co-curricular activities that are on offer appear to be ever increasing – especially with the implementation of CfE which celebrates wider notions of the curriculum than the previous curriculum. Such opportunities often encourage inter-agency working as well as embedding the school in the local community. When a school is given the chance to develop such initiatives, this can offer greater possibilities and more varied life experiences for its students.

In the first part of this chapter Casella's (1999) notion of learning happening everywhere, (and not just in the classroom) was utilised in order to pull apart the benefits of such an approach. In particular, examples from case study schools were offered to illustrate where this was taking place, and where this did not appear to be happening. In addition, the work of Dewey, Mead, and Joas, was interwoven through this section in order to theoretically situate the value of the practical activity of doing in learning experiences.

The concepts of engagement and belonging were introduced, as a result of the exploration of the value of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. However, it was highlighted how, what may look good in theory, does not always work, or happen the way you expected, in practice. This drew upon the ideas from Priestley and Minty (2013) in outlining first order and second order engagement with curricular change.

From here, the notion of the school being embedded in the community, and the community being a crucial part of the school structure and ecology were discussed. In particular, the ethnographic vignette developed from my meetings with Nathan, a young person attending Rosepark, highlighted the significance of relational resources in fostering agency. This analysis also develops the notion of developing resilience and the idea of the charismatic adult introduced in Chapter Eight.

Finally, the benefits of activities located outside the traditional curriculum were explored. It was noted how, at face value, they can appear to be offering individuals something more, but they

also come attached with issues and stigmas. The cost of such activities can limit the involvement of those young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, certain subjects, accreditations, or future post-school destinations hold societal stigmas, which discourage young people from opting for such routes. The following chapter further explores the wider culture of schools, as well as the wider Scottish education system. It demonstrates how shared outlooks and perspectives between staff, students and the wider community, while being a desirable outcome, are difficult to achieve in light of competing demands from wider national and global performativity trends.

Chapter 10: Cultural resources

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the idea of shared outlooks and perspectives between staff, young people, and the wider community. There will be discussion surrounding the similarities, as well as the disparities, between students and staff, as well as wider school policies. In doing so, this chapter will bring together the preceding two chapters and consider, and link in with, the wider policy context in which schools operate while highlighting the value of an ecological approach. In this chapter I refer to these shared outlooks as cultural resources. Therefore, below, I recap, and further develop, the key arguments surrounding the concept of culture (see Chapter Four) and explain my reasoning for adopting Archer's and Dewey's understanding of cultural resources to help me best understand the environments in which staff and young people navigate every day.

Archer (1988) explains culture as being objective in that it is independent of an individual. She argues that a 'cultural system' can then be transferred through 'socio-cultural interaction' where groups draw upon ideas from the 'cultural system', in line with their interests and aims, referring to this as 'interpersonal influence' where ideas are passed and shared as a result of social interaction (ibid: xv-xvii). Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2015) define culture as: '…to do with ways of speaking and thinking, of values, beliefs and aspirations, and encompass both inner and outer dialogue' (ibid: 30). These definitions are similar to Dewey's (1939) who acknowledges cultural resources as:

> …the elements of a culture interact with each other and the way in which the elements of human nature are caused to interact with one another, under conditions set by their interaction with the existing environment.
>
> (ibid: 76).

Culture is seen as a phenomenon which has an objective existence and can be easily transmitted between individuals and groups. Furthermore, it is to be something which describes, and helps us understand the complex relationships, messiness and connectedness which occur between material and symbolic resources that result in individuals developing and maintaining habits (Heilbronn, 2017) – as individuals as well as within particular groups. They result from prolonged and accumulated interactions between individuals and their environments (Dewey, 1939). Thus, the environment all around us, in which we live and act, is more than physical; it is also cultural (Dewey, 1938). This viewpoint aligns with the ecological approach where society is seen as a complex and interconnected web of life and culture arises from the emergence of customs and

traditions that crete a sense of common purpose among individuals/groups (Park, 1936). Mead's (1938) theoretical framings are also helpful in understanding the value of culture – as the environment, and its pre-existing conditions, in which an individual lives is crucial to understanding what possibilities may emerge in the future as they begin to interact (Chang 2004). For it is only as a result of the 'individual' and 'environment' interacting that emergence occurs (see Chapter Three for further discussion on Mead's theory of emergence).

The next section will refer to these cultural resources available to students and what these may look like when they are utilised by young people, in particular school settings. I will draw upon the case study of Rosepark, to highlight a culturally rich environment where student and teacher beliefs and values appeared to be working in tandem with one another (despite going against those held at policy levels). I will then draw upon Montgomery and Forestside, to illustrate an example of cultural mismatching where school beliefs and ideas of schooling and education are not in sync with students. This is largely as a result of outcome focused teaching which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Empowering and supporting local communities: the heart of the matter

In Chapter Four, I highlighted Biesta, Priestley and Robinson's (2015) findings regarding how some teachers are confused about their role in the school context, as a result of conflicting expectations and ambiguous ideas. They believe external policies, systems and structures imposed on teachers create educational change which lacks defined philosophical underpinnings and also inhibits collegial working. They support the need for wider discussions surrounding the purposes and meaning of education, to help teachers orient their thinking towards the future (and rely less on the here and now of current initiatives which constrain agency), and enable them to engage in professional dialogue, as well as orient practices in the classroom to the wider purposes of education. In the next section, I outline how, at Rosepark, staff beliefs created a positive culture and environment for all in this environment. In doing so, the staff supported action which acted as a counter to the prevailing, and expected, culture and structure of schooling. I then provide an overview of both Montgomery and Rosepark, where there tended to be a '...mishmash of competing and vague ideas' (Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015: 636).

Rosepark: 'a natural social unit'
Throughout this thesis, I have highlighted many positives of Rosepark, as observed by me as researcher, but also through my interactions with staff and students. There are weaknesses in

the school of which I referred to in the previous chapter, regarding the cost of extra and co-curricular activities which can be exclusionary. However, and this is not to compare with other schools in this study, on the whole Rosepark offered students, staff and the wider community a lot more than simply exam results. This was illustrated in Chapter Eight through the friendly and welcoming environment that I, as a researcher, experienced, but also through interactions with staff and students, which cemented the notion of an inclusive and caring environment where young people were respected. At all levels, from senior management to support teachers, staff reiterated the need for the young people in the school to be put first. Teachers told me that, at the end of the day, they were there to help the young people achieve their best, whether that's through FE or gaining knowledge and experience through extra-curricular activities. For example, one teacher stated:

> Getting through life and being content with what you've got. That's being successful.
> You can look to the next stage, the next stage, and the next stage, but sometimes you
> just need to step back and see if you are fulfilled in the moment and that's all that
> matters. You're successful if you've found what you want to do – no matter what that is
> – and if you strive to be better at it every day, not in terms of moving up the career
> ladder, but giving 100% everyday, then that's success.
>
> <div align="right">Interview with a teacher, Melanie, Rosepark, December 2016</div>

Melanie spoke passionately about the school, her role and responsibilities, and also about the young people she looked after as part of her student support and guidance teacher role. Her view on success, as reiterated by other teachers at the school during informal conversations, was that that success was doing one's best, no matter what it was, and that attainment in exam results was a secondary consideration.

> Anna: I don't feel the pressure to make sure the kids get straight As. That might make
> me a bad teacher but….
> Researcher: Why do you think that might make you a bad teacher?
> Anna: Because that's what everyone wants kids to get, isn't it?
> Researcher: Yeah, I can imagine it does feel like that. So, tell me about why you don't
> feel pressurised into making sure the students get As?
> Anna: I want them to take more than that away from this class. It should be about
> enjoying learning and expanding knowledge. Not cramming their brains with things
> they'll forget by next year.

Melanie spoke about the process of getting somewhere and valuing that experience, rather than focusing on the end product and outcome of a situation. She further explained that it was not her concern to worry about the grades and performance results of the school. She stated on many occasions that her job was to help the young people and to give them a positive educational experience which fostered a passion for lifelong learning. It was up to the Headteacher to deal with the criticism of not achieving a certain level of exam passes.

> On one hand you have the senior management to deal with – the stuff they're having to ask questions on. You also have the kids pulling you in one direction, parents and carers in another, and external agencies and bodies we work with in another. I picture us in the middle, the teachers, and everyone else around us tugging on us for our time and to best use our resources. We're just stuck in the middle trying to please everyone. It's a juggling act. I prioritise the kids because at the end of the day that's why we are here. The Headteacher can deal with all the others – the angry people [laughter].
>
> Interview with a teacher, Melanie, Rosepark, December 2017

A recurring theme in my conversations with all staff at Rosepark was how much work and expectation was laid upon their shoulders.

> It's never ending. You always have something that needs to be done, someone to please, someone to answer to, someone to apologise to, markers and performance indicators that we need to meet. It's not worth it all at times – the job. I always say only people who love teaching can stay in this profession because otherwise there's nothing keeping you here.
>
> Interview with a teacher, Adam, Rosepark, December 2017

They had to deal with numerous groups of people with competing agendas and carefully juggle these, to ensure the best possible outcomes. What struck me, with Rosepark, was the shared beliefs amongst staff. From what I observed, this was a caring and nurturing environment, where children and young people were encouraged to flourish and become the best individuals they could be. This did not necessarily fit in with wider policy agendas regarding higher attainment scores and greater numbers continuing their education in HE institutions. This tended to be due to personal reflexivity and staff's own world views – a sense of a need for

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social justice. The support from senior management, who shared similar ways of thinking (resisting the demand to meet performative targets as seen in the quote below from the Headteacher at Rosepark), also enabled staff to build a positive environment for young people. This collegial environment strengthened the staff's ability to resist competing agendas from higher levels (policy and global agenda) as a result of the relational resources available to them.

In an interview with the Headteacher, Mark, he joked about informing people never to become a Headteacher due to the responsibility that falls on your shoulders. However, he made it very clear that the students' well-being was at the heart of his school by commenting that giving young people a positive educational experience was crucial – in order to ensure their engagement with lifelong learning. Mark developed this viewpoint by noting how a young person may end up with a multitude of Highers, but end up disengaged with learning and struggle to recall what they actually learned from school. Whereas, he was more in favour of emphasising the whole experience, which could shape future learning opportunities. Therefore, at Rosepark it could be said that the school leader provided a culture of protective mediation which fostered a safe and positive for students and staff.

> I'm concerned, like most, that the numbers forget the individuals. We've got some individuals who have terrible home circumstances and you just think how do you even make it to school. You can't fathom how they manage to bring themselves here everyday when they've got so much else going on at home. So, them coming to school is a positive destination in that sense. It's success. It instils some stability and they end up admitting to wanting to be here, and that's important. They may be hard work and act up when here, but if we can offer them encouragement and support to help them develop and grow then that's all that matters.
>
> Interview with Headteacher, Mark, Rosepark, December 2017

At Rosepark, the staff tended to be very attuned to student thinking. The Headteacher expressed that he often got comments at the Local Authority level to raise, for example, numbers going to university, but in his experience this was not in line with what the young people necessarily wanted – nor best for them. There could be arguments made that young people lower their goals and need encouraged to raise them to believe university is possible. However, myths regarding a lack of aspirations have been dispelled (Treanor 2017). In addition, from what I observed and from speaking with young people, it felt like the staff fully supported and advised their students.

During specially designed activities, classroom observations, as well as during break/lunch and movement in between periods, there were recurring acts and references which supported the notion of a caring, inclusive and supportive nature amongst students and between students and teachers at Rosepark. There was an active interest in the whole well-being of each individual. Young people often spoke about the particular situations of their peers, what they admired others for, and how they sought to show they cared for these individuals.

