ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, MEDICINE AND SOCIAL CARE

CLASS, STATE SCHOOLING & SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN ENGLAND: A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY WITH A PARTICIPATORY VISUAL INTERVENTION FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF AN 'UNDERCLASS'

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A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Anglia Ruskin University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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SPECIAL DEDICATION

I dedicate this PhD to my dad, Bob Howden, who sadly did not get to see me complete it. It was his belief in me and his words of wisdom when I was growing up that connected me to my passion for learning. I know if he was here today, he would be very proud of me!

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis critically explores the role state schooling and education plays in contributing to the lived experiences of social class inequalities and the knock on effect this has upon and throughout adulthood. Five female adults from the lower strata of the working class who live with multiple deprivations in an English town with economic, social and education disadvantages were recruited.

Through a critical theoretical framework, this thesis draws from both Marxist and Bourdieusian class and reproduction theories. This framework was most suitable to uncover and expose relations of power and domination at the root cause of the inequalities with the view to creating the space for individual and wider socio-political change. However, Bourdieu offered no way forward for agency to become active in challenging existing structures and as Marx did not write widely about education this thesis further relates to a Freirean form of praxis. That is, agency engaging in a cyclical process of action and reflection for transformation.

A critical ethnography was employed and methods used were multiple, in-depth and participatory. In addition to developing and raising consciousness amongst the adult participants, space was created for a visual intervention, referred to as VICE, to complement the dialogue.

The findings demonstrate the ways in which state schooling and did contribute to the reproduction of inequalities and how the lower strata of the working class internalise their negative experiences resulting in struggles between the 'self' and wider society. Furthermore, the findings from the VICE show the adult participants did take some positive steps towards their individual and socio-political transformation and they had raised their social, political and economic consciousness.

More nuanced research is needed from adult perspectives for a micro, meso and macro level analysis. There is also a need for research to develop innovative methods to bridge a gap between theory and practice led methodologies to include otherwise marginalised voices.

Keywords: social class, underclass, consciousness, critical education, inequalities, empowerment.

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List of Abbreviations

BTEC…………………………………….……….Business and Technology Council

CE……………………………………………………...Critical Ethnography

DfE……………………………………………………Department for Education

FE……………………………………………………Further Education

FSM……………………………………………..……Free School Meals

FT……………………………………………………Forum Theatre

GCSE………………………………….General Certificate of Secondary Education

HC……………………………………………..…..Hidden Curriculum

HE……………………………………………....Higher Education

ISA……………………………………………Ideological State Apparatus

IT…………………………………………..Information Technology

JRF……………………………………..Joseph Rowntree Foundation

MA……………………………………………………Masters

NK……………………………………….…………Nell's Kitchen

NLR……………………………………………..……….Nell's Living Room

PAR…………………………………….……Participatory Action Research

PE…………………………………………Physical Education

PF……………………………………………..……Participatory Film

Q&A………………………………………….Questions and Answers

RO………………………………………...……Researcher Observation

RSA……………………………………………Repressive State Apparatus

SEBD……………………….…………..Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

SES……………………………………….Social Economic Status

SRT…………………………………….……Social Reproduction Theory

TiE……………………………………………….Theatre in Education

UNESCO……………..……United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation

VI……………………………………………….Visual Intervention

VICE………………………………..……Visual Intervention within Critical Ethnography

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

During my time working with children, young people and adults from diverse backgrounds and more often from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds, I planned, designed and implemented visual and arts-related community projects.[1] These projects proved to be of benefit to my students in relation to offering an alternative to traditional methods for learning. After engaging in a review of the literature I realised that marginalised and disadvantaged groups may benefit from a critical form of learning. I also recognised a gap in methodology[2] and planned to incorporate an intervention similar to my community projects to address this issue.

1.2 Research Questions

As I focussed on reflecting upon my positionality relating to personal and professional experiences for this research I knew I had more than one question in mind so I formulated these two main research questions:

- What is the relation between social class, state schooling and education in England and the reproduction of class inequalities amongst the lower strata of the working class?
- Can the same participants develop in terms of consciousness for their own individual and for social transformation?

To complement the main body of research I generated a further question to the main two:

- Can a visual form of praxis complement dialogue for the participants to transform their previous negative experiences?

1.3 Aims and Objectives

This thesis, through a critical framework, seeks to: a). **understand, critique** and **explain** the relation between social class, state schooling and education and the (re)production of class inequalities with b). the **intent** to create space for empowerment. Empowerment is defined here in a broader sense to mean *'power with'* rather than *'power over'* (Kreisberg,1992, p.xi) in an emancipatory process

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[1] I offer a discussion on these projects under section 2.4 'the professional me' in chapter two.
[2] This gap in methodology is discussed in chapters five and six.

where researcher knowledge is not simply deposited, in a 'banking concept',[3] but developed with the adult participants for them to engage in raising consciousness- socially, economically and politically.

My focus is on the individual lived experiences, that when viewed collectively, highlight the commonality between my participants,[4] bringing them together through trust and mutual respect in a bottom up approach. Moreover, from personal and professional experiences, which I report and reflect upon in the following chapter, I knew being from a poor and disadvantaged background that verbal dialogue alone may not be enough to positively impact upon my participants critically engaging in making changes to their lives.

1.3.1(i) Aims and objectives of research

1. To explore and develop a historical and sociological understanding of the personal lives of working class poor and disadvantaged adults.

2. To critically examine the purpose and function of the state schooling and education system in England and its relation to social class and inequalities.

1.3.1(ii) Aims and objectives of a Visual Intervention

1. To additionally implement and evaluate a form of *praxis,* combining knowledge (theory) with practice (action). The intervention will be developed amongst the same group of working class adults, drawing from my similar work projects of recent years with children, young people and adults in my local home community.

1.4 Rationale

The key intention of my research is to broaden knowledge and understanding of social class and inequalities in capitalist society with a focus on state schooling and education. Education in the UK is evidently rife with inequalities and given the country's 'economic position as one of the most affluent countries in the world' (Themelis, 2014) the inequalities have long made for important discussion within the

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[3] Paulo Freire (1993) refers to a 'banking concept' in education to mean deposited knowledge and this is discussed later in this chapter.

[4] I refer to the participants as 'my participants' throughout this thesis for two reasons. Firstly, my participants and I feel to refer to them as 'the participants' makes them appear as objects rather than subjects and secondly, to use the word 'my' does not in any way imply that they belong to me. Simply for the purpose of this thesis they were a part of my research and by referring to them as 'my participants' they felt a part of something which I believe enabled their voice to come through more powerfully.

sociology of education. Whilst research has voluminously explored class, education and inequalities (see for example Ball, 1981, 2003; Bailey, 1995, Cole, 1998; Reay, 2001) there is a limited, albeit longstanding (e.g. Jackson and Marsden, 1962) body of literature surrounding the subjective narrative of voices of the working class in education and arguably, even less from the perspectives of working class adults' lived experiences. There is also a lack of innovative research using arts-related and visual methods for transformation as Savin-Baden and Howell-Major (2014) note. This is because studies tend to use either action related *or* theory related research.

By bringing in detailed life stories, my research focusses on the subjective narrative rather than just the objective measurement that tends to dominate the literature within education research. It is therefore imperative, to gain an understanding of my participants' experiences to listen to their voices to understand the role state schooling and education plays in the reproduction of their lived inequalities. Understanding these experiences that have led to their educational failings/failures and their lack of individual and social transformation is necessary for engaging in the structure and agency debate.

A critical methodological framework with an additional co-created visual intervention therefore is not only complementary for the dialogical process but also an important part of my research.

1.5 History of Social Class, Capitalist Society and State Schooling and Education

1.5.1 Social class in capitalist societies

Social class, it is two words we hear in our lives at some point whether from a lesson in secondary school, or from reading a newspaper article with headings such as 'social class determines child's success' (Garner, 2008) or 'The glaring gap in the English education system is social class' (Rustin, 2015) or from television programs, particularly in the last few years where there has been a surge in what has been dubbed as 'poverty porn', such as *Benefits Britain: life on the dole*, *Great British Big Benefits Handout* and *Rich House, Poor House* (Channel 5, 2014; 2015). We are therefore made aware, in society, from childhood that there is some level of social order, and that there is a hierarchy in this social order. In 2013, the BBC's – Lab UK Great British Class Survey, conducted by Mike Savage categorised 'people in the UK…into seven social classes' (BBC, 2013a) with the highest status class being the elite and the lowest being the long term unemployed, with the latter often dubbed an underclass within the literature (Murray, 1984; Wilson, 1985; Macnicol, 1987;

Welshman, 2013), that is social groups exhibiting so called wayward behaviours caught in a cycle of poverty and deprivation and in Marxist terms those who 'belong to family units having no stable relationship at all with the mode of production' (Smith, 1992 cited in Welshman, 2013, p.4).

For Marx, capitalism is a historically specific mode of production that arises when specific economic and political criteria are in play and, while it started earlier, it became established in the 18th century with the advent of the industrial revolution. Marx and Engels (1848) discussed in *The Communist Manifesto* how manufacturing had been swallowed up by 'modern industry…by industrial millionaires, the leaders of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois' (p.2). Agricultural peasants became landless and were forced into cities to sell their labour power in the market place. Mass production became the new norm when machinery over took hand-made items. The British economy grew and became the largest in the world due to its industries in cotton, steel and coal and due to its Empire- and the Empire's raw materials for British industry (Hudson, 1989; Allen, 2009). The capitalist classes had a new-found source of wealth that set them apart from the rest of society, just as previous upper/ruling classes had the basis of their wealth and power in various sources of wealth such as land ownership. The role of the market and the division of labour became the central component of life where everything from food to labour was reduced to a commodity. And education was no exception when it later became subjected to marketisation with students seen as commodities (Whitty, 1997; Chitty, 2004; Ball, 2008).

1.5.2 State schooling and education in capitalist society

Although prior to 1870 schools existed for the poor in England many of the children of working class families had no formal schooling whatsoever (Rubinstein, 1993). It would be the Elementary Education Act of 1870 whereby a national state system of schooling and education would become compulsory for all children between the ages of five and ten (parliament.UK, 1870). All classes were to receive an education to the best of their capabilities but as attendance was not mandatory many of the poorer working class families could not afford the fees to send their children. However, changes to the Act a decade on saw schooling become free and mandatory and working class children, now in attendance, were subjected to harsh conditions in overcrowded classrooms where teachers did not encourage independent thought. Education for these working class children was based on repetition, copying and memorising. And schools, in a rigorous class-based society,

were set up to educate children dependent on their class background. For example, the upper classes received a private education whilst the middle classes attended grammar schools leaving the working classes subjected to the lowest levels of education in elementary schools (Gillard, 2011b).

State education has gone through many changes since the 1870 Education Act with key legislative changes in 1944 and 1988. A limit to class sizes in the 1944 Act together with a new tripartite system and the 11+ examination system were designed to reduce inequalities (Barber, 1994) but even with the subsequent comprehensivisation of most secondary level schools in the 1960s, a system designed to be non-selective, dividing children by attainment and presumed ability has always been apparent. Streaming and setting in state schools 'widens the class attainment gap as middle class children in the top sets benefit while working class children, disproportionately placed in lower sets and streams, are further disadvantaged' (Reay, 2017, p.80).

1.5.3 The working class poor

The growth of industry had widened the gap between the rich and the poor, those who were poorly educated and unskilled were further divided into what were considered and labelled as deserving and undeserving groups. The 'undesirable' poor got through each day often stealing and begging. They were the undeserving groups 'regarded as the social problem' (Mann, 1992, p.2). In Henry Mayhew's account of the London poor, during his time as a mid-19th century journalist, the stories of the struggles of the poorest people, the underclass, from street traders to prostitutes to thieves and vagrants, exposed the horrendous lives they had to live (Mayhew, 1968) as did the writing of Charles Dickens (1838) such as *Oliver Twist*, published as a book in 1838, Friedrich Engels' *Condition of the Working Class in England,* published in 1845, and the surveys of London carried out by Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the people in London,* published in their final form in 1892-1897. George Orwell (1940) also recognised the treatment of the poor or those who had 'fallen' from those who had money and power. And all this was during a time when the country's capital was not only powerful but also the richest city in the world.

By comparison in the 21st century, the deserving and undeserving poor are visibly portrayed as those who work to support themselves with those who are dependent on benefits, long term unemployed and branded by the media as *lazy* and *feckless* (see for example, Channel4, 2014; Channel5, 2015; McKenzie, 2015; Birchall,

2017). Defining the poor has been of interest to researchers since Charles Booth (1892) mapped out rich and poor areas of London in the 1880s. More recently the poor have been defined as those on low-incomes and it is children and young people from low-income families who are bearing the brunt of being labelled and stigmatised (Weale, 2019). Moreover, communities are broken down as the level of solidarity and trust diminishes (Giroux, 2009).

1.5.4 Neoliberalism and class war

The relationship between the social classes has been referred to as a 'class war from above' (Harvey, 2005). This is a war that sees the wealth of the capitalist class growing at the expense of the working class as they obtain a larger portion of public wealth. As Prendergast, Hill and Jones (2017, p.24) state:

> Neoliberal and neoconservative policies aimed at intensifying the rate of capital accumulation and extraction of surplus value comprise an intensification of a 'class war from above' by the capitalist class against the working class.

Neoliberalism has resulted in 'deepening inequalities of income, health and life chances within and between countries, on a scale not seen before the second world war' (Hall and O'Shea, 2014, p.9). Whilst the rich have received tax breaks under neoliberal governments, the poor 'have suffered…absolute pauperisation…with worsened and worsening pay…and withdrawal and limitation of social and welfare benefits (Prendergast, Hill and Jones, 2017, p.24). The latter can be seen in the ideological thinking behind cuts in welfare policies under successive Conservative-Liberal (2010-2015) and Conservative (2015-present) governments to encourage hard workers to get on if they are to be supported by the state in what is known as the 'welfare to work'[5] process.

Schooling and education under neoliberal governments have also been at the forefront of policies. Education is, to a large extent, a process of acquiring qualifications needed to meet the needs of the economy whilst schooling is an institutional process of learning. It is also, in varying degrees 'citizenship training' and 'personal development'. Marxist theoreticians working within an economic

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[5] Welfare reforms in 2010-2015 Government policy capped benefits for working age people, lumped all benefits into one single payment, made changes to housing benefits and introduced tougher penalties for those committing benefit fraud. For further information see: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-welfare-reform/2010-to-2015-government-policy-welfare-reform [Accessed 12/9/19].

paradigm analyse state education as being shaped by capitalism in order to prepare children and young people for their places in a hierarchical workforce where 'education has a role in conditioning and institutionalizing children not only for exploitation at work but toward an acceptance of their future life conditions and expectations' (Greaves, Hill and Maisauria, 2007, p.46).

A speech given by David Cameron in 2011 highlights the ideological thinking of the relation between the state and the schooling to work process:

> Yes, it's the child's responsibility to study hard at school…but if that school is a place of constant disruption and chaos, they're not going to get a fighting chance. Yes, it's the parents' responsibility to look for work…but if the state is paying them more not to work, it becomes a rational choice to sit at home on the sofa. Yes, it's the teenager's choice to smash up the bus stop and torment their neighbours…but if the criminal justice system doesn't draw a firm enough line between right and wrong, they're more likely to do wrong. That's why across all these vital areas – education, welfare, criminal justice – we're undertaking radical reform.

> *Extract taken from David Cameron's 'Troubled Families' speech* (GOV.UK, 2011, online)

These words in David Cameron's speech, more than three decades on from Thatcherism,[6] still draws attention to a problem group in society albeit more subtly than when Margaret Thatcher held office (former Conservative UK Prime Minister 1979-1990). Cameron repeated Charles Murray's (1996) argument of blaming the system for making unemployment rational[7] when he openly blamed the state for families choosing between right and wrong. At the same time however, he indirectly highlights groups of people in society that do not fit the hegemonic norms of the political and social economy.

1.6 Context of Study

The period in which my participants have gone collectively from childhood to young adults to parenthood, from being located as having a working class origin as children to now as adults, being located within a 'reserve army' of labour in Marx's

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[6] Thatcherism is a term given to a collection of 'free-market ideas and family values' that came into play under Margaret Thatcher during her time as UK prime minister [online] Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22079683 [Accessed 15 April 2019].

[7] This is further developed in chapter three.

(1868) terms, that is those who dip in and out of the labour market under precarious conditions, began under the Thatcher era where the neoliberal project took hold in the UK.

The fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in a moderately populated small English town in the Midlands. This town, I name town X, once a thriving industrial town, suffered in the economic downturn of the 1980s with the closing of the steelworks. Although town X has gone through a re-generation program in recent years there are still many disadvantages. Poverty and crime levels are high, with the highest reported crimes during 2018-19 being violence, sexual offences and anti-social behaviour,[9] whilst educational attainment is low.[10] Five female adults between the ages of 34 and 42, living in this town their whole lives, and suffering with multiple deprivations were recruited and participated.[11]

My research findings suggest that class is the most fundamental form of oppression in capitalist society. All areas of secondary schooling and education had contributed to the reproduction of my participants class inequalities. By the time they had entered adulthood there had been a break down in the traditional working class patterns i.e. attitudes towards working long hours and family values held in their childhoods that had led to their demise in actively engaging with a positive work-ethic, accessing or staying committed to Further Education (FE) and within the political and social arenas. The breakdown of traditional patterns can be seen as *class decomposition* in the writings of people like Antonio Negri (see for example Hardt and Negri, 2017). According to Negri, the capitalist state (and including education) disorganises and decomposes the working class.

Furthermore, my findings suggest that it is possible to develop and raise consciousness through a visual intervention. The intervention enabled my participants to engage in theory and practice, where they could reflect on previous negative experiences and take action to make change.

Although social class is explored generally to enable an overall understanding of a class analysis, this thesis is specifically concerned with the lower strata of the

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[9] See Appendix I for a break down on the crimes and crime rates.
[10] According to a report in The Guardian just over a quarter of the town's working age population have a degree or equivalent NVQ level 4 (for further details see https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2009/oct/19/educated-degree-qualification-constituency-data).
[11] Introduction and details of my participants and the recruitment process is given more fully in chapter five.

working class and further considers the debates surrounding those regarded as an *underclass*. The discussion on the *underclass* hinges on their relation to the labour market, welfare system and family formation patterns. They are defined as so poor and disadvantaged they are considered a separate class below the working class (Welshman, 2013).

It has been argued that the idea of a social class is dead however, with class becoming less spoken about (Pakulski and Waters, 1996, Reay, 1998, 2006; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck, 2007). But with groups of people referred to as either deserving or undeserving in terms of supporting themselves and having a hard work ethic, the visibility of homeless people and those engaging in criminal behaviours, *class*, is an important topic to discuss. It is necessary to understand class and class relations to fully grasp the inequalities that arise.

1.7 Ontology and Epistemology

Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2011, p.3) discuss 'ontological assumptions' as leading to the 'epistemological assumptions' which gives rise to 'methodological considerations' and data collection. Ontological assumptions 'form the starting point for all research' (Waring, 2017, p.16) by examining the nature of reality and can be formed within a continuum of perspectives from realist to constructivist. This corresponds with the epistemological assumptions, that is, how reality is examined as being either positivist or interpretivist (Denzin, 2009; Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2011). A realist ontology and positivist epistemology for example, relates to an objective reality. Positivism searches for 'truth' objectively and is often quantifiable. Reality in this vein, is a shared reality rather than multiple as seen with interpretivism (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018). A constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology on the other hand, relates to the world as being socially constructed. In the words of Waring (2012, p.16):

> It is the accounts and observations of the words that provide indirect indications of phenomena, and thus knowledge is developed through a process of interpretation.

Whilst I acknowledge these ontological and epistemological approaches as research paradigms I take a critical/Marxist and subjectivist approach as I recognise a socially constructed world determined by pre-existing social structures. I acknowledge that individuals can develop in terms of consciousness and their experiences can lead to them constructing their own 'truths'; their own realities, but such experiences are shaped from, and to quote Beach (2015, p.55) 'within cultural

and institutional (social, practical, and socioeconomic) constraints that have a material existence that might not always be fully known in advance'. Positivism would not recognise experiences from the individual level and therefore the adult voices I researched would continue to be marginalised from social science research. Although realism would recognise individual experiences, such experiences would be on the here and now and not situated in the historical, political and economic context that is seen in my research (Beach, 2015).

1.8 Critical Theoretical Framework

Understanding and analysing social inequalities, power imbalances and recognising oppression, practitioners, theorists and others alike working with a critical perspective have a specific focus on social change; on creating spaces for action. However, through action or practice related research, critical projects tend to work towards empowerment and emancipation within a performance-related framework. For me, this framework can marginalise the voices of those who would not participate and an alternative is therefore needed to create space for a different kind of critical project that would overcome the potentially missing or marginal voices. I explore this through innovative methods, through employing two methodologies for this thesis. Firstly, I understand, analyse and critique the lived experiences of my participants through a Critical Ethnography (CE) and secondly, I create the space for change within this methodology through the use of a Visual Intervention (VI). I refer to the latter as a VI within CE (VICE) and further discuss this in chapter six.

Critical theoretical research covers a broad paradigm (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2002) and critical theories have existed since the 1800s, are primarily European in origin and 'can be traced back to Hegelian, Kantian, and later, Marxist' theories (Winkle-Wagner, Lee-Johnson and Gaskew, 2019, p.3). Whilst earlier critical theories did not address the idea of power and domination, later theories did, in, for example, the writings of the Frankfurt School- Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and others (Bonefield, 2014) and in Antonio Gramsci's (1971) prison notebooks. Critical theorists following the Marxist tradition focussed more on the relationship between capitalist society and social structures to determine the root cause of social inequalities and to enable social change.

In this thesis, I draw from and relate to various theories as these provide a most suitable framework. I begin with Marx as he theorised on *class* and *class consciousness*. I further engage with later Marxists (also referred to as neo-

Marxists)[18] such as Louis Althusser and Bowles and Gintis (1975, 1976) who took a critical approach in their analyses of education not seen in the work of Marx himself. However, Marx's theory is based on the economic relations of production and as he did not write widely about education I then draw from Bourdieu's *forms of capital* and *social reproduction theory* particularly as he incorporated a cultural element. Highlighting the social reproduction of class inequalities in schooling and education through a critical lens, is not only crucial for our understanding of the social determinants that affect our lives but also for the benefit of individual and collective agency in actively engaging with change. With a lack of space for agency in Bourdieu's work though, I further relate to the concept of *praxis* and the development of critical thinking seen in the work of Paulo Freire.

Below is a diagram setting out the steps of this framework:

Diagram I: Critical Theoretical Framework
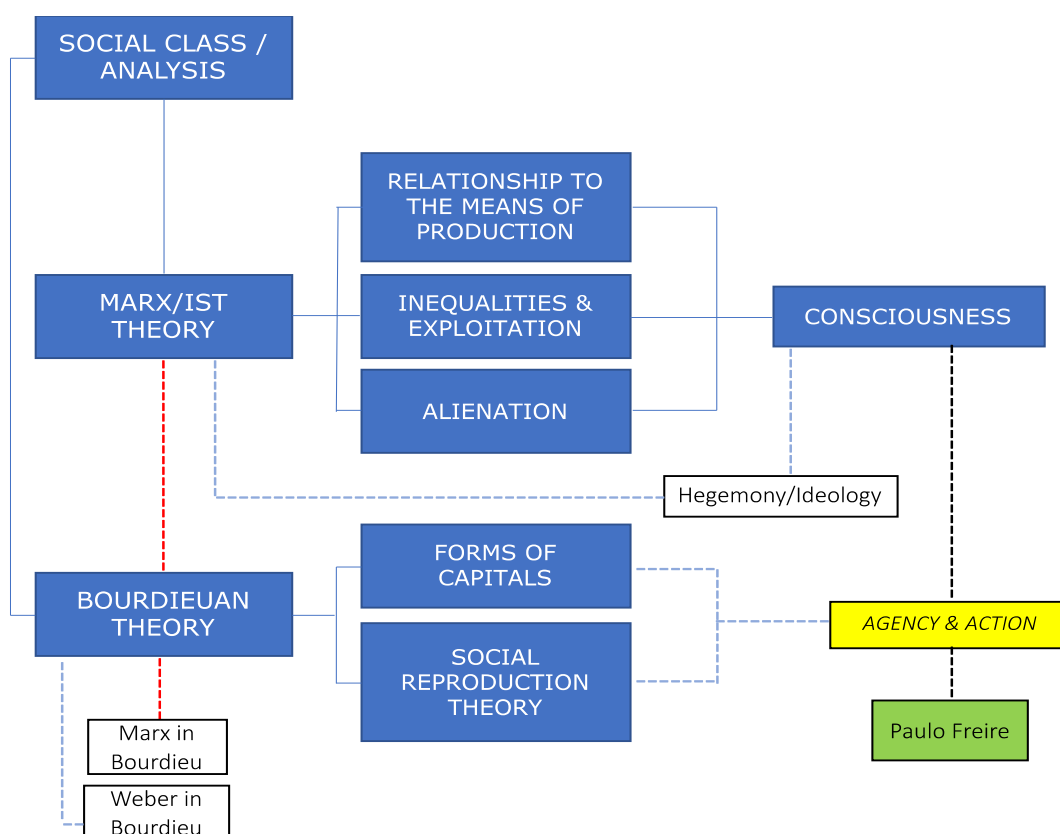
1.8.1 Social class analysis

For Marx (1848) and Marxists in general it is the relationship between a human subject and the economic means of production that determines social class. Social

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[18] Neo-Marxists extend Marxist theory to include an individual as well as structural analysis.

class in a capitalist society differs to earlier epochs of stratification, that is how sociologists assign groups of people according to a given system, whereby societies were based on slavery and caste systems but all have notably been based on a hierarchical structuring of that society; all inherent with inequalities. Those who incorporate a Weberian analysis, such as Savage, et al. (2015), tend to agree that class is 'a large-scale grouping of people who share common economic resources which strongly influence the type of lifestyle they are able to lead' (Giddens, 2009, p.437). A Weberian class analysis differs to a Marxist class analysis in so far that Weber believed class to be about a range of attributes such as education, occupation and life-style, rather than reducing it to a distinction between those who owned capital and those who owned only their labour power. Weber also stratified people into class, status and party (Weber, 1921; Giddens, 1971).[20] Furthermore, within social class analysis it is debatable as to whether an underclass, that is, a group of people generally thought as those that function outside of economic norms, is actually a separate class from the working classes (see for example Wacquant, 2008; Welshman, 2013).

1.8.2 Marx/ism

Marx saw the labour power of the working class, or the proletariat as he referred to them, as a commodity, a commodity being anything of value that can be sold in the marketplace, and he argued the exploitation of the proletariat arose from the surplus value (profit) generated from their labour time, which went above and beyond the time needed to earn enough money just for them to get by; a surplus value generated from bourgeois production. Marx felt the proletariat unwillingly entered a social relationship with the capitalist class or the bourgeoisie, that proved to be an antagonistic relationship, because the 'productive forces' of the mode of production required their cooperation. Marx stated in the preface of *A contribution to the critique of political economy:*

> In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces.

(Marx, 1970, p.182)

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[20] A Weberian analysis is provided more fully in chapter three.

Given this antagonistic relationship Marx (1848) believed the proletariat would recognise their common struggles against the capitalists as a class *in itself* and would thus rise together as a class *for itself* to overthrow the capitalist system. In becoming a class for itself the proletariat would move beyond a 'false' consciousness and form a class consciousness. This did not happen. Although Marx himself did not coin the term 'false consciousness' it is a term referred to as working class people's inability to engage with or understand the economic and social conditions that allow for their exploitation.

1.8.2.1 Hegemony and Ideology

Antonio Gramsci (1971) for example, developed his theory of cultural hegemony to explain why the working classes failed to recognise their common struggles; why they failed to bring about a successful revolution. Gramsci argued that through 'common sense' ideology the dominant group were able to exercise control and Louis Althusser (1971) agreed. Althusser further developed this with his concept of Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). Althusser proposed that RSAs, that is, the state, the military and the police, use a form of 'violence' to control citizens. However, he concerned himself with 'interpellation', that is, the meaning making, of identities, relationships and social connections to institutions. Institutions such as families, schools, religion and the media, according to Althusser, function based on ideology to reproduce the norms of capitalist society. Bowles and Gintis (1976) supported Althusser's concept of ISAs in *Schooling and Capitalist America* where they argued how the hidden curriculum reproduced classroom social relations seen in the social relations of the workplace.

1.8.3 Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu, influenced by Marx and Marxism extended his work from within the classical theoretical framework of Marx but also Weber. Bourdieu however, did not refer to himself as a Marxist although this has been contested (for example see Giroux, 1981).

In *Distinction,* Bourdieu (1984) extends Marx's concept of economic relations in a class analysis. Whilst he believes that power is held with those who have the most capital he also believes that a class cannot be reduced to solely economic relations. For this reason, Bourdieu simultaneously introduces the idea of symbolic relations and this resonates with Weber's social stratification along the lines of 'status'.

Bourdieu (1984; 1986) has four major concepts when defining social class – *capitals, habitus, fields and symbolic power*. Bourdieu believed individuals to possess economic, social and cultural *capitals* although in varying amounts and of different types, and discussed capitals as being embodied, objectified and institutionalised.[21] The *habitus*, that being an embodied cultural capital, refers to the skills and behaviours individuals learn within a particular group or family and thus where social reproduction occurs. The *habitus* can be determined *by*, and also determine ones' position *within* the economic, political and cultural *fields.* This is because one will arrive at a field equipped with a set of experiences from a field of origin such as the family which may come into conflict with the habitus of that particular field. Finally, for Bourdieu, *symbolic capital* means one has a form of recognition, honour or prestige and furthermore *symbolic power* is the hidden dominant force that operates within a *field* that confirms ones' place in a social hierarchy. These conceptual tools were of central importance to his theory of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986; 1989).

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argue that education plays a key role in reproducing social inequalities. Bourdieu's conceptual tools, as Webb, et al. (2002, p.1) so eloquently state:

> constitute what is arguably the most significant and successful attempt to make sense of the relationship between objective social structures (institutions, discourses, fields, ideologies) and everyday practices (what they do and why).

1.8.4 Consciousness, action and agency

Although Bourdieu provides a solid case for understanding cultural and class practices through his conceptual tools, and Bowles and Gintis (1976), through the hidden curriculum, developed the Marxist concept of ideology, Henry Giroux (2001) argued neither offered an empowering way forward for human agency to interrupt the status quo for social change. With this in mind, and as a commitment to critical research I relate to the Freirean concept of *praxis*.

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[21] The embodied, objectified and institutionalised states are discussed in chapter three.

1.8.4.1 Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher, felt education was a political process that oppressed the masses. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire (1993) brings our attention to formal education as a 'banking' concept, one where information is simply deposited from teacher to student. Students, in this respect, do not challenge what they come to think of as normal. In the same vein, one cannot recognise class nor can one become liberated, that is freed from their oppression, without first developing a critical consciousness. To awaken the critical consciousness, one must engage in a form of 'praxis', (Freire, 1974) a process of reflection and action, to enable their transformation. In his reaction to overcome oppressive forces, Freire spent his life's work attempting to liberate the illiterate masses through a critical literacy education program. In this problem-solving education both teacher and learner enter into a critical dialogue where they connect their experiences to the wider context and upon reflection, the oppressed, according to Freire, begin to problem solve and transform their oppression, at a collective level through social action.

The idea of transformation has been influential for those looking at the role of agency such as Giroux and critical pedagogues such as Peter McLaren who engages with radical forms of education. Freirean methods have also been influential beyond the formal education system. For example, Augusto Boal developed drama techniques as a way to educate and contextualise the historical, social and political process of people's lived realities in order to change them.

Marxists believe that the social relations in capitalist society are primarily reproduced and maintained through ideology and that class is a socially and politically fixed position. Bourdieu believes we all have capitals of different value in society with higher levels being held by the dominant group. However, as is developed in chapters three and four, it has been argued that these ideas leave no room for the active role of agency. It is clear from Freirean methods that through a form of praxis agency can engage in a transformative process. As this relates to the final research question, it is addressed through the use of an additional methodology and the findings are discussed in chapter nine.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

The role of this introductory chapter has been to outline and contextualise what this thesis is about through offering an overview of the discussions and debates within the literature surrounding social class in capitalist society, state schooling and education and inequalities. The theoretical framework, methodologies employed for data collection, rationale, aims, objectives and research questions are also provided. This chapter has put forward the main Marx/ist and Bourdieusian arguments that will be developed in further detail throughout chapters three and four.

Chapter two is an autobiographical reflection of my lived experiences of social class from childhood to adulthood. The role of this chapter is to deepen the rationale for this study through engaging with the main arguments outlined in chapter one. As this is a critical study I believe there was a need for me to critically reflect on a personal level before I commenced the fieldwork to understand my position and to reduce any biases I may have held.

Chapter three provides a review of the literature that was drafted and finalised in preparation for answering the main research questions. This review looks at theories, both classical and contemporary. The role of this chapter is to explore social class in capitalist society to analyse class and class relations and summarise an underclass in sociological and political debates.

Chapter four offers a detailed and critical review into the relation between social class, education and state schooling in capitalist England and engages with both structural and materialist Marxist debates around 'reproduction' and 'resistance' theories. The role of this chapter is to engage with the structure and agency debate in relation to schooling and education as being central to social reproduction theory and to further engage with a form of praxis.

Chapter five outlines the main methodology which is Critical Ethnography (CE) and for ease of reading, this chapter is titled Methodology A. The role of this chapter is to provide a justification for using this methodological approach and considers the ethical implications for each of the methods used.

Chapter six outlines an additional but complementary methodology which is a Visual Intervention (VI) and for ease of reading, this chapter is titled as methodology B. The role of this chapter is to make a case for an innovative methodology as a form of praxis which relates to the final and additional research question.

Chapter seven discusses part (I) of the findings and discussion for the main body of research. The role of this chapter is to present the findings in relation to the main arguments and debates discussed in chapter three and four.

Chapter eight discusses part (II) of the findings and discussions for the main body of research. The role of this chapter is to present the findings in relation to the main arguments and debates discussed in chapters three and four.

Chapter nine discusses part (III) of the findings and discussions relating to the visual intervention. The role of this chapter is present the findings in relation to Freirean thinking discussed in chapter four.

Chapter ten concludes with the overall arguments and summarises the findings from parts (I), (II) and (III). The role of this chapter is to bring together what has been set out in this thesis and includes the limitations of hard to reach groups, implications for policy and practice, benefits for stakeholders and calls for further research.

1.10 Chapter Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has provided a background to what social class is and how state schooling and education have reproduced class inequalities. The research questions for this thesis, the aims and objectives, rationale, ontological and epistemological stance and theoretical framework have also been covered and laid out.