> One of our friends isn't having a good time. We're there for her. She has problems at home so she comes round to mine after school and we do our homework together so she has a nice environment to do it in. The teachers have let her stay behind after school sometimes too so she can do her homework before heading home. We're all there for her.
>
> Chloe, Rosepark, December 2016

> What I like about rugby is meeting all kinds of other girls I would not have spoke to otherwise. We're in different year groups but we all like get on really well. It gives me more people to speak to about stuff and get advice about things, y'know, and stuff like that from them. Certain people you can go to for different things and it's like we really are a team and it's all fun at the same time.
>
> Heather, Rosepark, December 2016

Rosepark epitomised what Dewey defines as a natural social unit in that it is '…[a society] held together because they [the people] are working along common lines, in a common spirt, and with reference to common aims' (Dewey, 1907: 27). This can also be seen in the excerpt below from an interview with Melanie.

> I was pretty shocked when I moved here at how tight a community it is here. I came from another school in the South of the city and it had nowhere near the sense of identity and community belonging that Rosepark has. I think that's what is so great here as a school is so central to the community. People are proud to be from here. They love their community, it's not without its issues like the social and economic deprivation. Um, but I think that brings communities closer to identity and gives a greater sense of belonging. We try to encourage and foster that identity and community feeling as it can really help propel students to succeed, like even something as simple as asking a kid why

they are dropping litter when they feel so proud to be part of this area and community –
it makes them question their actions and adopt more respectful attitudes.

Chapter Six presented the school and local area context and how the history and socio-economic struggles of the community have injected a sense of pride as young people see their community begin to flourish and undergo regeneration. Much research discusses the need for schools to have strong links with community leaders and key stakeholders in the local community (Chapman and Sammons, 2013; Ainscow, 2005). However, perhaps what is needed, as suggested by the success of Rosepark's community connections, is strong links: with every member of the community, and not just those with an element of power and influence. Thus, embedding the school into the community and the community into the school. As can be seen in the above sections, this was often done through school staff acting creatively in action situations (Joas, 1996) in order to build, and foster, an environment where young people felt included, respected and listened to. This often went against the wider education and schooling policies linked to performativity but helped to instil pride and belonging for both staff and students.

A mismatch of cultures

Forestside drew parallels with Montgomery in that staff were positive about the opportunities for young people and highlighted their concern for students' future wellbeing and development. However, when questioned further about policies and how such things were enacted in practice, they drew upon policy speak to describe these developments. This hinted towards: a lack of understanding in policy aims and objectives; and, discrepancies between teacher beliefs, the theory of policy initiatives, and what happens in practice. In addition, young people were often critical of their school and teachers, and were unaware of said opportunities to help them progress as individuals. During my observations, I spoke with a physical education teacher who commented on the value of the small community feel at Forestside and how this resulted in close relationships between staff and student– and each young person being known by many of the teachers in the school.

He mentioned the importance of the small community and how this results in a close
knit school community. Staff develop close relationships with students. This means

young people have many sources of support as they are known to many staff (not just teachers) within the school. He pointed out five boys who participate in ice-hockey at the local ice-rink and commented that hockey, while traditionally tends to be seen as girly by boys, is very popular due to the large majority who do play ice-hockey in some form. He then laughed and highlighted how when they come to play hockey on the astroturf they still think they can glide and skid like they do with ice hockey.

Fieldnotes, Conversation with teacher, Forestside, September 2016

He further explained that the close knit community and awareness of each student amongst various staff helped young peoples' needs to be met. In particular, he highlighted how, through getting to know the young people, he often felt he could encourage them to try a sport or activity that they may enjoy - even out with of school. At first, I started to consider how this appeared to be referring to the concept of 'Funds of Knowledge'. Such an approach involves educators building upon the unique experiences, resources and knowledge of particular communities, in order to not only appreciate and view students life stories as an asset, but also highlight how best to engage and make relevant learning for young people from less advantaged communities (Moll et al., 1992). It is drawn from an assets based approach, which recognises all social groups have cultural capital – but some are more valued than others by the dominant structures and ruling classes of society (Lareau, 1987).

However, after speaking to young people it was clear they did not feel the same way. A young boy, Jack, who was sat at the side for most of the lesson due to forgetting his P.E. kit was repeatedly told he was not allowed to go the toilet. When the teacher was teaching the other students, I spoke to him and found out his parent had shrunk his top in the wash and he didn't have anything else to wear. Jack also explained how he had been off school recently with bowel problems and that's why he was asking to go to the toilet. It is important to note that, in order for the young person to visit the toilet, the teacher would have to go with him to let him back into the building due to the card entry system.

I asked Jack how he thought he could get round this in future and his reply was he thought he shouldn't bother coming to school as no one cares about him here anyway. I asked him if anyone at home could speak to the school for him. His reply was his mum worked all the time and was never around when he needed her. He appeared adamant that nothing could be done and he was getting emotional and hiding his face. I asked him if it was okay for me to go ask the teacher if he could go (and offer to take the key

card to access the building with the boy so he could go) and the relief and appreciation on his face was clear to see. The teacher seemed exasperated when I asked, but permitted it. When walking back over to the astroturf Jack commented on how he couldn't wait to get out of this place. I asked him further about this and he said he wanted far away from his family and school and was leaving as soon as he could.

Fieldnotes, conversation with Jack (S1), Forestside, September 2016,

In this situation, I, as a researcher, was conflicted regarding how ethically I had acted in influencing the situation by speaking to the teacher. Issues surrounding power, undermining the potential voice of the young person, as well was as credibility of the young person's worries (were these melodramatic and exaggerated?), were a concern. However, it also raised pertinent issues regarding Jack's feelings of hopelessness and how he did not feel listened to by teachers – or at home – and was clearly disengaging from school at the very start of his secondary school journey. Nevertheless, this concern regarding lack of teacher and/or school support, alongside minimal home support, was not supported by other young people I spoke to in Forestside or Rosepark. At Forestside, most of the young people tended to reflect positively on the close-knit environment of the school and how they felt supported in their learning. However, in my discussions with young people at Montgomery, they tended to feel unsupported. For example, in one discussion, young people told me:

Ross: Teachers are important in helping you do well…..well, the nice ones anyway. The ones who are human too, and not just see work as work and are robotic…but there's not many of them. The ones who care. Most don't care and they don't treat us like they want to be here.

Laura: Some teachers, yeah, some of them help you. The ones you get on well with who give you feedback which helps you develop, and they listen to your problems and needs, and respect you as individuals – and don't just see you as a clueless kid. They encourage you to develop as a person.

Researcher: So, would you speak to any teacher if you had any problems, say you were being bullied or were struggling with home life?

Laura: No! I say they listen, but like I mean homework. I can talk to my mum if I've got a problem.

Ross: Yeah, they don't really care at the end of the day. We've got a good group of friends we can share problems with and help each other out and stuff. And yeah, my mum or my brother are good at helping me out too.

Young people attending Montgomery were less forthcoming than young people at the other two case study schools to name a member of staff they felt comfortable talking to about their problems or worries. At both Forestside and Rosepark, when asked if there was a member of staff they could speak to if they had any problems, young people were enthusiastic about certain teachers and staff who were sources of support. However, at Montgomery, the young people often commented that they would prefer to speak to friends or go home and speak to a family member if they had an issue. Young people felt staff were not on similar wavelengths to them and far too often treated them like children. This notion of being treated like a child, but also having to show respect to teachers (and other adults), was also commonly recurring in this school. Young people struggled with the power dynamics seen in this school but, also wanted teachers to enjoy what they were doing.

Torrington and Weightman (1993) comment that understanding the culture of a school is crucial as otherwise the mismatch between action and culture can result in ineffective action. The following excerpt from `my fieldnotes expresses concern over how much it appeared that the school staff relied upon the young person to step forward regarding any difficulties. I found this troubling, as many young people could slip through the net, to which a staff member replied that this was the young person's responsibility, not theirs.

> I raised the possibility of a young person working hard and not having any noticeable home difficulties, and whether they may go unnoticed (resulting in future issues with their academic work). For example, the young person may struggle with familial issues arising from divorce, unemployment, mental health, addiction, long hours and low pay. She comments that every young person is covered by the care of the guidance team. I further questioned if young people could slip through the net and whether the guidance teams know each individual well enough (since this relies heavily on the young person communicating with staff). She mentions that at the end of the day it is up to young people to take ownership of their learning and their futures. It's up to them to speak up, explore, and consider options. The bell rang so this conversation was cut short but many questions remain unanswered. Similar views were echoed by the SMT and also by the Principal of Guidance support. What about vulnerable young people? Those who lack confidence or need encouragement?
>
> Fieldnotes, Conversation with a member of staff, Montgomery, January 2016

Unfortunately, I was unable to follow up with this member of a staff regarding my further queries, as they visited the school infrequently as part of their role as careers advisor. However, the excerpt highlights Torrington and Weightman's (1993) argument of a mismatch between action and culture. In this example in particular what the school culture may actually require is support and encouragement for young people to talk about their issues. It may be some young people feel unable to come forward and discuss their problems with staff. However, just as a 'what works' agenda cannot be rolled out across all schools in Scotland, the individual needs of young people need to be catered for in each specific context. We can start to see how deeply embedded the ecological model is in society and can draw upon the concept of 'ecology of equity' (Ainscow et al., 2012) to help us understand the complex processes that are at work. Ainscow and colleagues describe this concept to mean that trying to achieve equitable experiences and outcomes for young people depends upon the whole system – from family, teachers, school, community, and policy-making – to work together and interact in order to make a difference to the school from the outside (Ainscow et al., 2012).

What works: data driven education

In early 2017, the Scottish Government published *A Research Strategy for Scottish Education.* In this resource they drew upon the findings from the review conducted by the OECD of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) to highlight the need for a more coherent approach to data usage across all levels of the schooling system – in order to ensure improvement and success. The report itself declares the need: to identify effective interventions in schools; to establish 'what works' in the Scottish context and, to learn from the international evidence which is available. They state that adopting such a 'data driven approach' will allow for collaboration, communication, development and dissemination of best practices, approaches and interventions in Scottish education (Scottish Government, 2017g). However, the OECD (2013) stresses the need to carefully conceive the use of data in evaluation and assessment – with teaching-to-the-test and curriculum narrowing being pinpointed as potential key concerns of such a set-up.

This section will discuss the role of data, performativity, school effectiveness and what works agenda, in the creation of the school environment and how this influences students, staff, and how wider policies are enacted. The literature surrounding this area was discussed in Chapters Three and Four and will be developed further in the following sections through expansion of relevant areas of the literature alongside the presentation of data that was gathered for this study.

Performativity: an ecological approach

As Lingard, Hayes and Mills (2003) comment, the school effectiveness agenda is attractive to policy-makers as the focus is one-way: the emphasis is placed on teachers and school. The process is not reciprocal, where both schools and teachers as well as policy makers are held accountable. Ball (2006) furthers this by argument by referring to school effectiveness as '…the most asociological of the new educational studies' (ibid: 61). It turns something complex and contextual into something manageable and malleable. From my very first day of fieldwork, I was questioning the reality of the statistics upon which I had based my school selection. In the field notes excerpt below, I was left questioning the positive leaver destination statistics for Montgomery school after attending a staff meeting, where the main item on the agenda was the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) initiative.

> I'm informed risk matrices are developed for each student. From the completion of the risk matrix (multi-agency) comes an action plan for each student (if they are at risk). This is to ensure a positive leaver destination is in place for that young person once they leave school. In the meeting they really harp on about the need to get young people into positive destinations and to improve the number of their students obtaining a positive destination. It all feels very RESULTS focused. Young people suddenly become numbers and statistics and not much else. Do they really care about the well-being and what's best for that individual or is it more about ensuring their percentages look good?
>
> Fieldnotes following a staff meeting Montgomery, January 2016

The above excerpt highlights once again my discomfort at what I was observing – and there is discussion of that in Chapter Seven. There is also further discussion surrounding the disparities between staff and students in the preceding section. I could analyse the actions of the teachers at Montgomery, but to do so would focus solely what I was witnessing in that meeting and ignore the wider contextual environment in which the teachers were, and are, operating. It is also crucial to acknowledge how my thinking has developed since gathering my data, and writing my field notes, and how, when the ecological model is applied to this specific context, multiple discourses are evident, and the complexity of the situation becomes apparent. In particular, this is highlighted in the above section on empowering communities where it can be see that teachers are operating in structures where they become '…objects of policy, rather than

subjects' (Lingard Hayes and Mills, 2003: 401) and the education system becomes one of '…policy as numbers' (Lingard, 2011).

During the first stages of my doctoral studies, and early on in my data gathering, I came from a child rights perspective, noticing the flaws in the schooling system from a young person's perspective and the possible detrimental effects upon them of flawed school practices. I saw what I thought appeared to be injustices and questioned them. This is a valid viewpoint and one that can be well argued as no individual should need to suffer from a results driven system. However, in adopting this viewpoint I initially ignored all the values involved in the setting, and the other individuals that may be suffering as a result of such a system. Teachers themselves operate within restricted contexts where they are often powerless, undervalued and disenfranchised. Not acknowledging that negates the contextual and situated elements of a situation, albeit: spatial; temporal; socio-cultural; or, collateral. Therefore, the value of exploring the ecosystem of a situation becomes apparent once again where it provides a framework for assessing educational attainment and success and aids the design of effective initiatives and policies which benefit all those operating within the system.

The school as a container of (professional) anxiety

Isabel Menzies-Lyth's (1960) study on social defences in a teaching hospital proposed organisations give rise to many anxieties for staff and the development of defences against these anxieties are a routine part of organisational life. Bibby (2010) used this model on the teaching profession and highlighted that, in order to conduct similar analyses, we must first decipher what are the objective features of the school (the primary tasks of teachers and how all actors, teachers, students, parents, interact with that task; and the inner beliefs of the teachers); and secondly, the social defences established by teachers and the educational system to ease and alleviate anxieties. Then, and only then, Bibby argues, we can see how intertwined the anxieties experienced by teachers are with the school and wider educational system.

This section will highlight how these ideas can be further applied in a school setting and also align with the approaches of pragmatism and Mead, in that the interwoven and ecological context of a whole system is constantly being queried. Reference will be made to data gathered primarily from two teachers, Melanie and Adam, who both work at Rosepark.

Melanie is a guidance teacher at Rosepark who has been teaching for 8 years. She is outgoing, friendly and speaks enthusiastically about the students. Adam is a science teacher, who was a

chartered teacher[12] and previously took on short-term roles in management. However, he prefers the day-to-day job of teaching, so has returned to this role and does not see himself moving into management in the future.

> Money doesn't grow on trees. We have less staff, less money, less resources, and we're being asked to do more and more and more. You feel drained and stressed quite often. There's pressures from everyone, at every level and we get pulled in about five or six different directions every day. So, yeah, you're constantly juggling…I always prioritise the kids, because this is what it's all about. Sometimes I've had to justify my actions to the Headteacher and say 'well, we only get 35 hours in a week and I can't do it all'. There's not a teacher who's worth their soul who works 35 hours a week. Come Friday you're burned out and yet you still think, or have to do work, at the weekend. I sound like I hate my job, but I love it and speaking about it makes me proud of the effort we all put in and how dedicated we are, but there are a lot of demands on our time.
>
> Interview with a teacher, Melanie, Rosepark, December 2016

In the above quote, Melanie explains the competing demands and negotiation and juggling of tasks which goes into her everyday job. She explained that there simply was not time to do everything that needed to be done and that sometimes things had to slip – with her choosing to focus on the children and their needs, rather than worrying about paperwork. A recurring topic of our discussions was the decreasing lack of resources (human and financial) in education, alongside the demand for greater returns. Returning to Menzies-Lyth (1960) work on anxieties in organisational life, Wilson and colleagues (2008) explain, in relation to their work in the area of social work, how anxieties arise surrounding resources, the performance management systems that are put in place and imposed measures of quality. They comment that increasing reliance on partnerships and multiagency systems which resultantly leads to lack of authority and control within wider systems. Thus, fractures begin to appear. Bringing this back to the education system, and Melanie's quote, we can begin to see that there are similarities between social work and teaching – and wider organisational life – which suggests a blurring of boundaries between sectors of provision. However, we can also see, more worryingly, history repeat itself within professions, which are crucial to facilitating social justice in society and

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[12] A qualification-based grade of chartered teacher was established to reward experienced and high quality teachers who wished to pursue a challenging career, but still teach: http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/46930/0023894.pdf

inclusivity in return for a culture increasingly influenced by consumerism and neoliberalism. The below excerpt from an interview with Adam supports this view and highlights what can be lost within the parameters of performativity and neoliberalism.

> Death by worksheet. Death by textbook. We need to jump through all the hoops at present. There needs to be more focused on the stuff outside of school. Sometimes a chat with a kid before the class starts can shed light on skills that they have. Like one kid in my class has historically had a very poor attendance, but he's really stepped up this term and re-engaged with school thanks to input from his guidance teacher and pupil support. He became a buddy for younger pupils and he loves it and they really like him too as they can relate to him. Basically, I found out he was acting as a sort of care provider for his grandparents. His mum was working all the hours under the sun to make ends meet and he has to look after his grandparents by helping them to appointments, getting their grocery shopping and cook their meals. I think that's why he liked the buddy role, he has something he's good at which is caring and looking after people. We wouldn't have found out if he hadn't mentioned his grandparents one day. If that's not a successful kid though, I don't know what is. But, what happens? The results come in. We get told we're not good enough and we need to improve. We have meetings to see where we can improve and how. It's not quite as simple as that though. We need more support and it shouldn't land on us. We carry the responsibility, but we are only doing what we can do with what we've got. Yet, we get all the crap thrown at us.
>
> Interview with a teacher, Adam, Rosepark, December 2016

Adam was very passionate when discussing the ideas behind standardised assessment and bureaucracy. His reference to a young person who almost missed out on an opportunity, due to his general 'life skills' not being seen as valuable, highlights where there could be value for a funds of knowledge approach (Moll et al., 1992). It is not just ensuring that out-of-school experiences are valued, but that such an approach also displays more compassion. Furthermore, it has the potential to break down traditional power differentials between staff and students, where young people are not underestimated and constrained with what knowledge and skills they are able to display in the classroom context.

Adam's interview highlighted the day-to-day conflict that teachers can face between managing performative demands and their own personal values and beliefs. Furthermore, Solomon and

Lewin (2016) argue how competing and contradicting demands within curricular systems can restrict school innovation, and as a result teacher agency. They note how: learning is often advocated as useful and interesting in its own right, while, placing significant weight on attainment in certain subjects (English and Math); thematic and interdisciplinary curriculum structures are then counteracted by exam-led, subject-based curriculum; and, the aims of producing a well-rounded individual are contradicted by the focus on measurable progress and success. Although Solomon and Lewin were writing based on their research in a secondary school in the North of England, similar conclusions and arguments can be made regarding CfE and the discrepancies between what is said on paper and what happens in practice.

Katie (Montgomery Academy)

This section provides the final young person ethnographic vignette. In this vignette, I highlight the conflicting educational, pedagogic and curricular demands and the effects this has for both young people and staff.

Katie is in her third year of secondary school. She loves animals, is interested in animal care and hopes to go on to study to be a veterinary nurse. She does not like school and rarely attends. When she does attend she is not engaged in her classes as she says they have no applicability to the real world outside of the school bubble. A member of senior management recently met with her and as a result of this meeting organised a placement at a local pet shop for her to see if she did enjoy working within the animal care sector. She really enjoyed it, found the experience valuable and it furthered her desire to work with animals. Another meeting was held and Katie was offered the opportunity to work in the pet shop one day a week – instead of attending school. Staff saw this as compromise as it not only gave her the chance to continue gaining more experience working with animals, but also gave her a shorter school week (so fewer days to attend). Katie saw this as gaining 'skills that'll help me when I'm out in the actual adult world'.

In order to encourage her participation at school further, as she progresses to key stages in her school career, staff have told her if she keeps up her attendance – which has remarkably improved since beginning work at the pet shop – and her grades begin to improve – little difference has been made to her schoolwork as of yet – she will be allowed to work at the pet shop two days per week in her fourth year of school. Drawing upon Biesta and Tedder's (2007) understanding regarding how agency can be achieved, it can be argued that Katie, as well as the senior staff member, have acted by means of their environments drawing upon '…individual

efforts, available resources and contextual and structure factors….[creating] unique situations' (ibid: 137).

However, from one particular perspective, as noted above, this interaction and, what seems at face value, co-operation, between staff, the community (the pet shop owner) and the young person actually raises pertinent issues around school engagement and the curriculum. Turning to the concepts of 'pedagogies of indifference' and 'productive pedagogies' (Lingard, Hayes and Mills, 2003; Lingard, 2007; Lingard and Mills, 2007; Lingard and Keddie, 2013), we can see how young people are put at disadvantage before they even step into a classroom. Lingard and Keddie (2013) highlight how presenting young people with a less intellectually demanding curriculum can undermine how practitioners view these students – as deficient beings, with accompanied lowered academic expectations and achievement. Thus, a view towards productive pedagogies is advocated in order to provide socially just teaching which benefits teachers as well as students through: strengthening schooling as a good in its own right and in positional terms (redistribution); working with and valuing cultural difference (recognition); and according students a voice (representation) (Lingard, 2007; Lingard and Keddie, 2013; Fraser 1997, 2009). Therefore, in Katie's situation, the limited desire to build support for her and offering her a less academically rigorous environment, alongside lowered expectations of what she can achieve by staff, leads to a 'language of lacking' (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In other words, the result is an increase in deficit attitudes towards young people from disadvantaged backgrounds which compromises distributive justice and also connects back to pedagogies of indifference which lack relatability for young people.

The points illustrated here also link back to further arguments surrounding performativity and the desire to reach positive destination targets on the part of the school, but also SER studies where solutions are offered as '…simple solutions to practical problems' (Riddell, Brown and Duffield, 1998: 170). School context is important, as is recognition of the complexity of the environment in which schools operate, and, most importantly, the individual life histories that young people bring with them, there are no '…manageable and malleable' solutions (Ball, 1998: 7). Passing Katie off to work a day a week at the pet shop appears to over-simplify the solution to engagement with education. Yes, she is attending school more frequently (but a correlation cannot yet be seen between her attendance and grades), and also gaining experience within an area she'd like to move into post-school. She can be seen to be somewhere safe where people are looking after her and doing something that she enjoys. It can also be suggested that education should not be limited to school, and, thus, Katie engaging with the pet shop is seen as

a flaw of the current compulsory education system which focuses on the school context. However, questions still surround whether she is gaining similar learning opportunities as those from more advantaged areas. As Fielding (2004) has commented, a results driven agenda supersedes genuine concern for an individual; while placing emphasis on outcomes replaces the integrity of means and ends; and unitary styles of learning are preferred over those that are reciprocal. Thus, such approaches, associated with school effectiveness policy agendas, fail to address fundamental inequalities in society, which make it difficult for young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to fully achieve their potential.

However, it was not just Katie who suffered from performative and accountability systems. Young people across all three schools spoke of the pressure of exams and assessment. These were young people in S1-3 who were very aware they had exams in the near future and already had an astute understanding of the pressure they could be under (mainly due to seeing the effects of assessment on siblings). They spoke about how:

> …there is a lot going on [regarding the senior years of schooling with specific reference to exams and studying and applying for FE/HE]
>
> David, Forestside, October 2016

> I struggle with nerves and remembering information [on test days].
>
> Connor, Rosepark, December 2016

> …stuff can be going on at home, so you can't give school work your full attention.
>
> Heather, Rosepark, December 2016

> …[after-school commitments can] impact your ability to do any school stuff, like working or caring for someone in your family. That can take up all your time.
>
> Laura, Montgomery, January 2016

However, it was generally acknowledged that confidence and self-belief were key to doing well (as discussed in Chapter Eight). This is highly pertinent, when the 2017 PISA report (from data collected in 2015) placed the UK 38th out of 48 countries based on how satisfied 15 year olds were with their lives (with the average score being 6.98 out of 10) (OECD, 2017).