Through engaging with Marx/ist class analysis, this chapter has argued how exploitation and thus alienation happens to those who do not own the means of production and how a 'false' consciousness develops as a result. To have a false consciousness is to have an uncritical view of the status quo and Gramsci (1971) described this uncritical view as 'common sense' ideology. For Gramsci, the docility of the working class results from, and indeed contributes to, hegemony, that is, the ability of the ruling class to dominate opinion and belief through ideological hegemony and, most of the time, without force. Althusser (1971) argued that institutions such as schools operated as Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) where the status quo is maintained.

Bourdieu, also addressing cultural domination, was concerned with how the power dynamics in society manifested themselves in practice. He introduced the concept of cultural and social capital into his class analysis as opposed to solely an economic capital seen in the work of Marxists. Further to the forms of capitals, Bourdieu incorporated *habitus, field* and *symbolic power.* These conceptual tools

central to his Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), sees schools as sites that reproduce class inequalities.

However, the role of agency has been called into question. For example, Henry Giroux (2001) argued that reproduction theory left no room for resistance; no room for agency. Moreover, in relation to schooling and education creating uncritical thinkers and in the ability to create space for action the ideas of Freire (1974) have been explored. Freire helps us to understand that moving beyond a 'banking' concept of education in a form of praxis; a cyclical process of reflection and action is when consciousness can be developed and raised. This form of praxis enables both teacher and learner to become not only liberated from their oppression but active agents in transformation.

In the next chapter I deepen the rationale for this thesis through providing an autobiographical reflection of my own experiences of social class, inequalities and schooling and educational experiences. These experiences relate to the main arguments and concepts that are explored in this chapter and that are further developed in chapters three and four.

CHAPTER TWO: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a deeper insight into my rationale. Here I present my autobiographical reflection to set the scene of growing up working class, poor and disadvantaged to later becoming a critical thinker. In this reflection I draw from the theories of Marx and Bourdieu and relate to Paulo Freire in terms of critical thought.

I began this journey in a different position to my participants in terms of knowledge, so, for me, to use utilise a methodology with the purpose of developing a critical awareness amongst my participants it was imperative for me to reflect on my own background before conducting my research. By recognising my own empowerment as a form of power, I could overcome ethical dilemmas such as biases and assumptions[24] I held of my class background, schooling experiences and inequalities. Although I have added some autoethnographic data/reflective accounts throughout the findings and discussions chapters seven to nine, I wanted to use that space to enable my participants voices to come through. This section will also enable the reader to understand the reflective journey, albeit a watered-down version,[25] I took in situating myself in the research.

2.2 The Personal Me

Throughout my childhood I was confident with learning and taking on leadership roles. This was always reflected in my school reports. I remember the time I once organised a surprise party, with the permission of the head teacher, for my fourth year junior school teacher and in the first year of secondary school I organised a class play. I was never encouraged by my teachers however to further what appeared to me to be a natural talent beyond the classroom. Even outside of school within my own friendship groups and in my neighbourhood I would organise street games and look after younger children but there was no one who helped to nurture me. I was occasionally told people like me were *'bossy'* and no one likes a *'bossy boots.'* Despite occasionally feeling down, as if I had done something wrong when I thought about my leadership skills, I had an overwhelming desire to become a 'someone'.

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[24] I discuss ethical dilemmas more fully in chapter five.
[25] I initially wrote a detailed chapter on my autobiography but after receiving comments from the critical readers I decided to take out paragraphs that would be more suited to other printed formats such as a book.

Both my parents worked in local factories. My dad worked full time whilst my mum worked around his hours but having no money left after bills was an issue. For a short while during the mid 1980s my parents worked all the hours they could, from early morning milk runs to evening sandwich runs for the factory workers but in 1987 my dad had lost his job, or so I was told, reality has it he had been sacked. They had given up their extra runs and only my mum was left working part time in the glue factory. That is when I became aware of the rows between my parents; they tried their best to keep their rows private but it was not always possible. I picked up on things quickly and I knew my dad had no choice but to sign onto the dole, which back then was an awful experience. Our dole office was a mobile hut at the bottom of the under-shop level shabby bus station. I cannot remember what day of the week he had to sign on, I think it might have been a Tuesday or a Thursday but whatever day it was I remember standing in the long queue that used to run the length of the bus station. I found it embarrassing as a child but the worst embarrassment came once we were inside the hut, when my dad had to do what I can only describe as him having to bare his poverty-stricken soul to the arseholes[26] at the reception desk. The look on their faces confirmed to me what my mum had argued – that asking for money was to go cap in hand, begging; we had reached the lowest ebb, as if we were no longer good enough to be 'respectable' working class.

Not long after my dad signed on to the dole, I remember there being discussions around my dad going to college and my mum disapproving. Under Margaret Thatcher's unemployment scheme my dad had attended a free catering course and decided he did not want to return to a 'dead end' job, as he referred to them, in a factory. He was now going to train to become a chef to make something of his life. In the mean time we would remain on the breadline with only my mum working. I was intrigued by my dad's change. I knew he had never been happy working in factories and I felt quite excited he was going to be a someone. Even as a young child I felt that being a someone meant not being the same as everyone else in our family and that was an achievement because coming from a large family like ours, my mum was one of eleven children, the adults that worked did so in low paid, low skilled jobs and we were all poor; everyone was the same and I often wondered what it would be like to be different.

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[26] I use the term 'arseholes' due to personal opinion and the opinions of my family background. If I had developed this as autoethnographic data in my write up of the findings I would have still used this term.

2.2.1 Disadvantages

Economically, I was disadvantaged. My parents could not afford to keep up with any trends and to be fair I rarely asked for anything because I knew what the answer would be. We did not even have a family holiday until I was about 12 years old and that was only to Chapel Saint Leonards, a few miles from Skegness. As a young person, I was never aware of what was actually happening in the adult word financially speaking. It was private. I just knew that people like us had to work hard to earn a living and to pay the bills. And being female meant the only time I would not have to work was when I had children but even then I would be expected to go back to work with school aged children. It was just what people like us did.[27] Being economically poor has continued into my adulthood and I have bought my children up under similar conditions although it is the choices I have made that has led to this. We have had to live on the bare minimum, even with my husbands' full-time wage, but like my dad, I refuse to work in a factory. Doing the same monotonous routine day in day out was not a future I could visualise myself in.[28] Having six children in the space of 11 years has enabled me to be a stay at home mum and having been propped up by the state in terms of receiving child related benefits, which at the highest amount equated to what I would have earned full time in a factory, I have been able to focus on becoming educated. For me, this has been a personal journey to becoming a someone but as a family it has been to change the course of history; to put an end to repeating the patterns of the past, although not without difficulty. By increasing my cultural capital in the form of qualifications I felt I could increase my economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) but this has been no overnight task.

Ideologically, I was disadvantaged as a child and a young person. My mum read the *Evening Telegraph* every evening and had a grumble at local misgivings and she watched the 6 o'clock local news but I was never encouraged to engage with the local misgivings and the thought of having to watch the news filled me with boredom. Everything in my young life was unchallenged, I literally knew nothing about world affairs because *'it didn't concern me,'* our four walls were a safe haven for me. I learned to behave in a submissive way and done as I was told. I had to tame my 'bossy' side and in doing so I was protected from stepping out of line. I

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[27] For similar examples of working class auto/biographies see McKenzie, 2015; Hanley, 2017.
[28] I experienced working in a fruit factory when I left school and in various factories a few years later and knew first-hand what my dad had meant by them being 'dead end' jobs. I found working on the factory floor did not challenge me and there was no chance of any promotions because I would rather be in a position where I could be submissive rather than 'bossy'.

think of this period in my life as being wrapped up in what I refer to as a 'working class bubble'. To have been anything other than working class would have been a travesty. I took this learned behaviour into school with me and even into my young adulthood.

Socially, I was disadvantaged as a child and a young person. Although I came from a big family where I had a lot of cousins and we all played together at regular family gatherings, I always felt like I did not belong; as if I was not a part of them. We did not socialise beyond our family gatherings and we shared no friends in common. Beyond family though and during my young teenage years I felt some kind of 'connection' to those poorer than us because their lives, on the surface, were more open; more transparent. They were more troubled; they had a tough exterior (useful for the fights they got into) and they were definitely more carefree. I felt jealous of their carefree attitudes. I did not really belong with these people, I knew that, but as a teenager I was beginning to get rebellious and these were the best sort of people to hang out with, hiding under the underpasses (also known as subways) smoking and drinking and then staying at a friend's house because you knew you could not go home in a state. I never did get too carefree though because if I had I would have gone home and fronted my fate. There was always a side of me that knew it was 'wrong' and that I would not be 'safe.' I wanted to be a someone but not like this. I had acquaintances from better backgrounds but none that could develop into friendship. Those better off than me went on regular holidays, they had better clothes and used words I had never heard of or understood, I was embarrassed to be different; to be not as good. The boundary line my parents had drawn for me placed me between these two very different groups of people. Not that I knew it then but this line taught me a valuable lesson that would serve me well with my critical development during adulthood.

Academically, I was disadvantaged as a child and young person. My mum never helped me with homework, she used to say *'your dad can help you because I haven't got the brains for it'* and sure enough my dad did, until, I was in secondary school, then he said he could not understand half of what I was doing. As a teenager, I did not read books at home although I enjoyed completing homework tasks and I have no memory of ever visiting places that could advance me such as museums or libraries, we were either too poor or there was no time with my parents working. These disadvantages went with me into adulthood. In the early years of becoming an adult I spent most of my time in and out of being employed in the local factories, mainly due to starting a family at a young age. I parented my eldest two

children just as I had been brought up by my parents but the desire to be a someone burned deeply inside me. By the time I had my third child, I felt so dissatisfied with the boundary line that had kept me safe throughout my life that I began to make changes. I took up education as a mature student with the view to becoming a teacher. I was stepping outside of my comfort zone; outside everything that I knew as normal.

2.3 The Educated Me

When I arrived at secondary school I felt mixed emotions and as if I did not really 'fit' anywhere. My friends from primary school were similar to me but now there were many friendship groups who appeared to be better than us and boy did they let us know about it, from calling us names to pushing us around. And as if that was not enough, to add insult to injury, the teachers too, favoured the better off students. To say that school is a site of social reproduction as Bourdieu (1989) argued is a truth I had come to know well. My desire for wanting to be a someone grew much stronger through this period; I wanted to be like the better off students. I went through the school system always trying my best, after all my parents wanted me to work hard, not because they wanted me to have some high-flying career but because working hard is what 'respectable' working class people were good at; it would show docility and conformity for the workplace. As a confident learner I was a competent student but I often felt like an imposter when other more affluent students were praised for their ability to complete tasks. I remember the time I wanted to learn how to play the flute, not because I particularly liked the idea of playing instruments but more because I liked how the teacher encouraged her students. It was not a very good experience for me. The teacher ignored my request to play on several occasions and when I did not give up she gave me a flute to try. On the first blow into a flute I did not make a sound and that was enough for the teacher to say that I could not play and should not ask again! I felt like a failure, I had over stepped the line and no longer felt that safety net. I was not a 'good' girl. I had learned a valuable lesson that confirmed my upbringing.

Towards the end of secondary school, I wanted to be a teacher but with no encouragement from either my parents or my teachers I took computing as an optional choice in my final year before leaving school with nine GCSEs. They were not top grades but they were enough to get on a BTEC course in Information Technology at college. I completed three years at college and secured a BTEC first in Information Technology and a BTEC National in Computer Studies. These

qualifications did not really get me anywhere in terms of employment. I had no idea what I could do and I did not want to work in a factory. But that is exactly what happened. I was now in a position that confirmed what my dad had spent my childhood telling me, *'you'll end up factory fodder just like your mother.'* However, through sheer determination to have a better life I started working in a local afterschool club and a few years later I researched how to become a teacher and went on to discuss my options with a course leader in the local college. Somehow the line I should not over step had moved. I felt I could go further. In 2005 I enrolled on an access course with the view to becoming a teacher. My experience of education was different to what I had ever known – the teachers were encouraging of all of us to attend university, it felt almost like this was an expectation upon completing the course. Looking at the reforms for Higher Education tuition fees under the then Labour government may have had something to do with the teachers' encouraging attitudes especially as the majority of us were 'mature' students with young families coming from a working class background. Although tuition fees were raised to £3,000 in 2006 (Belfield, et al., 2017) when I enrolled on a degree course, I was able to secure a government 'income-contingent' tuition fee loan along with a maintenance grant. If these had not been available I would not have gone to university because this was not the norm for people like me and I could never have afforded it. Little did I realise though; I would be saddled with a debt that would grow in interest each year because my journey would not lead straight into a job but into further academic study.

My academic journey, particularly in the early stages of university, was not the best experience in terms of support. I have always felt less deserving of things and being the first generation in my family to go to university was met with a sense of pride but accompanied with a sense of uncertainty by my parents, understandably really as they knew nothing about academic life. Even at university I felt less supported than those who came from more affluent backgrounds because they were prepared and seemingly fitted in with other students and their tutors/lecturers much easier than I did. I remember sitting in a talk given by a third-year student on my first week and she had said to prepare as soon as possible for the dissertation; a dissertation, what was that? I had never heard of the word and I had no clue what it was so I sat quietly and told myself I would get there by blending in and staying quiet. I could not tell anyone and run the risk of looking stupid. After all, I was a 'disadvantaged' working class girl doing something completely out of the norm and I had learned from childhood to stay 'safe' by not over stepping the line. This silent approach

would serve me well however because in 2009, heavily pregnant with baby number six, I graduated from university with a 2:1; a huge achievement for someone like me. I was so proud of myself and in a bid to push that line further forward I enrolled on a Master's (MA) degree in education. I felt I needed to understand not only my own history but the reasons for the behaviours of those worse off than me.

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) would become my speciality at MA level. Once again though, I came up against students from more affluent backgrounds with some lecturers showing more interest in them and what they did with their free time, engaging in conversations that I could only dream of. Towards the end of that degree we had to choose a research module. Somehow I chose two which went unnoticed until the points needed to be added up and converted into a grade. The university made me feel like such a fool; as if I should have known. Just like the time in school with the flute, I had over stepped the line and did not feel 'safe.' I was, however, awarded my MA and as an adult in my mid-thirties with six children and two degrees I pushed myself even further.

My trajectory had been different to those from more affluent backgrounds and it showed with them all carefully mapping their lives out. I clearly still lacked in cultural and social capital because beyond working for myself with my community arts-related projects I could not see how what I had learned during my time at university could be put into practice, especially as I did not have a teaching qualification. By the time I came to the end of my Master's degree I applied for a PhD with the view to becoming a professional in the field of education. I was curious as to why my schooling and education had not developed me in terms of my leadership skills and I knew others felt the same. I was curious as to why poor and disadvantaged people could not have better. What was stopping them?

2.4 The Professional Me

By the time my eldest son reached a year old I landed a six-month contract as a classroom assistant in a primary school. It is here I began to realise some children could not be taught by traditional methods and some came from such poor backgrounds they did not know how to engage with teachers or students. I decided post contract I would set up my own afterschool club. I was on a mission to engage children in education; a mission to do things differently. After a year of planning and a further six-months for checks to be completed through Ofsted, I opened my doors in February 2003. I was affiliated with two local primary schools in the catchment area and got off to a good start with enough children to immediately take on a

member of staff. The club ran for two and half hours after school each day and I provided space for games, homework, art and reading. During this time, I found myself often listening to the children and their discontentment of the school day and spoke to them about how to make their experience of the club a good one. Enabling the children to talk freely is the most valuable lesson I learned because I now had a concrete starting point for my vision of teaching. Unfortunately, the timing of the afterschool club was not right for me. My third baby was due at the beginning of September and with a lack of experience of owning a business I made the decision to close at the end of that school year, just five months after opening.

I would spend the next ten years following my college enrolment in 2005 volunteering part time in various school settings from primary to secondary to specialist. I had observed a lot of behaviours in this time and listened to many children's personal stories. The desire for me to be a someone was now transitioning into the need to somehow make things better and more bearable for poorer children. At the end of 2012 I started a drama and dance class for disadvantaged children; for those who had been pushed out of other local classes in the community for not being strong performers. I knew many children like this because my middle daughter was a dancer and whilst her talent shone through others struggled to get noticed. Parents could not afford to keep up with appearances and would often stop taking their child/ren. I spoke to those parents about my idea for a new class, then booked a hall and asked a GCSE student, who was a friend of my daughter, to work on a project with me for 12 weeks. This for me was a test at over stepping the line. If the children or parents disapproved at any point I knew I would plummet back into the need to be submissive and feel safe.

I designed the projects to initially build up the self-esteem and self-confidence of my students. The first arts-related[29] project I held incorporated other art forms such as painting, drawing, dance and music. I did not lead this project in the traditional sense. Instead I worked with my students in producing a theme for our story and then we worked together on writing a script, designing props, adding in dance and playing instruments. I was lucky enough to know other adults that had experience in dance and music and I therefore organised workshops for myself and the students to give us an idea of how to produce our pieces. We took our finished project into a school theatre to perform in front of family and friends and it was the positive

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[29] Although I was not trained in drama I had a passion for acting and I did attend some drama lessons in my local community as a child.

feedback from parents with regards to how I had conducted the project, enabling my students to take a 'participative' role in the production, that prompted me to add a critical element into my next project/s. The conversations I had with parents reported a difference in their child's confidence levels with comments such as '*he'll be back for the next one*', '*he's like a different child*', 's*he's really enjoyed it*' and '*nobody does anything like this, she's tried different groups but never gets on with them because she's always put at the back*'. To make the projects 'critical', I created the space for students to critically question, upon reflection, the piece they had helped to create.

Educating children and young people this way had educated me and it was not long after the first critical project that I began designing projects for adults. In addition to this, and after the passing of my dad, I founded a small charity with aim of educating the public. My vision for teaching was something out of the ordinary but not something unheard of. Not that I knew it until I began my PhD but alternative teaching was already being practiced (see for example, Freire, 1974; Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1995).

2.5 The Critical Me

With six children, a husband, a charity, an education and a mortgage, I was a someone. I am a someone. I am a mum, a wife, a daughter, a friend and I have been a business owner. I am the founder of a charity. I am a student and I am a home-owner. I had stepped out of line on a few occasions in order to become a someone but yet I did not feel a someone. This lost sense of self relates to Marx's work on 'self-estrangement' (Marx, 1845) whereby I had stepped away from the working class pattern of providing my labour in return for a wage and on becoming educated I was stepping into middle class territory. I had become isolated from work, from society and from myself. I could not self-identify as either working class or middle class.

I started asking questions. I wanted to know why I felt the way I did. I had learned how to become observant through my submissive behaviour. I learned to sit in silence and watch what was happening around me. What I had come to realise is that with every year that had past, I had proved to myself that people like me could make it. I sought answers to *why* things had always been the way they were and how I came to understand them. I began to notice others in the position I had been in prior to starting university and I wanted to help educate them. I *needed* to help

because this, I felt, was how I was going to become that someone I had always desired to be.

It was not until I had read the work of Karl Marx and Pierre Bourdieu and even Paulo Freire for my PhD that I queried the idea of alienation and social reproduction and the process of developing critical thought. Reflecting on my life in this way has enabled me to see things from a critical perspective (Freire, 1993). I came to realise throughout my schooling I had been subjected to passive learning, taking everything at face value due to my learned behaviour. I had been alienated from myself. I realised that social and cultural norms had been reproduced through the limited knowledge I received. I had accumulated limited social, economic and cultural capitals (Bourdieu, 1986). By engaging in both further and higher education as an adult however, I had gone against the norm, I had invested in my social and cultural capital and I was becoming both liberated and empowered. That is, in the process of becoming a someone I freed myself from the conditions that prevented me from being 'more fully human' (Freire, 1993, p.39). For me, this is where everything began to fall into place.

Politically, I had grown up in a neoliberal and neoconservative era under Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) and John Major (1990-1997). Recession in the 1980s meant my dad struggled to find work and this to me was normal. I did not see the world through a critical lens. I did not know we were oppressed. I was aware of businesses closing in the town where I grew up just as I was aware of my parents discontent with Thatcher. Everything was a struggle. My parents accessed the resources available to them in terms of employment and/or benefits so it was not their fault we had no money beyond food and bills. I lived a life where I had been normalised and accepting of the status quo. I had learned to behave in a way that reflected capitalist social relations positioning myself lower down the social hierarchy (Marx, 1848). Understanding my past has enabled me to become the someone I had always fought to be and I no longer feel alienated from myself. I have been liberated. I have become empowered to take control of my life and change the course of history for my family so that class patterns are not repeated in the future. I am in the position to help others in what Freire (1993) determines as a *pedagogy of the oppressed*.

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

To reiterate the introductory section of this chapter, it was essential for me to overcome ethical dilemmas such as biases and assumptions I held of my class

background, schooling experiences and inequalities. I have taken the reader on a personal reflective journey from growing up working class, poor and disadvantaged to going through the state education system as someone who was normalised and accepted the status quo to becoming a someone with a critical consciousness. This chapter deepens my rationale by reflecting upon and contextualising ideas such as alienation seen in Marx's theory of class. I have acknowledged my empowerment upon becoming liberated from the oppressive forces of my lived conditions. This has been an important part of the process for understanding, analysing and helping others to recognise and overcome the oppressive nature of their inequalities. This relates to Freirean thinking and is discussed in chapter four.

Moreover, I have contextualised social and cultural capitals and the idea of school being central to social reproduction put forward in Bourdieusian theory. In the following chapter I discuss what social class is and further explore the idea of an 'underclass' as being separate to the working class. I analyse the arguments for and against the notion of class.

CHAPTER THREE: SOCIAL CLASS IN CAPITALIST SOCIETIES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the theories briefly discussed in chapters one and two. Here, I argue in favour of drawing from Marxist and Bourdieusian analysis to understand social class and class relations in capitalist society. I explore the Marxist concept of alienation and exploitation and class consciousness. Furthermore, and by drawing more firmly from Bourdieu's theory of the forms of capital I explore how the different social classes are attributed with different levels of capitals and how *habitus* and *disposition* are reproduced from social class (dis)advantages. Following this I engage with the underclass debate and argue that the underclass is symbolic, in Bourdieusian terms, of capitalist social relations rather than a separate class to the working class.

3.2 What is Social Class?

To understand *class* and *class* differences early theorists such as Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim theorised their accounts of class within society. Each theory, although different, discussed a relationship between social structure and capitalist society (Giddens, 1971). Marx has been the most influential, although contemporary theorists tend to base their understandings within these early theories, it is Marx that 'continues to be of interest…for his analysis of the structure of power in capitalist societies and his comprehensive view of the close interrelationship of economic class dominance, political power, and ideology' (Farganis, 2014, p.29).

3.2.1(i) Karl Marx

In his work, he writes about society as a whole rather than individuals that make up the whole. In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx (and Engels) bring our attention to two major classes in society; the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie, as Marx clarified, are the ruling class who were born out of feudal times and became successful as the owners of the means of production – that is, as capitalists. The proletarians however, according to Marx, are the working class who sell their labour in return for a wage and hence have no ownership over their production. Moreover, Marx states 'in every social process of production is, at the same time a process of reproduction' (Marx, 1867).

The process of social and economic reproduction as E.P. Thompson (1963) points out, with the making of this class of workers, was a fundamental part for the

progression of capitalist society from old feudal society, and with the growth of capitalism came the expansion of the proletariat, usually manual workers such as factory workers, but, in Marxist terms, workers who sell their labour power to capitalists or to organisations and institutions that educate and keep workers alive. Harry Braverman (1974) much later developed this using the concept of proletarianization through the deskilling of, for example, the 'professional worker' strata of the labour force in his book *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. Braverman argued the 'deskilling' of labour has proletarianized the middle classes or as Marx called them, the 'petit bourgeoisie' as they were forced into becoming wage labourers over appropriators of capital. Of course, much of the labour power exerted in the factories during Marx's time, has since been replaced by science and technology today in the 21st century's digital age (Hill, 2018). But for Marx and Marxists', the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is an exploitative one, one that is about power and control, one that both causes and is characterised by class conflict and class struggle. As Johnson (1982, p.30) sums it up:

> It is a relation based on exploitation, the appropriation by capital of a proportion of the value produced by labour. It is in the interest of capital to increase the level of value appropriated; it is in the interest of labour to resist exploitation and to try to increase the proportion of value retained. It is in the interest of capital to see to the reproduction of the social relations that preserve its class privileges; it is in the interest of labour to modify or revolutionize prevailing social relations.

These relations as Marx stated, 'constitute the economic structure of society' giving rise to 'a legal and political superstructure…to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness'. For Marx 'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness' (Marx, 1970, p.182). Through this exploitative relationship, the working class, in general, develops a 'false' consciousness within their environment and with the world around them. This sense of ignorance or adherence to the status quo, this false consciousness, is at the forefront of working class consciousness'. For Marx (1845) this is because on the surface of such relationships the concept of exploitation is hidden. The capitalist pays the worker a wage in return for a day's labour and this sugar coated deal is deemed fair. The worker does not recognise what is below the surface; only their 'conscious existence' and this distorted view of reality is what Marx calls 'camera obscura' (p.37). In reality one will live in the

moment without connecting to the historical process and without becoming creators of one's own future. A false consciousness is what separates the worker from the commodities they produce in what Marx refers to as *alienation*.

In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,* Marx, discussing alienation, highlights how the worker is worth less than he produces and lacks the ability to take control of his production in terms of pay and working conditions. In the same vein, the worker is alienated from others in a class-based hierarchy because of the conflicting social relations, and from himself; his species-being as Marx (1844, p.32) lays out:

> Estranged labour turns thus – man's species-being, both nature and his spiritual species property, into a being *alien* to him, into a *means* of his individual existence. It estranges man from his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his *human* aspect.

What Marx was highlighting in his analysis of class was how workers are forced into leading lives not of their choosing but through the 'forced labour' that has shaped their thoughts and behaviours and prevented them from being free. The social relations of capitalism, being essentially an antagonistic relation between 'the two great classes of society' leads to conflicts in Marxian analysis. In terms of social and political change, this is a dialectical process seen in Hegelian thinking. The dialectical process begins with the 'thesis' – that is, the proletariat being both opposite and antagonistic to the bourgeoisie in market terms, in terms of there being a struggle, a class struggle over the appropriation of surplus value/profit from the labour of the proletarians. This, then produces the 'antithesis' – that is, the proletarians realising and reacting against their exploitation. This results in the 'synthesis' – that is, the overthrow of capitalist society for socialist society. Marx (1848) argued the conflict between the two classes would lead to the proletarians realising their common struggles, moving from a false consciousness to a true consciousness, which would then lead to them overthrowing the bourgeoise, and eventually resulting in a classless society. A classless society is the final stage of socialism whereby both the economic structure and social life become communal, that is, a communist society. The means of production would no longer be in private hands, there would be no material class conflict and class would therefore cease to exist (Marx, 1848; Best, 2005; Farganis, 2014).

Marx's theory of social class however, has been criticised for various reasons including the accusation of it being 'economistic' and 'deterministic' particularly as

Marx argued that it was the economic laws that governed not only society but the course of history too. For Marx, society and its relations were determined by economic structures. Other Marxists such as Louis Althusser and E.P. Thompson have rejected these criticisms believing Marx's work was not fully understood (Thompson, 1963; Althusser, 1971). There has also been considerable debate within Marxist theory over 'reproductionist Marxism' on the one hand, and less deterministic versions of Marxism stressing autonomy, resistance and the role of culture on the other and this is further discussed in relation to education in chapter four (see for example, Giroux, 2001 for a summary of this, and Apple, 2006). Althusser's (1971) most notable work on Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) was his way of understanding and explaining how the 'state' plays a role in reproducing the social relations that benefit capitalism (Althusser, 1971; Apple, 1982; Rikowski, 2008; Hill, 2018). These work differently to the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) such as the government, the army and the police which reproduce the capitalist through control and violence.

3.2.1(ii) Max Weber

Agreeing with Marx concerning the conflictual, antagonistic relationship between the classes was Max Weber. He believed market opportunities to be the cause of social inequalities rather than the exploitation of one class by another, taking a multi-dimensional approach to status and power (Weber, 1921; Panday, 1983).

For Weber, life chances are determined by one's position in a capitalist market in a two-way process that sees what one puts in one gets out in a process that is exploitative. For example, property owners will have different (and possibly better) opportunities to non-property owners because of their economic position and their ability to be economically mobile through the resources they possess and the same applies to those with skills/qualifications. And it is the commonality of these life chances, the outputs, that determines a class, status group or party. Those with honour or prestige make up a status group whilst those with political interests make up a party and both are independent of a class (Weber, 1921; Panday, 1983).

Power, being central to Weber's stratification theory, was dependent on who *possessed* and *exercised* power and how this was distributed within the social, economic and political relations of a society. Defining social stratification in broader terms than Marx, Weber's three concept theory divided society into class, status group and party. Weber (1921, p.302) states in *Economy and Society*:

A class situation is one in which there is a shared typical probability of procuring goods, gaining a position in life, and finding inner satisfaction.

Weber felt class was not a 'substructure underlying the other modes of stratification but…an independent dimension' (Rubinstein, 1993, p.280). His analysis of class going much further than Marx, saw three types of class; 1. Property class, 2. Commercial class, 3. Social class, but like Marx, within the social class element, Weber believed there to be many social classes although he identified four main types of class. These classes, which included the working class (i.e. those who owned only their labour power), the privileged (i.e. those who owned property and were highly educated); the propertyless intelligentsia (i.e. the civil servants); and the petit bourgeoisie (i.e. the professional people and shopkeepers or the middle classes) were made up of individuals who commonly shared economic interests and similarities in their skills and their abilities to make an income (Holton and Turner, 2010).

Both Marx and Weber accept that there are various levels and strata within the different classes. One important difference that separates Marx and Weber is where Marx believed the working class would rise together against the capitalists, Weber felt the commonality of the working classes would not necessarily lay the foundations for social action. He notes:

the direction in which the individual worker, for instance, is likely to pursue his interests may vary widely, according to whether he is constitutionally qualified for the task at hand to a high, to an average, or to a low degree. The rise of societal or even of communal action from a common class situation is by no means a universal phenomenon (Weber, 1921, p. 929).

3.3 Contemporary Class Theories

Sociological explanations have tended to start 'with either Marx or Weber…as both approaches shared the assumption that classes were real and had a significant impact on people's life chances' (Best, 2005, p.13).

Other theorists have written on the conflict between the classes, but it was Marx who theorised on a deeper level 'about the relationship between social class and social structures' (Hill, 2004, p.146). For Marx, importantly, 'the history of all hitherto existing history is the history of class struggles' (Marx, 1867, p.1).

3.3.1(i) Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) with his cultural perspective linked structural forces with the role of individuals (or agency). Bourdieu believed all members of society to possess some form of capital(s), defining capital socially, economically and culturally, as mentioned in the introduction chapter to this thesis. The notions of all capitals must be fully understood 'to account for the structure and functioning of the social world' (p.46). It is through these capitals that society reproduces itself from one generation to the next. By social capital, Bourdieu referred to the relations and set of norms and values that social groups hold in common with each other which can lead to ones (dis)advantages. Certain social connections can be converted 'into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility' (p.47). Economic capital is based on what one has in terms of cash, assets and/or investments, and cultural capital is defined by Bourdieu (1986, p.7) 'as a form of knowledge'.

Cultural capital, central to Bourdieu's work, 'can exist in three forms' (1986, p.47) – embodied, objectified and institutionalised, and is key for understanding the reproduction of social inequalities. To summarise these three forms, cultural capital:

> in an embodied state…is in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and the body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods; and in the institutionalised state, resulting in such things as educational qualifications (Nash, 1990, p.232).

Cultural capital is developed through what one is exposed to over time and in its' embodied form, produces ones 'habitus', habitus being the habits, skills and dispositions one internalises and acts upon. Dispositions are the socially constructed thoughts and behaviours one has acquired from their experiences within their environment. For Bourdieu (1984), dispositions are transposable. In other words, thoughts, perceptions and the way one behaves in one environment is transferable to another and this will either place one as distinct from or similar to others in the same social class, family, community or group. For example, those growing up exposed to classical music will have an appreciation and understanding of that genre of music, a cultural distinction that is different to those whose musical tastes are more inclined to, for example, rap music. In the words of Bourdieu (1984, p.18) 'nothing more clearly affirms one's 'class', nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music'.

Habitus occurs as the result of both structure i.e. the family, education, religion etc and agency i.e. how one interacts with their environment or 'field' as Bourdieu refers

to it (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu (1993, p.87) notes the 'habitus is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way'. Habitus, according to Bourdieu, can change over time with one being exposed to different experiences in the field/s, 'dispositions are long lasting: they tend to perpetuate, to reproduce themselves, but they are not eternal' (p.29). What Bourdieu meant by this was that habitus is not fixed; that agency is therefore shaped through and within the field. It is necessary to consider how habitus is played out in both the family and education to understand the struggles that occur between structure and agency that lead to the reproduction of their social inequalities.

Fields are contexts, or social spaces, that are not only hierarchical but where agency is reproduced. Fields have their own set of norms, for example, schools are sites where formal education takes place and the set-up of the school will be organised around different forms of capital based on what is to take place. The capitals 'are both the process within, and product, of a field' (Thompson, 2008, p.69). Fields are where one will compete with others to acquire capitals and thus subject them to power relations. To quote Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.102) 'agents and institutions constantly struggle according to the regularities and the rules constitutive of this space of play…'. Fields are spaces where individuals, with their economic or cultural capitals, classify themselves to one another in what Bourdieu refers to as 'aesthetic sensibility'. This is one's:

> everyday choices in matters of food, clothing, sports, art and music-and which extends to things as seemingly trivial as their bodily posture-serves as a vehicle through which they symbolise their social similarity with and their social difference from one another' (Weininger, 2002, p.141).

The power relations in these struggles is a form of 'symbolic violence' and it is 'the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2005, p.167). These class based relations see the middle and upper classes as the dominant class as they acquire and accrue the different forms of capitals to secure their position in a given field whereas the working class in their struggle will acquire capitals of limited value in society.

It is, for Bourdieu, through cultural capital where power relations and domination occur. Unlike Marx who believed power and domination to be based on economic relations, i.e. through the ownership of the mode of production, Bourdieu believed such relations to be symbolic of both economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986;

1989). Whilst many sociologists have applied Bourdieu's concepts to their work particularly within the sociology of education (for example see Laureau, 1987; Reay, 1998, 2001, 2005b; Skeggs, 2004), his theory is not without its critics. Goldthorpe (2007) and King (2000) highlight Bourdieu's theory of a (higher) dominant culture in society who have the advantage over the (lower) members of society namely the working classes as a central concept that offers no alternative for working class social transformation. This is because as Wright (2015b, p.1) states 'Bourdieu… is centrally concerned with the replication of class structure and inequality'. Whilst I agree with these critics on the grounds of Bourdieu's work offering no alternative, I do believe however, that Bourdieu's tools provide a useful insight into understanding reproduction and thus useful for understanding the relation between class, education and inequalities which are the main aims for this thesis.