In addition, it also raises wider issues about performativity and audit culture as a whole – as I have tried to highlight throughout this chapter. The situation is complex, embedded and there are multiple perspectives to the situation. Just as the focus on performativity impacts upon young people and their potential futures, it also has an effect on teachers and their agency. They can feel powerless and undervalued in a system of prescription which in theory is supposed to give teachers greater autonomy and agency (Scottish Executive, 2006: 4). Instead, teachers are subjected to top-down control through output regulation – steering outcomes through the use of school inspections and/or attainment data (Priestley et al., 2015).

Widening participation

The first findings chapter on young people's agency highlighted how the stigma surrounding modern apprenticeships, FE and even employment or training options. Young people often believed the only way to succeed in life was through obtaining a university degree – despite the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2017) publishing figures that highlight half (52%) of Scottish graduates (FE and HE both included) are employed in 'non-graduate' jobs. With increasing 'credential inflation' (Brooks and Everett, 2008), where, as graduate numbers increase, degrees lower in value, until additional qualifications or experiences are sought, such as internships or Master degrees (Leonard, Halford and Bruce, 2015). In spite of this, HE degrees are valued more than other forms of destination with Ryan and Lőrinc (2018) finding that young people who opt to do apprenticeships feel 'looked down on', due to the stigma associated with modern apprenticeships.

In this section, I will further expand upon this argument while highlighting how the work done to encourage young people into university can misjudge how best to achieve the aim of the initiative – and could lead to disempowering young people.

In 2016, the Commission on Widening Access, published a report which outlined the ambition of ensuring every child born in Scotland has the same chance of going to university upon leaving schooling (Scottish Government, 2016h). However, in contrast to such an aspiration, Beckett and Wrigley's (2014) suggest that working to enrich young people's lives and experiences may be more beneficial than widening access schemes and closing the gap initiatives. They argue that a wider range of career opportunities could be more advantageous and result in a less obsessive number-driven accountability system. Building upon arguments developed in the previous chapter, there comes a point where it is important to consider what is a socially just educational

system. Is it one where every individual has access to HE? Or is it one where every individual is supported in following their aspirations, and to achieve their full capacity, while all post-school destinations are seen as worthy as another – with HE not being viewed as the gold standard?

At Montgomery, I spent a day following S3 students who were participating in a widening access programme (Lift Off).

> What is worth noting is that I was informed, usually all the third years in the school attend the initial introduction (the event happening on the day I observed). However, this year they have chosen to target particular young people. So, senior management and guidance teachers were involved in selecting a 'core group' of which an even smaller group will receive 1:1 help – during S4-6. There were around 50 young people in the hall – of which 20 will take part in the final group. Very targeted? Does this cherry pick students? Do young people feel different for being selected? What about those flying under the radar who may well deserve help but may not be known so much to teachers? Do young people see the value in this opportunity? Are they made fully aware of the skills and competencies they do have – or do they simply get accepted into university?
>
> Fieldnotes from Montgomery, January 2016

Some of the questions that I raised in my fieldnotes regarding Lift Off arose, and were answered, in relation to other initiatives which were running at Montgomery. In particular, one with significant influence in this school was the Saltire Awards, mentioned above in the section on engagement, belonging and identity. However, most of these questions were left unexplored or unanswered. Therefore, this is an issue which requires much greater exploration to ensure that the education system is socially just and fit for all young people, and not simply another version of unjust schooling (see Chapter Eleven for wider discussion of this issue).

Summary

This final data analysis chapter has explored the role of cultural resources, and culture within schooling and wider education system, in helping to promote good educational outcomes for students. The chapter linked back to the policy context outlined in Chapter Two and further cemented the benefit of using the ecological approach and pragmatism in this study.

I have built upon arguments which have been developing in the previous two chapters to highlight the positive culture found in Rosepark.   In particular, the role of the community, and the school acknowledging the needs and wants of the community, play a particular important role in developing a positive learning environment for young people. It has also been highlighted how at Forestside and Montgomery there appeared to be the opposite where staff: struggled to manage the competing wider policy aims and objectives, with the local needs and wishes; retain their own beliefs and values, when faced with opposing theory in policy initiatives, and what actually happens in practice in the classroom.

 This section draws heavily upon the literature on performativity, accountability, as well as the arguments outlined in Chapter Three regarding the 'what works' approach to education policy-making. I outline the flaws of these approaches for staff and young people, highlighting once again how all individuals are bound together in a large interconnected co-dependent system (Park, 1936). Herein lies the value of an ecological approach to understanding the web in which schools operate.

The final section discusses widening access initiatives. This section poses more questions than gives answers. However, it is important to ask such questions as a socially just education system has to be coherent and fluid with regards to how the purposes of education and learning are defined and how such values are implemented in the system.

Chapter 11: Insights, implications, and reflections

The final chapter summarises how this thesis unfolded before engaging in a discussion of the key themes arising from this research. Until now these themes have not been drawn together and made explicit to the reader, but there are implicit themes running throughout this thesis which will be examined. I then provide a discussion regarding the use of multiple conceptual frameworks and what this offered the research. There follows a discussion of possibilities for future research while acknowledging the temporal and contextual dimension of the research world. Finally, reflections are offered on the research process, alongside my 'internal conversations' to further augment the prominence of the key themes in this research study, but also to highlight how in wider society these issues were felt by myself as researcher.

So, what?

In this thesis, I have outlined the mixed methods research that I undertook to first of all establish which schools, in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, were achieving good educational outcomes for their students; and secondly, explore the ecologies of three case study schools in order to gain an understanding of what may be driving these positive outcomes. Chapter One introduced the topic area, myself as researcher, and the research significance, aims and objectives. These research questions are outlined below.

1. Are there schools in Scotland which serve disadvantaged communities but achieve good educational outcomes for their students in comparison to similar schools (in terms of socio-economic status)?
2. What are the within-school factors that improve educational outcomes for young people in these schools?
3. What are the out-of-school factors that improve educational outcomes for young people in these schools?
4. What are the implications for those interested in improving the educational outcomes for young people in schools?

In Chapter Two, the political landscape at the global and national levels was set out. I outlined the prominence of the OECD and international student assessments, the significance of the UNCRC with regards to child voice, and the influence of similar initiatives (such as the London

Challenge) for the Scottish Government. The effects of globalisation, and glocalisation, on national level policies in Scotland, focusing primarily on the Scottish Attainment Challenge were explored. Finally, the key themes of top-down reform and associated limitations were introduced, as well as the value of the notion of a democratic and just society where young people's voices are heard.

Chapter Three moved on to discuss the wider issues of globalisation, the OECD and international student assessments, which are introduced in Chapter Two. This chapter explored the SER movement and critiqued how there is a need for more nuanced and multi-faceted understandings of student experiences with a move away from 'what works'. In doing so, I began to situate the study and highlight the strengths of the research in providing an exploration of relationships, structures, and individual agency to highlight how young people both shape and are shaped in their particular school contexts. The theoretical framings that underpin this thesis are then formally introduced: the social-ecological model and Pragmatist thought, influenced by Mead's (1932) Theory of Emergence and Joas's (1996) notion of Creativity of Action.

In Chapter Four, existing knowledge surrounding young people living in disadvantage and their educational outcomes is introduced. This chapter explored the extent of research in this area, including how the concepts and measures of disadvantage and good educational outcomes are understood alongside identifying gaps in the research literature. The levels of the social-ecological model (public policy; community; organisational; interpersonal; individual) are adopted in order to structure this chapter and weave in arguments from SER and performativity, as well as referring further to the theoretical arguments of pragmatist thought, primarily in the work of Joas and Mead. In particular, this chapter highlighted how this research is not one in which solely educationalists should be concerned with and nor does it solely impact on young people. The issue of the poverty related attainment gap has significant consequences for multiple layers of society.

Chapter Five takes a diversion at this stage to answer the first research question in its entirety. I outline my reasons for doing so and highlight the data limitations of the secondary dataset. I then explain how I explored the data to gain an understanding of which schools, in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, were achieving better than expected outcomes for their students. This process, drawing upon mixed methods, is outlined step-by-step in order to capture the original methods which were used in order to attain a holistic view of schools achieving better than expected. A commentary is provided of the descriptive statistics and

scatterplot charts generated by the data analysis, but reference is also made to HMIe reports and interviews with key informants. This chapter linked to wider arguments surrounding performativity where questions can be raised regarding: what does a school achieving better than expected outcomes look like? Furthermore, and most importantly, I highlighted the subjectivity of statistical data, the value of mixed method research and the importance of questioning, as far as possible, through exploration of all available data, the social world in which we live.

A brief contextual chapter for each case study school is offered before Chapter Seven considers the methodological approach of the research study. This chapter consists of the methodology chapter where: literature on case study research and ethnographic approaches are reviewed; the phased approach of this research stage is introduced; and, the tools utilised from my researcher toolkit are presented.

Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten, provide an analysis and discussion of the data gathered in these case-study schools. In the following sections, an overview of the key themes arising from these discussions are offered with connections being made between the individual chapters. These research findings are integrated to answer the research questions for this doctoral study.

Key themes

As stated, three key themes emerged from this research. These themes were present across the three data analysis chapters and offer answers to the research questions which are posed above. The themes outlined below are:

- Diversity in the understanding of what it is to be successful.
- School culture: engaging, belonging and empowering
- Performativity: a global phenomenon

Diversity in the understanding of what it is to be successful.

A key finding from this study, is the notion that success is not easily defined and does not share common understandings between and across social groups. In the course of this thesis, I have illustrated how different individuals and groups appear to 'defeat' the ideas of success that are imposed on them by society. I adopted Lister's taxonomy of agency (2004) in order to make sense of ow young people navigate their environments in order to achieve the outcomes which

they desire. The ethnographic vignettes which were developed also demonstrate how the environments are imposing certain values and ideas of success on young people.

As I proceeded through my data analysis chapters, these ideas of conflicting beliefs with institutional and national demands were extended, referring to the experiences of staff – both teaching and senior management. In particular, these examples highlighted the range of methods which staff adopt in order to get by. At Rosepark High School, it was illustrated how the values and beliefs of the Headteacher permeated throughout the school. There was an attitude, adopted by all, of doing what works for this school, and not what the government wishes the school to do. This strategy appeared to have brought about a positive and warm school culture, but also challenged what many would argue is the neoliberal trend of focusing on performativity. This is discussed as the final key finding of this thesis.

In Montgomery Academy and Forestside High School, the discrepancies in thinking between staff and students emerged. Particularly at Montgomery, staff spoke about target setting, achieving goals and improving statistics, when in reality they were talking about the lives and futures of young people attending the school. This interpretation, reinterpretation, and adoption of policy discourses, not only constrains teacher agency, but also leads to 'superficial and vague' (Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015: 636) understandings of concepts associated with CfE due to imposed systems and processes. Furthermore, as highlighted through the adoption of the social-ecological model, this filters down to young people's experiences of school.

I want to return to my first research question here. In Chapter Five, I wrote: '[this chapter will outline]…the findings for stage one of the research, which will seek to answer my first research question'. This language was used in order to highlight how subjective identifying schools that are 'exceeding expectations' can be. I cannot provide a definite answer, nor can anyone else. Therefore, the answer to this first research question that I posed is as follows, I took the steps outlined in Chapter Five (using the data available to me): to explore the data to identify schools which achieve better than expected educational outcomes for their students; drawing upon literature in the area and theoretical grounding; to come to a conclusion for this study regarding schools serving disadvantaged communities which were deemed to be achieving good educational outcomes. This further highlights how the question of 'what is success' is a subjective one which can elicit multiple, diverse responses.

School culture: engaging, belonging and empowering

The second key theme arising from the data is the importance of a positive school culture. The school culture is the unique atmosphere which is brought about by activities and behaviours, primarily as a result of social interaction, but also related to the wider environment, the members of the institution, and it is initially recognised as experiential, as a sense of feeling, rather than realised at the cognitive level (Allder, 1993).

The concept, and role, of the 'charismatic adult' (Segal, 1988) in supporting young people to achieve agency was used to shed light on the experiences expressed by young people. Through the vignette of Nathan developed in Chapters Eight and Nine, the significance and influence of a positive role model through the work of a particular youth leader, Neil, was highlighted. This idea is connected to resilience and what protective factors developed by the self can encourage positive outcomes. However, it also highlights the importance of supportive adults to foster and nurture traits.

The role of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities in providing a sense of belonging to a school for young people was then explored. These activities often linked to the school's wider vision of success and what they expected from students. In Rosepark, such activities were held in high esteem and given as much credibility as traditional academic subjects and pursuits. In Forestside and Montgomery, the activities tended to be reactive, in that they were provided to young people who were 'at risk' of 'failing' if they continued on the traditional academic path. These connections to the school may be why, at Rosepark, students and staff both commented on a shared sense of belonging alongside a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive environment. However, the other two case study schools, in attempting to be balance the competing agendas outlined in policy documents, staff may have struggled to position themselves in relation to a shared understanding and expectation with their student.

From the data, it could be suggested that much of Rosepark's 'success' could be attributed to strong leadership. The Headteacher shared similar values as teachers, with all staff repeatedly mentioning they were '...there for the young people, and not to get good statistics'. They wanted to provide young people with positive learning experiences which stayed with them as they continued on in their lives. The idea of learning happening everywhere (Casella, 1999) was embedded in the culture of Rosepark – with all experiences being deemed valuable irrespective of if they happened outside of the classroom and/or school.

However, it is pertinent to note that such a straying away from those steps which were expected to be undertaken by schools was not without its struggles. Staff at Rosepark reiterated time and time again the struggle in: juggling competing wider policy aims and objectives, with the needs and wishes of the local community; and, retaining their beliefs and values when faced with such opposing policy initiatives.

This section provides responses to my second and third research questions. I have not disentangled these two questions as to do so would negate the complex and interwoven factors at play when exploring what factors are influencing positive educational outcomes. Strong leadership and a positive school culture can be noted as being an in-school factor. However, the engagement with the community at the school level, in recognising the vibrant and diverse histories of the local areas population, and the community, in return providing opportunities for young people, suggests a mutual and reciprocal relationship which can be attributed to an out-of-school factor.

Performativity: a societal phenomenon

The final prominent theme which arose from the data was the issue of performativity as phenomenon which influences the actions, and experiences, of all individuals in a school setting.

In chapters based upon the data gathered for this study, the idea of performativity, and how it permeates through the social world, was introduced in Chapter Eight. This was not explicit, but the group discussions with young people, following the card sort activity, hinted towards a mismatch between how young people wanted to define the idea of success and how it was understood in day-to-day life as a result of societal expectations. The majority of young people explicitly stated happiness, contentment with life and individual achievements were key to success. However, during the card sort activity those who had academic credentials or had revolutionised work in their field were ranked highest. Whereas, those, such as the celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, were ranked low because they were deemed to be doing something that anyone could do. Therefore, skill of cooking is held in less esteem than the skills required for careers in animation, technology, and politics.

In Chapters Nine and Ten, further evidence is provided to suggest current culture focuses on performativity measures. In Chapter Nine, the idea of learning happening everywhere (Casella, 1999) was introduced. However, it was noted how this valuable method of experiential learning was not taking place in two of the three schools in this research. Competing demands from

policies and what happens in practice in the classroom limit the opportunities of teachers to fully engage in promoting positive learning experiences for their students.

As highlighted in the above section on school culture, Rosepark was a school where the positive environment was apparent from day one. Whereas, the staff in the other two schools appeared to struggle to juggle the conflicting requirements of their jobs. However, the fear of performance measures were apparent in all three case study schools. All staff referred to statistics, reports and data (regarding the school attainment and their recent performance figures) and all spoke about accountability in light of baring the weight of exam 'failure' or statistics simply not looking good, or improving, enough. The chapter demonstrated how shared outlooks and perspectives between staff, students and the wider community, working towards a common goal, while being a desirable outcome, is difficult to achieve. This appears to be due to the competing demands from wider national and global trends.

In two of the key themes identified from the data, the esteem of non-traditional subjects and the idea of performativity have been recurring (performativity and understanding the varied notions of success). The reverence given to FE, employment, training and apprenticeships is minute in comparison to the respect offered to those who follow HE pathways. In a culture, where the focus is on performance and individuals achieving the best they can do, this is not surprising. Nevertheless, it raises questions regarding: social justice; recognition, representation and redistribution (Fraser, 2009); equity measures in schooling; the purposes of education and learning; and, how best to implement such purposes and values into the education system.

Referring back to the research questions, to develop responses to questions two and three, a return can be made to the policy context offered in Chapter Two. Here, it was highlighted that the interconnectedness of school based policies, alongside global trends, display how factors may appear, at face value, an in-school factor, but can ultimately be a sign of wider social patterns at the supra level. Therefore, these factors can be deemed as lying outside of the school ecology. The issue of performativity is interesting in that it can inflate attainment (as seen through widening access initiatives), and as a result improves educational outcomes (if a more limited view of a positive educational outcome is adopted). Through this framing, it can be argued performativity measures help improve educational outcomes. However, it does not reach the heart of the matter. It does not seek to explore what is causing such a gap in attainment. It does not deal with the systemic stigmas, poverty and inequalities in existence in society. Nor

does it sit well with the values and ideas outlined in the Scottish CfE, where the individual student is placed at the heart of the system.

As I wrote at the start of this section, performativity is a phenomenon which influences the actions, and experiences, of all individuals in a school setting. At times, in being reflexive, I have widened this theoretical framing out to apply it to myself, as researcher. In doing so, I further highlight the interconnectedness of the social world and how all individuals are bound together in a large interconnected co-dependent system (Park, 1936).

The next section explores the multiple conceptual and theoretical frameworks which were utilised throughout this thesis.

The conceptual lenses: application and reflections

This thesis utilised a mosaic of theoretical and conceptual lenses in order to best understand the complex environment of the school. This section will offer a critical review of adopting a mosaic approach to the application of theory/concepts, but will also provide insights into the individual strengths and weaknesses of each conceptual lens.

Interactions viewed through the lenses of the social-ecological model and Pragmatism

Chapter Three provided an overview of the main philosophical principles guiding this research study. The social-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fraser, 2004) and Pragmatist ideas, influenced by Mead (1932) and Joas (1996), were introduced. In particular, the social-ecological model was particularly useful in acknowledging the influence of the environment on an individual – and the effect of the individual on their environment. A discussion follows regarding how such an approach embodies the ideas put forward by Simmel (1971) and Park (1936) in that they view society as a tangled web of individuals interacting with one another. Mead's (1932) Theory of Emergence and Joas's (1996) notion of Creativity of Action are introduced in order to further develop the social-ecological model. Mead, whose work influenced Joas, shared the belief with advocates of the social-ecological model that interactions were key to understanding the social world. As, '… [reality] is actively created as we act in and toward the world' (Hewitt and Shulman, 2011: 6). Furthermore, the use of both Mead's original work and Joas's recent work, as influenced by Mead, can aid our understanding of the social world through a move away from theories of reproduction. In particular, Joas' work moves away from the habitual adoption of Bourdieu for work focused on school attainment and focuses on the agentic actions that individuals take when they can no longer draw upon their habitual responses.

Mead's work has been critiqued for being obscure (Joas, 1993; Athens, 2005) while Joas has been criticised for misinterpreting the work of Mead (Athens, 2005) and providing a theory which is vague in defining key concepts (Campbell, 1998). However, despite these downfalls, and as noted above, both Mead and Joas provide a way forward in exploring how individuals interact with their surroundings and achieve agency in the process.

A taxonomy of agency

In Chapter Four I introduced Lister's (2004) taxonomy of agency. This conceptual framework highlights the ways in which individuals respond to the situations in which they live – and how they achieve agency. Lister (2004) suggests the roles that agency may take by posing four categories: getting by (coping and managing); getting out (seeking change); getting back (resistance typified as rebellious behaviour); and, getting organised (collective, political action). This conceptual framework was used throughout the data analysis chapters (Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten) to highlight situations where young people achieved agency.

This taxonomy was used to highlight that young people are not simply passive recipients of the environment around them. This connects with the ideas surrounding the use of the social-ecological model and Pragmatist thought which suggest we both effect and are affected by the world around us (James, 1907; Papadopoulou, 2012; Park, 29136, Seaman et al., 2005). Furthermore, agency – or the 'creativity of action' (Joas, 1996) – is the focal point of this framework which offers a counter-narrative for young people, and those living in socio-economic disadvantage, who are often characterised as 'passive objects…in the benign form of the helpless victim' (Lister, 2015: 145).

Although Lister's (2004) typology of agency allows for the exercising of agency to be portrayed by young people, she has commented that such typologies can 'romanticise' individual agency. Furthermore, focusing on agency and the 'getting by' aspects of the taxonomy can take away from the structural constraints – poverty and the hardships which come with this – that individuals face (Patrick, 2017). In addition, Clark-Kazak (2014) argues that the separation of the 'personal' and the 'political' in Lister's conception of agency is problematic. Clark Kazak (2014) suggests, in line with feminist thought, that the personal is the political and to separate these out dismisses the decisions made at the micro level which impact on power relations at the meso levels of family and community. It is also worth noting that there is a lack of diversity in the taxonomy. Both age and socio-economic disadvantage are known to limit and constrain an

individual's actions. However, there is intersectionality within this diverse group. As Clark-Kazak (2014) comments: 'Being of the same chronological age or cohort does not automatically make for solidarity' (ibid: 11).

Reflections

The mosaic approach to the conceptual framework which has been adopted in this thesis may be misunderstood as one of messiness or indecisiveness. I recall being told early on in my doctoral journey to ensure a solid and coherent theoretical grounding for my thesis. It was explained that if you do not have a solid theory that you risk 'cherry picking' conceptual frameworks to fit in with your data.

However, in defence of the multiple conceptual frameworks that I have drawn upon in this thesis, I have highlighted throughout how interwoven and influential each of the framings are on one another. Furthermore, the theoretical underpinnings outlined in Chapter Three guided the study early on – and this thinking can be seen throughout the thesis in relation to methodological and analytical approaches. The conceptual framing of Lister's (2004) continuum of agency arose as a result of the thinking arising from Pragmatist philosophy as outlined in Chapter Four.

Most significantly this mosaic approach offered me a way to retain the complexities of everyday life. It allowed me to explore the creative, everyday moments, through the work of both Lister (2004) and Joas (1996), alongside the structural forces which impede on the lives and lifeworld's of the individuals that I studied. In addition, there were opportunities to explore how these interrelate at the multiple levels of society through both Mead's (1932) work and the social-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fraser, 2004).

The subsequent section explores implications and possibilities for schooling in Scotland. In addition, possible areas for future research are offered.

Going forwards: What might work?

Continuing to explore what appears to be working in specific contexts requires small-scale evaluative work at the school level to ensure initiatives introduced do help to narrow the attainment gap and provide more equitable outcomes for all young people. None of these are suggestions are set in stone, as this would go against my view on 'what works' and the SER

agenda. Instead, drawing upon the data from this research study, suggestions are offered which may allow for more nuanced understandings of context specific initiatives which foster positive educational outcomes. Furthermore, it also pinpoints areas that require further attention, and a close eye, to ensure that these specific individuals and groups are not left behind from the policy making process as the education system is further developed.