3.3.1(ii) Erik Olin Wright

Although it is not the intention of this thesis to use the analytical framework proposed by a leading contemporary Sociologist, Erik Olin Wright, as in his attempt to offer a 'fully developed class analysis' (Wright, 2015b, preface) he interconnects different theoretical backgrounds. This thesis cannot ignore his notion of class location particularly in relation to the underclass. In his view of the class structure Wright discusses three relational concepts of class in which he believed there to be an inescapable exploitative and dominative process. Furthermore, Wright, concerning his thinking about class more broadly than Marx, as he incorporated further criteria than just property ownership to include power and income, felt the middle classes occupied a 'contradictory location within class relations' (Wright, 1997, p.16) as they could not be located as within either the capitalist class or the working class as Marx had predicted. But for Wright, when discussing those at the very bottom of the social hierarchy, the underclass 'can be defined as a category of social agents who are economically oppressed but not necessarily exploited within a given class system' (1997, pp.23-4). Wright considers this group of people to be outside what he refers to the direct class location[30] although it is possible, they are part of a mediated class location and it is this part of Wright's thinking that this thesis connects to.

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[30] The mediated class location refers to class locations in a relation whereby one has the power to influence the other, such as a married couple whereby one is a capitalist and the other a clerical worker, and therefore partially conditions the other's decisions. The direct class location is where relations are based on the nature of one's job (Wright, 2015b). This is further explored in chapter four

Wright, in his early days of defining a theory for a social class analysis argued for a Marxist view but later incorporated other theories such as that of Max Weber into his work stating: 'each of these approaches to class analysis is incomplete if it ignores the others' (Wright, 2015b, p.3). Although Wright believed a Marxist theory to be the 'superior' viewpoint of the theories he incorporated, he felt each theory to be 'class-relevant causal processes' referring to the different approaches to a class analysis as *'individual-attributes', 'opportunity hoarding'* and *'domination and exploitation'* (p.3). Individual-attributes relates to social stratification. Education, being a key focal point within individual-attributes together with cultural and social capital impacts upon the opportunities one has in the labour market. The inequalities that arise from the different levels of jobs one can have is where Wright relates to the power relations seen in the work of Max Weber. It is here he discusses the exercise of control as '*a process of social closure, the process whereby access to a position becomes reserved for some people and closed off to others'* (Wright, 2015b, p.6). In other words, it is a process of inclusion and exclusion. This opportunity hoarding process is dependent upon educational qualifications that lead to the (dis)advantages of the different class backgrounds which in turn leads to conflict over economic and material resources. If the inequalities were to be improved on a scale that benefits the individual-attributes of the working classes there would be no impact upon those further up the social hierarchy but as Wright (2015b, p.8) points out:

> Where opportunity-hoarding mechanisms are important, in contrast, eliminating poverty by removing the mechanisms of exclusion potentially undermines the advantages of the affluent with the existing system.

In this vein, Wright views domination and exploitation as key to understanding class relations and as a way to explain how one can control the life of another. Domination is the ability of one 'to control the activities of others' whilst exploitation is when one can economically benefit from the labour of a dominated other (2015b, p.8). One's 'material interests' are therefore 'shaped' through their relation 'to the process of exploitation' (Wright, 2000, p.23) and thus determines class location. So, for example, those who own the means of production and employ only those who provide their labour in return for a wage, stand to financially gain from the surplus value produced by the workers. At the same time the workers stand to lose out financially, meaning the owner and the worker are in a relationship where the owner can continue to exploit and dominate whilst the worker will continue to be exploited and dominated. This relation determines the owner as being in a capitalist class

location and the worker as being in a working class location. Here, Wright, in a classical Marxist tone, is discussing class location in terms of both economic and social relations of production.

Direct and mediated class locations are a central concept to Wright's thinking within class structures. Whilst direct class locations, according to Wright (2000, p.23), are linked to family backgrounds so for example, a child 'born into a wealthy capitalist family links the child to the material interests of the capitalist class via family relations', mediated class locations are when one can be described as being in two 'class locations'. One can be 'capitalist class by virtue of family ties and working class by virtue of job'. In other words, it is possible to be from a capitalist or working class background and have a job with a lower or higher ranking. Wright also spoke of a 'contradictory' class location where he concerned himself with the middle classes that had not become either a member of the capitalist class or a member of the working class as Marx had predicted. Others too have written on these boundary issues of the middle classes (for example see Poulantzas,1974; Abercrombie and Urry,1983). Wright argued that the working classes were both exploited and dominated by the bourgeoisie under capitalist social relations of production but the same could not be said for the middle classes. Those in managerial positions for example, are exploited by the bourgeoisie but at the same time they operate as dominators over the workers. Small business owners too, the petit bourgeoisie, can also be found in a contradictory class location as they are not dominated by bourgeois relations but are exploiters of labour power as they employ the working class.

Guy Standing, most notable for his work on defining a 'precariat' goes further in his class analysis and separates the precariat from the working class:

> The precariat was not part of the 'working class' or the 'proletariat'. The latter terms suggest a society consisting mostly of workers in long-term, stable, fixed-hour jobs with established routes of advancement, subject to unionisation and collective agreements, with job titles their fathers and mothers would have understood, facing local employers whose names and features they were familiar with.

(Standing, 2011, p.10)

Standing, speaks of a very broad 'precariat', a class in the making and sub-categorises those who are no longer working class, those who are migrants with no fixed abode and an educated population who have no future job security. For

Standing, this level of precariousness is what separates the working class and the precariat.

Wright however, through his Marxist gaze, critiques Standing in two ways – firstly, Wright believes the 'material interests' are not distinctively different between the working class and the precariat. Material interests being 'objective interests' which relate to social action and social changes that result in the (dis)advantages of the 'material conditions of life' (2015b, p.129); therefore, the working class and the precariat cannot be distinctively separate classes. Secondly, Wright disagrees with the precariat being 'a class in the making', as Standing calls it, because the 'deprivation' of those Standing refers to as the precariat are based in different time frames and their 'optimal strategies for securing a livelihood are not sufficiently unified for the precariat as a whole to constitute a class' (2015b, p.123). These strategies for the 'fallen' working class, those outside economic norms, are based on the past, but on the here and now for the migrants and in the future for the educated. With this view in mind, Wright is saying that they cannot come together in a unified way.

3.4 Rejection/s of Social Class Analysis

Debates surrounding social class in post-war capitalist Britain have dominated the sociological field until quite recently (for example see Reay, 2005a; Ball, 2008; Kane, 2011; Bloodworth, 2014). But as stressed by Poulantzas (1974, p.214), 'the obvious willingness of Marxian theorists to keep redefining their class categories…theoretically deprives class theory of internal cohesion,' and by doing so poses as a risk to make clear 'the structures and functioning of society'. Standing's work on the precariat is a good example of this. In defence of Marxist theorists however, the structure of society constantly changes and this is because new technology replaces human labour power, new jobs are created in the division of labour and new opportunities arise for social mobility resulting in new class formations or the 'recomposition of classes' (Hill, 1999).

Other arguments have been put forward suggesting the focus on *class* misses or diminishes the social effects and individual and group experiences of *race, ethnicity* and *gender* for example. During the 1970s and 1980s, class analysis was challenged by the rise of identity/cultural politics and by the rise of feminism. Feminism put gender at the forefront of the political debate and by the late 1990s, working class feminists such as Beverley Skeggs (1997), Pat Mahony and Christine Zmroczek (1997) argued that understanding the class experiences of women

offered a deeper insight into the way class works. Whilst in *Formation of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (1997), Skeggs demonstrates how class and gender together are important for understanding 'the production of [women's] subjectivity' (p.6), Mahony and Zmroczek discuss the race element. In her 12 year longitudinal study of working class women enrolled on a 'caring' course, Skeggs' ethnographic research shows how, through 'respectability,' that is, the way they dress and conduct themselves in different situations, working class women produce and reproduce themselves. Furthermore, being black, working class and female, Mahony and Zmroczek highlight how race, class and gender have historically positioned black, working class women as powerless. In these scenarios race and gender have been viewed as the most important elements. For example, Reynolds (cited in Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997) discusses how black women have been viewed as a whole [class] in terms of education and occupation rather than in terms of their class position as would be seen with their white female counterparts. Although there is a 'shared history of racial oppression…experienced by both black men and women' Reynolds believes 'that it is too simplistic to focus on 'race' to the exclusion of gender and class' (p.11).

A further argument put forward in the 1990s by Pakulski and Waters (1996) announced the 'death of class' in which they argued 'that classes are dissolving and that the most advanced societies are no longer class societies' (p.4). The rise of neoliberalism, the globalisation of markets, technology and the rise of individualisation are reasons for their announcement (Tittenbrun, 2014). The focus of the neoliberal agenda 'to reduce the role of the state, and strengthen and stimulate independence and self-reliance (Hill, 1990, p.55 cited in Prendergast, Hill and Jones, 2017) was clearly evident when Margaret Thatcher said 'there's no such thing as society' (Keay, 1987). What Thatcher meant by this was that a society does not exist without individuals. The idea being that society would be rewarded through hard work based on individual effort and merit in a meritocracy (Harvey, 2005). This created competition and broke down any forms of class solidarity.

Postmodernism rejected class analysis, together with other meta-narratives, linear narrative and grand theories. Instead, for postmodernists, history had ended, mass social struggles such as working class struggles have been replaced by local struggles. Mass identity, such as social class, race or gender have been replaced by particularism and individualism in a post-industrial society. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002) for example, argued that the rise of individualism

and individualisation is related to the break-down of traditional collective identities, i.e. how people relate to others in their social class, stating that:

> Individualisation is a concept which describes a structural, sociological transformation of social institutions and the relationship of the individual to society, freeing people from historically inscribed roles. Individualisation liberates people from traditional roles and constraints, and individuals are removed from status-based classes. Social classes have been detraditionalized (p.202).

With this in mind, 'individualisation stems from changes in society associated with industrialisation and resulting consumer society' (Middlemiss, 2014, p.929). By this, Middlemiss is referring to claims that mass industrial society, with, for example, its large concentrations of workers in factories and workplaces such as mines, had given way to smaller workplaces, work-from-home, increases in self-employment, with people defining themselves as consumers rather than as workers in a particular class position and consciousness. Sociologists with a focus on consumption tend to place individuals into groups according to what they have and what they buy in what has become known as a 'consumer' culture.

This analysis plays into the structure and agency debate, particularly with 'consumer as active subject (agent), and the notion that the market offers legitimate…context through which individuals should seek to explore, identify and experience the world around them' (Fichett, Patsiaouras and Davies, 2014, online). In other words, individuals are free to make choices that benefit themselves as an individual and in doing so lived experiences are based on identities of 'self'. Middlemiss, (2014, p.932) asserts that as membership of class and status groupings are less significant in our lives, our sense of self is more transient, and we adopt and discard identities depending on where we are, who we are with, and what we are doing.

Callinicos (1989) and Hill, et al. (2002) however, point out that whether in classical industrial or late modern capitalist society, exploitation of the workers labour power, whether directly employed, or self-employed (such as Deliveroo drivers) remains visible. Frederic Jameson (1984; 1992) claimed that postmodernism is *'the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism',* that the capitalist class welcomed the idea of multiple subjective identities over class identity as it best served their interests.

3.5 The Underclass Debate

Although there are various arguments against the notion of social class, there exists some socially excluded people who are referred to as an *underclass.* The term has attracted considerable debates from both sides of the Atlantic (see for example, Wilson, 1985, 2006; Macnicol 1987, 1999; Murray, 1996, 1999; Welshman 2013).

3.5.1 A reserve army of labour and the lumpen proletariat

According to Marx (1867) in order to increase a surplus value, that is to maximise profit and keep the rate of wages down, capital creates the conditions to produce a surplus working class population; capital needs workers at its' disposal. Marx referred to this surplus as a 'reserve army' of labour. That is, people who are unemployed but willing and able to work. 'The reserve army of labour' increases competition among workers, and acts as a downward force on wages' (Welshman, 2013, p.3).

In opposition to this stood a mass of people who were unemployable and who Marx (1848) referred to as *'lumpen;'* people unlikely to join any revolutionary movements. They were an underclass both dangerous and uneducable, 'the social scum' who were the 'passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society' (p.10).

3.5.2 Defining underclass

A divide between the poor and the behaviours and attitudes of the underclass can be seen as:

> distinct from the working class- in effect, a rootless mass divorced from the means of production- definable only in terms of a social inefficiency, and hence not strictly a class in a neo-Marxist sense (Macnicol, 1987, p.299).

The poor have historically been associated with poverty and although the term underclass was popularised in Britain in the 1980s/1990s labelling the poor has been met with various labels or terms. Terms such as '*cycle of poverty; 'cycle of deprivation' 'exclusion'* and *'problem families'* (Welshman, 2013, p.2) were developed to describe a class of people so disassociated from society that they could not be classed in the same league as the working class. This was not a far cry from a century earlier when research of the poor was in pursuit of a 'residuum'. Charles Booth looked into the life of the poor in London in the late 1800's, mapping out areas of wealth and areas of poverty dividing the such into group A or group B

with the latter being the poorest, the helpless and those who were idle (Macnicol, 2017). More recently, Guy Standing (2011, p.2) referred to those socially excluded as a 'lumpen-precariat':

> Below the groups that can be defined in class terms is an underclass, a lumpen-precariat consisting of sad people lingering in the streets, dying miserably. Since they are effectively expelled from society, lack agency and play no active role in the economic system beyond casting fear on those inside it, we may leave them aside, although some elements can be activated in moments of popular protest.

Standing has clearly tried to resituate Marx's lumpenproletariat of the nineteenth century in to the global market of the 21st century.

3.5.3 The American and British underclass

The term underclass began on American soil originating in the 1960s when Gunnar Mydral argued that technological change and unemployment were the reasons for an American underclass; put simply, the economic structure was a cause of poverty (Mydral, 1962). Empirical studies played into that effect (see for example Hannerz, 1969; Rainwater, 1969). In *'A Culture of Poverty';* Lewis (1959) looked into the lives of five families in Mexico to determine the patterns that evolved in lower class culture. He theorised people living in poverty did not necessarily have the same values as other cultures in poverty. Lewis held the view that the values were generational due to the poor recognising structural inequalities in their environment and adapting to them. The debates on the cultures of poverty thus shaped social welfare known as the war on poverty. However, following the Moynihan (1965) report, research turned its attention to black African-Americans. This added a race element to the underclass. Later, the Liberal reforms that had been in place were argued by Conservative, Edward Banfield as counter-productive as he believed no amount of welfare payments could end the problems of the poor (Banfield, 1970). The underclass was argued by Auletta (1981) as being attributed to single mothers dependent on the state, criminals, black people and the mentally unstable.

In Great Britain, Sir Keith Joseph, Conservative secretary of social services 1970-1974 developed the 'cycle of deprivation' theory. Unlike Lewis who blamed inequalities generated by capitalism, Joseph blamed poor parenting. Welshman (2013) points out that Joseph's theory was underdeveloped and more research was needed. From a Conservative perspective, however, the underclass exists because

the state provides a safety net for the poor that actively encourages them to behave in a way that distinctively separates them from the 'deserving' groups and the working class in general. In this vein, the dependence of the unemployed person on welfare handouts forces them into a stereotypical role of an inferior character because 'welfare is an act of grace or charity' (Cooper, 2012, p.654). This view is born out of Charles Murray's thesis on the underclass. In *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980* Murray (1984) blamed state welfare programs as being the cause of poverty in America and later applied this to UK context. As Murray states (1996, p.82):

> I am blaming governments for wrong-headed policies that seduce people into behaving in ways that seem sensible in the short term but disastrous in the long term.

Murray's focus on cultural behaviour of the British underclass disregarded the race element developed in America and concentrated on behaviours of a 'certain type of poor person', the type not likely to take up employment opportunities after being 'long-term unemployed' (Murray, 1996, p.82). William Julius Wilson in *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) however, criticised Murray for his view of welfare as being the cause of poverty. Wilson (1985) argued that the underclass have a 'weak labour force attachment' which is due to the limited job opportunities available in their area. For Wilson, the criminal and dependent behaviours associated with those in deep poverty are born out of structural inequalities.

Elaine Kempson (1996), commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, demonstrated that people living on low incomes were not part of an underclass. Kempson draws her conclusions from the 31 studies she researched in the 1990s (online) stating:

> They have aspirations just like others in society; they want a job; a decent home; and an income that is enough to pay the bills with a little to spare. But social and economic changes that have benefitted the majority of the population, increasing their incomes and their standard of living, having made life more difficult for a growing minority, whose fairly modest aspirations are often beyond their reach.

However, the notion of an underclass was reignited and clearly brought to the forefront of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition political discussions when David Cameron, in his speech in 2011, titled 'troubled families' as 'a large proportion of the problems in society' (GOV.UK, 2011, online). What Cameron

meant when talking about 'troubled families' was families without educational qualifications; who are without jobs and dependent on welfare; where mothers are depressed and their offspring are likely to engage with criminal activity. Considering his speech applied this term to a minority of families, the definitions are somewhat broad and could apply to anyone from the working classes especially during times of uncertainty when working people tend to fall in and out of employment that is often precarious and low paid and are financially worse off, and where rising levels of anxiety and depression are all too a common feature of British society (NHS, 2015; Booth, 2016; ONS, 2017; Shackle, 2019).

3.5.4 The media and a social divide

Newspaper reports have added to the notion of poor people being benefit dependent and lazy (Ross, 2011; Hall, 2013; Fruen, 2017) particularly since Iain Duncan Smith's speech on the Welfare State in 2010 stated that 'a deeply unfair benefits system too often writes people off' (GOV.UK, 2010, online), suggesting benefit handouts are the reason for welfare dependency and a desire not to work.

One can type into Google 'media reports on benefit cheats' to view how widely those on benefits are regarded as cheating the system in order not to work, who accept benefit payments fraudulently, although *The Guardian* reports how a significant percentage of cases 'put forward by the public…are false' (Cowburn, 2016, online) and *The Independent* reports the tip offs as leading to 'claims the Government is guilty of creating a witch-hunt' (Cowburn, 2018, online). In comparison to this however, those from higher income groups are less scrutinised within the media for cheating the system through tax avoidance although the amount lost to the Treasury is far greater. These measures are without doubt inherently class based (Henman and Marston, 2008).

Extreme levels of poverty exist and have been reported through the media in the UK, reflecting Conservative thinking, as if it is the fault of the individual/s, *for example* in a series of recent televised programs '*Benefits by the Sea: Jaywick'* (Channel5, 2015), residents were shown to be living in properties unfit for human purpose in some cases, and portrayed as wasting their 'benefit' money on cheap alcohol and cigarettes. Jaywick is regarded as the most deprived town in England (BBC, 2019) but with limited or no work opportunities/clubs/classes/groups for the residents to attend one should question how possible is it for them to lift themselves out of their daily struggles.

When extreme levels of poverty from non-UK poor countries are portrayed through the media in the UK in comparison, there is an element of it not being their fault, with a plea for help, because their daily struggles are due to wars and famine. It is without doubt then that extreme poverty is represented within the media in different ways to reinforce 'public ideas about poverty' (McKendrick, et al., 2008, online). As a rule, televised programs in the UK as in the US ridicule the working classes whilst portraying the middle classes as sensible. The ideological role of these depictions is to reinforce social ideas in the public domain in relation to the working class.

3.5.5 Rejections of an underclass

With the obvious change in labels and a lack of coherent empirical data, there is, of course, those who object to the concept of an underclass. Michael Katz (1993, 2012), for example, argued that the establishment is responsible for highlighting a divide between deserving and undeserving groups by providing poor relief for only the former. And Dean and Taylor-Gooby (2013) argue that the cycle of deprivation theory put forward by Sir Keith Joseph not only shared similarities to Oscar Lewis' culture of poverty thesis but that his theory was flawed. Empirical evidence suggested that the cycle of deprivation was not intergenerational as some families had broken that link (see for example Bagguley and Mann, 1992). But as Dean and Taylor-Gooby (2013, p.44) point out, 'the reflexive effect of the underclass concept is not to define the marginalised but to marginalise those it defines'.

3.6 A Class Divided

However disputed, class highlights an existing and unequal relationship, exposing differences between ones social and economic norms with that of others and this is also true of their cultural norms. For example, how someone lives, what they believe in, their values, their tastes such as clothes, music and food together with what assets they have and how much they earn. As Hill (1999, online) notes social class does not just expose 'social differences, it also causes them' and this can result in forms of negative stereotyping of groups personally such as youths being referred to as hoodies or chavs. Benefit seeking/dependent people, people in low paid jobs or those with a trade such as beauty therapy or plumbing tend to be less valued in society as more white collar and more academic positions are favoured (McKenzie, 2015; Hanley, 2017; Jones, 2011). Our social persona can therefore influence how others perceive or even treat us. One's behaviours, ways and beliefs can lead others to label or stereotype; a form of discrimination that occurs both in society and

institutionally. Discrimination, through a Bourdieusian lens, is a form of 'symbolic violence'.

Furthermore, a divide amongst the working class poor is a layer of society thought of as an outcast; a group of people 'who fall outside…[Marxist] class schema, because they belong to family units having no stable relationship at all with the 'mode of production' – with legitimate gainful employment' (Smith 1992 cited in Welshman, 2013, p.4). The underclass according to Wright (1989; 1995; 2000) are economically oppressed, that is, 'they are excluded from accessing material resources through dominating social relations', they do not provide their labour and are therefore not exploited in the same way as members of other classes. For this reason, 'to say they are in a direct class location would be a complex process' (Wright, 1995, p.377).

3.7 Chapter Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has discussed social class in relation to capitalist society, reviewing and commenting on different class theories and how society is structured and ordered based on a hierarchical system. This chapter further discussed a divide within the working classes to include the notion of an underclass. Whilst the earlier debates blamed changes to economic restructuring there has since been a longstanding debate that the individual is responsible for their own poverty. Having distinguished between the different class theories and having explored rejections of the existence of social class, I agree with Skeggs (2004, p.6) that *to abandon class as a theoretical tool does not mean it does not exist anymore; only that some theorists do not value it'.* For me, understanding social class is important for understanding capitalist social relations which in turn is important for engaging in the structure and agency debate and the underclass debate. Moreover, although I recognise other oppressions such as race and gender I am taking a Marxist class perspective in this thesis as I take the view that social class is the most fundamental form of oppression. This is because, as argued by Rikowski (2006) under capitalism you can get rid of racism and sexism for example by employing black people alongside white people and women alongside men but in this respect capitalism would still exist. Class inequality is fundamental to capitalism as shown throughout this chapter, class equality therefore cannot exist within a capitalist society.

Social class, at best, is a very broad term with not one single definition but rather an umbrella term embracing various levels and strata within different classes. In this chapter I have argued in favour of Marxist and Bourdieusian class and reproduction

theories. Marx believed social class related to the means of production and property ownership and argued that social classes were, essentially, in conflict, with the capitalist class having power and control over the proletariat, albeit a power and control that is contested by individuals and by class related movements, parties and groups. The relationship between the two main classes however, is an exploitative one whereby the working classes are subjected to a false consciousness. To further understand consciousness, Bourdieu, with his concept of capitals, enables us to see how the working class acquire and accumulate capitals of limited value in society. Moreover, he argues that schools are sites of social reproduction and his conceptual tools are central to understanding this.

It is also said the underclass lack in educational qualifications, morals, income and jobs and they are viewed as having the most deplorable behaviours and are often ridiculed for being poor. Without coherent empirical studies on the definition of an underclass however, I believe that it is not possible to view an underclass as separate to the working class in Marxist terms.

Whilst this chapter has highlighted the tensions between class and capitalist society resulting in the reproduction of social class inequalities, the next chapter focusses on, and goes further with discussing the role state schooling and education plays in contributing to social reproduction.

CHAPTER FOUR: STATE SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION, SOCIAL CLASS AND INEQUALITIES

4.1 Introduction

Whilst this thesis recognises other social structures as playing a role in the reproduction of inequalities such as the family, the work place and wider communities I am specifically interested in a long standing consensus 'that the dominating class in Britain still underrates the colossal waste of talent in working class children' (Jackson and Marsden, 1962, p.16) and this chapter therefore pays particular attention to the role of state schooling and education.

I begin this chapter with analysing and understanding the nature and purpose of the state educational system in England. This chapter looks at education as 'formal' learning and schooling as an institutionalised form of learning. I present an historical account of the development of the education system, to critically explore how social class inequalities have evolved and been reproduced. Having identified and considered the debates for this chapter I present my argument in favour of Marxist 'reproduction' theory rather than 'resistance' theory. Overall, I argue that by applying Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) and notion of capitals, state schooling and education does play a crucial role in reproducing class inequalities. Moreover, after examining educational policies put in place, purportedly as meritocratic, and with Bourdieu's outlook offering no alternative for change, I relate to Paulo Freire's 'conscientisation' theory and form of praxis. I therefore, offer a discussion on how, in the space for resistance, micro-level interventions can be developed for the empowerment of individual agency.

4.2 Social Inequalities and Social Mobility

'A disadvantaged child will nearly always and everywhere become a disadvantaged adult' (Bloodworth, 2014, online) is the opening line in a report printed in *The Independent* newspaper online. According to this report:

> children of wealthier parents are more likely to go to the best schools…, eat the best foods, have access to 'high culture' and have a quiet place to do homework…poor but bright children get overtaken by their less intelligent classmates from wealthier backgrounds.

Social mobility is viewed as important in public policy to reducing social inequalities, but as Reay (2006, abstract) notes, 'social inequalities arising from social class have never been adequately addressed within schooling'. These persistent

inequalities are evident in a recent government report *State of the Nation 2018-19: Social Mobility in Great Britain* which states that although 'schools have long been viewed as the engine for social mobility…gaps between the poorest students and the others are prevalent at all stages in the education system' (Social Mobility Commission, 2019, p.v). Social mobility does not lead to a better life for all, does not necessarily lead to a more equal society- as generally only the brightest hardworking working class people will climb the ladder in terms of occupation and income.

4.3 History of the Purpose and Function of the English Education System

Institutionalised education is not a neutral process, it is a political one (Freire, 1993) and it is necessary to look at the history of the purpose and function of schooling and education to expose how *class* and *class* inequalities have evolved and been reproduced, because to quote Chitty (2014, xiv), 'there's a need to avoid seeing history as a succession of chance events or as just one thing after another.'

4.3.1 Early forms of institutionalised education

Early forms of education were initially of religious intent and vocational in nature with a very narrow curriculum. Education up until this point had been provided through secondary schooling and universities for the upper classes, for the sons of 'gentlemen' (Gillard, 2011a). Any education that existed for the poor was provided by churches or charities and it was in the most basic of terms (Painter, 2006; Gillard, 2011a).

In the late 18th century, with the onset of the industrial revolution and the growth of urbanisation, society was rapidly changing and so was the nature of education. Charity schools were founded to improve the lives of poor children who faced destitution. These schools were originally set up and funded by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) to do just that, promote Christianity but these schools had proved unwelcoming to the non-conformists and Dissenters. It was believed that educating the poor was a dangerous venture that would lead to them getting ideas above their station (see for example Silver and Silver, 1974; Chitty, 2004).

However, the education movement later in the 19th century saw education of the poor viewed as a humanitarian right with the idea of cost-effective mass education (Silver and Silver, 1974). New types of schools were opened by those in favour of educating the masses and education became more class rigid, rife with class

inequalities and gender specific in terms of preparing young people for their future work and gender roles (Levine, 2006). Education reports were in favour of a class structured society, reports such as that of the 1868 Taunton Report set the foundations for a 3-tiered secondary education system (Gillard, 2011b). It would be the Forster Act in 1870 however, that provided the foundations for state involvement of a national education, particularly as there was, seen by government and employers, a need for an educated workforce and this would be a way of controlling an increasing working class population (Sadovnik, 2016; Ball, 2017; Reay, 2017). Schooling worked for the poor in the sense that the Forster Act aimed to provide an education that was compulsory, free and non-religious (Parliament.UK, 1870; 1944).

4.3.2 Twentieth century education to today

Before the 1944 Education Act, the ideology of mainstream education was that of conservatism, with an authoritarian ideology and perpetuation and validation of a social and political hierarchical system (Hill and Cole, 2001). However, the 1944 Education Act, the Butler Act, represented a somewhat more liberal and a more meritocratic version of hierarchical conservative ideology, and was key legislation in terms of how it related to post-war education demands and to the demands of wider society for post-war social reform. The Act was welcomed by the major parties as it held onto traditional British values such as those derived through religion and the hierarchy of social order, but it went further by offering a step up to the advancement of the working classes. For example, free school meals and free milk were introduced, school fees were abolished, a new funding regime was put in place and secondary schools under the new tripartite system, saw the opening of not only grammar schools but also technical and modern schools. For the first time secondary schooling was open- indeed compulsory for all and it was free, with no fees. The idea behind these schools was to place children into the school that purportedly best matched their aptitudes and abilities at aged 11+ (Hurt, 1979). grammar schools in large part remained for the academically able and, overwhelmingly favoured the middle classes. The majority of working class children and those who failed their 11+ test attended the secondary modern; a school that offered a practical rather than academic education. Few technical schools were set up. Director of the Institute of Education, Fred Clarke described 'the 1944 Education Act as rooted in class prejudice' (Best, 2020, p.56); a period seen as a 'social class project'. Education policy by all accounts had failed to adequately address the post-war mass inequalities (Barber, 1994).

In response to these sociological critiques of the grammar school/secondary modern social class divide, through the 1960s, comprehensive schooling gradually became the new norm, if not universal for state secondary schooling (private schools continued to serve the upper classes of the population), following Education Circular 10/66 of the Harold Wilson Labour government. Teacher training, too, began to change, as Ball (2017) discusses, with the introduction of the Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree level program and the requirement in 1971 that all schoolteachers needed a degree to qualify for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The rationale for these changes to schooling and education at this point was to address the inadequacies of secondary moderns and the universities that had reproduced class inequalities of the young people (Ball, 2003). For example, the 1959 Crowther Report (and later, for primary schools, the 1967 Plowden Report) highlighted how schools turned-out working class children aged 15 into working class jobs without a decent standard of education to further their capabilities, and with the selective nature of universities all but closing them to working class children. Comprehensives were designed to be non-selective and for the first time the focus of schooling and education was to be relatively child-centred. These were relatively progressive times (Hill and Cole, 2001). The reports can be seen as similar to the USA's 'war on poverty' as the idea of social problems and poverty were firmly at the forefront of political discussions (Macnicol, 1987) discussed in chapter three.

Over the course of the history of education the focus had been on 'structures' but by the 1980s, following the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in 1979, attention had turned to 'standards' and the 1988 Education Reform Act marked another major political shake up with the introduction of a national curriculum and a marketized system of schooling.

4.3.3 Marketization of education

Marketization of education in England developed significantly with the 1988 Education Reform Act of the Thatcher era (1979-91) when neoliberal policies were central for the delivery of public policy. New types of school such as City Technical Colleges (CTCs) were introduced along with an increase in what was termed parental choice. The new education policies, it was claimed by Conservative governments and ideologists were to eradicate low standards in a bid for young people to compete on an international level (Chitty, 2014). New Labour, while in power 1997-2010, accepted and extended these neoliberal policies, which very effectively tore up the social democratic post-war educational consensus

established by the 1944 Education Act. After becoming Prime Minister in 1997, Tony Blair continued with competitive market policies in education. The publication of the league tables was a bid to 'drive up standards' and to provide visible evidence of how schools perform to give parents greater choice in where they wanted to send their child to school. Ball (2003; 2008) and Whitty (1997) however, have argued that marketisation simply reinforces existing inequalities because some schools perform like 'grammar' schools whilst others perform like secondary modern schools. Le Grand and Bartlett (1993) reference this in their work highlighting how schools, in a bid to compete in the league tables, make the market work for them in a process of selection or 'cream-skimming', i.e. selecting those students who are more academically able and cost effective, and filtering out or 'silt-shifting' i.e. those students not so academically able or cost effective. Gillborn and Youdell (2000) extend on this in what they call the 'A-C economy' whereby they argue that 'schools are *rationing education'* (p.1).

Nevertheless, the Labour government at this time invested heavily in education in order to produce a skilled and motivated workforce for a profitable economy and to produce a workforce which was to be internationally competitive (Harvey, 2005). Such sentiments and discourse are typical with respect to the education policies and the labour market policies of neo-liberalised economies globally. In this global and local environment, the stress on competition increasingly penalised those who could not compete very well. To quote Tomlinson (2005, p.8):

> disadvantaged groups found raised hurdles and moved goalposts in the struggle to acquire qualifications. The increasingly competitive nature of education meant further control of the reluctant, the disaffected and those 'special needs' groups who were unlikely to join the economy at anything but the lowest levels.

Education in England has a long history of reproducing class relations and policies have worked against the poor reinforcing their inequalities. From early forms of education through to a neoliberal education the poor have been controlled by the powers that be. In this respect little has changed, other than the changing labour market necessitating the creation of a larger technical, supervisory and lower professional class and a smaller class of unskilled manual labour.

4.3.4 Academisation of schools

Education policy under the Labour government saw privately owned and controlled Academy trusts take over schools failing to meet the government set necessary standards to compete i.e. where students did not gain 5 A-C GCSEs. The idea of the academy program was to build on the competitive nature of schooling that began in the 1980s (Long, 2015) but had been criticised as to what extent the academy status brought about success (Curtis, et al., 2008). This did not stop the expansion of the academisation of schools however, which later took off under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government (2010-2015) when schools in general could convert to academy status. These schools with their autonomous budgetary responsibilities and autonomous governing bodies were and are independent of local government control. Academy schools were set up to be publicly funded but independent schools with the freedom to set their own agendas including varying the national curriculum and the terms and conditions of their workforces. Since then, in addition to Academies, many 'free' schools have been set up but the competitive nature of these schools have only heightened inequalities. In an article with *The Guardian*, Diane Reay highlights that 'the academy and free school movement has made things worse for working class children, with more segregation and polarisation' (2017, online) whilst other 'research found that the school system has become less equitable since 2010, with higher-performing schools admitting relatively fewer disadvantaged pupils' (Hill, et al., 2016; Prendergast, Hill and Jones, 2017; Greany and Higham, 2018).

4.4 Social Class and Educational Outcomes

Despite all the policy initiatives in education evidence suggests opportunities for the disadvantaged[31] working class to obtain five GCSEs at grade 4/C or above and go to university are far less likely than their middle class counterparts exposing just how divisive the education system is. A publication by Save The Children (2013) also reported how disadvantaged White British children are 'least likely' to perform well in their GCSEs. In 2019, for example, 16.7% white British pupils on Free School Meals (FSM) achieved solid, i.e. grade 4 and above, GCSE grades in English and maths, compared with 46% of their better-off-peers not on FSM (GOV.UK, 2019). It is a pattern seen over time. The Sutton Trust (2010) for example, having compared children born in 1970 and 1989/90 report that pupils

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[31] Disadvantaged groups are measured by those eligible for free school meals.

sitting tests at age 11 and 16 are less likely to do well if they come from backgrounds with 'poorly educated parents'…indicating no change in education mobility for the least educated households' (p.2). The table below shows the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and all other pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 between 2010 and 2016 (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007, online).

Table I: Pupils in England achieving five or more A*–C at GCSE and equivalents including English and maths at end of Key Stage 4

GCSE achieved (5A*-C) inc. English & Maths			
Percentage achieving by year	**England**	**Disadvantaged pupils**	**All other pupils**
2010	55.7		
2011	58.7	36.7	65.6
2012	59.3	39.1	66.1
2013	61.3	41.8	68.5
2014	58.9	39.5	66
2015	59.2	39.4	66.7
2016	63	43.1	70.6

Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007.

Although the number has increased, young people from lower social class backgrounds are also less likely to participate in Higher Education (HE). The gap between the higher social classes and the most disadvantaged has continued since the expansion of the HE provision (see for example, Connor, et al., 2001; Hill, et al., 2016). The figure below shows the percentage gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils from state-funded schools who move on to HE at age 19 between 2005/06 – 2016/17 (DfE, 2018, online).

Figure I: Percentage gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils of pupils entering HE from 2005-2017
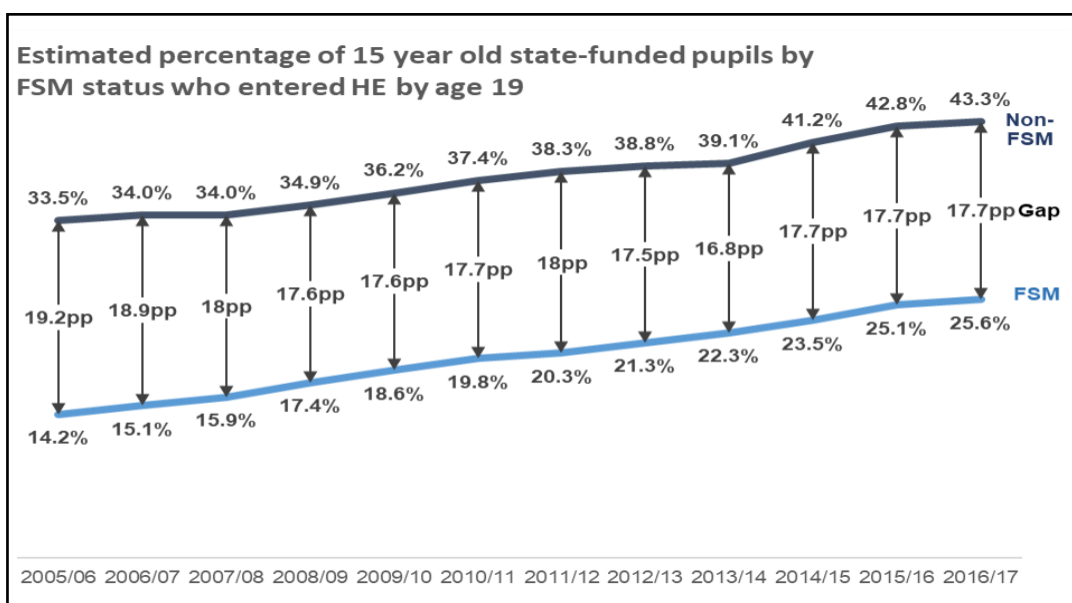
Source: Department for Education [DfE], 2018.

Moreover, in what has been called the 'school to prison pipeline' in the USA (Giroux, 2009; Nelson and Lind, 2015) whereby children and young people are excluded from school and end up engaging with criminal behaviour has been highlighted as an issue in the UK (Keaney, 2019). With a rise in school exclusions in the UK in recent years it is hardly surprising that many young people turn to crime or suffer from a mental health disorder[32]. Figure II below shows the number of 'permanent and fixed period exclusions in England' across all primary, secondary and special school sectors. Although the exclusion rate has been relatively stable overall since 2006/07 there has been a sharp rise in secondary school exclusions since 2013/14. The reasons for these exclusions include physical assault against an adult or other student or verbal abuse (DfE, 2019).

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[32] Behavioural issues attributed to an 'underclass' were discussed in chapter three.

Figure II: School exclusion rates between 2006 and 2018
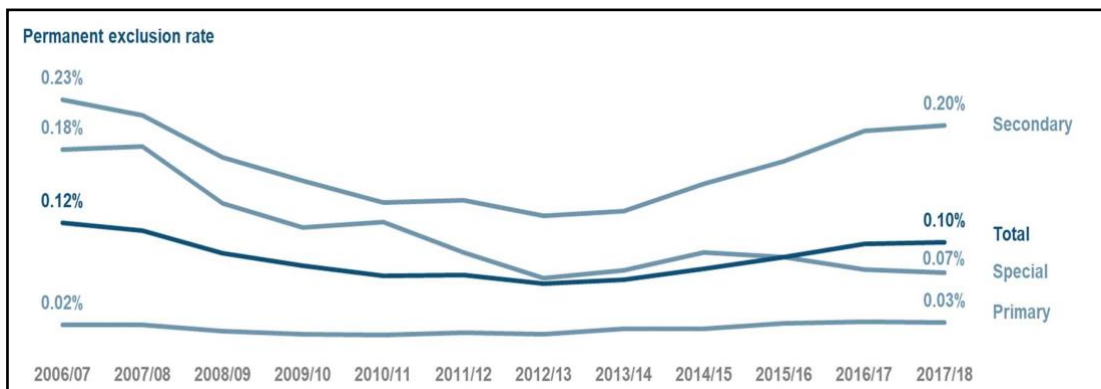
Source: Department for Education [DfE], 2019.

How then, can we best explain why the inequalities exist in education? In the next section I provide an overview of salient theories in the sociology of education that have long attempted to provide an answer to this question. I then offer a discussion on two schools of Marxist thought, referred to as 'reproduction' theory and 'resistance' theory, briefly discussed in chapter three, before developing my argument in relation to 'reproduction' theory.

4.5 The New Sociology of Education

Contrasting theories of education differ not only in their prescriptions and analyses of the aims and effects of schooling, but also regarding their position within the structure and agency debate- the debate over how much space, if any, there is, for resistance, for individual and/or group agency, within the structures of schooling (and indeed of the wider society). The structure/agency debate relates to the amount of autonomy individuals, groups and institutions do or can have within capitalist economy and society.

4.5.1 Marxism and reproduction theories

Marx has played an essential role for researchers in the field of education, although he did not write specifically or widely about education; 'at least in the sense of being educated formally in institutions' (Rikowski, 2001; Cole, 2008, p.30). Marx and Engels theories of capitalist societies have shed light on social relations in production which in turn has been crucial for theories of education.

Schools in this sense prepare students to accept and fit into neoliberal ideology particularly since 'the 1988 Education Reform Act established classic neoliberal policies forcing the marketisation of schooling' (Hill, et al., 2016, p.10). The

globalisation of the capitalist system has driven this competitive knife into the hearts of nation states and their public services such as education (Rikowski, 2006) resulting in the education system preparing children for a working future that meets the requirements of the economy. Liasidou (2012) points out how the very best students will be lined up for the very best jobs whilst those students who add 'negative value…are avoided where possible in this economy' (p.175). Evidencing how they are avoided, Keaney (2019) highlights how school 'exclusions' of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have risen in a bid for schools to look admirable in the league tables.

Of course, schools are institutions where, in addition to gaining educational qualifications, many other personality characteristics and skills can be developed- or inhibited. But the development of these skills are controlled through what teachers can teach and how (Malott, 2013). In this vein, teachers as 'guardians of the quality of labour power' (Kumar, 2016, p.281) must prepare young people with the required knowledge and skills to ensure there are no interruptions to the 'businessification' of education (Rikowski, 2002, p.2) in what has been called a *class war from above*.[33] Marxist theorists such as Malott, Hill and Banfield (2013), Hill (2004; 2006), Hill, et al., (2016) and others argue 'the capitalist state will seek to destroy any forms of pedagogy that attempt to educate students regarding their real predicament' (Hill 2006, p.116). Giroux (2013, p.461) stresses, in a 'war against teachers'

> the current crisis in education cannot be separated from the rise and pernicious influence of neoliberal capitalist and market-driven power relations, both of which work in the interest of disempowering teachers, dismantling teacher unions, and privatising public schools.

Although Giroux compares education in the US to the military in terms of school culture, he highlights how educational reforms are dumbing down curriculums to prevent teachers from teaching critical thinking skills and with cuts to the education budget teachers are often over worked and underpaid. Teachers too, in England have been striking over pay and pensions and with an increase in bureaucracy (BBC, 2013b; Walker, 2013; DfE, 2016). Cuts to education budgets also impact upon the students in terms of there being less money for extra curricula resources evident in recent times with schools having to make teaching assistants redundant from their classrooms (Ratcliffe, 2017).

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[33] A 'class war from above' is discussed in chapter three.

4.5.2 Reproduction theories

With the working classes having not mobilised as Marx had predicted, Gramsci (1971) developed his theory around the idea of ideological domination in what he called 'hegemony', the ability to control through consent and without force. Gramsci believed ideology is where the mass of the people shared a 'common-sense' and without them recognising structural and ideological change in the class struggle they could not form a counter-hegemonic force (Hoare and Sperber, 2016). For Gramsci, schooling is an important part of this process and his writings have been influential for other Marxists and critical thinkers in education. This turn in thinking, known in the 1970s as the new sociology of education, developed in two schools of Marxist thought- 'reproduction' theory and 'resistance' theory. These theories paved the way for seeing schools not just as sites of reproducing inequalities but as sites for resistance. However, both concern themselves with knowledge construction and meaning making as Arnot (2006, p.18 cited in Brown, 2011, online) states:

> Central to this debate was the tension between social phenomenology and Neo-Marxist sociological theory, the former offering a view of the micro-negotiations of meaning and the construction of knowledge through practice, the latter exploring the macro-contextualization of such constructions and the political constraints of such possibilities.

In the move towards reproduction theory, Althusser (1971) argued that schools operate as Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) where the ideology of the capitalist system is deemed just and fair. Agreeing with Althusser, Bowles and Gintis (1976) recognised a social relationship that corresponded between the school environment and the workplace in what they call the 'correspondence principle', discussed in chapter three. They see schools as functioning like factories and suggest the hierarchical structure of the workplace, such as managers, supervisors and workers is mirrored within the hierarchical structure of schools with headteachers, teachers and students with those higher up controlling those lower down and instead of receiving wages for work, students are subjected to a rewards (and punishment) system to make them conform (Sarup, 1978; Cole, 1988; Bailey, 1995). Bowles and Gintis stressed the importance of the hidden curriculum- where pupils learn to accept the status quo and learn the rules of conforming although they did not provide evidence of this (Willis, 1977).

Nonetheless, this idea of 'correspondence' between the social relations of schooling and the social relations of work, has been influential for researchers relating to the 'hidden' curriculum. For example, in the context of schools and universities as ISAs, de-schooling theorists, such as Illich (2013) argue that the hidden curriculum legitimised social injustices through manipulation and control to reproduce existing class structures. The hidden curriculum is not overtly taught like the national curriculum but students learn the norms of schooling through lining up for assemblies and wearing uniform, they are rewarded for good behaviour and learn what sanctions they will face if they do not conform. This is because, as more recently noted by Robinson and Aronica (2015), the education system is still modelled on an industrial paradigm.

Despite there being a National Curriculum for schools the actual curriculum on offer in schools varies according to the school intake/students. Children and young people from lower social class backgrounds are subjected to different pedagogies, expectations and lower levels of learning, such as copying from textbooks, than their middle class counterparts. They have less time for autonomy towards tasks. To provide an example of this, in a study on school effectiveness in four secondary schools in Scotland it was found that lower socio-economic English classes were subjected to lengthier writing times with limited time for student discussions. This replicated the major study by Jean Anyon of differing pedagogical practices and teacher expectations between schools serving different social class groups (summarised in Anyon, 2011). Duffield (1998) also found that teachers of low SES settings worry about enabling student autonomy. How the formal curriculum in state schools in England is taught is also under constant surveillance from the schools inspection and monitoring organisation, Ofsted, a state apparatus for controlling schools, teachers- and thereby students (Poulson, 1998).

4.5.3 Bourdieu, education and cultural capital

In political terms 'schools…set the stage for winning global economic competition among nations' (Saltman, 2018, p.xiii). Bourdieu (1986) argues the role of state schooling as being central to the reproduction of class inequalities and it is not difficult to see how economic capital has been influential throughout the history of schooling. Poulantzas (1974) noted how the more economic capital one has the more cultural capital they can acquire but for Bourdieu, cultural capital is just as influential because schools function based on the cultural capital of the dominant group. Those from working class backgrounds will have been subjected to different

types of cultural capital, of different levels of social prestige and status, within their family 'habitus', than that promoted through the school which can put them at a disadvantage in terms of their education as they are less likely to know how to make the school system work for them. MacLeod (2009, p.14) argues:

> …schools serve as the trading post where socially valued cultural capital is parlayed into superior academic performance. Academic performance is then turned back into economic capital by the acquisition of superior jobs. Schools reproduce social inequality, but by dealing in the currency of academic credentials, the educational system legitimates the entire process.

This offers a reason why there is an attainment gap between the poorest students and wealthier students as evidenced in Table I section 4.4 of this chapter. The 'social structures and cognitive structures are recursively linked, and the correspondence between them provides one of the most solid props of social domination' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.14). The dominant culture in this respect has not only been maintained within the *field*, in this case schools, but has continuously competed for the accumulation of capitals which will be of value in wider society. Furthermore, the inequalities that are reproduced are deemed just and fair (Grenfell, 2008).

Cultural deprivation theorists such as Sugarman (1966) and Feinstein (1998) dismiss Bourdieu's theory and rather they suggest that the working classes are deprived of values needed to get on and achieve in school because parents do not have the right attitude for their child to succeed. Bernstein (1977) attempted to discuss this in relation to difference in the linguistics codes between the working classes and middle classes. According to Bernstein, middle class children developed an 'elaborated code' at home that benefitted them at school as they would be rewarded whereas working class children using a more 'restricted code' meant they had what some, and some teachers would regard as an inferior language, more context-bound and less bound in ideas or what was traditionally considered as 'abstract'. In comparison to the elaborated code, the restricted code was generally and widely devalued at school.[34]

Nonetheless, there is a wealth of studies that have applied Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. For example, studies have shown how inequalities in school have led to a poor sense of self-worth as a student becomes disengaged whilst other

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[34] However, and as Bernstein (1977) noted, the restricted code of the working class is useful for drawing on shared knowledge and experiences.

studies show the impact of limited capitals relates to a students' participation with and in Higher Education (see for example Sullivan, 2001; 2002; Burgess, et al., 2008; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009; McKenzie, 2015; McKnight, 2015). Parental background is often an indicator of student achievement particularly as parents are seen as the consumers of their child's education (Ball, 2017). In *Cultural Capital and Educational Attainment,* Sullivan (2001) measured the cultural capital of both students and their parents by looking at parental occupation and the qualifications of the students and found that cultural capital effects performance at GCSE level. A study by Reay (2001) showed middle class mothers as having the cultural capital to navigate the school system in relation to decision making that benefitted their child/ren whereas the working class mothers were less able to do the same.

4.5.4 Resistance theory

Although the reproduction of class inequalities are evident within the curriculum and hidden curriculum they have been contested by resistance theory. Bowles and Gintis' correspondence principle for example, has been critiqued for under-developing the theory in relation to action (Sarup, 1978). Others too, picked up on the lack of power of agency and the space to resist suggesting that young people are passive learners (Willis, 1977; Giroux, 1981; Apple, 1982a). Cole (1988) also highlights how Bowles and Gintis theorise at the macro-level and ignore micro-level analysis particularly in relation to the role of teachers. Moreover, Bourdieu has been critiqued for focussing on the dominant culture and not offering a direction for social change (King, 2000; Yang, 2014). When taking into account the notion of the habitus, Giroux (1982, p.7 cited in Jenks 2003, p.164) emphasises 'its definition and use to reduce it to a conceptual straight-jacket that provides no room for modification or escape…'.

Resistance theory developed from the cultural struggles that occurred in opposition to the political and economic status quo can be situated within Gramscian thinking as previously mentioned in this chapter. Gramsci (1971), and others after him, believe 'a new social order depends not just on the seizure of state of power but on the transformation of minds, common sense, and civil society by educative work' (Saltman, 2018, p.664). In a bid to promote this ideology and particularly since the 1980s and 1990s, culturalist or humanist Marxists such as Apple (1979), Saltman (2018), Giroux (1981; 2001) and others have critiqued reproduction theorists for not recognising space for resistance where they believe students and teachers have a degree of autonomy to push back the dominant ideology (Hill, 2018). Willis' (1977)

ethnographic study of working class 'lads' as a counter-school culture is a good example of this. In *Learning to Labour,* Willis concerned himself with 'why working class kids get working class jobs' (1977, p.1) and observed 12 working class boys (or 'lads' as they referred to themselves) over a period of two years. He spent 18 months observing them in a school setting and the following six months in their workplace. Conducting his research using various methods, Willis aimed to understand the 'lads' thoughts and behaviours from their point of view. The findings in Willis' study showed the 'lads' as more interested in having 'a laff' than being interested in striving for qualifications and this was because there was a need for earning over learning in the 'lads' attitudes. They were preparing themselves for becoming factory fodder. Blackledge and Hunt (1985) however, critiqued Willis for having a small sample of all boys who were not a complete representation of the school.

Others have argued that focussing on 'class' reproduction misses out other elements such as race and gender. Feminists for example, argue that education reinforces the idea of a stereotypical role of women in capitalist society (see Rowbotham, 1973; Rose, 1993) whilst black Marxist feminists (see Hooks, 1994) argue experiences of being female and black is different to being female and white in schools although it has been argued that policies benefit white people in the English education system and therefore 'institutional racism' impacts upon black people in general (see for example Gillborn 2002; 2008). Apple also discusses this in terms of unequal power relations in his book *Education and Power* (1982b) where he argues that structuralist Marxism is too deterministic and that the relations between ideology and culture plays a role in generating class, race and gender inequalities. Apple believes these are equivalent in their effects.

Apple and others, however, have ben critiqued by Kelsh and Hill (2006) for culturizing the Marxist concept of 'class'. They argue, in this respect, that, for cultural Marxists, class is the:

> Effects of market forces that are understood to be (relatively) autonomous from production practices, that is, from the social relations of capitalism that are the relations of exploitation between labour and capital (pp.4-5).

To sum up these two schools of thought, reproduction theorists see *structure* as the cause of inequalities whereas resistance theorists critiquing reproduction theory argue there is space within structures for active *agency* to challenge the status quo.

Although, I see validity in both sides of the argument I lean towards the former, structural or materialist Marxism, in the respect that education reproduces 'capitalist' class relations that are connected to the social relations of exploitation of production. And to reiterate my view in the conclusion of chapter three, I believe class is the most fundamental form of oppression in capitalist society although I recognise other oppressions such as race and gender, and that within the working class, in general, women and some minority ethnic groups suffer more exploitation and discrimination and oppression than others in the same class. I do however, recognise there are spaces in formal settings such as schools and within teachers pedagogy, and in informal settings such as in communities, for resistance that could lead to individual and social change but this would not be on a scale envisioned and demanded by structuralist Marxists. This is because, to quote Hill (2018, p.47) 'Cultural Marxists…reformists and social democrats, downplay, indeed, subvert and impede, class analysis and class struggle'.

4.6 Freire, Critical Consciousness and Praxis

Although there is no established theoretical link between Bourdieu and Freire, it could be said both 'agree that formal education only reproduces domination/oppression' (Burawoy, 2011, p.6; Freire, 2015). But whereas Bourdieu's work does not engage with individual and social transformation, Freire's work begins with 'pedagogy' as a critical form of action. 'It is to the liberation of the oppressed as historical subjects within the framework of revolutionary objectives that Freire's pedagogy is directed' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1993, p.12). In this section I relate to Freire's 'banking' concept of education and to others such as Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux and Augusto Boal to explore how Freire's theory is brought into action through formal education in the form of critical pedagogy and through informal education in the form of theatre and performance.

In the words of Freire (1993) 'education is suffering from narration sickness' (p.52). Freire felt that education, delivered by those from both a powerful and controlling elite, was to fill the heads of young people with information that has no real meaning to them and does not reflect on their real lives. He saw the relationship between the teacher and the student as a contradictory one whereby it is assumed that teacher knows all and must teach all to a blank canvas of students; where teachers are the leaders and students are the willing followers. As accepted by Shor (1987, p.4): 'Knowledge is handed down…like a corpse of information – a dead body of knowledge – not a learning connection to…reality'; what Freire referred to as the 'banking concept of education' (1993, p.53). In this sense, one can assume 'that a

person is merely *in* the world, not with the world or with others; the individual is spectator not re-creator' (p.64). When thinking about the different strata of social class and their attributed capitals, Freire highlights how education socialises young people into an unequal and selective way of thinking and thus disempowers and marginalises many minority students in its' midst.

Influenced by Marxian thinking, Freire, thinks and writes in a dialectical way. Freire began his career teaching literacy to illiterate peasants, in what he called 'culture circles', in Northeast Brazil, to free them from the conditions that had dehumanised them. Freire's aim was to weaken the power exercised by some over others. It was from these teacher/student experiences where he developed a critical pedagogy, a teaching method whereby teacher and learner together must problem-pose in a dialogue with one another. For Freire (1993, p.65):

> The banking method [of education] emphasizes permanence and becomes reactionary; problem-posing education-which accepts neither a 'well-behaved' present nor a predetermined future-roots itself in the dynamic present and becomes revolutionary.

This type of learning, according to Freire (1993) has the potential to become 'an act of knowing and a means of action for transforming the reality which is to be known' (p.66). In this way both teacher and learner develop a critical awakening that can lead to their liberation. Freire referred to this as 'conscientizacao' or as it is known in English 'conscientisation'. In the process of becoming conscientized one will move through a series of state of mind from being in a 'magical' state of consciousness to reaching 'critical consciousness' (Freire, 2015, pp.14-15). In the magical state one will not recognise the oppressive forces of their inequalities, in Marx's terms they one would have been subjected to a false consciousness, but when one begins to critically awaken they are in a 'transitive' state. For Freire this is the stage where one becomes engaged and curious to learn more. However, naivety prevails. One cannot yet fully be aware of the oppressive forces and may still be disinterested in knowing because they have not connected with their reality. In this respect they move back and forth in their state of mind. This is:

> The development of the awakening of critical awareness. It will not appear as a natural byproduct of even major economic changes, but grow out of a critical educational effort based on favourable historical conditions (Freire, 2015, p.15).

The process of Freire's culture circles is one of codification whereby students or learners begin to tell the stories of their lives and as they recognise and connect to the reality of their struggles a process of decodification begins. Without this process of reflection and action, transformation is not possible. Reflection without action is merely verbalism; empty words and action without reflection is merely activism (Freire, 1993). However, acting upon the world in this way, through developing a critical consciousness, does not mean people will come together and form a revolution.

> On the contrary, by making it possible for people to enter the historical process as responsible subjects, conscientizacao enrols them in the search for self-affirmation and thus avoids fanaticism (Freire, 1993, p.18).

In this vein, Freire has been accused of not fully endorsing the Marxist revolutionary camp particularly with his development on dialogue. This highlights a tension between a Marxist and Freirean form of consciousness.

Moreover, others have critiqued Freire for developing a pedagogical model that is irrelevant in different contexts (Bhattacharya, 2011; Rodrigo, 2016) but as Kincheloe (2008) points out Freire did not want us to merely copy his work he wanted us to 'study his work in the context of the new times that would face us and to constantly reinvent his work in our historical moments' (p.163).

Regardless of the criticisms, Freirean thought has been applied to various theoretical and practical contexts. Freire's 'transformative' action for example is deeply rooted in critical pedagogy. Giroux clearly argues in favour of a Freirean style pedagogy and states 'those arguing that education should be neutral are really arguing for a version of education in which nobody is accountable' (Franca, 2019, online). *In life in schools* (2016), McLaren gives his account of working with students facing and living with oppressive conditions in and out of school. He recognises the need for a pedagogy that is radical to overcome oppression and calls for teachers to engage with a revolutionary critical pedagogy (see for example McLaren 1995; 2000). McLaren (2016) also recognises that for students to successfully engage in knowledge production, critical pedagogues must first understand and analyse the experiences of students. They can do this through reflecting on their own experiences and connecting to the wider social context.

Beyond this and in practical contexts outside the formal education system there has been an increase in the use of Freirean style methods with the most notable connected to Augusto Boal and *Theatre of the Oppressed.*

4.6.1 Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed

Forum Theatre (FT) in *Theatre of the Oppressed* is a type of community-based education that was designed and set up by Augusto Boal to create space for social change. The drama and theatre used to educate, agitate and activate audiences are powerful in the respect that they can allow one's mind to open critically and to problem solve and thus deeply inquire into the social, ideological, physical and material world around them (O'Neill, 2014). Influenced by the work of Freire, Boal provided not only a space for action to take place but broke with the idea of a 'banking' concept that saw the audience as active rather than passive spectators:

> In Theatre of the Oppressed, by contrast, dialogue is created; transitivity is not merely tolerated, it is actively sought – this theatre asks its audience questions and expects answers. Sincerely.

> (Boal, 2000, p.20)

FT encourages the audience to actively engage with the play, by imagining and then acting out how they [the audience] could change a situation in a way that can free the actors or protagonists as he refers to them, from their oppression. The audience member can stop the play whenever they feel a change would have a better outcome. And having an antagonist (or a joker) on stage allows many versions of the social situations to be played out as he/she will act as a barrier to the proposed change meaning new ideas for change will continue to arise. Boal's intention was to create a platform for engaging in critical thinking amongst wider social circles for the collective good. Both Freire and Boal refer to this as one becoming 'conscientized'. However, and in the process of conscientization, one could argue that the relation between protagonist and antagonist in FT is one that imposes new knowledge on the other in a critical way and could become quite heavily focussed on, this could possibly result in negative thinking in some people who are unable to draw positive conclusions from their oppression, and in this respect, they cannot move on. The implications of FT are widely reported on (see for example Day, 2002; Arendshorst, 2005; Bresler and Thompson, 2007).

Nonetheless, to quote Preston (2016) [kindle edition]:

> The facilitator may not ever 'know' or be able to resolve all the contradictions that emerge in the process, but the process of being critically aware is key, as is the journey to understand what is happening in all of its contradictions.

4.6.2 Other micro-level interventions

Moreover, others have gone on to use Boal's work in various walks of life such as schools, colleges or wider social communities and some are working with a so-called underclass. Cardboard citizens, for example, uses FT to tell stories of real life situations in theatres, on the street, in hostels, and prisons and David Diamond's *Theatre for the Living*, based on Boal's FT, deals with real life problems and brings communities together. Both organisations use trained actors to relay the stories through drama (TfL,1981; Cardboard Citizens, 2010).

My own arts-related community projects developed a pedagogical approach that Freire had boasted.[36] My later projects for example had been participatory and reflexive. They were intended for awakening the critical consciousness and for developing social change. Having set up and run my arts-related community projects long before hearing and learning about Freire (and Boal) I feel somehow connected to him, as if he had somewhat influenced my work, similar to how he connected with the work of Gramsci:

> I only read Gramsci when I was in exile. I read Gramsci and I discovered that I had been greatly influenced by Gramsci long before I had read him. It is fantastic when we discover that we had been influenced by someone's thought without even being introduced to their intellectual production.

(cited in Mayo, 1999, pp.7-8)

Freirean methods can clearly be carried out in both formal and informal settings. In this respect, a pedagogical approach that actively encourages marginalised people to engage in a form of praxis can prove to be a positive way to address social inequalities for transformation.

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[36] I have given an account of my arts-related community projects in chapter two and further reference them in chapter six.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has critically explored and analysed the role of state schooling and education. Since the neoliberal period began (in England and Wales) under the Thatcher era, the education system has deeply divided young people based on their class background. Marketisation has seen schools compete against each other in a bid to attract the 'best' students. Evidence suggests those from poorer backgrounds are less likely than more affluent peers to achieve good GCSEs, complete a university degree and are more likely to be subjected to exclusion. These inequalities can be understood through reproduction theory and I draw from Bourdieu's conceptual tools and SRT whereby schooling and education produce and reproduce the social relations of production. Students come to internalise the norms of the institutional habitus and in the case of students from a working class background this conflicts with their familial habitus. Resistance theorists such as Giroux (1981) disagrees believing there is space for active agency to push back the status quo as seen in the work of Willis (1977).

Moreover, the Freirean concept of praxis has the potential to overcome 'camera obscura' discussed in chapter three. In this view, the consciousness of agency can be developed and raised for both individual and social transformation although this chapter has highlighted a tension between Marxist and Freirean forms of consciousness. These methods have been incorporated into formal critical pedagogical practice (McLaren, 1995) and informal practices such as Forum Theatre (Boal, 2000). However, these micro-level interventions have not influenced the macro-level structures of society or the education system that reproduces the inequalities in the lives of the people we have worked with. The hope of reformers/reformists and of revolutionaries of course is that such examples become more and more widespread and impact on the wider society in both cultural change, ideological transformation, and in material change.

In the following chapter I discuss the first of two methodologies I employed to collect data on class, state schooling and social inequalities.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY (A) – A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces and discusses the methodology and the methods that builds on and develops the discussions, arguments and debates in the literature reviewed in chapters three and four around class, state schooling and education and social inequalities. In this chapter I make clear what Critical Ethnography (CE) is and why it is most suitable for the critical framework of this thesis. In addition, and in my role as critical ethnographer, I have created space within CE to include a Visual Intervention (VI) as a complementary methodology to CE, which I refer to as VICE. This was previously mentioned in the introductory chapter to this thesis, and it has resulted in my fieldwork being conducted in two cycles. Cycle one is further broken down into 2 stages to reflect individual and group level data collection and both are discussed in this chapter whilst cycle two is discussed in chapter six.

The data collection was an iterative process where each method followed an analysis of the previous method. For ease of viewing the data collection methods from both cycles I present each step in the table below:

Table II: Data collection methods

CYCLE ONE *stage one* (chapter 5)	**CYCLE ONE** *stage two* (chapter 5)	**CYCLE TWO** *Vice* (chapter 6)
- Individual Interviews -Informative Sessions -Observations -Walking to School Interviews	-Group Interviews -Observations	-Group Sessions -Drama Games -Work Shops for arts-selection -Participatory Film -Critical Film Review & Interviews -Final Follow up Interviews

The intention of this methodology was to observe and record the lived inequalities through the narratives of adult voices with the view to exposing injustices for social change, so the research was therefore naturally qualitative.

5.2 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has often been regarded as less important than quantitative research simply because it is not based on a hypothesis, it is not scientific, there are no rules for measuring (Denzin and Lincoln, 2016). However, qualitative research allows the researcher to study their subjects phenomenologically meaning the data produiced is rich and in-depth (Mason 2002; Patton 2002; Denzin and Lincoln 2011). By phenomenologically, I mean the researcher seeks to explore, to understand and to interpret their participants' environment from their point of view (Gray, 2014). The researcher enquires into the social and cultural phenomena of their participants through various methods afforded with qualitative research giving them the flexibility to adapt their research in response to new developments. The qualitative researcher is always sensitive to the social context they enter (Mason, 2002) and their 'research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.24).

In qualitative research, the researcher begins with a set of assumptions of the research problem he/she wants to study and then moves on to gain access to a research community/field and collects data from the participants in 'natural' environments such as in school, the workplace or within a family or community. The researcher must give ethical consideration to not only the data collection methods they use but also throughout the whole research design. To conclude a qualitative research project Creswell (2014, p.44) says:

> The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change.

To assist me with a qualitative research project I employed an ethnographic methodology, one that was critical and could draw from and relate to Marxist, Bourdieusian and Freirean theories. 'Marx was adamant that revealing the real state of affairs was dependent upon a thorough detailed analysis of actual social practices' (Harvey, 1990, p.7).

Whilst other methodologies may have been useful for recording the narratives of adult voices such as phenomenology, they lack the crucial element needed to

critically interrogate and personally experience the lived experiences of a culture. Phenomenology, for example, is about describing, explaining and interpreting social experiences of a particular culture and data is often collected through interviews (Denscombe, 2014). Whilst narrative research is about exploring individual lives and then telling the stories of those experiences (Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2018; Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018) it does so descriptively and through a micro lens whereas this thesis brings together the macro, micro and meso levels of analysis. I appreciate there are other methodologies that bear similarities such as participatory action research and case study research but I want to use this time to make a case for CE and introduce the space to incorporate a VI.

5.3 Research Methodology

I seek to develop knowledge 'through the subjective experiences of the people' (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018, p.21) meaning accessing a related 'field' or a 'context' is important for me to spend as much time as possible with my participants in order to get to know them. This is my rationale for using an 'ethnography.'

5.3.1 Ethnography

Ethnography offers a deeper and more detailed analysis over other methodologies that tend to have a more generalised analysis (Harvey, 1990; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019) and in this respect the analysis is due to the 'emic' position afforded to ethnographers. To understand a culture, an ethnographer must acquire an emic position; to view that culture or society as a member. Rather than just observing from a far, the ethnographer actively engages in the daily routines of the people they are studying, they are gaining an 'inside' understanding. In addition to this the ethnographer must also learn to take an 'etic' position. That is, an 'outsider' position; a position that enables separation from the culture or society being studied to reflect on objective beliefs from within the environment itself. The emic and etic perspectives mean the researcher, as ethnographer, cannot be in a neutral position (Harvey, 1990; Fetterman, 2010; Madden, 2017; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). But this does not mean that ethnographic research is a weak or negative method. To provide an example, Fetterman (2010, p.1) points out the how the ethnographer arrives 'with biases and preconceived notions about how people behave and what they think' and that the biases can be both 'controlled' and 'uncontrolled' with the former bias being potentially limiting to the research and the latter bias potentially undermining 'the quality' of the research. However, the 'negative effects of bias' can be overcome with careful planning of the methods for an emic and etic position.

The ethnographer seeks to understand through more than just observation as ethnography incorporates more than just a method. It is a way of seeing things and a way of writing. The ethnographer begins with an open mind, as Spradley (1979) highlights, 'ethnography starts with a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance' but the ethnographer comes to learn new things about other people and also about themselves and in doing so their thoughts change (Campbell and Lassiter, 2015, Madden, 2017). Just like anthropology, ethnography enables the researcher to record data through various means such as taking photographs, keeping a diary, and writing fieldnotes to name but a few. The ethnographer reports from being inside the field, reporting from an emic perspective, and will write from the viewpoint of his/her participants, from an etic perspective (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019).