One way to achieve this could be small-based teacher inquiry projects. Donaldson (2010) wrote that career-long professional learning for teachers should be promoted in order to nurture '…reflective and enquiring teachers who are engaged in continuous improvement' (ibid: 15). In particular, DeLuca and colleagues (2015) note how collaborative professional enquiry can foster both individual learning and innovation, but also encourage educators to work together to improve educational outcomes for young people. Drew, Priestley and Michael (2016) have discussed the value of critical collaborative professional enquiry (CCPE) in the Scottish context. They comment how CPPE can foster individual capacity, agency, as well as providing access to relational and cultural resources which supports the cultural and structural dimensions of schooling. As a result, educators have greater access to pedagogical possibilities and practices to use in the classroom through their additional resources (individual, relational and cultural), as well as promoting a change in culture due to the framing of their work in raising individual and collective capacity.

However, such an initiative would require overhaul of the education system in order for the objectives to be realised in a current environment where time is precious, and teachers feel pushed and pulled in multiple directions on a daily basis.

Another suggestion, which is outlined as a future provision in the Education (Scotland) Bill, is to provide young people with a greater voice.

> Ensuring that the views of children and young people are considered gives them an opportunity to participate in decisions and activities which influence policies or services that can impact on their lives. It contributes to their sense of belonging, helps communities to become stronger, and increases the likelihood that services will make a positive impact.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2017f: 21)

The bill proposes a strengthening of the voice of young people and placing responsibility on the school to encourage general student participation, rather than focusing on inflexible, and

tokenistic, student participation in pupil councils or committees. Hulme and colleagues (2011) comment on how student participation in Scotland tends to be 'patchy', with participation activities primarily invitational or used to consult with young people. They comment how this suggests there is significant scope to provide greater opportunities for young people to have a voice in Scottish schools. In response to the Education (Scotland) Bill Consultation, a third of all respondents noted the importance of participation. However, a fifth of all respondents commented that student participation was already happening in school. Furthermore, these respondents commented, as a result, that there was no need to introduce legislation and it may be better for student participation to be promoted via GIRFEC or simply encouraged in schools rather than legislated (Scottish Government 2018g).

Using the Ladder of Participation (see Figure 11.1), as described by Hart (1992) we can begin to see how schools may think they are promoting student participation – but it is also clear that Scotland is very far from the top rung of the ladder, youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults. Tokenism is a style of participation which is deemed by many to be in place in Scottish schools. This takes place when young people are given what appears to be a voice. However, they have very little (or none at all) choice regarding the subject topics or the style of communication, as well as little, or no, opportunity to form their own opinions (Tisdall, 2017; Tisdall and Davis, 2004).

Therefore, it is suggested that there is much work to be done in the area of child voice and participation, to ensure children and young people are feeding into a curriculum which ultimately effects their later life chances. Furthermore, Mannion, Sowerby and I'Anson (2015) emphasise the importance of teacher-student relationships in schools providing the building blocks to participation. This was something found in this study, alongside a greater sense of belonging and identity for young people if they had positive teacher-student relations. Similar findings are illustrated in Brown, Croxford and Minty's (2017) study which examined students' views regarding active citizenship in Scottish secondary schools. The study provides strong empirical evidence that a strong participatory school culture impacts positively on young peoples' enjoyment and experience of school. Therefore, it is suggested that a school community which listens to, respects and values its young people is likely to reap multiple benefits including more positive life experiences for their students at a crucial stage of their life.

Ladder of Participation		
Degrees of participation	Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults	
	Youth-initiated and directed	
	Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth	
	Consulted and informed	
	Assigned but informed	
Non-participation	Tokenism	
	Decoration	
	Manipulation	
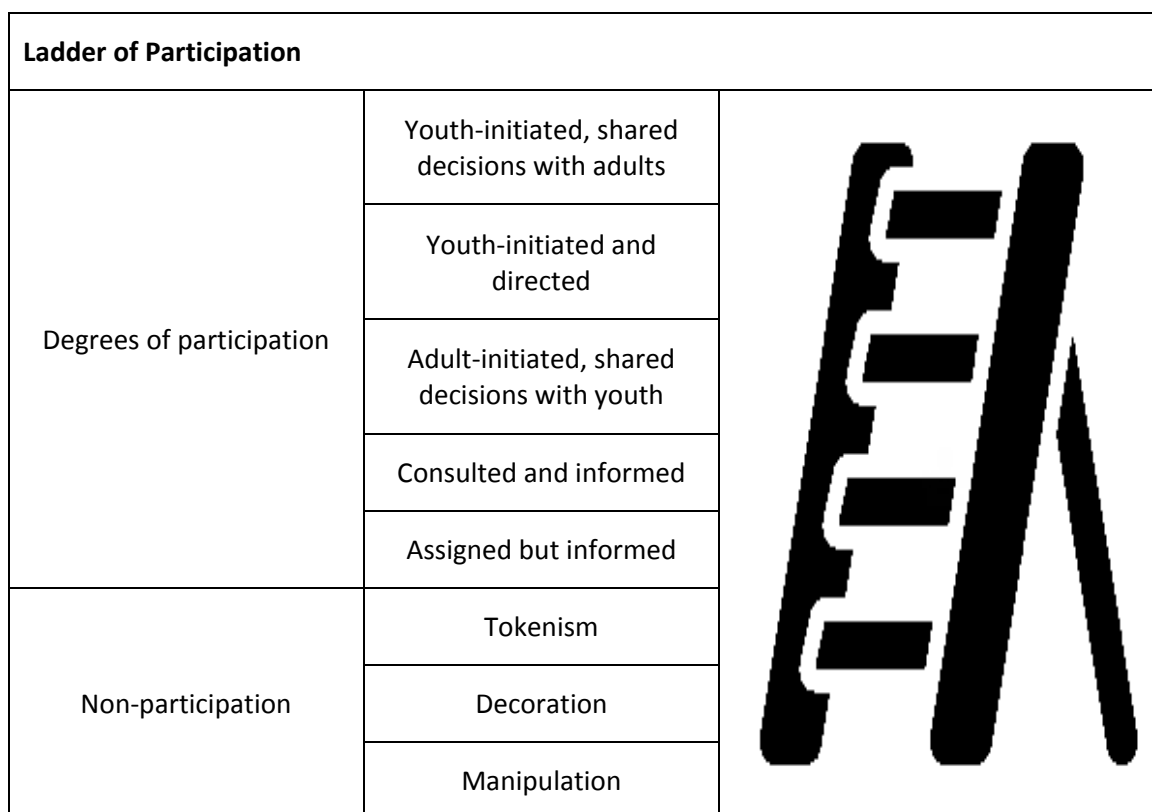
Figure 11.1: The Ladder of Participation, adapted from Hart (1992)

The Education (Scotland) Bill also states a provision for greater parental and community engagement.

> We will include provisions in the Education Bill to make the existing legal duties in relation to parental involvement clearer and stronger, to reflect the transfer of responsibilities to headteachers through the Headteachers' Charter and to encourage stronger collaboration between school leaders and parents. We will also clarify the relevant duties which apply to early learning and childcare which is funded but not provided by the public sector.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2017f: 18)

The key focus of the bill is on improving parental engagement in school life and in learning outside of the school context. There is evidence from the National Child Development Study (NCDS) that highlights the influence of parental involvement on school attainment. Feinstein and Symons (1999) found parental involvement to be a more influential indicator of attainment than other family indicators, such as social class and parental education. In particular, they discovered that young people whose parents showed interest in their school studies progressed 15-17% more in math and reading between the ages of 11 and 16 years compared to those young people with low parental interest. However, Gorard, See and Davies (2012) comment

that elements and strategies relating to parents in improving attainment should not be pursued in isolation, but alongside wider interventions. In addition, the bill clarifies parental and community involvement as being more closely allied relations between parent councils and school staff. Ultimately, parent councils, as noted in the consultation itself, are often unrepresentative of the wider school population – with full-time working parents, single parents, those with English as an Additional Language, and parents with disabilities finding it particularly difficult to participate (Scottish Government, 2017f). Therefore, it could be said greater consideration needs to be taken to ensure parental voice is not only recognised, but also representative.

In addition, the wider community is not covered under this provision. The community is referred to as the parental community. However, at Rosepark, the young peoples' pride in their community was evident and this was fostered by close links with local businesses, third sector organisations and social services. The wider community, and the links schools have with their local community, could be seen as a significant factor in promoting positive learning experiences. This implication is not solely recommended on the findings from this empirical study, but based on theoretical framing from the work of Dewey which has been referenced alongside the arguments presented in this thesis.

Furthermore, and in a similar vein as valuing community connections more, encouraging approaches based on Funds of Knowledge may be of value. Of most importance within this approach is it's positioning of knowledge and how it values all knowledge, skills and experiences, and not just academic attainment. Therefore, the lived experiences of young people outside of school are deemed just as important as those grades attained in exams. Viewing young people's life stories as an asset, and not a deficit, can engage young people in their learning. This approach also allows for contextualised initiatives which work for the local community and fit in with their values and history. Furthermore, the Funds of Knowledge approach allows for broader possibility of enabling greater representation and recognition from all of those involved, and interested, in the Scottish education system. Students could have their agency enabled and may be able to feed into the curriculum. While, the local community (including parents) would be delivering learning experiences, and more importantly, having these experiences valued. This would distribute power from the dominant classes of society to those previously disenfranchised. In line with this thinking, the Funds of Knowledge approach embraces all three key requirements of Fraser's (2009) participation of parity: representation; recognition; and redistribution.

However, as noted with CCPE, such approaches cannot be the sole responsibility of the school, the headteacher, or teachers. Promotion and support for such initiatives need to be enacted at the national level. In society, at both the national and global levels, the single-minded focus on performative and accountability systems suggests an overhaul of present-day thinking would be required in order to move to systems which celebrate diversity and learning for learning's sake. Indeed, Chapter One introduced a set of questions posed by Murphy and colleagues (2015), including one where he questioned how the education system can both balance, and celebrate, the diverse and complex needs of individuals with the wider needs of the state. However, returning to the original Four Capacities of CfE (successful learners, responsible citizens, confident individuals, and effective contributors), there is an unearthing of the pillars of a curriculum, where diversity and positive educational outcomes (and not solely high academic attainment) are at its core.

Possibilities for future research

The areas for future research are extensive. This is not because there is no current research in the area, but because society is in a constant state of flux. This thesis has reiterated how the context we are living in is always changing. The present is temporary.

However, some areas which may be pertinent and arose during the research study, include: exploring perceptions towards widening access initiatives and stigma towards non-HE trajectories; and the adoption of qualitative approaches grounded in longitudinal research methodology.

The first suggested area is widening access initiatives and, in particular, an exploration of what a socially just education system looks like. In the Blueprint for Fairness report, written by the Commission on Widening Access, it was noted:

> The task set to us by government was to advise on the steps necessary to achieve the First Minister's ambition that a child born today in one of our most deprived communities will, by the time he or she leaves school, have the same chance of entering university as a child born in one of our least deprived communities.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016h: 2)

It is important to note the wording in that each child should have the same chances to the same opportunities. In other words, all young people should have equitable opportunities. However,

at present, universities are being provided with targets to reach, in order to ensure they have a certain proportion of students from the most deprived areas in Scotland. Once again, it can be suggested that performative measures turn a social justice ideal into one where discrimination and marginalisation may be heightened. As commented in the findings chapters, a university degree is seen as a gold standard with other pathways a lesser alternative. In doing so, and in trying to promote HE, other career paths, despite being deserving of the same levels of recognition, are further stigmatised. Therefore, this is an issue which requires much greater exploration to ensure that a socially just education system fit for all young people is being created, and not simply another version of unjust schooling. It also fits in with wider notions of what it means to be successful and what we want education to be for. Murphy and colleagues (2015) posed: what does an educated school leaver look like? However, it is worthwhile unpacking this more to fully understand what do we really mean when we refer to 'educated' and how this can differ across society.