After the data collection process has finished the researcher continues in his/her role of ethnographer to write up. In this final stage, the ethnographer must replay every detail collected for the purpose of analysis (Fetterman, 2010). There are of course, limitations in research, that can impact on the full use of an ethnography. For example, restrictions on timescales means the ethnographer only gets a snap shot of cultural life although there is no right or wrong way to develop an ethnographic study as each one is personal to the ethnographer (Bell and Waters, 2018). To overcome this, he/she needs to make use of their time accordingly. In *Complexities of Ethnography* (2014) Gelling discusses the difficulties of doing ethnography, it is a field where one learns how to adapt their tools to the environment. In other words, the ethnographer must think on their feet.

5.3.2 Critical Ethnography

Traditional ethnography tended not to challenge the status quo although there are some notable examples (see for example Street 2001; Robertson, et al., 2015). Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways with Words* (1983), was a result of a 10-year-long study living in two working class communities in the USA. A black working class community and a white working class community. Heath's study highlighted how school's literacy and home literacy practices served neither of the communities very well and introduced some key vocabulary into discourses of literacy. It is as Marx once said 'the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways. The point is to change it' (Marx, 1978, p.402). This is where critical ethnography (CE) becomes most applicable as it is both a theory and a method (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2002). CE differs to standard ethnography in the sense that it is a critical

theory[37] based approach to ethnography, it is both political and pedagogical in its approach. CE, as Kay Cook (2008, p.148) expresses:

> grew out of dissatisfaction with both the theoretical stance of traditional ethnography, which ignored social structures such as class, patriarchy, and racism, and what some regarded as the overly deterministic and theoretical approaches of critical theory, which ignored the lived experience and agency of human actors.

Critical ethnographers set out to purposely explore and understand social processes to uncover and expose the inequalities that are inherent within those processes (Carspecken, 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2011). Conquergood (1985) discusses a 'dialogical performance' whereby the researcher extends the conversation into cultural politics and questions the role of agency. In this vein the researcher 'resists domestication' (Madison, 2020, p.5) and breaks down barriers to marginalised voices. As Carspecken (1996), Madison (2005; 2012; 2020) and others in this field continue, the role of the critical ethnographer is to scratch beneath the surface and contribute to emancipatory knowledge, therefore moving from the 'what is' in traditional ethnography to 'what could be'. A CE is therefore most appropriate for meeting the aims of this thesis.

That aside, CE has been critiqued for being politically and ideologically biased as the researcher does not begin from a neutral stance, data is therefore seen as lacking in validity (Jordan and Yeomans, 1995). The researcher needs to consider this by having a degree of self-reflexivity in order for their research to be transparent and more accountable. In relation to how CE can be methodologically plausible, i.e. for the research to be credible, Madison (2012) and Carpsecken (1996) provide a foundation in which to build from. Carspecken, although a leading figure in critical research, offers a philosophical approach collecting and analysing data from an etic perspective before engaging with participants. He also relates to more generalised critical qualitative research than specifically an ethnography and refers to critical ethnographers as 'criticalists' (Carspecken, 1996). In terms of my approach I situate the critical ethnography in this thesis within the three-part model offered by Madison (2012). Madison's approach differs to Carspecken's in that the researcher is more vulnerable in terms of positionality, s/he is open and engages with the lives of others. 'There is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in others' worlds' (Madison, 2012, p.10). Madison's approach

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[37] Critical theory was discussed in chapter three.

is based around method and the practicality of the research and the primary source of data collection is the interview process where both the researcher and the researched become 'conversational partners' (p.40). I implement this type of interview into my methods which is discussed later in this chapter.

Nevertheless, as van de Vaart, et al. (2018) point out communicative methods using dialogue alone are not always best to draw out deeper personal experiences, experiences that can inform social change. To overcome this, I complement CE with an additional methodology, that being a Visual Intervention (VI). In this respect, and relating to Freire's concept of praxis, a VI can develop a critical awakening amongst individuals 'to unveil ideological beliefs and practices that function to inhibit their democratic voice and participation' (Darder, 2002, p.102). Some researchers using CE have incorporated another methodology such as 'action' research whilst others have used CE as a complementary methodology (see for example Jordan and Yeomans, 1995; Averill, 2006). Another variant of CE has a focus on performance and it is here that participants 'perform' their daily routines and thus shape the meaning of their culture and experiences. The researcher views these performances as their source of data collection and this can further lead to researcher as co-performer and writing an autoethnography (Denzin, 2009; Madison, 2020). There is an *action* element to a CE and although this study is not an action research it is worth noting that the action element could be referred to as a *critical* or *emancipatory* action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996; Kemmis, 2001). CE will no doubt continue to be developed particularly as over the last decade or so innovative methods have been on the rise within research across the social sciences (Kara, 2015; Bryman, 2016).

5.4 Research Ethics

Although the intention of this research was to initially study young people post 16 years, I made an amendment to my university ethics form to carry my study out with adults. I had been volunteering in a secondary school and I spoke to the deputy head about conducting my research within the school sixth form. The deputy head asked me to type up and hand out letters of consent to the year group. I contacted the deputy head two weeks after I had constructed and handed in the letters to the school office, to be told by her that none of the letters had come back signed by students and parents which meant I could not do my research there. I then contacted a further six secondary schools via email and had instant rejections from three schools, two schools never replied, and one school invited me in for an

interview with the head of year 12, Mrs B. I discussed my research and what I was looking to do, and Mrs B informed me that it should be fine to proceed if the head of the school was to agree. I later received a phone call from Mrs B to say that the head had rejected my request because *'it was not the right time for this type of research to be carried out in the school'*. I decided at this point it would be better for me to review my situation.

Sixsmith, Boneham and Goldring, (2003) explain how an 'outsider' must gain the trust of a gatekeeper as the gatekeeper will not want to be in position where s/he may be undermined. As I did not have sufficient time to negotiate with the gatekeepers, I accepted the rejection and went back to the drawing board and discussed the issues with my supervisor.

I had previously worked with young people and adults in community groups, so I chose the route of studying adults and regardless of not needing parental consent I still had an ethical duty of care and responsibility to each of my adult participants across the data collection processes. A major ethical dilemma is that which requires researchers to strike a balance between the demands placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of truth, and their subjects' rights and values potentially threatened by the research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In other words, I had to think carefully, not only about how best to conduct the study using the most appropriate methods for data collection but also how this could impact upon those I wanted to research. Moreover, I needed to be flexible in my approach when considering the ethical dilemmas to overcome potential difficulties that could have arose; ethical dilemmas do not stop at the beginning.

As my research project was concerned with working class adults facing, and living with multiple deprivations such as low income, poor education, poor housing, benefit dependency, alcohol and/or drug dependency, petty crime, and whilst my participants may not live with or face all the listed deprivations, this did put them in a vulnerable position. Thus, I was faced with ethical dilemmas from the start. In order to protect the identity of my participants and avoid possible embarrassment, labelling or stereotyping, I ensured their privacy by using pseudonyms and storing their data securely. Through being compassionate and open about my research my participants were knowledgeable about my intentions. I also gained informed consent from them. These dilemmas were important for me to recognise and to ensure a good ethical conduct and furthermore, to make sure my participants felt a sense of confidence to discuss issues in their lives without the fear of being known

or shamed and in addition not feel bound to my research nor worry about a power relationship in which they would feel inferior to me as the researcher. Thorne (1980 cited in Brooks, Te Riele and Maguire, 2014) argues 'informed consent offers some protection to the powerless simply by extending the right to be left alone' (p.81). Powerless people are considered as those who 'are easily negatively stereotyped and stigmatized' such as 'the poor' and 'the unemployed' (Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2011, p.175). Moreover, I had a duty of care to ensure my participants remained confidential around sharing sensitive information. As a result, I spoke to all of my participants about this and all agreed that what was said amongst us would stay amongst us.

The ethical practice I proposed so far was applicable to many data collection methods such as interviews and observations. However, as my intention was to complement the dialogue with a visual intervention I needed to think about ethical procedures in visual research and this is discussed in chapter six.

Making note, I knew there were other ethical dilemmas such as protecting myself from getting it wrong; 'known as the costs/benefits ratio' (Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2007, p.75). By getting it wrong, such research could cost me my name within the field, regardless of my good intentions, but on the flip slide to this, finding an ethical balance would potentially prove beneficial for my participants and thus, potentially, beneficial for progressive social change. My research set out to understand and listen to the voices of a marginalised group and re-tell their stories in their own words and to develop and raise in them a critical awareness. Striking and maintaining the right balance between myself and my participants was crucial throughout this process.

5.5 Research Timeframe

My initial research plan was to be carried out over a period of 4 months but after reading some literature around ethnography and to produce thicker and more detailed data I favoured a longitudinal study and extended the period to 12 months. According to Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2007, p.119) longer studies 'require a long-term data collection period to cover a range of foci' and with the times involved with my research I knew there could potentially be issues with getting participants together for group tasks and with the volume of data for this type of study.

I took the view of doing reflective evaluations during and after the observation and interview process with a final follow up via interviews after the completion of the VI

to measure if my participants had developed consciousness and to seek if individual and wider social change had occurred.

5.6 Positionality

As I am from a similar social class background to my adult participants, I am an 'insider' researcher and as I already had access to groups of working class adults through my own community projects and volunteering in others this meant I was on the 'inside'. There was no need for me to gain access through the permission of a gatekeeper.

My research project concerns social class, and class matching has been discussed within the literature in recent years. For example, Mellor, et al. (2014) draws attention to the particular interest, amongst scholars, of class matching in qualitative research involving the working classes. Mellor, et al. (2014) discuss how there is an assumption that working class academics may have a better understanding of working class participants within class matched interviews but Rhodes (1994 cited by Mellor, et al., 2014, p.138) argues that class matching can have a 'one-dimensional' focus that 'may lead both researchers and the researched to imagine that they know each other's lives and invite the expectations of particular responses'. However, there is the power relationship to consider between the researcher and the researched regardless of being an 'insider' or an 'outsider' researcher. It has been argued that the power lays with the researcher as the researcher holds the ultimate say in the final write up (Brinkman and Kvale, 2005). Mellor, et al. (2014) argue against this believing the researched have a great deal of power over the study in hand, for example, they [the researched] can decide how much information to arm the researcher with and they can choose not to attend an interview. That aside, Mellor, et al. (2014) pick up on the critique of class matching and quote Archer and Hutchings (2000) who believes that it is near impossible for the researcher-researched relationship to be an exact match.

Personally, and professionally speaking, being from a working class background and working with children, young people and adults from working class backgrounds does not mean I know it all. My experience/s may or may not be the same as my participants. For example, I critically explored the schooling experiences of my participants, and all but one of them have not been able to access further education. I, on the other hand have accessed both further and higher education. With this in mind and with the use of 'participatory' methods, I balance the power relationship between myself and my participants. By participatory, I mean we all had a role in

decision making such as deciding where and when interviews would take place and we all participated in group sessions and the VI. Although I guided the research topics to be explored from the initial individual interviews due to time constraints my participants had the choice on whether they wanted to impart related information. Participatory research alters the relationship between the researcher and the participants seen in traditional research where the relation is hierarchical. It enables the voices of marginalised groups to be heard where they would otherwise be missed. Participants are able to confront the negative aspects of their experiences to make sense of their environment which can help them to make effective changes. I took this route as I wanted to build a trusting relationship from the beginning; I wanted my participants to relax, without them putting me on some kind of researcher pedestal (Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2011). Obtaining deep information, to scratch beneath the surface, and expose unequal social relations was important to fulfil the aims and objectives of this thesis.

5.7 Research Design

Whilst I am concerned about the level of education those lower down the social hierarchy face, it is worth noting, I am not so much concerned about the level of qualifications each person possesses. I am more concerned at the level of inequalities that have been endured through state schooling and education that resulted in each of my participants living the class-based life as they were brought up or now in a worse social class-based position than their parents. I am passionate about promoting social change at the individual level and at the wider socio-political level. I am passionate about truly understanding and interpreting the inequalities of personal lived experiences and highlighting, ontologically speaking, the 'power and identity struggles' and 'privilege or oppression based on…class' (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018, p.36).

In relation to the aims and objectives of this research it was necessary for an interpretivist approach over a positivist approach especially as I sought to critically explore the lived experiences of social class inequalities of each individual participant. The experiences I have explored are socially constructed and as a researcher conducting qualitative research, I accept that 'reality is multiple' and 'seen through many views' (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018, p.20). However, I do acknowledge that if I had been looking at the educational qualifications of the same cohort for example, then a positivist approach may have been more relevant such

as in Bourne's (2015) PhD thesis on social class inequality and educational attainment.

5.7.1 Sampling

Qualitative research tends to be on a small scale. Such research therefore does not require the researcher to study a large sample (Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2007) and as my research is in a predominantly white working class town with multiple deprivations my sample size is small but representative of the town.

I used 'purposeful', or, as Fetterman (2010, p.16) refers to it, 'judgemental' sampling for my research as I wanted to select a group that was potentially 'information-rich' (Patton, 2002; Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2011; Cresswell and Poth, 2011) to fulfil the aims and objectives of this thesis. An advantage of this type of sampling is 'time saving' and with the issues I had faced in relation to gaining access to my original research cohort plan, it was an obvious choice for me. However, I was aware of the disadvantages of this sampling method such as there being an increase in bias and the researchers potential error of judgement (Fetterman, 2010). Having access to 'information-rich' groups was how I overcome the disadvantages as I was already active in my community[38] providing arts-related projects and volunteering in others.[39] I initially spoke to different adults across these groups regarding my research and what I was looking to do. I had a sample of males and females and I made it clear that I would only require five participants as this would be adequate with the volume of data I was going to collect. I would also work on a first come first served basis.

Purposeful sampling is suitable for an ethnography and it can also give the ethnographer 'a halo effect' (Fetterman, 2010, p.36). The halo-effect assigns value, whether good or bad, to a person. In other words, the people in the sample could easily relate to me as ethnographer as they have assigned value to me from the groups. The downside to this would have been if they held me a lower regard as I may not have been able to recruit the participants I needed.

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[38] My community groups are discussed in section 2.4 of chapter two.
[39] The group I attended as a class member was a group that run similar to my own community projects. This group was a theatre group telling the stories of local injustices. The other group I occasionally volunteered in was a performing arts group that my daughter attended.

5.7.2 Recruitment

This sample proved to be advantageous for recruiting participants although all my participants ended up being all female as the males felt they could not fully commit their time. One female came from the group I attended and volunteered in; one female had volunteered in my arts projects class whilst the other three females were parents of children in my arts projects class. The latter three were aware of each other from the group but they were not in the same friendship group. Nevertheless, I recognised this would create a gender imbalance in the data but as my focus was on class experiences I continued with this all female cohort.

Once I had recruited my participants and briefed them in more depth, I made it clear both verbally and in print that under no circumstances would they be tied to my research; they were free to withdraw consent at any point and any data collected up until that point would only be used if they were happy for me to proceed with it.

Although I had not given much thought to the age range of my participants, all five females were between the ages of 34 and 42 making their period of secondary schooling between 1987/8 to 1999/2000, this period being largely a period of Conservative governments with mass unemployment and the rise of privatisation.

The table below introduces my participants and employment status, their age and the years they attended secondary school.

Table III: Participant information (Key- Precariously Employed PE; Unemployed UE)

PARTICIPANT NAME & EMPLOYMENT STATUS	AGE	SECONDARY SCHOOL YEARS ATTENDED
Kat - PE	34	1995-2000
JD - UE	37	1992-1997
Nell - PE	39	1990-1995
Leigh -UE	40	1989-1994
Mary -UE	42	1987-1992

5.7.3 Reducing the negative effect of bias

To reduce the negative effects of bias as briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, I considered how I was going to collect my data. I used triangulation or as otherwise known, multi-methods (Gray, 2014) using a combination of interviews and informative sessions, observation and diary entries. My methods were 'participatory' to enable all adult participants (myself included) to 'participate' in the study.

5.8 Data Collection Methods (A)

As the data I collected was based upon the lived experiences of my participants exposing oppressive social relations, my fieldwork began with looking at the *effects* to find the *cause* and therefore took *a posteriori* approach.

Initially, I considered including questionnaires as a data collection tool since this would be a potentially good way of measuring what levels of class consciousness and critical awareness each of the adults had before, during and after the research study. I did go on to pilot a questionnaire to check if I would gain the necessary data but after they were completed, and together with a conversation I had with my second supervisor, I decided not to include them because they did not really fit with an ethnographical methodology.

5.8.1 Pilot stage

During my interview pilot I generated an opening question to ease the adults into the conversation and very quickly realised that the first question was not enough to get beyond the initial awkward moment that arose, and I also needed 'go to' questions when the conversation got underway and began to deviate too far from the topic. I soon realised that this type of interview could be very lengthy. As a result, I produced a check list of related topic questions which I kept to hand as a 'go to' and as I planned to carry out individual interviews before group interviews, I allowed for the time slots of each adult to be convenient for them, so they [interviews] were not rushed. I then planned for the group interviews to be longer to accommodate six adults (myself included). The pilot enabled me to act on the idea of pulling out main themes from the individual interviews, given the times scales involved, to use them as themed topics for conversation. Moreover, I could use the main themes for the visual intervention.

Before I began my fieldwork, I provided my participants with consent forms and information sheets[43] and I briefed them on my initial plan for collecting data. As I planned on data collection being participatory I made it clear [to my participants] that if they felt things could be done differently or they were not entirely comfortable with the methods I proposed, then they could stop me and have their say whenever appropriate. Participants were also made clear, during the briefing, data collection would be carried out in an environment where they felt most comfortable. The idea behind this was to build up rapport between myself and my participants quite early

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[43] See Appendix II for a copy of the participants consent form.

in the research. According to Spradley (1979) there are four stages in developing rapport and these were clear during my interviewing process. For example, in the first sets of interviews I felt a sense of uneasiness, I would use the word 'erm' quite a lot during my sentences and some of my participants did not appear to give too much away, this was no doubt because of the nature of my inquiry of delving into their personal worlds. I had one participant who appeared more anxious than the others and her cooperation was based on her having a feeling of getting it wrong. For example, I would ask a question and she would reply with *'is that right*?' at the end of her sentence. To overcome this, I would repeat the explanation I used in our conversation and ask the same question in a different way. However, as conversations got underway my participants relaxed more, which also showed through their body language.[44] Building the rapport in this way proved to be a strength for this research as it was informal and enabled my participants, in a way, to have a chat about their lives.

5.8.2 Cycle one – stage 1

Chart I below shows the data collection methods for the first stage of cycle one that were introduced at the beginning of this chapter.

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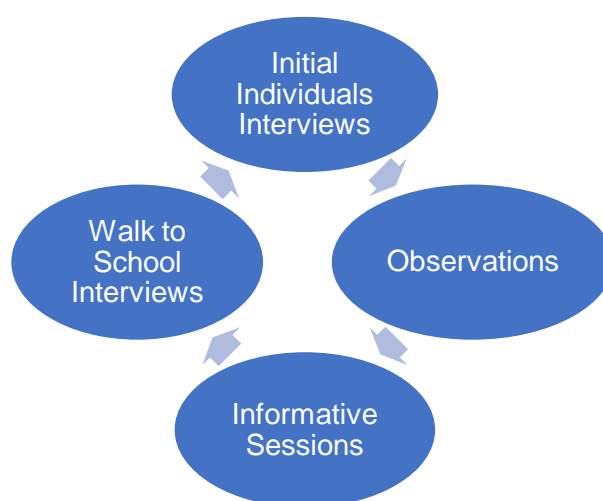
[44] I am not trained in the observations of body language and nor would I try to discuss the meaning of body language from any perspective other than an amateur one. I can tell the difference between someone feeling relaxed and someone feeling uptight or apprehensive. For example, my participants went from having their arms folded across their bodies in the early interviews, suggesting a sense of uneasiness to having open arms and talking using hand gestures, suggesting they were much more relaxed in the later interviews.

5.8.3 Interviews and observations

Using 'conversation' styled interviews is a perfectly natural methodological tool for a CE. In fact, a CE requires a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee, 'one in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in the other's world' (Madison, 2005, p.9). This style of interview allows the interviewee to talk about their lives as they have experienced them, their stories or 'narratives' come through and allow the interviewer to question and gather further information about what their experiences have meant to them, in a way that thickens the plot (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

However, there has been considerable debate around just how much people can remember when giving autobiographical accounts of the past. People are likely to place themselves as objects to remember experiences than to actually know them (see for example, Rubin and Baddelley, 1989; Thompson, et al., 1996; Prohaska, Brown and Beli, 1998). Moreover, memory recall in the form of 'forward telescoping' is when one places events more recently than when they actually happened. The responses in this respect are then made in error. With this in mind I developed a verification process to check that my participants responses were as accurate as possible. For example, through enabling enough time for responding, my participants had time to reconstruct the information required to recall their experiences (Prohaska, Brown and Beli, 1998) and through repeat interviews my participants were able to revisit their responses.

5.8.4 Individual interviews

The table below shows the week number and venue for the initial individual interviews.

Table IV: Participant and interview information

PARTICIPANT NAMES	INTERVIEW WEEK NO.	MY HOUSE	PARTICIPANT HOUSE	OTHER VENUE
JD	1-6		✓	
MARY	1,4,5,6		✓	
	2,3	✓		
NELL	1-6		✓	
KAT	1,2,3	✓		
	4,5,6			✓
LEIGH	1-6		✓	

Over the first six weeks of conducting my fieldwork I carried out interviews in the style of a two-way conversation, and on a one-to-one basis with each of my participants in their natural settings or at a place they felt comfortable with, for up to two hours per session per participant once a week. During these interviews I participated in the lives of my participants, for example, I would engage in their normal routines after work/school runs, during meal times, or even through the daytime when they were carrying out household chores such as washing and ironing. We also went out for coffee at a supermarket café and there were times they came to mine. On one occasion I sat in my car at a McDonald's carpark (with coffee I might add!) with one participant. Each week I asked my participants where they would like to meet for me to capture their lives as true as possible.

A total of 67 individual interviews were conducted and out of the initial 30 interviews that took place 5 were conducted at my house. I believe this to have been of some benefit to two of the participants who came, Mary and Kat, in relation to building the trust between myself and them, as if they needed to get to know me almost as much as I needed to get to know them. Although I did not ask them if my intuition was accurate, I felt it was as Kat said on one occasion *'I thought you lived in a bigger house. I dunno know why'.*

To overcome the sheer volume of data anticipated, I divided each week into categories (shown in the table below).

Table V: Weekly interview structure

WEEK	CATEGORY
1	Childhood memories of home & background/Class awareness/Role of 'Self'
2	Home & background as an adult/socialisation
3	Education/Schooling/Qualifications
4	Employment status/Income/Benefits/Job Opportunities/Careers
5	Politics/Ideology
6	Recap/Ideology Continued/Main Informative Session

Having this weekly structure and some prepared 'go to' questions covered the ground that related to the literature but at the same time there was an 'openness to changes of sequence and question forms…' that Kvale (2007, p.65) discusses with a semi-structured interview. Enabling my participants to expand on their answers created a 'diversion of the interview into new pathways' (Gray, 2014, p.386). This happened on a few occasions and proved time consuming. For example, when I asked my participants to describe a typical school day, I was met with predominantly negative responses such as: '*I hated school'*, '*the teachers would be like get out, and I never done anything*' but their responses did not end there. Both Leigh and JD discussed how this had affected them '*badly*' and when I asked them to elaborate on this we moved into a discussion on mental health. The responses from my participants were negatively laden so to move on from conversations not specifically linked to my research I would consult my 'go to' checklist and provoke positive thinking by asking another question that related to the topic.

After I had finished the individual interviews each week, I immediately transcribed them, analysing recurring themes that each participant had in common. Although a thematic approach is just one of many ways 'for synthesizing the collective' (Saldana, 2016, p.10) it was the most natural and appropriate method for my research and thus offered a meaningful approach. Transcribing my data in a word document enabled me to put basic themes in the margin and once the basic themes had been applied, I began to add in meaning fields, this was my interpretation of what each participant had said. After reflecting on the week three school interviews I realised I had not armed myself with enough information regarding the type of school my participants attended nor their reputation. I rectified this for the repeat

interviews which then fed into the informative sessions of the secondary school interviews. Over the 30 repeat interviews my participants read through these meaning fields which meant their voices came through more accurately adding validity to my data and I also took the opportunity of inviting them to add further comments where they felt appropriate.

5.8.5 Observations

I kept a reflective diary and conducted participant observations during the interview process because, although observations are commonly used within an ethnography, participant observations are not generally used as a stand-alone method (Spradley, 1980; DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011). I observed how my participants interacted with, and in their environments and how they presented themselves and I compared this with what they had told me during the interviews.

As I was aware of how bias can be problematic in a CE I additionally kept a self-reflexive diary. This was for me to reflect on how I felt being in a new environment, how I conducted myself in terms of being a researcher and the methods I was using.

5.8.6 Walking to school interviews

Finally, to complete stage one of cycle one I progressed on to further and more in-depth interviews to gain a fuller picture of my participants experiences of schooling and education. These next six interviews, also individual, took myself and my participant on their physical journeys to secondary school as they had experienced them. The idea behind this was for my participants to differentiate between remembered experiences and actual experiences more accurately. Kahneman (2011) suggests that when we [humans] discuss our experiences of something we tend to discuss what we remember more easily than what we 'actually' experience.

These interviews lasted between two and four hours and were only conducted when each participant felt they had the time, i.e. after their children were in school and chores had been completed or would be ok to leave for another day. These were lengthy interviews that could not have been rushed as my participants and I walked and talked about their journeys before reaching their school to help with memory recall. The main ethical limitation to this method was how confrontation of the school could provoke negative emotion. It was a potential harm that required ethical consideration (Hammersley, 2017). I spoke to my participants prior to this about the idea of facing their past to dig deeper into their memories and how they remember

positive and negative areas more vividly. Whilst they gave consent I did inform them at any stage they felt uncomfortable or did not wish to continue we would stop. Each participant took the journey once except for Kat who wanted the time to re-visit and therefore went through her experiences twice. I spent time observing the surrounding environment as we walked in their footsteps and I listened to them discuss their journey. Once we approached the school I began with the question, using the same one for all my participants, '*how does facing this make you feel?*' Although we spoke in terms of having a conversation, I used a series of questions, developed from week three individual interviews on schooling experiences, to provoke both positive and negative emotions to not only expose areas of *power, dominance* and *control* but also to uncover if they had been able to influence such forces and relations for the personal benefit of turning a negative into a positive.

5.8.7 Informative sessions (conducted during and post interview process)

My role as critical ethnographer was to be informative and highlight *social relations* that had been oppressive and a cause of inequality where possible. This information had been reflected in everyday public perceptions and/or was political in nature. I refer to informative sessions as the time taken during the interviews to impart the information. In these sessions where I felt I could build on this knowledge I asked questions to that effect and thus informed my participants during the interview in a way that could be easily digested.[45]

Categorising the topics each week enabled me to analyse the data in sections, at the end of each individual session, and any information I felt I missed out during the interview would be discussed at the beginning of the next interview. I asked each participant after every informative session whether the information made sense and further offered them an opportunity to ask questions to help with their understanding. As such I was able to self-reflect on my role as a critical ethnographer. Each interview started with a recap of the previous week and during week six, to measure if my participants were becoming critically aware I not only checked if they had understood the information I provided, but I also asked them to provide me with an example of what they understood.[46]

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[45] I have included an example of this as vignette a in appendix III.
[46] I have provided examples of this as vignette b and c in appendix IV.

5.9 Cycle One – Stage Two

As I had completed an early analysis of the one-to-one interviews, I was able to tease out the themes my participants had in common, themes I felt had occurred because of *power, dominance* and *control* through the social relations which had resulted in barriers to them being upwardly mobile. For example, themes such as a form of institutional bullying, having no money, low confidence, poor health, alcohol and benefit dependency. To reduce the tensions my participants had described feeling in new situations, I spoke to each of them about the recurring themes I had initially analysed from their interviews and as they were already aware of each other from the briefing of this research, they began the group interviews with knowing what they had in common.

5.9.1 Group interviews and informative sessions

The three fortnightly group interviews took up to four hours per session, once a fortnight over a period of six weeks. These interviews built on the themes through our discussions of personal experiences and linked us to one another. I also encouraged my participants to engage in research tasks such as looking for related information and statistical evidence via the internet or through talking to family members. These pockets of research underpinned and further informed our group discussions. Again, the interviews were participatory in nature, for example, we decided as a group where to meet, at first this was at a supermarket café where everyone felt comfortable and then we progressed onto one another's houses in the subsequent weeks. In the first interview I began with rolling out the theme of alcohol dependency inviting any of my participants to talk about their experiences of it. Conversations, such as these enabled 'the free flow of information' (Spradley, 1979, p.78) allowing for trust to build between the group, there was a feeling of togetherness, a feeling of commonality. This was important to build group rapport especially as my participants did not know one another on a personal level beforehand.

Although I had conducted an initial data analysis from the individual interviews to enable the main themes for the group interviews my participants did play a role in shaping the interview process. For example, Nell spoke about holding a group interview at her house where she would provide us with some nibbles to eat and non-alcoholic drinks whilst Mary and Kat discussed how the interviews should flow in no particular order. This worked quite well as it enabled my participants to talk more freely without the pressure of having to answer.

In the final group interview I introduced a visual element as part of a factory scene role play task.[47] The idea behind this was to not only provide my participants with information in a visual way but to elicit information from them in a way that actively encouraged expression through dialogue and visual methods. This task also prepared the ground for the visual intervention that was to follow the group interviews. It was at this stage my participants began to ask questions they had not asked before.

5.9.2 Observations

During the group interviews I observed how each participant I had come to know on an individual level, interacted with others they did not know. I watched as they took on their different roles to 'fit' together as a group. Observations allow the researcher to observe data as and when it happens, 'to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed' (Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2011, p.456). I knew from the one-to-one interviews that appearance might play a role in them accessing unfamiliar settings and prevent them from going into a new group situation as the same individuals they were in their own environment.

I kept a reflective diary with simple notes to assist me with remembering what I had observed in both the individual and group interviews and as soon as the sessions were finished, I typed more detailed notes. For example, I was able to see what I was thinking in relation to what had been said. These entries enabled me to align my thoughts with the codes I generated from the data.

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[47] The factory scene was made up using a table with my children's playdough and other creative (kids) tools. All my participants could identify with working in a factory so this was a simple straight forward task to enable them the opportunity of taking a hands-on approach in a visual way. I provided my participants with five different job areas; cleaner, factory operative, supervisor, manager, & clerical and asked them to rank them in order of what they would apply for first. I then asked them to act out the roles of manager, factory operative(s) and supervisor. The role of the manager was to give orders, ensuring maximum profit, and the role of supervisor was to oversee the production of the factory operatives who were making clay pies. The supervisor was responsible for the timing and accuracy of the pies. Once this task was complete the supervisor ordered the factory operatives to become creative and make their own style of clay pie using the items available to them. The chosen clay pie (identified at management level) would then become a product of the factory owners and the winning factory operative would receive a higher rate of pay for their 'troubles'. The idea of this task was for my participants to problem solve; i.e. through having to compete against fellow workers, through taking on uncomfortable tasks and being alienated from what one produces; to open dialogue and critical discussion and to also prepare them for the intervention of the additional part of my research.

5.9.3 Interview reliability and validity

My research used indirect questioning as opposed to direct questioning for the simple fact, I wanted my participants to feel relaxed and not as if their answers would be scrutinised. Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2011, p.417) citing Tuckman (1972) suggest 'the indirect approach is more likely to produce frank and open responses' and therefore making the answers more honest and reliable.

Questions can be organised in different ways to obtain the necessary data. The tried-and-true models that Madison (2005) draws from, such as the Spradley (1979) & the Patton (1980) models, categorize questions in the following way:

- Descriptive; Structural; Experience; Contrast

- Behaviour; Feeling; Knowledge; Sensory

I armed myself with the idea of a set of questions I felt useful for exploring the backgrounds of my participants and later another set of questions for a more in-depth discussion of their schooling experiences. These questions were informed by the main discussions and debates from the literature review in chapters three and four. From this stage, I wanted to explore more deeply, their schooling experiences, and by repeating questions and adding in questions I felt were not explored in the initial interviews, I was able to conduct further in-depth interviews on a one-to-one basis. I provide an example of the types of questions Madison (2005) draws from in the table below.

Table VI: Types of questions

DESCRIPTIVE:	Can you describe a typical school day?
FEELING:	You understand there is a social divide, where do you feel you fit into the divide?
OPINION:	What do you believe is the outcome for the different social groups?
STRUCTURAL:	What is your role within your family setting?
EXAMPLE:	Could you give me an example of what you mean by that?

These types of questions are *open* questions and whilst some are short and some are long 'both of these enable respondents to answer in their own words, which might be more suitable for sensitive topics' (Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2011, p.176).

By asking the same questions with each of my participants, my interviews were consistent making them more reliable. I initially gave each participant the same amount of time for the interviews with the allowance of each interview being individual in the sense that my participants were not rushed, I gave them the time to elaborate further where necessary and also used some probing questions such as '*why do you think that*' to deepen my understanding. However, I was cautiously aware of the suggestion from Fowler (2009 cited in Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2011) that the overuse of probing questions can lead to bias creeping in.

From the interviews I had audio recorded, I transcribed and thematically analysed the preliminary data. I then gave my participants their transcriptions to read through for reliability checking and to add further comment where they felt this was appropriate. This assisted with the preparation of discussing the themes as a group and enabled the data to be thickened and thus more reliable (Madison, 2005); an essential part of participatory interview research.

5.9.4 Observation reality

To observe my participants in the group sessions I looked at two main areas, one being the interaction with each other and the other being their interaction/behaviour with a different environment. I do not claim to be an expert with observing people, but I can apply my own experiences together with observations I have made over the years in my professional life working with others to draw a general conclusion. To reduce the possibility of my participants altering their behaviour during the observations and the possibility of me missing something I did not focus on one participant at a time. As conversation flowed it enabled me to observe myself and my participants as we all interacted.

5.9.5 Critical self-reflection

Having critically reflected on the steps I took to carry out my research methods, it could be said that I used my position of power as a researcher, having the advantage over my participants because I had spent time getting to 'know them' individually before we came together as a group, whereas the group members did not know each other on this level. In my defence however, I feel my position helped

to balance the power relation between myself and my participants particularly as I conducted participatory methods throughout my research. It was beneficial for this study to understand and explore the lives of my participants at an individual level without the influence of others, to set the scene for the group sessions and to assist with producing the visual intervention to keep within the time frame as much as possible.

5.9.6 Constraints

After I had recruited my participants, I found one of the biggest constraints of this research to be timing. I planned to carry out my fieldwork over a period of 12 months starting in March 2016. The first eight months went to plan but the following eight months went by with no form of fieldwork due to three out of five participants facing terminal family illnesses and because of my own poor physical health at that time. During the eight months of inactivity I contacted my participants twice, once about half way through and finally in July 2017. At this time my participants felt ready to pick up from where we left off in the latter days of November 2016. In August 2017 I held individual meetings with my participants to refresh them in terms of their interviews enabling them to re-read the transcripts.