Closely related to this is the stigma towards non-HE trajectories. The section on widening participation in the final data analysis chapter argued that young people tended to share a common belief that the HE pathway was the only way to truly succeed in life. Literature in the area highlights how young people who follow non-HE routes can feel 'looked down on' due to the stigma associated with these pathways (Ryan and Lőrinc, 2018). Relating back to my previous discussion on 'what does a socially just educational system actually look like?', by looking at policy initiatives, the state aims to allow young people to follow their aspirations (albeit in FE, HE, employment or modern apprenticeships) through their commitment to DYW and widening the curriculum to non-traditional accreditations. However, through the development of other policies and target setting, as seen in widening access initiatives, they detract from the work of these aforementioned initiatives in celebrating the diversity of career trajectories. It also reinforces the idea of HE being held in the highest esteem and any other alternatives being of lesser worth. As has been previously mentioned, this does not result in a socially just educational system, in which the State is trying to foster, but instead reinforces stigma, divisions and stereotypes. Therefore, attitudinal research surrounding career pathways could be a potential area for further research, especially with young people, but also key individuals in their lives (such as parents/carers, extended family, teachers). This can be used to gauge a comprehensive understanding of perspectives, but the data could also be further used as a baseline for engagement with young people thereafter to highlight the diversity of post-school pathways.

A final suggested area for future research would be developing the use of longitudinal research in this area. In particular, qualitative longitudinal methodologies (QLM) and the adoption of sub-sample qualitative work with large-scale, quantitative longitudinal studies has value to input into the understanding of the heterogeneity of children and young people's experiences (Thomson, 2007; Henderson et al., 2012).

QLM offers a greater understanding of '…the temporal and cultural dimensions of social life' with the focus on exploring the '…varied and individualised circumstances of their day-to-day lives' (Neale and Flowerdew, 2003: 192). Through QLM researchers can capture the 'ebbs, flows and detours' of an individual's life and begin to make sense of the participants past as well as their strategies for navigating their future. One pertinent limitation to the use of QLM is funding pressures and the lack of time in which researchers are permitted within their funding timeframe. However, it offers policy-makers a more useful evidence base in the longer term. Policy-makers appreciate research that ascertains the effectiveness of an initiative or findings that support their up and coming policy plans. However, QLM and associated findings can help to plan and develop new policies based on an understanding of the diversity of values, priorities and experiences in society (Holland, Thomson and Henderson, 2006). Exploring attainment and young people's perspective of success would be potentially beneficial and insightful using QLM. It could highlight the turning points in which objectives and aspirations change and why this is so. Furthermore, the use of smaller scale qualitative work with a sub-sample from large-scale quantitative longitudinal studies offer the whole perspective of a situation, the depth and breadth of life experiences alongside data which allows for researchers to explore change and compare perceptions and actions over time (Saldaña, 2003). In Scotland, there is possibility to explore such options with the Growing Up in Scotland study as the children are now approaching 14 years old. The possibility of in-depth qualitative work, alongside long-term quantitative data, and the possibility of linking to further administrative data would provide a picture of what life really is like for young people in Scotland.

The next section moves to discuss my personal reflections on conducting this research, acknowledging the power of performativity on both staff and myself, and provides some concluding thoughts.

Internal conversations: the terrors of performativity

In this thesis, I have highlighted the creative action which individuals, groups and communities (attempt to) undertake in order to achieve success. These moments of creativity are as a result of the reflexive self-constructing, and reconstructing, their orientations towards action. As a result, to not reflect on my actions, my construction of my actions, and my orientations, would be counter-productive to what I am trying to highlight. Therefore, this section explores the theme of performativity, as experienced by both the participants and myself during the data gathering process, as well as acknowledging limitations of this research.

A common query from staff, at all three schools, was asking me about how well their school was performing. They would ask for updates each day I was in the school or quiz me about when my final report would be ready so they could see how they had done. I regularly had to remind staff that I was not assessing their teacher or their school, but I was interested in the culture and networks and was not a qualified teacher and thus knew little about what made good or bad teaching. In addition, at all three schools, I got a similar comment as to the one I received at Rosepark:

> You know that is truly so nice to hear that. We never hear that [school is exceeding expectations]. It feels like nothing is ever good enough. Nothing will probably ever be good enough.
>
> Interview with a teacher, Anna, Rosepark, December 2016

Another common theme was staff regularly being told that where they were going wrong by upper levels of the education structure (Local Authority and Government), but were not given feedback or encouragement on where they were going right. Therefore, communication always felt negative which effected morale. For example, staff spoke of slight improvements in results or grades going unrecognised, which led to them questioning why they remained in the profession.

Something, which struck me late on in my doctoral studies, was how much I empathise and align myself with the experiences of the young people and teachers in my study. Throughout this journey, I have not only produced this thesis, but I have developed my research craft and built my knowledge, skills and experiences in areas I would never previously have imagined. I have come to realise that just as I argue for young people's wider experiences to be valued within the education system, I wish for more than just my thesis to be valued going forward.

Often, when I am asked about my PhD, I tell people about the topic and the stage I am at with writing. However, I do not touch on the activities I have volunteered for, which have been the most significant part of the doctoral journey in providing me with small milestones (and successes) to keep me motivated, but also shaping me into the individual I stand as today. In this sense, by focusing on the parallel paths of my situation and the young people's experiences, this thesis has become increasingly more personal and intimate as I have travelled along its path. For me, to not reflect on this would exclude a significant part of my thinking, ignore pertinent biases that may shade my thinking, dismiss the struggles I have faced as a researcher in academia, and also hide how the arguments in this thesis can be widened out to many of our everyday lives. Within this analytical framing: I am the author of this research, but also the audience.

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Appendix A: Closing the Gap infographic (Scottish Government 2017h)

Closing the Gap

Reducing the link between deprivation and poor educational attainment in Scotland

Our Vision

Our National Performance Framework highlights our ambition for our children and young people to grow up to be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

Scotland should be the best place to go to school. We want each child to enjoy an education that encourages them to be the most successful they can be and provides them with a full passport to future opportunity.

To achieve this, we need to raise attainment consistently and for all our children and young people, and progressively reduce inequity in educational outcomes.

Children living in the most deprived areas in Scotland are....

- 6-13 months behind their peers in problem-solving at age 5
- 11-18 months behind their peers in expressive vocabulary at age 5
- Around two years of schooling behind their peers at age 15

This inequity gap holds true for school leavers at every single decile of area deprivation - not just the bottom 20% and most of this variation exists within rather than between schools.

We have a firm foundation in our key policies:

CfE
Curriculum for Excellence is our long-term platform for energising learning and teaching by providing more coherent and flexible learning, aimed at raising standards, improving knowledge and developing skills for learning, life and work for every young person.

GIRFEC
Getting It Right for Every Children is the overarching approach to all our policies and frameworks. GiRFEC is all about keeping the child at the centre, providing early intervention and co-ordinated support.

Early Years
We know that investing in the early years of a child's life can help prevent problems developing later on. This is why we established the Early Years Framework in 2008 and introduced the Early Years Collaborative - a multi-agency local quality improvement programme to put these principles into action.

Teaching Scotland's Future
Will provide a stronger and more coherent early phase of teacher education, enhanced opportunities for professional learning and a greater range of leadership learning opportunities.

What is happening to support this?

Leadership at all levels
The implementation of Teaching Scotland's Future

The establishment of a Scottish College for Educational Leadership

Excellence in Learning and Teaching
Curriculum for Excellence empowers teachers, schools and their leaders the freedom to innovate

Effective interventions
Encouraging collaboration and continuous self-improvement through our Self-Improving Schools Partnership Programme and Pathfinder Schools

Use of Evidence and Data
The establishment of literacy and numeracy hubs across Scotland to facilitate sharing of best practice

Funding for the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre

Engaging with Families and Communities
Providing accessible information through a refreshed Parentzone

Working with schools and the third sector to explore effective links and share ideas

What next?

We need to secure consistent, continuous improvement within our education system to meet the needs to every child.

We want to enable schools to successfully manage their own local improvements that will allow them to meet the particular needs of students, families and communities.

At the same time, we will equip teachers and professionals with the authority, resources and skills necessary to do this.

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Appendix B: Gatekeeper information sheet

Information sheet: research exploring educational outcomes

The research study:
- This study intends to explore educational settings which achieve good educational outcomes for their students, despite serving disadvantaged communities (in terms of socio-economic conditions).
- The research will help to build up a contextual understanding of the multitude of factors (both within and out-of-school) which contribute to these schools achieving good educational outcomes.
- A school, and its local and surrounding, community, will be taken to be a single case study.
- Due to the in-depth nature of the research (ethnographic case studies), three schools will be selected to take part. Individuals involved in the research may include: students, teachers, parents, and other associated, and key, figures, such as youth community leader or careers advisor.
- It is intended for data collection to occur periodically between September 2015 and June 2016 (2015/16 school year). However, the research can take a flexible approach and the conditions of the study can be negotiated with each individual school.
- The research project will follow an iterative design, but likely methods will include participant and non-participant observation, interviews and group discussions, as well as the potential for other methods designed or explicitly proven to be of value when conducting research with children and younger people (e.g. photo-voice elicitation).

How were schools selected?
- The first stage of my research involved the identification of suitable case study schools.
- Existing, and publicly available, data was utilised and correlations between socio-economic status (the use of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and percentage of students qualifying for Free School Meals as proxy indicators for disadvantage) and educational achievement (proportion in a positive initial leaver destination and the number of students awarded particular SCQF levels by key stages).
- However, in order to give greater context to this data, HMI reports were also drawn upon, alongside, discussions with key informants involved in the school inspection process.

What would participating involve for the school?
- At all times the research would adhere to ethical guidelines (BERA 2011)
- If a school decides to take part, they are not bound by this decision. They can opt to withdraw from the study, at any time. This will be the same procedure for all individuals who opt to take part in the study.
- The information provided by any individuals involved in the research will not be made available to others, will be treated in the strictest confidence, and used only for the purposes of this research. Additionally, the researcher will strive, where possible, to keep individuals and their schools identity anonymous.
- Individuals would not be required to take part or answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. While it is intended for interviews to be audio-recorded, consent to do so will always be asked.
- The researcher is a PVG Scheme Member in respect of regulated work with children.

Further information:
- This study is co-funded, as part of a PhD studentship, by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Education Scotland.

Appendix C: Parental consent form

Dear Parent/Guardian

Your child has been invited to take part in a research study being undertaken at their school. I am writing to provide you with some information on the project so that you can decide whether you are happy for your child to take part.

The research is part of a doctoral study being undertaken by a PhD researcher at University of Stirling, and is also being conducted in collaboration with Education Scotland. It seeks to explore and gain an understanding as to what helps young people achieve good educational outcome, in their particular school. Young people will be shadowed and invited to take part in group task-based activities and individual interviews. While shadowing the young person's class, the researcher will be observing the class as a whole, and not focusing on individual learners. In addition, during the activities and interviews, young people will be invited to discuss what they believe enables, or will enable them, to achieve their aspirations.

As well as asking for parent/guardian consent, the young people who take part in this study will also be asked if they would like to take part – and they have the opportunity to opt out.

The findings from this research will feed into the researcher's overall study and academic work, as well as having the potential to influence policy-makers in Scotland.

All notes taken by the researcher will be kept in the strictest confidence, stored securely and will be used for this research project only. The researcher will also strive to ensure that individual young people are not identifiable within the research findings.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact me, Tracey Hughes, by email: t.l.hughes@stir.ac.uk

Alternatively, if you have any concerns or questions – prior to or during or after your child's – involvement in the research study, the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, at the University of Stirling, may be contacted.
Name: Alison Bowes
Email: a.m.bowes@stir.ac.uk
Telephone: 01786 467719

* If you are happy for your child to take part in the research, you do not have to do anything further. Your child will also be asked if they wish to take part.