Following the refresh period, my participants initially watched the film we had produced individually before doing the critical film review together as a group in December 2017. Although I had planned for my fieldwork to be carried out over a period of 12 months it took twice as long. However, the total number of months we were active was 13 months.

5.10 Data Handling and Coding – Cycle One

During the individual interviews I could *hear* (re)occurring ideas building between my participants; recognising similarities in their stories. I immediately transcribed each 'verbatim' interview after they had taken place and built on the similarities, using an interpretivist perspective, looking for patterns, contradictions and tensions in the data (Bazeley, 2013). I later took the opportunity, after the end of each week's interviews and before the start of the next, using a critical approach to further examine the data and make connections with wider social structures/relations to feed into the informative sessions that were interwoven with the interviews. By asking myself questions such as *'what is the data saying', 'how does this link with the other interviews and informative sessions'* and *'should I explore this further'* meant I could further immerse myself in both emic and etic analysis and explore the commonality of emerging ideas held within each of the individuals' experiences.

I applied meaning fields to the transcriptions, allowing my participants to read through them, using and/or statements to check the validity of my understanding and interpretation of the data. This was important for me to 'get it right' as I was building on the narratives to give a voice to each of my participants. This deeper level of thickening the data was an essential part of the process as it enabled me to initially code the strongest most common ideas [across all my participants] and meant I kept within the extended timeframe.

As I had categorised each week for interviewing, and had the additional school experience interview, some of the questions overlapped. At this stage I used a bottom up approach to explore the patterns and did not disregard any of the patterns that I coded (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Using a thematic analysis, I was able to take forward, from the individual interviews, a set of common subthemes which I had grouped into organising themes for the group sessions. At this stage in analysing the data however, I worked with the flexibility of not using one specific theoretical approach that is afforded with thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.7) 'argue that a lot of analysis is essentially thematic - but is either claimed as something else such as discourse analysis, or even content analysis (e.g. Meehan, Vermeer, & Windsor, 2000)'.

In the first wave of coding (Bazeley, 2013; Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2018), I coded these themes using word. It was a time-consuming process; however, it was one that enabled me to really get to know the data. One of the early common themes my participants shared was their awareness of social class and an example of the process I took during initial coding is shown in table VII below. Table VIII shows the process of moving from the initial coded patterns to a coded organising theme.

Table VII: Coding example

PARTICIPANT	QUOTE	NOTES/CODES
Nell	"Well, obviously I was aware we we're the tramps and my friend ***** was a snob" [giggles]	Awareness of social differences Feels socially lower/Tramps & snobs
JD	"I didn't pay too much attention when I was little, but I knew when I got a bit older there	Unaware of differences in childhood

	was people better off than us, they were snobs"	Awareness in adulthood People better off -Snobs
Mary	"Like, well you got your upper class, you got your middle class & working class & that kind of thing. I see myself as working-class cos I don't speak like [puts on a posh voice] that, cos I don't have no money"	Aware of social classes Feels working class People higher up are -posh
Kat	"I am aware of a working-class but I never really felt different as a child but as an adult it's just how the government make me feel because of how they are with benefits, you don't really feel welcome to them although that maybe best for you"	Awareness of working class Pressure of being working class/benefit dependency
Leigh	"I don't know cos I don't think I fit in anywhere. I tend towards I don't wanna say it but the lower class, crazier people if you know what I mean"	Awareness of a lower class Feels more comfortable with this class Lower class are crazier

Table VIII: Data analysis and themes

COMMON CODES	ORGANSING THEME
-Feels socially lower/tramp/crazier people -People better off – snobs/posh -Feeling of being working class	-Common theme amongst the group comes the from experiences of feeling as if they are amongst the lower sections of society: (LOWER) CLASS AWARENESS

I coded this first set of data and related it to the theories discussed in chapter three around class consciousness and social reproduction. Nonetheless, the more familiar

I became with the data the more patterns I could see, and as the methods were an iterative process potentially creating more patterns, I felt as if I was being buried by the voluminous data, particularly when more than one code could be used for the same quotes. To overcome this, I attended an introductory training course offered at Anglia Ruskin university on using NVivo and later followed this up by watching some YouTube videos on getting started with NVivo. After watching a few tutorials, I decided to install a trial version of NVivo 11 on my laptop to familiarise myself with it. When I became comfortable with its use, I installed the full version and continued with my data analysis. However, I was mindful of getting carried away with creating too many codes and not 'taking advantage of the linking, memoing, and analysis tools' available in NVivo (Bazeley, 2013, p.139).

Once my transcripts were uploaded onto NVivo, I immediately began to re-read the data and added my initial codes as categories, or in NVivo terms – Nodes. 'A node is a category into which different codes fall or are collected' (Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2018, p.677). After this preliminary stage of thematic coding I assigned each participant to a *case* and added all their individual coded content from the transcriptions. This enabled attributes to be added and patterns to be seen easily (QSR, 1995). I repeated this step for the group transcriptions placing the individual coded content into each participants' case.

To check the reliability of my coding I created a visual map using paper and pen, and read the transcriptions from the screen. I found this visually more useful, as NVivo was only on my laptop, there was no need to change between screens. I mapped out the basic themes connecting them to the organising themes.

5.11 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has shown how and why a critical ethnography was the most suitable methodological framework for this thesis. It has discussed the data analysis that leads to discussion of the findings in chapters seven and eight.

Engaging with my participants and their daily routines over a long period made this methodology ethnographical. The interview was the primary source of data where my participants and I were 'conversational partners' and the extensive use of interviews, the timing and the style proved to be a strength of CE (Madison, 2012). This was imperative to build rapport (Spradley, 1979). In my role as critical ethnographer and through the use of informative sessions whereby I extended our conversations connecting the social and cultural politics to the wider context, I was able to resist domestication (Madison, 2012).

Observations and diary entries enabled me to keep track of any tensions and contradictions. The observations captured data as and when it happened providing more validity than if the such like had been unconsciously missed (Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2011).

However, with different methods came a vast array of ethical procedures. Careful consideration was given to ensure confidentiality, anonymity and trust throughout and across the data collection processes. To overcome criticisms of critical ethnography, I remained open and honest about my research through a degree of self-reflexivity. I also used a verification process with the data.

I then analysed the data taking a thematic approach as this was the most appropriate. Thematic analysis is accepted as having a degree of flexibility as recurring patterns and themes can be seen in various forms of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I initially took a bottom up approach without disregarding any themes that were coded and once I completed this I related them to the theories discussed in chapters three and four.

The methods I used for the CE developed as an iterative process. In triangulating my data, it is evident from the individual and group interviews and the diary entries that my participants did have a lack of class consciousness and the capitals they acquired had limited value in wider society. Furthermore, whilst is it evident that dialogue alone was not enough to fully develop consciousness it is not clear whether this would have been if the CE was extended over a longer period.

In the following chapter I discuss the complementary section to CE as a standalone methodology, *Methodology (B) – A Visual Intervention.*

CHAPTER SIX: METHODOLOGY (B) – A Visual Intervention

Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning.

(Freire, 1998, p.31)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the critical ethnography discussed in chapter five in the form of a visual intervention. However, I offer a discussion on this complementary methodology in stand-alone terms as it is a methodology in its own right. I discuss how both methodologies can be combined as an innovative methodology in educational research. I do not begin this chapter with discussions on *positionality, sampling and recruitment* as it is a continuation of the main methodology whereby I continued to work with the same previously identified participants.

This chapter is important for highlighting the step by step process taken in the attempt to achieve individual and social transformation which meets the aims of a CE. The methods of which are below in chart II.

Chart II: Cycle Two
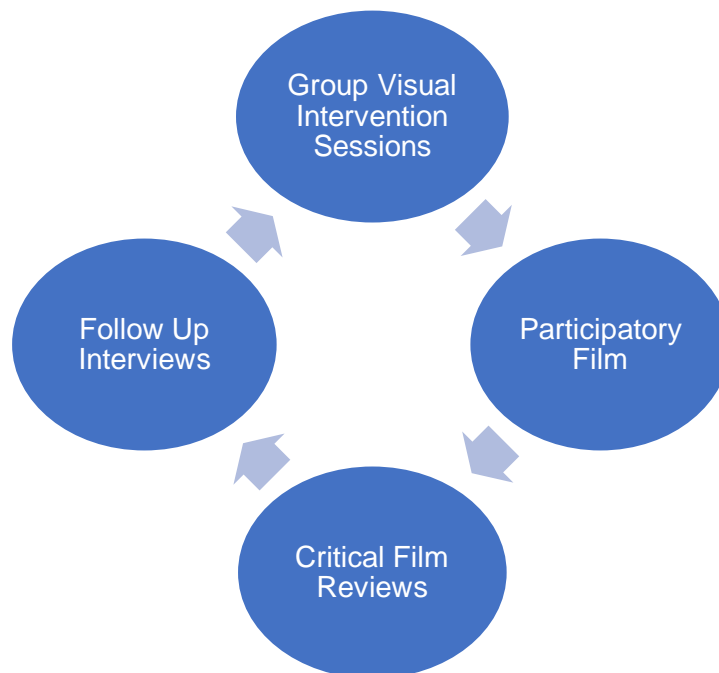
6.2 Visual Methodology in Qualitative Research

Visual methodologies in qualitative research are used in many fields although the 'visual' is still a fairly new but rapidly growing phenomenon outside the fields of anthropology and sociology. Visual methodology has become popular in, for example, education, psychology, health, media studies, women's studies and art and design (Pink, 2007; Rose, 2016). The visual methods can range from photographic images to art work and film or video making. Data can also be generated through the use of various tools such as a digital camera, a drawing, a mobile phone and a camcorder. A study conducted by Joanne Hill (2013) showed how combining interviews with photography in a visual ethnography could empower her participants visually. The participants were able to tell their stories through photographic images by reflecting upon the 'self' in PE lessons.

6.2.1 Visual approach and photographic images

The history of visual research in anthropological studies has been concerned with photographic images (Silverman, 2014). Early anthropologists used photography as their 'visual notebook' to document their research on the cultures of aboriginal people, in a passive way, to provide a scientific evidence of human lives (Banks and Flick, 2007). In the late 1880s after moving images, also known as motion pictures, had been popularised, cameras became more sophisticated enabling anthropologists to now produce films (Barnouw, 1993).

6.2.2 Visual approach using participatory film

Anthropologists considered film useful for capturing and recording the lived experiences of the context the anthropologist observed (White, 2003; Emmison, Smith and Mayall, 2012). For example, 'A.C Haddon and Spencer and Gillen…who undertook research…saw film as the means to best record the atmosphere and sensory experience of the rituals they observed' (Emmison, et al., 2012, p.58). Brown and Strega (2015) however point out how traditional methods did not give an accurate account of the experiences of the people observed. This 'ethnographic' film-making, as it is also referred to, began to change in the twentieth century when anthropologists developed practices that were both 'collaborative and participatory' (Pink, 2007, p.7). To provide an example of this, White (2003) discusses how a participatory visual approach using video has become popular because 'participatory approaches have paved the way for community-based ownership of communication media such as newspapers, radio and video' (p.8). Wheeler (2009) touches on this in her study of using participatory video to explore violence in the

poor areas of Rio de Janeiro in which she sought to 'build a bridge between violence and citizenship through participatory social action' (p.10).

6.3 My Community Arts-Related Projects

Participatory Film (PF) was produced for the VICE and the process that led to PF used creative methods that overlap with arts-related approaches seen in arts-based research. However, Savin-Baden and Howell-Major (2014) notes that the latter must not be confused with the former, for example, arts-informed inquiry and arts-engaging inquiry are approaches to research that do not focus on the arts discipline *per se.* In other words, the 'content' or 'story' of an arts discipline is the focus of analysis rather than the art form itself. This can be seen in my community arts-related projects which laid the foundations for designing a VICE for this thesis.

The first project, at the end of 2012, was to initially build the self-confidence of my students. I had spent the previous 10 years either working with children with low academic attainment or children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) in school settings and I had worked with children in after school settings who appeared to isolate themselves.[49]

6.3.1 My community arts-related projects as 'transformative' interventions

Each project began with using 'freeze frames' as an ice-breaker, which is particularly useful when new students attend, it is a technique used in drama to enhance performing and dialogue amongst everyone involved. There were no planned scripts, the students split into groups and discussed issues they had in common at school/workplace, or from their neighbourhood/s. They then created what they thought a still shot (freeze frame) of their issue/s would look like for the other groups to discuss. These are snap shots, for the students, of what goes into a project to ease them in gently.

With my later projects from 2013 onwards, and as a group we began to incorporate film, so we could see ourselves in role play. Issues that the group have in common go on to be the theme of the project which then builds from the discussions of personal experiences and further research[50] and how best we can use this in role play. To offer an account of one of the most recent projects, my students were able

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[49] I have discussed observing children in informal settings as another reason to starting my community arts-related projects in chapter two.
[50] The research part is carried out in the student's own time and could include looking at areas that feed into the theme with statistical or factual data.

to discuss what they thought made 'a bully' for an anti-bullying film using story boards and discussion of their own experiences. Some had been bullied and spoke about times when this had happened. Once they had researched their topic, they decided what should go in their short film and where they wanted to film it. The students decided to look at bullying from a bully's perspective to try and understand why bullies bully. They all came together once the film was edited and finalised and critically reflected on their theme through questioning what they had done and why. As a result, some felt they had bullying traits although they did not see themselves as a bully. They felt confident to talk about bullying and came to realise there were many reasons for it and that by opening discussions on bullying they could take a different approach in their social and school settings.

The idea behind these arts projects as being 'transformative' projects was to open a critical dialogue between everyone involved for the critical reflection of common issues with the aim of enabling them to become critical agents in their wider socio/political communities. Through connecting to their learning and through recognising their empowerment in this way is where Paulo Freire believes 'they discover a new meaning as well' (Freire, 1985, p.14).

6.4 Augusto Boal and Forum Theatre (FT)

I have compared the drama and theatre aspect of my community arts-related projects to Boal's FT and although the arts-related projects, are similar to FT, in the respect that the projects used a form of theatre, that is, people acting out real life social situations in a given space, and they engaged the audience in discussion, they also differed. To take one example, my arts-related projects finished with the use of film. And secondly, the projects were designed to be empowering but they began with the individual in mind i.e. to promote critical self-reflection. The projects then moved onto a collective empowerment for social change. FT begins and ends with the collective in mind as its' purpose is for the interaction of both performer and audience.

6.5 Ethical Procedures for the Visual Element

With a re-ignited interest in the use of visual methods amongst researchers, notable in the field of sociology and education, ethical considerations are considered important for a successful research project. Although there are many overlaps between ethical procedures with other methods such as with interviews and observation, ethical issues with visual methods are more difficult to overcome (Wiles, et al., 2008). Warr, et al., (2016) discuss how some researchers do not gain

ethical approval with visual methods because they are not widely understood. They elaborate on an 'ethics in practice' (p.5) whereby visual researchers have ethical approval but may need to *think on their* feet if unexpected ethical issues arise during their research process. This type of ethical approach is one where decisions are made based on a compassion for the individual or group and one where the researcher has developed a collaborative relationship with them (Pink, 2007; 2015).

Visual research needs to be honest and not misleading, i.e. to include non-related objects/people in the images is ethically unjustified. The participatory film produced as a result of the VI for this thesis was ethically justified in this respect and signed informed consent was given to include related young people which is discussed later in this chapter. Consideration was also needed in terms of my participants developing consciousness in the process of and through making film. This is because there was a potential risk of conflict between my participants and of emotional harm. However, as the group was small my participants were helpful with each other and I believe this to be because, as Freire (1993) notes, they developed a level of 'sensibility'. My participants and I engaged in a cyclical process of meaning making, dialogue and reflexive questioning and Steir (1991) notes how it is possible to become empowered and move on from or live through lived experiences.

6.6 A Visual Intervention in Critical Ethnography (VICE)

Creating space within CE is useful for adding a visual element that can assist with the dialogical process to promote social change as mentioned in chapter five. A 'visual' implies the multiple methods that can be used, and in this case, I have designed a VI with the arts in mind. The framework for this intervention is given in figure III below. This table shows how common issues are explored at the beginning of the intervention and then freeze frames follow. The arts-related disciplines are optional based on what the participants select but all incorporate a drama. This framework shows the penultimate step as using film before the final step being the critical review.

Figure III: Framework for the Visual Intervention:
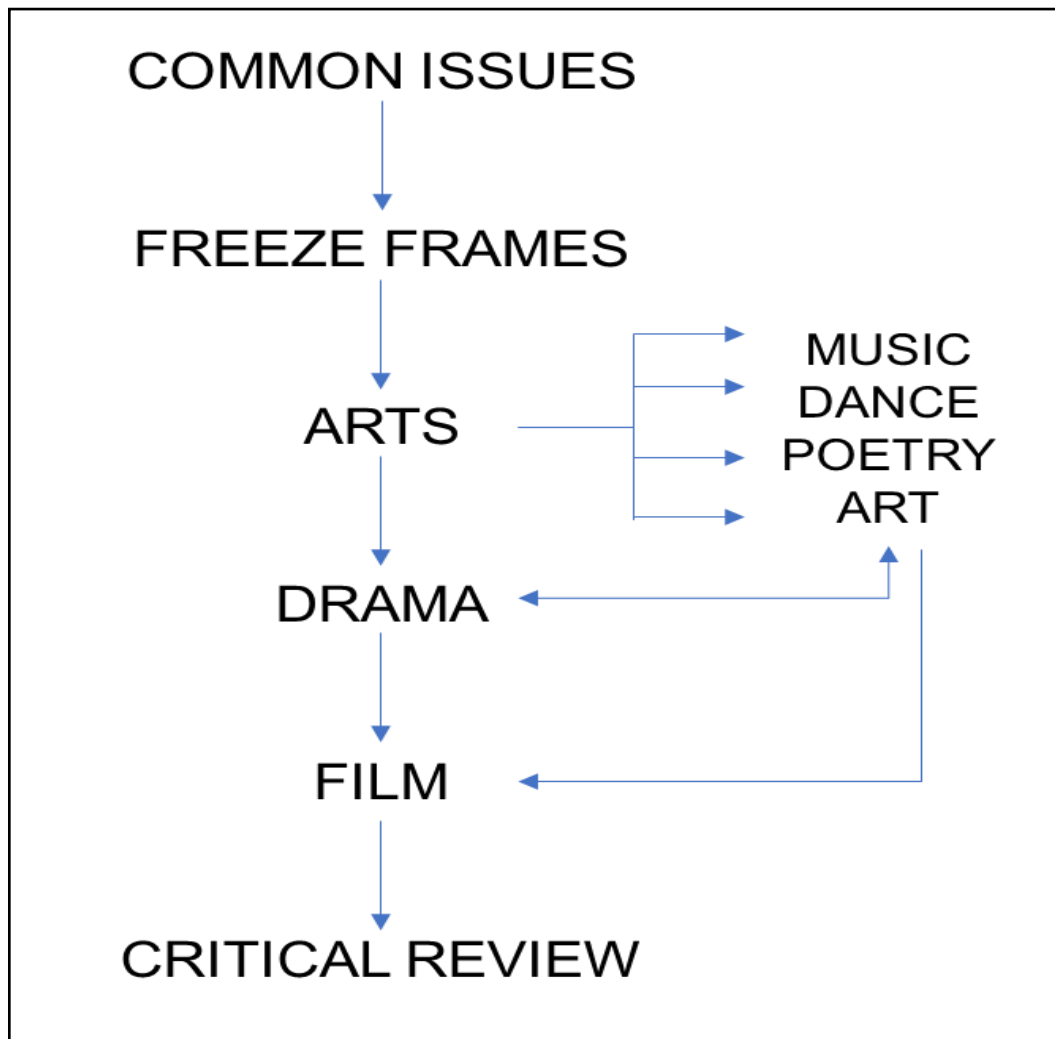
6.6.1 Rationale for a VI

We live in a world where our thoughts and consciousness are shaped through institutions and the media for example, as well as from our own social networks such as friends, families and colleagues, all of whom to a greater or less degree are impacted by the Ideological State Apparatuses (Althusser, 1971). Although this impact, and the nature of the 'message' can be questioned through dialogue quite often those from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as the lives of my participants, do not *hear* the communication (for example from a putative emancipator, or researcher), effectively enough to move beyond the status quo. Freire (1985) argues this is because disadvantaged groups suffer at the hands of dominant groups in society and as such it is not generally possible for those groups to become critically aware of their situation. He believed, in order for the disadvantaged to push past the challenges that dehumanise them, they must first

recognise them. Freire concerned himself with *praxis,* a form of action and knowledge whereby he notes education as a 'practice of freedom'. In this he argues for transformative learning as discussed in chapter four. This transformative element can be developed through the social, economic and political 'informative' learning that is afforded with CE but coming from the basis that I have learned, initially from working with disadvantaged groups, dialogue alone is not enough for emancipatory purposes, particularly amongst disadvantaged people where the material conditions of everyday life are so dominating for them.

This is where the visual element can be powerful, more powerful than primarily verbal communication alone. It can enable critical reflection to build amongst participants through *seeing* and thus potentially generating fresh understandings for my participants to both critically reflect on previous negative social and educational experiences. My intervention then, is a form of *praxis* and my rationale for this additional and complementary visual methodology.

6.6.2 What VICE is not

In the section that follows I argue that VICE, although bearing striking similarities, is neither performance ethnography nor action research as briefly discussed in chapter five.

6.6.2.1 Performance Ethnography

It is my understanding that performance ethnography is about the researcher grasping and understanding and therefore interpreting the cultural displays and actions, the movements and language that naturally occur in the everyday lives of those being studied (Denzin, 2009). These 'cultural' performances provide the 'script' for social performances which are 'the ordinary, day-by-day interactions of individuals and the consequences of these interactions as we move through social life' (Madison, 2020, p.150). According to Erving Goffman it is a dramaturgical process in which social performances, whether peaceful or conflicting, can be seen in all types of social relationships for example between parent and child or manager and worker. To quote Goffman (1990, p.15)

> Regardless of the particular objective which the individual has in mind and of his motive for having this objective, it will be in his interests to control the conduct of others, especially their responsive treatment of him.

Madison (2020), citing the work of Turner (1982), notes how the 'dramas' born out of the social relations Goffman was discussing relate to 'a four-phase structure' that

begins with an interruption, a 'breach', to the status quo of the cultural norms and moves through redressive action' to reach the 'resolution' (p.151). Performance ethnography then, is concerned with how people create and recreate themselves. It is possible for the ethnographer to write this performance into a 'critical' performance through autoethnography (Madison, 2020). The pedagogical action of the ethnographer can then create change for the better in the everyday practice or 'performances' of the social relationships for the empowerment of the disadvantaged. Denzin (2009) refers to this as 'performed ethnography'. VICE in this respect has a 'performed' element but differs from Denzin's definition for two reasons. Firstly, the 'performed' element is non-scripted[52] and is performed by my participants rather than actors. Secondly, as a researcher I was not seeking to understand through performance *per se* but rather to create the space for illuminating oppression through visually complementing the dialogue between pedagogy and the active forms of learning.

6.6.2.2 Participatory Action Research

In a similar vein, my understanding of Participatory Action Research (PAR) is that although the intention is to generate knowledge from problem-solving and to make changes based upon the new knowledge through practice-led means, PAR is a continual process, one where practice is re-examined and reformulated (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Wright, 2015). In the words of Kindon, Pain and Kesby, (2010, p.1) 'PAR involves researchers and participants working together to examine a problematic situation or action to change it for the better'. To summarise, the researcher and participants start from a common footing; they recognise there is a problem. When looking through a Marxist lens however, marginalised groups will not generally 'recognise' a problem as they are subject to a false consciousness and exploitation, as discussed in chapter three, meaning researchers and participants must *first* seek to uncover the problem, to understand it, critique it and then change it for the better.

If I had conducted research based only upon the VI, the findings would have resulted in my participants producing and telling their stories through an intervention, similar to Conrad's (2004) research that used popular theatre as a pedagogical tool and a research method. However, my research was less about the practice of intervention *per se* and more about using an intervention as a form of

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[52] By non-scripted I mean that a script was not prepared as it would be for a performance that would need to be learned by the actor/s.

praxis and complementary to CE. Without the use of VICE, the results would not have come into fruition the way they did. One of the main reasons for not using a VI as the sole or main methodology was because experience had taught me that adults tend to shy away from performing so not to draw attention to themselves and during the pilot stage the adult responses to performance-led research confirmed my understanding of this.

6.7 Data Collection Methods (B)

By inviting my participants to take part in an intervention such as the one for this study and providing them with the opportunity of 'fleshing out the bones' of the framework I provided them with, enabled more naturally occurring and participatory methods to develop. Be that as it may, the structure of the VI I initially designed (*see figure III),* includes the use of film although this was not initially taken up by my participants until the second session as part of the intervention as I shall explain.

Following the debriefing of the group interviews, my participants and I met once a week, up to four hours per session for a total of four weeks. Before the first session I briefed my participants on the different art forms I had used as part of my community projects and encouraged them to think about other arts I may not have mentioned and which they would like to select to best portray the common themes. As there were five main themes we had in common we decided to use them all in the intervention.

6.8 Cycle Two

This second cycle of data collection revisited the informative sessions from cycle one. I knew from the individual informative sessions that my participants had begun to develop an understanding of their commonality but they had not yet related this to active social change. At this stage I had no real vision of how the VICE would come into fruition, I did however remain open to reflexivity.

6.8.1 Session one – drama and poetry

In the first of the arts sessions I introduced my participants to drama by using 'freeze frames' as ice breakers, although they had connected on a group level only one participant, Kat, had used drama in school/college and therefore being new to this art form they were all (re)connecting on a new level. We initially, and amicably, split into two groups so that one could observe and critically interrogate the other and vice versa. This session took place at Nell's house after she offered and we all agreed. One group went into Nell's kitchen (NK) whilst the other stayed in Nell's

living room (NLR). This enabled both groups to play with ideas, without the distraction of the other group present, and not necessarily using our common themes at this early informal moment but instead to discuss topics of interest. Once the common topic was decided, each group, performing in NLR, put the action element of their topic into a 'freeze frame' and displayed it to the opposite group. To provide an example of this, the NK group chose to display the frustration of taking their children shopping in a supermarket with the NLR group not knowing what was being displayed. As part of the NLR group, I consulted with my group members on what we thought the 'freeze frame' was saying to us. This encouraged dialogue amongst our group and Nell began with: '*we think this is something to do with authority*', I then proceeded to say, '*what made us think that?*' to which Nell replied (whilst looking at the NK group), '*cos she's down there and she's up there lording it over her*'. Although this was not completely correct it opened dialogue and physical movement between both groups and we were able to discuss ways of improving the situation. Whilst I observed group behaviours, I occasionally asked thought-provoking questions, such as *why in this scenario is someone lording it over another,* to prompt critical thinking amongst my participants; taking both an etic and emic positioning.

The initial 'freeze frames' were carried out in silence. However, to provide my participants with more knowledge on the use of a drama we trialled action shots with spoken word where no more than three words could be used. We stayed in the groups we had formed and carried out two 'freeze frames' and two action shots. Once we had completed the drama tasks we sat down together and spoke about how using drama made us feel and if we could use it as part of the VICE. All my participants felt relaxed enough to use drama but only if they could have props. Apart from Kat, the others felt they needed a distraction to help them overcome confidence issues.

By the end of the session, all participants decided that a drama *or play* would be an effective way to self-evaluate although Nell, JD, Leigh and Mary all expressed their preference for silent roles. They spoke about the feeling of being judged if anyone, they felt, who was not like them were to watch, i.e. the *'hoity toity'* and the *'poshy'*. To reassure them I spoke about the potential powerfulness of a silent play letting them know that they could do the play however they wanted.

I then introduced my participants to script writing through writing poetry. This was to give order and structure to our common themes and so we could tell our stories. We

began with two pieces of paper and two pens, and sitting in a circle on the floor, both myself and Leigh began to write a line of poetry[53] appropriate to one of our common themes on one of the sheets. We then folded the paper down to cover what we had written, before passing it to the next person in a clockwise direction. Writing the next line, blind to the previous line, enabled that person to build up the scene in a random way, until everyone had written something. I had learned this technique during a poetry workshop I held at one of my community projects and thought it would be useful with basic script writing. Once Leigh and I had the papers back that we started with, we read out what had been written. One of the poems flowed as if only one person had written it and we all agreed we would somehow like this as part of our play.[54] Although everyone took part and thought it was fun, Mary said she felt it was a difficult task trying to write something down which then prompted a discussion on having a script less play. This proved to be a strength of the intervention as everything occurred more naturally when we did not have to think about writing or reading a script.

6.8.2 Session Two – drama games and other art forms

In the second session, which took place at a public venue, we continued from session one with some other drama games beginning with one that I had played with students in my community arts-related projects, and what I like to call *corners*.

6.8.2.1(i) Corners

This game sees one person naming four corners and then players decide where to go. In this session, I took on this role and used four of our themes to label four corners of the room. My participants then proceeded to walk around the room in any direction until they chose their corner and stood there, with the last participant saying 'done'. Having my back turned so not to see my participants during their walk around or with what corner they stood in, I then called out one of the labelled corners. All participants in that corner were out and the game continued until there was at least one clear winner. The idea of this game was for my participants to use their bodies in the given space of the room; an idea also seen in the work of Boal (see Boal, 1995; 2000). This for me, has proven to be a strength of introducing drama for non-actors.

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[53] When discussing poetry with my participants I made it clear that the poems did not have to rhyme or make sense as a poetical flow can come through any nonsensical poem if it tells the story.
[54] A copy of the poem is attached as Appendix V.

6.8.2.1(ii) Catcher and faller

Another game we played, which I had not played in my arts-related projects, came from an idea of Boal (1995). This game worked on the physical trust of my participants and whereby we had to rely on each other for safety. We worked in twos and rotated with one another until we had all had a go of being the catcher and the faller. The faller stands completely still in front of the catcher with their eyes closed. The catcher at this point stands close enough to catch the faller as s[he] falls but the faller will only fall gently backwards when s[he] is completely ready to do so. The idea of this game is not only based on trust but aids one to move out of their comfort zone. Nell struggled with this game when she was in the role of the faller although she did eventually go backwards, she did not like the feeling of falling. This was an effective game to play because through discussing Nell's struggle, I came to realise that she held the trust for her catchers but when her eyes were closed, she felt not seeing the environment around her, left her with feeling like she would fail the game by hitting the floor. The feeling of failure was prominent, so we repeated the game with our eyes open and Nell gently fell backwards. In a way, the game took the *power* and the *control* from the faller and placed it in the hands of the catcher, but in Nell's case, after she expressed herself, she took back the *power* and *control*.

6.8.2.1(iii) Workshops

When the games had finished, we discussed using other art forms, and as we had already planned on using our poetry and a silent drama, I had arranged for the experienced artists I used in my community arts-related projects to pop in and give us a mini workshop in their specific arts area. I wanted my participants to have a 'feel' of each art form before deciding how the intervention would play out. Each mini workshop lasted around half an hour and enabled my participants and I to interact with each other in a new way. The first was with music, using instruments and selecting music to fit a play and the second was with dance where we used our bodies through movement. Once the artists had left, my participants started to feel as if they would not be able to see themselves in a way they could self-evaluate, and they did not want to perform 'live' in front of anyone, so I spoke to them about using film. This way my participants would be able to perform and watch themselves back. They became excited by this and began discussing if they did say something during the acting process, the film could be edited so their voices were not heard. I observed my participants as they continued to discuss the process of the

intervention and how it was leading into a dramatised participatory film with the role each of them took with planning. They spoke and giggled most naturally and on occasions Nell took the lead role on providing examples of how they could show their story.

After further discussions and playing with ideas we spoke about incorporating the poetry we had into the play. However, as previously mentioned none of my participants wanted to hear themselves speak although they felt if they did speak to recite the poetry, they did not want to see themselves at the same time. To overcome the hurdle of needing spoken word with the poetry, we decided at first to 'block' each participant out but then I pointed to the fact none of us were experienced with editing software and as I had the most experience of using home edition software, I could use a black screen; no-one would be seen at the same time they spoke. Kat immediately said: *'that would be really powerful, we should put that at the beginning of the film'*.

Each participant, having confidence I had not seen on this level before now, *played* out their common themes; their lived experiences of social inequalities that had resulted in barriers to their individual and social transformation. They made changes where they felt necessary, having the confidence to talk to one another and adding in props for effect. I was very much a part of this as my participants were. Together we spoke a line of poetry until we decided who wanted to say what, and I then offered to record those who had chosen to speak. We dropped two lines in favour of keeping the other four as we believed these to flow more easily. By the end of this session we knew how our VI would take shape, what we did not know at this point was that we would be going on without two of us present.

6.8.3 Session Three – participatory film tools and filming process

Before this session began, I received text messages from JD and Leigh, in two totally separate but devastatingly equal apologies. Both of my participants had been given the news of a family terminal illness. JD's mum had a cancer diagnosis whilst Leigh's dad was given weeks to live. They did not need to apologise nor inform me, but I am very grateful they did as I asked for their consent to use what they had brought to the VI for us to continue with the final part. They agreed and asked to see the film at some point after it was completed.

In session three, which took place in the same public venue, and after I explained to my remaining participants that it would be us completing the film due to family illnesses, I began with a mini workshop on how to use the camera (I discuss this

further in the film section). Mary was the shiest of all three participants, she felt she might break something and although she did handle the camera, she asked to watch the scenes she was not in rather than to record them.

We used this session to decide on how to play out our themes with only four of us. We linked two of the themes together as they related, for example, we linked the alcoholic/drunkenness theme with the homeless theme so that a participant could play this in one scene. Because the themes we were using were the main themes we all had in common, the changes we made to accommodate the absent two participants were made with minimal fuss.

As we acted out each of the themes/scenes, Nell discussed for the film to look more realistic we needed to bring at least one child into it (one of our own). As Nell and I were the only two with small children we each spoke to our young ones after this session about doing some brief but silent acting. The rest of us spoke to our elder children. One young child under the age of 18 was recruited with signed parental consent and to respect the anonymity of the child I will refer to her as child A whilst the other child, aged 17 gave his permission and signed a consent form, I will refer to him as child B.

By the end of this session we had planned each scene and was happy with the outcome. We planned to film in the same location to avoid any unnecessary changes.

6.8.4 Session Four – filming final scenes

Child A was present in the final session and child B attended during the filming for the final scene. We began this session with a run through of what we had previously acted out to show child A where we would like her to be. After a run through with child A we began to record each scene. Child B was only needed in the scene for approximately 10 seconds and he was briefed upon arrival. This session lasted around four hours.

At the end of each scene all participants would watch it back together on the camera's screen and then we would discuss whether to re-take the scene or not. The reflective process at this stage was more concerned with the final version of the film and if the stories of my participants were accurately portrayed rather than them knowing how to make changes to previous negative experiences. At this stage, although my participants were engaging in a form of praxis, that is, they had

reflected and took action upon the process they had not yet reflected again and this would not be possible without watching the whole film.

6.8.5 The use of filming

As I am an amateur film maker, I do not have a lot of equipment. To be precise I have a video camera and a tripod. I know from using this equipment that if people are too far away from the camera their voice will not be heard just as if the camera is used outdoors then it will pick up other sounds such as traffic and the wind. My participants spoke about using the poetry we had produced or by putting a song over the top that would fit the content of our film as being the best way to produce a film with a silent drama. I use home film making software such as *windows video maker* to edit and finalise film. During this process I can reduce background noise and put other sounds/songs over the top. I have used this camera and these methods for a number of years in both my personal and professional life meaning I potentially had more experience than my participants. As it happened, (after asking my participants) I did.

To overcome this, I held a training session or mini workshop as previously mentioned, where my participants could handle the camera, explore how it worked and to get to know how comfortable they would feel having the camera up close and further away from them. It was important for all participants to have this knowledge to fully engage with participatory methods, so they were on an equal footing when it came to be decided who would be recording and at what stages. This form of participatory learning is documented in the literature (Pretty, 1995; Chambers, 2002).

All the planning, i.e. the themes to be used, how best to portray accurate representations of each other's lives and where filming was to take place was decided upon by my participants during the group arts-related sessions. We decided as a group to respect the privacy of each other's homes and concluded it would be best to record our film in a public venue. As the venue can be hired out for any use, I decided not to inform the venue manager of our intent for use to reduce any ethical obligations I had to my participants. To overcome issues involving the venue I spoke to my participants about reducing the chance of recognition such as not filming large areas or areas where the venue name might be seen.

During the first film session I set the camera up and left it in a position where I thought it would best capture the actions of the first scene. As I had previously held the camera training session my participants appeared to feel at ease, as if the

camera was not there. Disagreements over filming were rare, however, changing the positioning of something in some of the scenes for example, meant that disagreements did occur, but they were quickly resolved. We also realised that the venue we had chosen to record our film was compromised when the name of the building appeared on the screen of the final scene. These scenes were deleted and re-recorded.

Once all our scenes had been recorded and we were happy with the initial playbacks we began the process of editing. At this point I was concerned with the interpretive process and as Mitchell (2017, p.94) note *'there is no quick and easy way to map out the interpretive process with visual research...'*. However, my participants had spent three weeks prior to filming building their scenes in a collaborative way and they were able to reflect on how the film was produced and finalised. My participants and I discussed what order the clips should be in and where they should be cut and put together with other clips. We also spoke about putting music over the top so the whole film was not silent. My participants chose a song that they thought best reflected their feelings but fit with the film. When they listened to each other's choices they decided to go with Kat's selection as the general consensus was that this piece of music closely related to the deep hurt and pain they had hidden in relation to their struggles.

With the time scales involved for editing, the lifestyles of my participants and the fact I had previous experience of editing I was nominated to produce the final and complete version. This stage was not participatory but as the scenes were not lengthy and we had kept only to the common themes, the film had developed in a natural way closely related to their everyday lives. I finalised the film over a period of three months and then contacted all five of my participants to ask if they were in a position to do the film review. Unfortunately, Leigh's grandad had been diagnosed with the same terminal cancer as her dad and although her dad lived beyond medical expectations her grandad had sadly passed away. And now, in addition to Leigh and JD's family illnesses, Mary's mum too had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Within a month of Mary's mum passing away her dad was diagnosed with terminal cancer and passed away a few weeks later. At this point my own physical health took a downward turn and with all the struggles my participants and I were suffering I decided to leave my research where it was temporarily especially as the majority of the fieldwork was complete.

The intervention enabled the commonality of my participants real lived experiences to come through in a visual way and they did eventually complete the film review as I discuss in the next section of this chapter. The participatory film approach to this transformative intervention was the most effective way for my participants to see themselves in role play and to therefore critically self-reflect to act upon their individual and social change.

6.8.6 Film strengths and weaknesses

Using digital film in social science research has both strengths and weaknesses. Whilst a strength of using film can be 'rich in detail', as it is used as a research tool to collect data and disseminate findings. For the purposes of this thesis film has been used to combine ethnography with storytelling and political engagement. However, film can also be 'highly intrusive and artificial' (Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2011, p.531) depending on the research design. Having said that, to explore sensitive areas and to analyse social injustices for example, film should be highly intrusive and artificial in its role of collecting data (Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison, 2011). However, this raises ethical issues that the researcher would need to consider before conducting the research. This is obvious in Wheeler (2009) study of using participatory video in violent contexts. Wheeler used this method 'as part of a broader participatory action research project…to challenge patterns of power and control' (p.10) in a violent area of Rio de Janeiro. Wheeler had a community of researchers who would provide what they thought to be safe spaces for open discussions. For example, information that was given from the public in private often differed from the information given in open (public) discussions suggesting the need for the researchers to follow the norms and rules of those being questioned. Wheeler also notes how the use of the camera and other technical equipment can be a negative for participatory methods because it can pose as an argumentative risk when deciding who uses the equipment and when as well as who and what goes into the video.

Since analyzing the PF, myself, I feel the methods in producing film has been empowering for my participants. They have had a say in all stages of production, they have been able to make decisions and choose whether to follow these through. The PF was dramatised but without written script, it was a re-enactment closely related to their personal lived experiences and this provided them with a safe space whilst at the same time put them on the outside looking in. Eight months after making the film all my participants have watched it. Seeing themselves in role play

and playing out their real lived experiences has put a different dynamic on their perspectives. For example, Leigh cried when she watched the film and felt quite shocked afterwards saying *'wow, this is my life. I know it's like this but to see it has really struck a chord with me'* and Nell also felt shocked. She said '*I wasn't expecting that. It really is rather powerful'*. In fact, at our next meeting, the critical film review, Nell told me that the film had stuck with her in her head and she wanted to do something real about changing her life.

Having created the space to raise consciousness and make changes in the lives of my participants I was aware of not only my influence as a researcher but of the environmental factors that could potentially result in my participants altering their behaviour. Although there is no clear definition, this can be referred to as the 'Hawthorne Effect'. Previous studies have shown how participants can work more productively when they are being observed (Chiesa and Hobbs, 2008; Payne and Payne, 2004). As the intervention was participatory I reduced this effect and to test how much influence I had upon my participants, I followed them up with one final interview three months post film review to find they were still continuing with the problem-posing and problem-solving methods.

6.9 Data Handling and Coding – Cycle Two

During the process of the visual intervention, I was both a participant and an observer. As a participant I engaged with the others from writing a line of poetry to taking turns with handling the camera and deciding where I would be comfortable with being recorded for my scene in the film. I listened to our conversations as we built up our scenes through a drama and I could *hear* that we had developed a friendship, through our laughter and through our honesty with one another. For example, during the recording of the poetry Nell laughed as she said *'as much as I love you guys, I can't do this in front of you it's embarrassing'*. We laughed with her but understood her pain of *reading* something aloud so we all agreed to record our line of poetry in a different room. I kept a diary of reflexive practice at some point during or directly after each session.

As an observer I noted interactions between my participants and I kept a diary of their experiences, how they behaved and responded to each other and the emotions they displayed. I also observed how they organised themselves with the art forms they selected and how the themes played out, capturing some verbatim too. As the verbatim was not from interviews, I recorded the data as 'conversation 0,1,2,3' etc giving it a number in chronological order. I then grouped the

conversations by giving them a heading to help me remember where a conversation started and ended. This enabled me to reflect from each session and relate it to what I had previously come to learn about each participant.

After the film had been produced, I recorded critical film reviews with each of my participants on an audio device, individually at first, and at their discretion, and then from a second critical review, as a group. I took notes in my diary of the observations I was making in relation to their emotions and behaviours. I noted their level of interaction with the film. I linked my observations with the specific theme of the film by adding the theme name to the data. This enabled me to keep track of where in the film my participants showed their emotions and behaviours I had observed. In addition to this I kept a reflective diary of my own feelings and emotions, of how I conducted myself in relation to being a researcher but also as a participative member of this project. This was important for me because observing the process of the intervention was a completely different experience to observing the outcome.

Furthermore, I recorded my initial response to watching the film alone noting my emotions and if there were scenes of the film that made me connect in different ways. I kept a separate account of what I thought of the film as an intervention.

Finally, post critical film reviews, and having personally watched the film on several occasions, I conducted a follow up of my participants via individual interviews. This enabled me to measure if my participants had developed in terms of capital accumulation and critical awareness.

As far as I could see, I was open to two different data analyses. One being the arts-related methods used during the 'process' of the intervention, and the other being the 'product'; the participatory film. I soon came to realise to fulfil the main goal of the VICE I needed to pay attention to the outcome asking myself *had the VICE provided a critical platform for my participants?* With this in mind I chose the latter. It has been noted that arts-related research generally focusses on the data generated from the arts-related method used and less attention is given to reflection from the arts discipline itself (see Kara, 2015). However, I do recognise that the latter strategy may be of use to other researchers wanting to understand different arts disciplines to implement in their work particularly in practice-led research. Nevertheless, I had this complete data set that had been generated from the process and felt this simply could not go to waste; this data would prove useful for thickening the data previously generated from cycle one.

The data set from the process has therefore been reported and evidenced where appropriate throughout part (I) and (II) of the findings and discussions in chapters seven and eight.

I coded the data in the same way as I had done for the data in cycle one using a thematic analysis. I organised these codes based on how they related to consciousness and the forms of capitals. Any codes not linked to an existing main theme was not disregarded at this stage. An example of the coding showing the arts-related method has been provided in table VIIII below:

Table VIIII: Coding process with arts-related method (RO=Researcher Observation)

PARTICIPANT	SOURCE	NOTES/CODES	ORGANISING THEME
Nell	RO from Critical Film Review – poetry	RO: Nell is questioning why her life is the way it is. This is different from the interviews when she often responded with 'that's life.'	(LOWER) CLASS AWARENESS
Kat	RO from Critical Film Review – poetry	RO: Kat expresses anger using language more openly that she did in the interviews. She's angry at being on the brink of society.	(LOWER) CLASS AWARENESS

To test whether the VICE had acted as a critical platform I revisited the nodes for cycle two and regrouped them. Through triangulating my data in this way, I could relate to Freirean theory and Bourdieu's capitals. This generated organising themes that I referred to as theory/s and is written up in chapter nine. Table X below provides an example of the nodes that were generated and table XI is an example of how I linked the nodes to the theory/s.

Table X: Initial coding process (RO=Researcher Observation)

PARTICIPANT	QUOTES/OBSERVATIONS	NODES/CODES
Mary – Critical Film Review (interview)	*"I would say that sketch we did with the medical stuff was reality for me"*	Awareness of/seeing REALITY
RO – Leigh: Critical Film Review	Leigh cried quietly, she stared at the screen and did not raise her head or eyes from the film. At the end she was silent for a good few seconds	Shows emotion, recognising 'self'/others – IDENTITY
Leigh – Critical Film Review	**Leigh:** "*wow, this is my life. I know it's like this but to see it has really struck a chord with me…*"	CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Table XI: An example of linking organising themes from table X to theory/s

NODES/CODES	THEORY/S
REALITY	PROBLEM-POSING/SOLVING / CAPITALS / CRITICAL AWARENESS
IDENTITY	CAPITALS
CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT	REFLECTION / ACTION / CRITICAL AWARENESS / CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

6.10 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has shown how a visual methodology, relating to Freirean concept of praxis, in the form of an intervention can complement a critical ethnography.

A drama was the primary method for the process of the visual intervention and this method proved useful for my participants to be expressive in a way the interviews did not. As noted by Boal (2000), they were able to move their bodies in a given space. Poetry, although a minimal artform used in the film, further developed their

verbal expression. Overall, the process had enabled my participants to engage in reflection and action whilst the music they selected reflected their deep hurt. However, the Freirean concept of praxis did not occur until they could reflect from the film. This is because the film had provided a 'mirror' into their lives enabling them to enter a continuous cycle of reflection and action. Although class consciousness was being developed it was not in the Marxist sense.

Just as I discussed in chapter five, observations and diary entries enabled me to keep track of any tensions and contradictions between what my participants said and how they engaged with the task at hand. Moreover, the follow-up interviews and my diary entries show that I had reduced the Hawthorne effect.

Nevertheless, with visual methods came a vast array of ethical procedures and informed consent was therefore given at all necessary stages. Through the use of participatory methods consideration was given to potential emotional harm and conflict in terms of raising consciousness. And the film was closely related to the lives of my participants and was not misleading.

The methods I used for the VI developed as an iterative process from the CE. I analysed the data taking a thematic approach relating them to the theories discussed in chapters three and four. In triangulating my data, it is evident from the individual and group interviews and the arts-related methods that although my participants had begun to recognise their struggles as part of the wider social context they had not developed the confidence to challenge them. Furthermore, the findings from the group interviews confirmed my participants music selection in relation to the pain they had internalised.

The findings and discussions for the VI are discussed in chapter nine as part (III). Next, and in chapter seven, I present the findings and discussions for the data collected from CE on childhood and home backgrounds – part I.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION PART (I) – REFLECTIONS FROM CHILDHOOD AND ADULTHOOD

7.1 Introduction

The findings and discussions are split into three parts and I discuss these across the next three chapters. Below I have set out and related the titles of each section of the findings to the corresponding chapters:

CHAPTER SEVEN	CHAPTER EIGHT	CHAPTER NINE
Reflections from childhood & adulthood	Schooling and Educational Experiences & Adulthood	Using a Visual Intervention within Critical Ethnography

This chapter sets out the sociological explanations of the home backgrounds of each of my participants and the lived experiences of social inequalities that they share in common as I have come to understand them. It is important to understand lived inequalities and to connect them to wider social structures at the root cause. This chapter therefore provides a contextualisation of the family habitus and cultural capital of each of my participants in order to effectively answer the research question. The findings in this chapter are organised into sub-headings and cover five main themes that resulted from the data analysis. Moreover, I write in a chronological order from *childhood* through to *adulthood*, although I occasionally jump to and from to reflect on the findings more analytically.

7.2 Outline of the research

Each weekly interview was arranged into categories that reflected my participants' individual cultural and social, educational, economical and ideological backgrounds from a personal viewpoint, and at the level of their generational viewpoints. Although this research called on the experiences of my participants, I could not disregard the historical understandings within each family unit i.e. their parents/grandparents, particularly as I relate to critical theory which must relate society to a historical context (Horkheimer, 1972; How, 2003).

The weekly individual interviews were structured as set out in the Table XII below:

Table XII – Weekly structure

WEEK ONE:	Role of 'self' within family unit as adults	Role of 'self' within wider community
WEEK TWO:	Continuation from week one but in relation to childhood	
WEEK THREE:	Education experiences i.e. qualifications/careers, curriculum & hidden curriculum	Schooling experiences i.e. environment, teacher & peer relations, friendship groups
WEEK FOUR:	Economic experiences in childhood and adulthood	Economic sustainability
WEEK FIVE:	Family values	Social & political ideologies
WEEK SIX:	Recap of weeks 1-5	Informative sessions

Following these six weekly interviews, and after transcribing and adding meaning fields, to the transcriptions I discussed in chapter five, I re-interviewed my participants using the same format and for ease of reading, I refer to the data selected as evidence for this chapter as 'repeat interviews'. I then moved onto a further six individual interviews that critically interrogated my participants schooling and educational experiences. These interviews enabled me to link the class backgrounds and experiences of my participants to the role state schooling had played in reproducing class inequalities through the shaping of their thoughts and behaviours.

Next, the three group interviews took place over six weeks at fortnightly intervals and where I refer to the group as *we* and/or *us* I include myself in the conversations.

The fortnightly group interviews structure are set out in the Table XIII below:

Table XIII – Fortnight interview structure

INTERVIEW ONE:	Focus on common sub-themes from individual interviews	
INTERVIEW TWO:	Coping strategies	Barriers to individual and social upward mobility
INTERVIEW THREE:	Introduction to 'visual' hands on task	Research task & debate

7.3 A Summary of the Key Findings

> ### Key Findings Part (I)
>
> *Reflections from childhood and adulthood*
>
> - There was a common set of traits identifiable across all participants experiences that can be linked to a working class, poor and disadvantaged background:
>   - ➢ All participants were economically poor growing up
>   - ➢ All participants were educationally disadvantaged as children and young people
>   - ➢ All participants' families showed similar levels of cultural and social capital
>   - ➢ All participants had limited / no class consciousness
>   - ➢ All participants lacked in critical engagement about the world around them
> - There was a common set of behaviours identifiable across all participants that can be attributed to their experiences of being from a working class, poor and disadvantaged background:
>   - ➢ All participants had an 'adult' role growing up and displayed behaviours associated with being poor and disadvantaged
>   - ➢ All participants felt a sense of shame and embarrassment within their class experiences
>   - ➢ All participants accepted their positioning in a social hierarchy
>   - ➢ There was no class consciousness only experiences of class difference(s)
>   - ➢ Lived experiences of all participants were 'negatively' internalised

7.4 Reflections from Childhood and Adulthood

In this section I separate the findings into the following sub-headings: *i)
Economically poor ii) Educationally disadvantaged iii) Cultural and social functions
of the family and iv) Social and political ideologies.*

7.4.1(i) Economically poor

Each of my participants experienced being economically poor in terms of low
income(s) and material deprivation for as long as they can remember. They have
experienced relative poverty all their lives (and at times absolute poverty too) and it
is evident each of them suffered, and continue to suffer from, severe material
deprivation as set out in government guidelines/statistics which includes; the
inability to cope with unexpected financial expenses, the inability to eat meat,
protein or vegetarian equivalent every other day and the inability to go on a weekly
holiday every year.

My participants' fathers, with the exception of JD whose father passed away when
she was young, were the main 'bread winners' in each household when they were
growing up, although their mothers worked and earned a wage too. Parents are
remembered, by my participants, as always working but their hard work did not pay
off financially, leaving each family economically poor, through low incomes, with no
room for contingency funds.

> Mum couldn't afford things when we was growing up. We had hand me
> downs from cousins and we used to have stuff from car boots, I remember
> E**** […*mum's partner*] would come home with bags of stuff and we'd take
> what we wanted before he sold the rest.
>
> (JD, interview two)

> We didn't have much money [giggles] so my mum used to dress me and my
> sister S****** the same, it was cheaper and I used to get my eldest sister
> M******'s hand me downs.
>
> (Mary, interview two)

> My mum and dad worked so many hours just to get by so we never got what
> we wanted and what we had we appreciated.
>
> (Kat, interview two)

> My mum and dad worked long long hours and their wages didn't stretch that far because we was a big family. By the time they'd paid rent, shopping, gas and electric there wasn't much left.

(Nell, interview two)

> My parents didn't have a lot when we were growing up, they couldn't put anything by for emergencies.

(Leigh, interview two)

My participants were children growing up throughout the 1980s and 1990s, an epoch when Conservative Prime Ministers Thatcher and Major respectively held office, during which time periods of high unemployment were prevalent as discussed in chapters one and three. Apart from Kat's father, during this time briefly serving in the RAF, my participants' parents were mostly employed but their employment was low paid due to the unskilled nature of their jobs. All of them worked in local factories. The town in which my participants grew up became an industrial town in the early 1900s and had attracted a large proportion of Scottish people in the 1930s but by the 1980s, with a global recession, this town suffered a massive economic downturn; shops closed down, many houses were boarded up, streets were littered with rubbish and broken glass, buildings and underpasses (also known as subways) were covered in graffiti and jobs were no longer secure as they once had been. As a result, many families suffered hardship clinging onto any available employment in their fight for survival. These struggles have been noted elsewhere in other towns throughout England (Townsend, 1979; Hall, 2003; McKenzie, 2015).

Half way into interview two, JD and I spoke about the (un)affordability of living, growing up in an economically poor household, in an economically poor town and I could not help but notice how her voiced quietened and how she looked away, often at the floor, as she spoke. Upon reflection, I wondered if my very presence was a reason for JD's apparent sense of shame discussing a lack of funds with a potential stranger but having spoken to her regarding similarities in my life and after my conversations with Mary I knew the sense of shame had been ingrained in them, in us all, since childhood and it was difficult to shake off. It was as if being poor was due to the personal failings of my participants' parents and therefore not spoken about. No-one wanted to be identified as being at the lower end of a social divide, similar to findings in the Great British Class Survey (Savage, et at., 2015).

Being unable to afford the basics at times meant my participants were materially deprived as children. For example, all my participants lived on beans on toast or soup at some point during their childhoods and Nell reported sharing biscuits with her siblings because there was not enough to go around. This is still a common occurrence in adulthood with JD reporting having to eat noodles for several weeks at a time as she cannot always afford to buy enough food. Nonetheless with their parents in work and with easier access to credit, working class people were able to take on debt for items they could not necessarily afford outright and for my participants' parents this was a way of subsidising their income and it appears this only heightened the sense of shame if it was needed.

> My mum took loans, probably for us to live, […*because*] I remember the provi woman coming round every week… she never let us know what she was doing. I only knew she had loans because they would come to the door.
>
> (JD, interview two)

> My mum and dad always worked when I was younger and I don't think they ever had anything like loans or that. My mum was strict, you had to work and support yourself. If we couldn't afford it we didn't have it.
>
> (Mary, interview two)

During the interviews with Kat, Nell and Leigh I observed body language and tone of voice as more aggressive than in the interviews with JD and Mary. Kat spoke rather quickly whilst Nell flung her arms about in annoyance. Leigh pressed down on her kitchen table intermittently with her forefinger as she spoke almost as if she was poking the blame on someone or something.

> Other people out there work less but get more […*money*], it's an unfair world really but I was brought up to believe that working hard is best to support yourself. It's better to support yourself and do what you can.
>
> (Kat, interview two)

> My dad worked long hours and my mum worked from 9-5 but she used to bus it in and back so she'd be gone from 8 in the morning till 6 at night…My mum said she'd wouldn't ask for help cos she didn't want people talking about her behind her back but I do know my mum and dad had debt from loans.
>
> (Nell, interview two)

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My dad did all the hours god sends and my mum, as we were growing up she was at home but then she would go off and do a twilight shift at 5pm as my dad came in but they never had a lot when we were growing up. They couldn't get a loan and they didn't have the money to put by. My parents were from different backgrounds. My dad's side were on benefits but my mums side had the work ethic there. My nan and grandad never helped my mum out either, probably because who she married cos they met when they were 17 and they had me before they were married which in those days still looked wrong so they never got any help there.

(Leigh, interview two / repeat)

Since becoming adults and now within their immediate family settings, it is clear each of my participants still suffer from financial hardship due to low incomes either from precarious work or benefits and additional borrowing is necessary for them to get through their difficulties. History in this respect repeated itself.

J**** [my partner] borrows money from his mum to help me because things are really tight, it's a cheapo food week this week and I budget shop by planning what we need every day to get by.

(JD, interview four)

I have to juggle things around sometimes [...*like the bills*], you have to if you need it cos that's the only thing you can do. My mum has helped with shopping and things like that but if we don't need it we go without.

(Mary, interview four)

I have to budget and sometimes I'll take a calculator with me when I shop so I don't over spend because if I do, I spend it from another area. I have a friend that can help me out [...*with money*] but I don't like doing that.

(Kat, interview four)

We try and pay all our bills at the end of the month and then try and live on what's left throughout the month but we're in the red. If the washing machine breaks down or the boiler or something happens with the car we can't afford to fix it cos there's nothing left.

(Nell, interview four)

> I've had loans in the past and we're still paying them back so we can't borrow and we're often late paying things cos we have to sort things out or I fall behind because I don't have enough money in the first place.
>
> (Leigh, interview four)

I observed through body language and facial expressions what being economically poor meant for my participants and their young families and it was clear in my conversations with them that they had not known anything different at any point in their lives. It appeared to have always been shameful to ask for help, for assistance from the government, leaving parents in a position of borrowing from other sources which usually meant paying it back at a ridiculously high rate. And the similarities with my participants now as adults were all too common.

All felt they needed more money for essentials and to help them get by and with children to support the need was great. It is unsurprising that child poverty in the UK has greatly increased since 2015 with cuts in budgets and families already struggling, leaning more on other services such as schools for support according to a report in *The Guardian* (Adams, 2018). I myself, just like my participants have relied on funding pots within our children's schools to help pay for school trips. In this vein, one can argue how poverty is a lived experience of structural inequality and not due to inadequate parenting as argued by Sir Keith Joseph in the 1970s.

All my participants recalled moments growing up when they wanted items such as the latest shoes or gadgets but their parents could not afford them, items such as these were viewed as luxuries. Even now as adults providing for their own children, luxuries are thought of as having the internet or being able to have a day out or simply to save for a rainy day. Items such as the internet are a necessity for schooling and education by today's standards in a technological society but it is a necessity out of reach for some working class and poor people. As such these luxuries prove all too much in each of my participants households.

> Things you don't do every single day are leisure items like going out and stuff and toys. I can't afford any of it.
>
> (JD, interview four)

> I don't go out socialising I can't afford to. I'd like to take my son J**** out for the day or go on holiday but money doesn't stretch beyond food and bills.
>
> (Mary, interview four)

Treating myself to clothes would be nice cos I don't even get a chance to buy myself much clothes. I'm skint and I'm at breaking point and it's scary cos there's nothing I can do about it.

(Kat, interview four)

I don't have enough money to save. I'd like to save for the future, just enough in the bank so if anything went wrong I had it there.

(Nell, interview four)

We don't have the internet cos I can't afford it. We don't have things like swim memberships or money for days out. Yes I smoke and I have a couple of bottles of wine over the weekends. I could cut out smoking, I could stop my bottles of wine but that's as far as I can go there's no other way of making ends meet as it is.

(Leigh, interview four)

All my participants experienced, when they were growing up, that working was better than not working and somehow money would never be plentiful. Additional borrowing was viewed as essential for day to day living and they experienced 'need' over 'greed' attitudes and often referred to those without jobs as *'lazy gits'.* Their common experiences have continued into adulthood and struggling financially and being materially deprived has therefore been a somewhat 'normal' phenomenon amongst them all.

Moreover, being from the poorer end of a social class divide resulted in each of my participants, as children and young people, experiencing social exclusion through forms of bullying because their parents could not afford to keep up with the latest trends. They identified themselves as someone not worthy; as not good enough.

The popular girls used to pick on me [...*and*] I was nearly forced out the second-floor window [...*at school*] once. They used to call me names and I was slapped across the face cos they were better than me, they had nicer clothes and they were pretty.

(JD, interview three / repeat)

The kids that bully is because they come from money. It's wrong, it is. You shouldn't have to go to a school with money for people to look at you better,

you shouldn't have to feel like being poor is worse, it's wrong but that's way it is.

(Mary, interview three)

I got bullied because I wasn't like them kids […*who had everything*]. They knocked my confidence.

(Kat, interview three)

I had a friend whose mum was on benefits and she got everything so I'll be honest with ya, my own mates used to dig me with what I was wearing, we used to dig each other but yeah other kids called us tramps.

(Nell, interview three)

I didn't really get bullied at primary school because that was a down and out school in a rough area but when I got to seniors' school I did. I wasn't like the other girls. I see it now with my daughter A****. Her friends have asked her to go to B***** after school, it's twenty pounds and I haven't got it, I can't afford it and I worry how long it'll be before they're not her friends anymore.

(Leigh, interview three)

My participants' parents took on low paid work because that is all they had access to and during uncertain times. They had not been educated to a level where they could get above and beyond their means, leaving the family/s believing it was their own tough luck. It is clear from the evidence that my participants did not just experience what it was like to be economically poor, it also defined who they were and who they still are today particularly as they had learned to internalise their negative experiences. These are real inequalities that have been a thorn in the side for lower working class groups of people for many decades (Beynon and Glavanis, 1999; Welshman, 2013; Savage, et al., 2015). From the youngest ages recalled, my participants all felt that people better off than them judged them and these feelings were reinforced through bullying at school.

7.4.1(ii) Educationally disadvantaged

Reflecting upon the first three weeks of interviews made me realise that my participants did not just share the experience of being economically poor but they also experienced educational disadvantages likely to be a consequence of being economically poor. Having no money for activities often resulted in my participants

playing outside as children because *'fresh air was free'* according to their parents but it was also a time where parents could switch off from the daily grind of work to focus on other forms of work such as around the house. Having no money for activities and limited education and no free time themselves to enjoy trips with their children to places such as the library or museums disadvantaged my participants in relation to extra-curricular activities.

My participants however, did recall occasional fond memories of having story books as children and having a parent who would read to them at bedtime and they too, as parents themselves, have had similar moments with their own children. But with the need to work to survive each of them fall short of seeing education, in the formal sense, as a way to benefit themselves or their children in the future. They are unable to afford the required items or fees at school and college level either for themselves or their children. This echoes my participants past experiences too, whereby parents could not afford for them to partake in school trips.

> J***** […*my son*] wants to do photography but I can't afford to buy him a camera and he needs one to get on the course.
>
> > (JD, interview three)
>
> I don't know what […*my son*] J**** is gonna do yet at college he might do an electrician's course but he works at the weekend so he will have to buy his own things whatever he needs cos I can't afford it.
>
> > (Mary, interview three)
>
> I would like to pursue a career in the performing arts but it's not the right time, I can't afford it. I don't know if it'll ever be the right time. I just can't afford to get to university.
>
> > (Kat, interview three)
>
> I hit every brick wall going trying to get on the Access course […*at college*]. I've got a family and a mortgage and I can't afford a grand to get on the course and if I wanna go part time I have to pay two grand, it's stupid. I just give up.
>
> > (Nell, interview three)
>
> I'm desperate to get the internet in here. I don't want them kids realising that A**** doesn't have the same as them and it won't get any easier when she

gets to seniors school either. We've got a laptop but it's knackered with viruses but we have got A****'s tablet but A**** says she can't do some of her homework because it's not compatible. So what am I meant to do go and buy another laptop I just can't afford it. So basically what they are doing is penalising her which isn't fair.

<div align="right">(Leigh, interview three)</div>

In this interview with Leigh, she referred to 'they' meaning the government rather than school. She could see in a way the government had control over the schools and I realised my participants in general, held the state responsible when things were tough but they were not conscious of schooling being, and what Althusser argues as, an ideological state apparatus whereby social inequalities are reproduced through the legitimation of the status quo (Althusser, 1971). And as such, as young people, my participants were subjected to parental attitudes that required them to leave school and find a job. Further educational opportunities were not supported.

I dropped out of school in year 11 and mum got me in her place volunteering until I turned 16 and then I got a job in P*******.

<div align="right">(JD, schooling interview)</div>

I went to work in a factory straight from school cos that's what I was told to do to earn money. My mum and dad split up and she was the only one earning so I had no choice.

<div align="right">(Mary, schooling interview)</div>

I wanted to do performing arts but my parents didn't support me, my dad said I should get a real job.

<div align="right">(Kat, schooling interview)</div>

Literally the day I left [...*school*] my mum and dad said to me if you don't get a job then you need to find somewhere else to live cos we can't afford to keep ya. They took me to the industrial estate, I got a loada job forms and took them to the job centre to get them to help me fill them in, took them all back the next day, yeah and I got a job and I've literally worked from day dot.

<div align="right">(Nell, schooling interview)</div>

> My mum gave me an ultimatum, you either go to college or you find a job
> you're not sitting at home on your bum and I went off to work.

<div align="right">(Leigh, schooling interview)</div>

Working in whatever capacity they could as quickly as they could was the message drummed home to each of my participants as young people leaving school. Their parents did not show any support for any form of schooling and education post 16 and it was not clear if parents would have done so if circumstances had been different, if they had the knowledge, although all participants and their parents viewed an education as needed for higher level jobs. In their case however, higher level jobs were unnecessary as that meant spending years '*learning*' and '*not earning*' which did not fit with their daily living; their very survival. It was a ladder too far out of reach. My participants had been reproduced economically, culturally and educationally through social structures i.e. the family, work and school and the role the state played in the reproduction of inequalities can therefore not be dismissed.

Moreover, a family allowance, a state benefit payment paid to all families with school aged children, stopped as soon as the child finished full time schooling leaving my participants' families in need of additional income. Therefore, gaining employment in a factory being '*quick*', '*easy*' and '*fairly straight forward*' was of benefit to the family needs. Although my participants report their fathers to be the highest paid earners and the one to work the most hours, their gender was less important when it came to working attitudes. All family members were expected to pull together financially.

7.4.1(iii) Cultural and social functions of the family

Within each of my participants' families, in the present day and most certainly as they were growing up it was not uncommon for the males and females to have gendered roles. For example, my participants report their fathers to be the highest paid earner and the one to work the most hours as previously mentioned but their mothers often cleaned and cooked and worked around having the children to sort out. They reported their mothers reading to them whilst rough play was common between the males. And whilst both parents were often viewed as '*strict*' it was quite often the fathers who held the most authority and my participants knew not to cross them. These gendered roles are still apparent with my participants as adults and especially as parents themselves.

The social function within each family, saw all my participants growing up subjected to a hierarchical order and they experienced different levels of control. The eldest of siblings for example, were given the responsibility of looking after younger siblings when parents were out at work, and I too made this observation with my participants' children although they were not home alone when I visited their houses. Looking back over the course of history with particular reference to the notion of 'separate spheres' in the nineteenth century and it becomes obvious that political and economic society was changing and working and family roles became stereotypical of men and women (Hall, McClelland and Rendall, 2000; Gleadle, 2001). A hierarchical order was visible when women took on more domesticated roles whilst men were the main breadwinners who took on more physical roles. The man was considered the head of the household and his children and spouse were his property. Although times have changed since then, comparisons can still be drawn and all my participants could rank their families in order from the one with most authority to the least.

> My mum was boss then me then my sister. I looked after her when mum was at work but now we're older I'd say my mum my sister then me because I'm the failure.

> (JD, interview one / repeat)

> I was the youngest of three girls. My sister S***** was the loud confident one and all my mum's friends used to say you were the wee quiet one. Yeah, I always used to be very very quiet you never used to get a word out of me. But I was always in the background and I never missed anything.

> (Mary, interview one / repeat)

> My dad was top dog and my mum was strict too but I didn't have to cook or things like that because my sisters were older and they had to do it.

> (Kat, interview one / repeat)

> My dad was the boss my mum was strict and us siblings had respect for each other but we knew our places with the oldest right down and we were never cheeky with our elders.

> (Nell, interview one / repeat)

My mum's side was strict, my dad was the soft one [giggles]. There's me and my brother and I'm the eldest so I done everything, I looked after him.

<div align="right">(Leigh, interview one / repeat)</div>

Views of being unequal were apparent in the homes of my participants. The unequal nature of homelife not only mirrored a working life but was necessary for the function of the whole family unit; each family member had a role to fulfil contributing to the normality of a hierarchical system in which my participants developed their sense of 'self'. It is clear to see how the family 'habitus', as theorised by Bourdieu (1984), really comes into play here as experiences of family life and the opportunities my participants had been exposed to personally shaped how they thought and behaved.