* However, if you do not wish for your child to take part in this project, please complete the attached slip and return it to the school before **APPROPRIATE DATE.**

Thank you for your help with this important study.

Kindest Regards

Tracey Hughes
PhD student
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Stirling

The factors which influence positive educational outcomes research study

I do not wish ………………………………………………………………………………….
(Print name of child in capital letters) to take part in this research study.

Signed: ……………………………………………………………………………………. Date: …………………

Your name (capital letters): …………………………………………………………………………………………

Relationship to child: ……………………………………………………. Child's year group: …………………….

Information sheet: research exploring educational outcomes

You are invited to take part in a research study which will explore the factors influencing good educational outcomes. Before you make a decision on whether or not you wish to take part, it is really important that you understand why the research is being done, what taking part would involve, and your rights while doing so.

Who am I?
I'm Tracey and I'm a research student at university. I want to find out more about how to ensure every young person has the best possible educational experience in Scotland.

What am I doing?
I hope to find out young people's views and experiences of the factors affecting their education. You'll see me hanging around at school, and in some of your classes. I may also ask if you are interested in taking part in some group activities or if you'd like to have a chat with me.

Okay. What do you do next?
At the moment, nothing! You just need to make sure you read and understand this leaflet.

If you take part, will anyone else find out what you have said?
You get to make the decision on whether or not you take part – and you can leave the study at any time without telling me why.

Whether you take part, and/or leave, what you say will be kept private and not discussed with anyone at the school (unless there is concern over your well-being). Plus, your name will not be used in anything I write-up.

What happens to the information I collect from you?
All the views and experiences (the large mountain of data) will be gathered together. Unique factors, more common themes and patterns, and generalised findings will be identified. So, really, the information you tell me is just the tip of the iceberg!

Then, I'll write up my findings and submit it in order to pass my course. I will also make sure that your school receives a copy of a report which will summarise the findings.

The data which is collected will be stored securely at the University of Stirling – and destroyed upon successful completion of my course.

Who is funding this research?
The research is part of a collaborative project between the University of Stirling and Education Scotland. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

Who has reviewed this project?
Before any research goes ahead it has to be approved by an Ethics Committee. They make sure that the research is alright to do. This project has been ethically approved by the University of Stirling Ethics Committee.

Any questions?
If you want more information or have any questions, you can ask me directly or contact me, Tracey, at: t.l.hughes@stir.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this – please ask any questions if you need to.

Sarah

- Sarah is aged 24.
- She lives at home with her parents and younger brother, James, who is 17 years old.
- She left school at 16 with good grades and has worked in a small coffee shop ever since.
- She recently got promoted to assistant manager.
- In her spare time she volunteers at a local community centre and enjoys attending dance classes.
- Most of her friends went to university.
- She is happy with her life and hopes to one day save up enough money to open her own coffee shop.

Brian

- Brian is aged 19.
- He left school at 16 with no qualifications.
- After being employed for a couple of years he started an apprenticeship as a joiner and is doing well. His supervisor has told him that he is impressed with him.
- He regularly visits his dad who is in prison. He lives with his aunt and uncle, but they do not get on. He wants to move out, but lacks the money to do so.
- In his spare time he goes out at weekends with friends where he drinks alcohol and takes drugs.

Aleksandra

- Aleksandra is aged 21.
- She has recently graduated from university with a law degree.
- She is bi-lingual.
- She lives with three friends in a flat in the city centre.
- She hopes to go on to study medicine.
- She likes baking, running and nights out with her friends.
- She isn't sure about her next steps and whether she wants to be a lawyer.

SECTION ONE: Warm up – talking about now

- What do you like doing outside school/ what did you do last weekend?
- How do you feel about school – what do you like/dislike?

SECTION TWO: Attitudes to success

In an ideal world, what would you like to be doing in 10 years?
- Why? What interests you about this?
- Do you know how/what you would need to do to get there?
- What/who initially made you think that you wanted to do this …….?

Can you see yourself doing this in 10 years?
- Why/why not?
- Do you think other people (friends, family etc) think you will be doing this?
-

What does a successful person look like/how would you describe them?
Complete the recipe for success worksheet

Successful people….
Card sort activity – ranking exercise

Do you see yourself as being successful?
- Why/ why not?

Does being successful matter to you?
- Why/why not?

What do you think is succeeding/doing well in school?
- e.g. progressing from year to year, getting good exam results, good reports from teachers, having lots of friends)

What do you think other people (teachers, friends, family, the Government) think of as success at school?
- Teachers; Family; Friends; Community; Government

Do you agree with them?
- Why/ why not?

What do you think of the importance placed on exams and the results you achieve at school?
What do you think stops young people doing as well as they can at school?
- Reference what they consider to be success at school – separate the practical from the motivational, e.g. bad teachers, couldn't do the courses they wanted, distractions, don't feel safe at school etc.

Which of these do you think is the main reason why young people don't do as well as they can in school?
- Is there anything that could be done to make it easier?

SECTION THREE: Influences

Do you think there are people who are interested in your future?
- IF YES: Who – parents, teachers, friends, family etc?
- IF NO: What makes you think there isn't?

What do these people think you should do in the future? (Ask about all mentioned previously)
- Are they supportive of what you want to do?
- What do they expect you to do?
- Do you agree with their ideas?
- Do you think their opinions will/have influenced your decisions?

Is there anyone/anything you think will influence the choices you make about your future? Anyone whose opinion you particularly respect?

What do you think other people generally expect of you in the future (not parents or friends, but society in general)?
- Do they have positive or negative expectations? i.e make a useful contribution/ cause trouble
- Why do you say that?

Overall, how do you feel about your future?
– Why do you say that?
– Are you excited/worried/don't think about it? Why?
– Do you think your options have been affected by the current economic situation/jobs market?

SECTION FOUR: Social media

Discussion using the devices cards
- Which ones do you use?
- How often?

Focusing on phones (in particular smartphones)
- How often do you check your phone?
  - At home; school; when with friends
- What do you use phone for during the school day?
  - Text; Social media; Playing mobile game; Taking/looking at pictures; Browsing web; Email; Making phone call/ checking voicemail.

Focusing on internet usage
- What is an appropriate amount of time?
- Do you find it addictive in nature?

Thinking about when you are at home where do you spend most of your time?
- Do your parents/carer keep an eye on your internet/social media use? Or, are you in control?
- Is this ever a source of conflict?

When using social media/the internet do you just speak to friends that you also know offline or do you have a group of friends that you only know online?
If no phone/internet – would this ruin their social life? What other effects would this have on their life (positive/negative)?

-         Left out the loop? Fear of missing out.

Awareness and online safety
-         Are they aware of content settings?
-         Are they aware of identified risks?

What else do you use the internet or social media for?
-         Use to understand issues – personal such as health (physical/mental) or global concerns?
-         Use to develop skills?
-         Use in relation to school? How?

Statements discussion
-         Pictures tell a thousand words.
-         I only speak to people I know from the 'real world' on social media.
-         I have a reputation to uphold on social media.
-         Social media is addictive.
-         Social media can harm your mental health.
-         Social media is something you either love or hate.
-         I can talk freely online. It takes the embarrassment off sensitive topics, like sex and relationships.
-         Social media brings people together.
-         Social media? That's not really me.
-         The internet and social media helps you learn. You can access so much and learn exciting new things and new skills.
-         If I didn't use the internet and social media I'd be left out the loop.
-         People these days spend too much time on the internet.

SECTION ONE: Warm up – talking about now

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SECTION TWO: Attitudes to success

In an ideal world, what would you like to be doing in 10 years?
- Why? What interests you about this?
- Do you know how/what you would need to do to get there?
- What/who initially made you think that you wanted to do this …….?

Can you see yourself doing this in 10 years?
- Why/why not?
- Do you think other people (friends, family etc) think you will be doing this?

What does a successful person look like/how would you describe them?
Complete the recipe for success worksheet

Successful people….
Card sort activity – ranking exercise
Vignettes
Draw your vision of success

Questions for prompts:
Do you see yourself as being successful?
Does being successful matter to you?
What do you think is succeeding/doing well in school?
- e.g. progressing from year to year, getting good exam results, good reports from teachers, having lots of friends)

What do you think other people (teachers, friends, family, the Government) think of as success at school?
- Teachers; Family; Friends; Community; Government
- Do you agree with them?

What do you think of the importance placed on exams and the results you achieve at school?
What do you think stops young people doing as well as they can at school?
- Reference what they consider to be success at school – separate the practical from the motivational, e.g. bad teachers, couldn't do the courses they wanted, distractions, don't feel safe at school etc.

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- What do they expect you to do?
- Do you agree with their ideas?
- Do you think their opinions will/have influenced your decisions?

Is there anyone/anything you think will influence the choices you make about your future? Anyone whose opinion you particularly respect?

What do you think other people generally expect of you in the future (not parents or friends, but society in general)?
- Do they have positive or negative expectations? i.e make a useful contribution/ cause trouble
- Why do you say that?

Overall, how do you feel about your future?
– Why do you say that?
– Are you excited/worried/don't think about it? Why?
– Do you think your options have been affected by the current economic situation/jobs market?

Scottish curriculum has 'lowered attainment and widened social inequality'
The Herald, 12th January 2016

Dr Jim Scott, from Dundee University, said the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and associated new National Qualifications have had a negative impact on education in Scotland.

New curriculum leaves many pupils 'bored'
TES, 14th November 2016

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is failing to engage large numbers of pupils, and by secondary school well over a third think 'learning is boring', new figures reveal.

The Scottish government report finds that many continue to be uninspired, despite the curriculum ushering in greater flexibility for pupils to explore what interests them.

'Schools don't need cash to close the attainment gap'
TES, 28th October 2016

Improvement scheme suggests that collaboration can raise the achievements of Scotland's poorest children.

Warning over return to 'tick box' teaching in Scots schools
The Herald, 8th November 2016

The new draft subject 'benchmarks' from schools quango Education Scotland are supposed to offer definitive guidance on the standards expected of pupils between the ages of five and 18.

However, the RSE's Learned Societies Group said they risked encouraging 'overly bureaucratic' approaches 'given their prescriptive and content-heavy approach'.

Appendix I: Staff topic guide

SECTION ONE: Warm up – talking about now

- **Tell me a little about your role as.....**
    - How long? Day to day? Key objectives? Any other informal duties?
- **How do you feel about the school?**
    - Strengths/weaknesses?

SECTION TWO: Attitudes to success

Discussion of positive leaver statistics
    - Their thoughts? Particular highlights and lowlights? How can these be improved? Do these need to be improved? What does that look like for teachers/SMT/students?

What is success?
    - Is there anyone you can think of who you think is successful? How/what makes them successful? Is it important? Happiness/well-being/good life?

For you, what do you think is succeeding/doing well in school?

Do you think students see it in this way? How about other agencies, e.g. social work? How about the Government and policy makers?

What do you think stops young people doing as well as they can at school?
    - Reference what they consider to be success at school – separate the practical from the motivational, e.g. bad teachers, subject timetabling, distractions, etc.

Which of these do you think is the main reason why young people don't do as well as they can in school?
    - Is there anything that could be done to make it easier?

SECTION THREE: Scottish policy and how it works in action

How is policy enacted in the school?
    - From who? By who? Local Authority dictates?
    - What contributions do teaching staff have?
    - What processes are in place to ensure consistency in understanding and values across teaching staff?
    - Are you satisfied with the current process? Why?

Taking 'The four capacities' and the aim to enable each YP to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.
    - Do you think equal value is placed upon all of these? Are these taken into consideration and how? Does a successful learner become one who attains? With lesser importance placed on the other three capacities.

Headlines activity
    - Thoughts on the four different headlines (CfE, engaging students, reducing the gap, standardised testing)