Moreover, all my participants were taught to respect their 'elders' no matter who they were. A viewpoint held within their grand-parents' generation too. The elder, it was believed, was more deserving of respect because they were older and wiser and therefore 'rightfully' held more authority. This view highlighted the inequalities between people as normal and as a result not one participant questioned the inequalities. They had experienced unequal power relations growing up in their family units and even in their friendship groups and had become accustomed to accepting the status quo. Not one participant felt as if they were treated as equal to their siblings and all knew their place at home.

C***** [...*my sister*] was always the one who was kinda pushed out when we were younger and I was the favourite one but I always felt on my own.

<div align="right">(JD, interview two)</div>

In our family household no we weren't equals. We were classed as favourites and stuff, we had favourites and all that kinda shit. My dad made it clear that S***** was his favourite and M****** was my mum's favourite, and where the hell do you come into that?

<div align="right">(Mary, interview two)</div>

I have epilepsy and my parents always treated me differently to my sisters. I've had to learn to stand up for myself really.

<div align="right">(Kat, interview two)</div>

No, we weren't equals but to be honest with ya I don't think they planned on having 7 children, no cos my mum tried to have the coil fitted. And she was sterilised and it failed twice so I generally don't believe they planned on having 7 cos after the 3rd she tried the coil.

(Nell, interview two)

Me and my brother are different and I think my mum favours my brother over me because she's always been there for him, he's been in prison and he's taken drugs, drinking, sleeping in the woods and just generally been a bum and my mum has always supported him and yet me I've learned to stand on my own two feet and I feel that she just constantly knocks me down for some reason. I never did anything wrong and yet I feel she favours him.

(Leigh, interview two)

7.4.1(iv) Social and political ideologies

However, all my participants were aware, when they were growing up, that their parents did not hold any position of authority in the workplace, i.e. as a supervisor or manager. They were aware their parents had to clock in and out at the same time each day and they knew their parents were answerable to supervisors and/or managers so it is no surprise that homelife for working class people mirrored all they knew.

My participants had been reproduced and their experiences led to them believing they are on the bottom rung of society with no entitlement to a voice in wider social structures/institutions. This was clear in their responses:

We go through all this *[…school, work, life]* but what for? Like people who have got money they have an easier life and they enjoy life but when you go through life with a struggle it's kinda like stressful and you can't do anything. I struggle emotionally if I see other people struggling because I can't help.

(JD, interview two / repeat)

I've got no power at all, I'm just a little twat, that has not the power, not a light in her. I haven't. That twat in Downing Street has and that's the light of it and that's true.

(Mary, interview two)

I don't have a voice anywhere. The government try and make it come across like we're the bad guys cos we're on benefits and things like that. It disgusts me. There's just no equalism out there.

(Kat, interview two)

I don't have a voice in this community […*where I live*] we just keep ourselves to ourselves, we don't even know who the neighbours are really.

(Nell, interview two)

I have no power, not in the slightest because I wouldn't know how to argue, I can't argue. I don't have enough knowledge about certain things so in that case I still wouldn't be able to argue a case unless I could get all the relevant information and even then I still think if I was speaking to someone more up there and they had a different opinion I wouldn't be able to argue that case because of the way I am.

(Leigh, interview two)

I asked them *'is there anything you can do to change this?'* during the informative session and they all replied with *'no'* and put a lack of questioning down to it being *'that's life'* and *'there's nothing you can do about it'*. Although I spoke to them about the inequalities amongst working class people not one participant felt confident enough to identify their issues as being part of wider societal issues. Each participant had been reproduced through structural forces but human agency also had a role in individual inequalities through their acceptance of subordination within their family, school and work life.

My participants shared a feeling of social and economic differences, although they were not directly aware of being working class as children or teenagers. They had not developed a sense of who they had anything in common with on a class level. They had no class identity; only class experiences.

I think […*social class*], it's to do with who you are, what you do, what you wear and what you get because even at school you could always tell the kids who had everything and the kids that didn't. My mum couldn't afford branded stuff, we used to have two-stripe trackies from the market. It was the same for my friends.

(JD, interview five)

The higher class have more money, *[…they]* speak better and are better educated and stuff. They have mum and dad to pay for things whereas we didn't have that.

(Mary, interview five)

Upper classes are snotty nosed buggers really, they look down on you and belittle you. I experienced this after my dad came out of the RAF, we were alright then but afterwards we dropped down the pay scale and my parents couldn't afford a lot.

(Kat, interview five)

Those with money tend to do a lot more. My mum and dad couldn't afford a lot but we never went without as kids like at Christmas and stuff, they took loan after loan just to get by.

(Nell, interview five)

Those with more money would tend to look down on us, the hoity toities…because I didn't have what they had.

(Leigh, interview five)

Moreover, when discussing political ideology, one major difference that I noted in past and present experiences is that all my participants held in common how their parents were part of a union at work and all voted for Labour because, as my participants tell it as they were told by their parents, *'they were for the people'*. But there was a lack of understanding about the ins and outs of unions on my participants part and also with what Labour stood for. Each of them as young people did not realise their parents had any form of class consciousness believing any knowledge regarding political ideology was empty nonsense and now as adults say they do not care about political ideology and none of them are part of any unions. Having said that, Roberts and Rose (1978) asserts that working class people who joined unions did not necessarily experience ever having to strike and with this in mind it is not entirely clear if my participants parents' joined unions to stand up for working classes in general or just to protect their own interests and if the latter is the case, this could be a reason why there was a lack of understanding on my participants part.

I don't get why anybody does it [...*stands together that is*] I just don't get it, I don't, all [...*political parties*] say they're doing this, this and this but you don't see it happening.

(JD, interview five)

I don't know about unions I don't go into that kinda thing. I don't vote anymore either as I think [...*political parties*] are all bullshitters to be honest. They all just tell you want you want to hear. From what I've seen and heard and what I've listened to on telly, from what they've produced I just thought what a bunch of arseholes that produce empty promises.

(Mary, interview five)

Throughout the interview with Kat in week five I observed her keenness to vocalise her opinion of governments in a negative way. She had worked in factories dominated by foreign workers and her experiences were overpowering and she was quite angry, evident in her response during our conversation.

As we're in Europe we get loads of Europeans coming down taking the jobs and if you're on benefits they tell you, you have to find work. The foreigners are paid less, they are cheaper so they get the jobs. Also, with homeless people, the foreigners get a home easier than those who are homeless which I think is unfair and people that have been in the army or those who have worked most of their lives get nothing out of it.

(Kat, interview five)

It's just a loada bullshit. It doesn't matter cos [...*the government*] are gonna do what they wanna do with the money and stuff so what's the point in even taking 30 seconds of your time to read something they're not gonna do. What's the point when you're never gonna win or even understand.

(Nell, interview five)

I don't vote cos I don't understand what they were talking about. I do read the paper and I read the political pages. It's like today Cameron is trying his best again to try and frighten everybody about leaving the EU saying we're gonna have world war three. I do try and get my head around it. They're all saying different things and it's all about who to believe and if you do believe that then when they get to power something else happens anyway so it doesn't really stack up.

(Leigh, interview five)

7.5 Working Class Behaviours

The findings I have presented so far relate to my participants' common experiences of being working class, poor and disadvantaged and this next section presents the findings on the common behaviours that appeared as a result of their experiences. I discuss these behaviours under a further three sub-headings; *i). 'Adultlike' working class and poor childhoods, ii). Socio-economic awareness* and *iii). Social structures/institutions.*

7.5.1(i) 'Adultlike' working class and poor childhoods

What became quickly apparent across all my participants' responses throughout the individual interviews analysis was how they had all experienced an 'adult' role growing up. I too, shared this experience. Growing up, and the need to want to be older, was necessary for independence and to have control in their lives but also in preparation for a working class life; to work and earn a wage. My participants went through a process of being 'normalised'.

Being from a poor and disadvantaged working class background meant as children and young teens my participants often had to look after younger siblings so parents could work, they were subjected to house hold chores such as cleaning and preparing/cooking food and finding employment so they could buy their own essentials such as toiletries.

Saturdays was always chore days. We had a rota which would change every week and on other days we would take it in turns to do washing up and drying after dinner…I was responsible for […*my younger sister*] C***** when mum worked.

(JD, Interview two)

My mum and dad worked [...*so as a child*] I used to go to my granny's and I'd have to get the coal for her and I used to, she had all these brass things and it was almost like calamine lotion and you used to spread it on and we used to thingy it off and she used to have the windows wide open. You used to sit there freezing.

(Mary, Interview two)

We looked after my mum and dad from the age of being able to do dishes. It would start off with the youngest always done dishes and then you worked up and the older you got the more work you got. We done all the cooking and cleaning for them coming in from work. I wasn't allowed out until I'd obviously finished or put on the dinner, even then with the babysitting obviously I done a lot of babysitting with my siblings and I didn't ever have school holidays.

(Nell, Interview two)

My dad would be out at work and my mum would do part time and we had to do chores and stuff, like housework.

(Kat, Interview two)

We had to work for things we didn't have things handed to us on a plate, we had to work hard.

(Leigh, Interview two)

Of course, these experiences differ to how middle class children are prepared for adulthood and Laureau (2011) refers to these different experiences as an 'accomplishment of natural growth' amongst the working class and poor families, that is children being able to develop without the input of the adults. During the process of natural growth Laureau discusses children playing and making up their own rules whereas in middle class families parents tend to work with their children on a more equal footing through planning activities, referring to this as a 'concerted cultivation'. Laureau (2003, p.4) says 'working class and poor children, despite tremendous economic strain, often have more 'childlike' lives with autonomy from adults and control over their extended leisure time', and in relation to my research I would agree, in this respect however I feel there is an element of (un)natural growth. As young children my participants feared the wrath of their parents if they stepped out of line, so play was often initiated with this in mind and as my participants grew

older free time was spent mimicking adult behaviour, for example my participants discussed using inappropriate language and shouldering high levels of stress, often displaying angry outbursts of what they could not have. Their behaviour was rather rebellious in places.

Although within the family environment, being a child/young teen mirrored adulthood, outside of the family environment i.e. out of the house and view of the adults and usually when in the company of school friends, being a young teen still mirrored adulthood. There was a sense of 'wild' and 'carefree' behaviour when my participants had free time. Behaviours such as drinking and smoking at young ages on the one hand, could be viewed as a deviant way of them gaining some control in their lives as these were done in secret but on the other hand having no money and having been subjected to an oppressive home life, being left to fill their own free time saw them not knowing what or having anything else to do especially when they hung around on the streets. Behaviours such as these have been frowned upon in wider society and reported on within the 'underclass' debate, attracting negative attention in both politics and the media, with young teens being referred to over the years as 'chavs', 'yobs' and 'hoodies' (Jones, 2011; Welshman, 2013). The expression 'out of sight, out of mind' springs to mind as parents would not be aware of their children's free time.

> With our group of friends, those who had poorer backgrounds were a lot more misbehaved. They'd dog school more often, they started smoking before anyone else and they also got pregnant before anyone else. I didn't smoke until I was 16, I started without my mum knowing. [*My younger sister…*] C***** found out one time cos I got drunk with G**** but I didn't really care and C***** grassed on me.

> (JD, secondary school interview)

> I was about 14 when I used to sneakily drink before school club, think I done it about twice and then smoked a fag with it as well [giggles]. My mum and dad had to pick me up from school club on the second time I done it though cos I was so drunk.

> (Mary, secondary school interview)

We'd walk along […*with friends*] having a laff and a giggle. A lot of them would spark up fags, I'm gonna be honest with ya I didn't really start smoking until late on. It was behind my mums back [giggles], I hit 15 maybe 16 where I started to find boys and go out and drink 20/20. My mum dint know half of what I got up to.

(Nell, secondary school interview)

When I was allowed out I used to go to go to my friend's house. It was literally a 2-minute walk and we used to stay out and drink alcohol. There was nothing for us youngsters to do.

(Kat, secondary school interview)

I had a boyfriend who was 17 and I was 14 and he had a car, that was the only reason I went out with him cos I didn't like him as a person but he used to come and pick me up from school sometimes and at weekends I'd go over and stay at his house, his mum didn't give a shit and my mum thought I was at K****'s but K**** used to come and stay with me and we used to go and get a bottle of mad dog 20/20.

(Leigh, secondary school interview)

During my observations I was able to see how history repeated itself. I witnessed how 'adultlike' behaviours are being developed through the class reproduction of a new generation; my participants' children. I observed how the expectation of certain behaviours was paramount for each family to function as a 'whole' unit and there had been no experiences of any alternatives. The younger children of my participants looked out for each other and were expected to do household chores or fill their time accordingly whilst the older children would be out whenever they could. According to Giroux (2001) these free time behaviours could be viewed as resistant type behaviours that wielded agency in opposition to the power relations that oppressed them but with this in mind it is clear my participants as young people, and even with their own children, did not relate such behaviours to their liberation for social change. On one occasion I witnessed Mary's young and underage teenage son intoxicated as he was dropped home by his friends. Mary felt embarrassed as she explained how he *'hangs out with all the wrong people'* and she's *'tried telling him but he doesn't listen'.* Mary herself displayed similar behaviours around the same age as her son and discussed them in individual reactionary terms rather than in a more-broader picture of class freedom.

It was the Easter holidays during week one of the individual interviews and my participants' children were off school and very much a part of the daily 'holiday' routine. JD's house also had bare floors and walls unfinished with paint, with empty paint pots sat in the corner of the living room. With her lack of household furniture, items such as shoes were often spilling out into neighbouring rooms, it was visibly apparent JD was suffering from financial hardship. I observed similar hardship at Mary, Nell and Leigh's houses too although Mary and Nell had the basics in good working order. No changes had been made to the décor in JD's house and neither had there been any additional furniture brought in throughout the duration of the interviews.

My time at JD's house saw her young daughter rolling in and out of the living room, where myself and JD were mostly sat talking, on her roller skates. She had been left to fill her time as she wished even before I had arrived and not because JD worked but because JD did not have the money or means of transport to take her daughter out to an activity or to an event, evident from her conversations with me. JD's daughter appeared 'bored' and at times she would enter the living room and immediately start a conversation with us even though I and JD were talking. After several minutes had passed, and it was clear she was going to continue being a distraction, JD got up and fetched her daughter a biscuit from the kitchen. I thought perhaps JD's daughter was seeking attention as I was a stranger in her home but JD mentioned how she relied on her older son, who was in still in bed at this point, or the neighbours' children to escort her daughter to the local playground so she could have quiet time to occasionally clean the house.

I observed this reliance on older siblings in Nell's house too. Nell had put her youngest child into holiday club previously but found it so financially draining that she now relied on her eldest child to look after him whilst she worked during the holidays. It was clear to see the 'parent' like relationship with Nell's children when the eldest put the tv on and fetched some snacks for the youngest although Nell was present in the house.

7.5.1(ii) Socio-economic awareness

In a similar vein, there was an expectation, from my participants' parents, for them as children to behave in a way that did not draw attention to themselves or their family in public; an expectation my participants also have as parents. There was a general consensus amongst them that those with money tend to look down on poor people and therefore they should behave in a way that did not attract gossip from

others. All my participants said, '*in public [like at the doctors] you had to behave, because that was for the benefit of others'* with four of them continuing with *'or you'd be in trouble when you got home'* or *'you'd get a clip around the ear 'ole'* and Nell further said, *'all my mum had to do was give us a look and we knew'*, a tactic Nell also uses with her children.

My participants' experiences revealed how they shared common 'cultural', 'social' and 'economic' capitals with their friends, displaying similar behaviours across their own friendship groups (Bourdieu, 1986). They were aware of differences amongst other groups and as such they often felt undeserving which has resulted in, in addition to the outwardly behaviours, individual internalised negative behaviours.

> I don't deserve anything now never mind growing up. I act impulsively and struggle to take control of things [...*in my life*]. I have self-harmed many times because I suffer with depression and anxiety.
>
> (JD, interview two / repeat)

> I've never self-harmed or anything like that but I know what it feels like to be made to feel not nice and not deserving. I'd just try and laugh it off though so they didn't see it getting to me. It's a lonely thing to go through.
>
> (Mary, interview two / repeat)

> When I was younger, I attempted to self-harm by cutting my arm. The reason I was doing it in the first place was just so I could feel like I could fit in with some people from my school. I wouldn't do it now but back then I just wanted to fit in.
>
> (Kat, interview two / repeat)

> I always did [...*act impulsively*]. I hated being called a tramp and not having what other kids had but I'd get on with it. I was no gimp.[57]
>
> (Nell, interview two / repeat)

> I have hit rock bottom so many times and I can't see a way out. I've never self-harmed but I have felt suicidal because you just don't fit in anywhere, there's just no way out.
>
> (Leigh, interview two / repeat)

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[57] Gimp in this community simply means to be weak.

The behaviours of being working class, poor and disadvantaged not only visibly separated my participants from higher class groups growing up but it clearly defined *who* they were. Amongst their friendship groups they all report in one way or another displaying boisterous and/or *'naughty'* external behaviours, they would also stick up for friends and family members where necessary but all participants internalised behaviours such as '*depression'*, and '*anxiety'*. The nature of their upbringing and their lack of education meant they did not understand their internalised behaviours and nor did they talk about them which resulted in them feeling a great sense of *'loneliness'*. This sense of loneliness is in line with Marx's thinking on self-alienation whereby one becomes separated from their 'species-being' as discussed in chapter three.

7.5.1(iii) Social structures/institutions

Nevertheless, my participants grew up knowing the importance of family co-dependency most notably through a tight-knit sibling kinship, they learned their place in the sibling kinship pecking order, they learned how to manipulate and bargain with their siblings usually through 'telling tales' to their parents but most importantly they developed a 'cultural behaviour' that served them well within their families, friendship groups and wider society. Despite feeling lonely my participants displayed forms of solidarity**.** Even if unequal, they had all developed key skills that prepared them for a working class life.

All my participants however, spoke of not having the need for adult input on their day to day lives at home within their family units and this applied more so within the wider society such as their communities and their schools because adult input showed a '*sign of weakness'* amongst their working class peer groups. With a lack of parental input schooling and education appears to be a pointless exercise.

> I dropped out of school and J***** […*my son*] has tried to do the same but he never bothered going to school and the school took me to court and prosecuted me.
>
> (JD, interview three)

> Schools are unfair, they teach the ones I would say have the money to talk…the ones who can be instrumental they're the ones that have got all the money. The lower class ones would be interested in going on trips and playing instruments but we can't afford to do that so what's the point.
>
> (Mary, interview three)

My sisters are older than me and they left school with nothing really but I had a passion for performing arts and my parents didn't support me with it. They used to tell me there was no money to be made in acting and that I should get a real job.

<div align="right">(Kat, interview three)</div>

School seems a lot more stressful from when we were kids, there's more pressure on them [...*the children*]. C******* [...*my daughter*] keeps coming out with she's thick and everyone else just is smarter but yeah I definitely think there is more pressure now. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing because rather than put my hand up [...*when I was at school*] and have everyone laugh at me, teachers left you to it, it swings and roundabouts really.

<div align="right">(Nell, interview three)</div>

My parents weren't educated and my mum, well she wanted me to leave school and get a job, but education isn't all that, yes you have to be disciplined in the workplace so in school you are taught how to behave around others. You know you can't shout and scream in the workplace because you're taught that in school but with education children get left behind which doesn't get picked up which means they're never gonna have a decent job cos they are not given the opportunities to get on at school to give them that boost they need. I guess they don't want to educate people or the drop outs and stuff cos then they'll have an opinion which means then they'll start to fight against something.

<div align="right">(Leigh, interview three)</div>

I was rather intrigued by Leigh's *'then they'll have to fight against something'* comment and felt it would be appropriate to revisit this conversation. It was the first time in the three weeks of interviewing that any of my participants had spoken in a way that I could view as being on a deeper and more critical level. Was it possible she recognised a real class struggle in terms of education? And if she did, was it possible that I could scratch a little deeper with my other participants?

Upon a deeper reflection it was evident that my participants could recognise class differences in their communities and their schools and even in wider society but from week three's repeat interviews what became clearer was that they did not

associate these differences with a class struggle, viewing any sort of commonality challenging the status quo as negative or with little interest.

> I don't keep up with political affairs really. I don't watch telly because I see stuff on Facebook. I know what I need to know and I go with the flow.

> (JD, interview three / repeat)

> I remember there was riots a few years ago but I didn't really know what the depth of them or what they were making a statement about but I really don't take interest in that kinda thing to be honest.

> (Mary, interview three / repeat)

> I watch the local news now and then and I've heard of the recent march [*…regarding the junior doctors' dispute*] that's been going on but the news aren't showing it are they? I've got a friend who's doing it I think, but you can't put yourself on the line if you don't know what it is.

> (Kat, interview three / repeat)

> I don't pay attention to be honest, it's bad ain't it but I don't have time. I do watch the local news sometimes but I don't really have the telly on much and sometimes I see stuff on Facebook but am quite a private person I don't like getting involved, am just not interested.

> (Nell, interview three / repeat)

> You've got the teachers who go on strike cos they don't think they're paid enough, it's ridiculous. It's the same as this NHS striking, if you become a doctor you want to save lives if you're striking people are gonna die, that's how I look at it but I think they're gonna start backing down.

> (Leigh, interview three / repeat)

Throughout the informative sessions I asked my participants if they understood the information I had provided them with and whilst they all said *'yes',* they did not have any further questions to ask me when I tried to engage them in a 2-way conversation during the individual interviews. Having the time to reflect enabled me to conclude that although they heard what I was saying and they thought about what was said and on occasions could provide examples,[58] overall they could not process

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[58] I have provided an example of the evidence as a vignette with JD attached as Appendix IV.

the information confidently enough to comprehend the new knowledge and this inability to process such information may have contributed to a lack of interest which therefore resulted in them shying away from asking any further questions. This finding is in line with Freire's (1974) notion of them being adapted in their environment as discussed in chapter four. My participants took what I had said at face value, not because they did not want change but more so because they have been unable to recognise how they have engaged in behaviours that could promote potential social change either for themselves or as agents in the wider socio-political sphere. In the words of Freire (2015, p.4) 'if man is incapable of changing reality he adjusts himself instead'.

7.6 Discussion Part (I)

In this section, I argue in favour of a Marxist class analysis but I believe for a further relational cultural perspective we need to think about how inequalities are socially reproduced. For this reason, I argue in favour of relating to Bourdieu's notion of the forms of capitals. Below, I discuss the conclusions I have drawn from the findings part I and relate them to the literature.

My participants' parents had worked in factories in low level positions with low level pay and from this suffered financial hardship. Growing up in families so poor resulted in my participants being socially excluded by those in higher class groups. Although my participants experienced class differences in terms of being poor and disadvantaged, not one participant questioned what they had come to learn as being normal. But with a lack of education, my participants, just like the generations before them, have had no choice or freedom to move beyond their poverty stricken lives. In short, they have experienced a working class poor and disadvantaged life and they have learned how to behave as a working class poor and disadvantaged person.

The 'generational' transmission of working-class habits has infiltrated the minds of my participants, their families before them and their families now going forward into the future. What mattered most to my participants for their future generations echoed their past generations; to find a job, earn their keep and not draw attention to themselves.

7.6.1 Analysing social class

Class in my mind, is undoubtedly key to understanding the reproduction of inequalities and power relations in society. I therefore argue that Marx provides a

good starting point. Marx (1848) defined social class as having a relation to the means of production. This relation is based on conflict through the exploitation and domination of one class by another as discussed in chapter three. Marx also believed these relations were unnatural and argued that economic society gave rise to a political superstructure which in turn determined social consciousness. With this in mind, the working class are exploited and their willingness or ignorance of the status quo is the result of them having a 'false' consciousness. A false consciousness is what alienates the worker from the commodity s/he produces, from others and eventually from the 'self'.

The findings suggest that social relations of production did play an essential role in the childhoods of my participants. By Marx's definition, my participants' parents are working class as they do not own the means of production, providing only their labour that generates a surplus value. This means my participants' can be located in the class structure as having a working class origin by virtue of their family background (Wright, 2000).

All of my participants had been subjected to a hierarchical order in their households and they knew who held the most authority. There was conflict between the siblings as they fought for their place in the family unit. There was also an expectation placed on my participants by their parents for them to complete household chores and they were subjected to punishments to keep them in line. Furthermore, with their parents working long hours my participants learned to adapt to the working day resulting in them becoming normalised and accepting the status quo. This relates to Bourdieu's (1989) discussion on *symbolic power.* My participants parents held the most *symbolic power* followed by the eldest siblings. It is here in this *field* where dominant relations played out confirming every individuals place in the hierarchy of the family.

My participants had not recognised forms of alienation and did not understand the term 'oppression'. As children, it was not their economic relationship to the means of production *per se* but the social relations of production their parents faced in different social structures, i.e. as exploited in the workplace, that reflected how each household was run. It can therefore be said my participants were subjected to social relations that resembled exploitation, domination and alienation. Similar can been seen within their school relations between my participants and their teachers and between my participants and their peers. This will be discussed in detail in chapter eight.

7.6.1.1 Consciousness and class shame

To reiterate a quote from Marx (1970) (in chapter one) *'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness'* (p.182). In this respect I argue that the social being of my participants has determined their consciousness.

However, during the individual interviews, I felt at first as if my participants displayed a 'false' consciousness, but I soon realised during the group sessions it was not as simple as this. At the group level, their 'collective' consciousness revealed they had been on similar journeys and at some point, post-school, their 'false' consciousness had become de-railed into what I would call a 'disengaged' consciousness. In Freirean terms it could be said they were in a 'semi-transitive' mode (Freire, 2015, p.62). This is because my participants lived in the moment and could therefore not view their lives with enough space to be critical and effective with change. All my participants were politically disengaged. They wanted change to happen to prevent social inequalities such as poverty and homelessness but all felt powerless to engage with making change happen. Not only had they been normalised but they felt that change could not happen particularly as they hold deep suspicions of the government, i.e. a belief that the government do not work for the mass of the people. Feeling this way appears to be a general consensus amongst the wider public (for example see Morell, 2003; Webb, 2009) and it is caused by how political parties conduct themselves and their manifestos in order to secure votes. Furthermore, my participants were socially disengaged. They could see differences within their lived experiences to that of others but all my participants had internalised their beliefs in a negative way and did not associate their struggles with the struggles of others. Freire (1993) referred to this internalising process as a 'culture of silence' (discussed in chapter four). This is the result of unequal social relations.

My participants had been subjected to a working life and earning was regarded as more important than learning. Whilst Marx theorised class as the relationship to the means of production he surmised a working class 'collective' consciousness whereby a 'revolutionary' class would emerge; moving from a class in itself to a class for itself. My participants however, although they had consented to engage in a 'transformative' and potentially revolutionary intervention post fieldwork, were so far from knowing what they had in common with others that they were uninterested in forming or joining any revolutionary class. This challenges Middlemiss' (2014)

assertion that 'our sense of self is more transient' because my participants uninterest had been permanent. They had not adopted or discarded different identities at any time in their life. My participants had always thought of themselves as poor.

It is evident from the data that the social relations my participants had been subjected to whether within their family units as children or at school with teachers and peers or in their wider social contexts led to their alienation from others and from the 'self', from their species-essence as Marx had discussed (Marx, 1844). This negatively impacted upon their emotions particularly in relation to having a sense of shame (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012). My participants, as adults, reflected on past experiences and constantly worried about being judged by others. I felt these worries fed into them judging themselves more negatively and increased their sense of worthlessness. This resonates with what Robert K. Merton (1948) called 'self-fulling prophecy'. For example, JD and Leigh internalised the belief that society would judge them for being poor and behaved in a way that saw them withdraw from socialising. Skeggs and Loveday's (2012) study of working class participants in Higher Education discuss 'shame' as being recognised within the self rather than as a 'symptom of inequality'. Drawing from Wetherell's (2014) 'affective practice', who note:

> every social practice involves some kind of affect…what marks out affective practice, however, from general social practice, is that this is human activity where emotion is a specific and principle focus of the practice (p.8).

The affective practice of social groups as a source of unequal relations are practices of the culture of silence where negative self-image is internalised by oppressed people (Freire, 1993). With this in mind, it is clear that my participants have embodied the affective practice of the fields they had entered.

7.6.2 The forms of capitals

If we turn to Bourdieu (1986) and his forms of capitals we can see just why my participants had embodied a sense of worthlessness. In this sense, according to Bourdieu, they had been reproduced. Unlike Marx, Bourdieu felt dominant class relations to come from economic and cultural capital. He believed social reproduction occurred through the forms of capitals one possesses as discussed in chapter three.

Cultural capital, in its' embodied form, is where my participants had developed in terms of skills, beliefs, tastes and habits. My participants had learned how to behave like a working class person from an early age evident with taking on 'adult' roles within their households. The responsibility that was placed upon them by their parents led to resistant type behaviours during free time. Having to cook, clean and babysit younger siblings meant my participants grew up internalising a hard work ethic because it resembled a working life. Their dispositions are clear to see particularly during their free time where both overt and covert behaviours occurred. Amongst friendship groups my participants began to drink, smoke, lie to parents and some even began truanting from school. Parallel to this, my participants had internalised their negativities resulting in anxiety and depression.

Socially, they had lived rather 'sheltered' lives particularly as most of their time outside of school was spent in the home doing chores or looking after younger siblings. Even in school and in their neighbourhoods my participants shared similar level of capitals with their friendship groups and they felt socially excluded from anyone they classed as '*better off*'. They believed they had to work hard to be thought of as 'deserving', evident with their attitudes towards undeserving groups as being '*lazy gits.*' How one behaves is often linked to how the working class are divided. This is reinforced through schools and the media (Willis, 1977; Channel 5, 2015; McKenzie, 2015).

Economically, my participants grew up experiencing hardship. They knew what it meant to be poor as they spent their childhoods outdoors during unstructured free time because their parents could not afford holidays or days out. Such outdoor activity was met with having '*nothing to do'*. There were non-paying youth clubs available which my participants, at times, did access as teenagers but they compared themselves to others which impacted upon their self-confidence. And as adults, with no savings and with low paid employment or the need for state benefit payments economic capital is still limited.

My participants, as adults, all rented properties and held no ownership of cultural goods worthy of high economic value, i.e. cars. In this vein it can be said that they lacked in an objectified form of cultural capital. Furthermore, they lacked in an institutionalised form of cultural capital as 'collectively' they left school with only a few qualifications. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

7.6.3 Structure and agency

The causes of my participants' social inequalities were not as a result of agency *or* structure as Bourdieu (1984) discusses but through a reciprocal relation between both agency and structure as this chapter has discussed. In the field, i.e. the family and the school, my participants struggled to accumulate the capitals that could benefit them in terms of their social class position and in terms of developing consciousness. Furthermore, the capitals they possess have a limited value in capitalist society.

Fields are sites of socialising in knowledge production but in relation to the school as a field, this had been a site, for my participants, of socialising in power relationships and social hierarchies that reflected capitalist social relations. This had resulted in their uncritical thought post-school and any resistant type behaviours that could be seen in their teenage years were more reactionary to oppressive home lives than towards wider social inequalities. As young working class people, my participants left school and entered into low paid and low skilled work. Just like their parents, they took whatever job they could get in order to survive. There had been no government incentives at that time for them to stay on at school.

Furthermore, my participants had been subjected to a 'them and us' scenario growing up and as a result to build some form of defence mechanism within themselves, one that was docile, as a way of protecting rather than challenging the status quo. But in some respects, the defence mechanism had become weakened through the internalised beliefs of lived experiences of unequal social relations and as a result my participants had adapted to hiding their pain under the guise of 'normality'.

7.7 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion to these common characteristics, for a working-class child subjected to a poor and disadvantaged life is tough to say the least. My participants knew what it was to be an 'adult' long before they needed to be, they were equipped with skills that helped them to blend in and publicly conform through perceived acceptable behaviour(s) and they believed that working hard was not financially rewarding but more so to keep people better off from judging them. A lack of interest in schooling and education came from the need to work to earn a living; for their very survival, from labelling and the class discrimination suffered at school (see Reay, 2017) and thus placed an importance on work over education.

The significance of this chapter has been to highlight how a Marxist class analysis provides a valid foundation to understand and analyse the exploitation and alienation of the social relations of production that can be seen in the lived experiences of my participants. Although there was a basic understanding of social and political ideology not one participant was truly conscious of a wider class system in which they had common connections with others. Even within the family unit where there was a form of solidarity each individual participant was met with a great sense of internalised loneliness and shame because of the inequalities they had faced as children growing up and now as adults themselves. Moreover, the Marxist concept of 'false' consciousness was problematised with the concept of what I call a 'disengaged' consciousness which occurred during the adulthoods of my participants. They were not ignorant to, or accepting of the status quo in the respect they turned a blind eye. They could see that the system did not work for them but did not know how to effectively 'engage' and challenge it.

Through a Bourdieusian lens this chapter has explored my participants level of social, economic and cultural capital from childhood through to adulthood. It was necessary to understand how the working class habitus and cultural capital comes into conflict with that of the schooling and education system in order to uncover how social inequalities are reproduced. This enabled the research question to be answered more effectively.

In the next chapter I continue with Bourdieu's notion of capitals and SRT to discuss part II of my findings - the schooling and educational experiences and the knock on effect into adulthood.

CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION PART (II) – SCHOOLING AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND ADULTHOOD

8.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out part II of my findings and discussions relating to the *schooling and educational experiences*, and the subsequent lives throughout *adulthood* of my participants. This section enabled me to relate class background to how schooling and education played a role in (re)producing the lived experiences of their social inequalities as I have come to understand them. The findings in this chapter relate to my research questions and are organised into sub-headings. Moreover, just as in chapter seven, I write in a chronological order from *childhood* through to *adulthood*, although I occasionally jump to and from to reflect on the findings more analytically.

8.2 A Summary of the Key Findings

<u>*Key Findings part (II)*</u>

<u>*Schooling and Educational Experiences*</u>

- The common class traits of all participants played a key role in their approach to schooling and education:
  - ➢ All participants had pre-conceived ideas of those they deemed as better off than them/those in authoritative positions
  - ➢ The school environment was viewed in a negative light by all participants because they lacked in the relevant cultural capital associated through schooling
- Schooling and education did play a role in reproducing class inequalities by reinforcing class stereotypes through:
  - ➢ schooling and environment
  - ➢ teacher/peer relations
  - ➢ curriculum and hidden curriculum
  - ➢ educational attainment
- All participants, except one who dropped out before her exams, left school at age 16
  - ➢ All participants failed to achieve a minimum standard of 4 GCSEs A*-E grades
- All participants' experiences of education lacked in critical engagement &/or critical development
- Schooling and education lacked in any form of *praxis*

- It is evident that class backgrounds and the role of schooling and education has contributed to the shaping of all participants' thinking and behaviour(s) and therefore has profoundly negatively impacted upon the adulthoods of all participants:

  ➢ No participant, except one, has engaged in further or higher education

  ➢ No participant has been able to move beyond their social class position

  ➢ No participant has identified common _class_ characteristics with others who are similar or with friendship groups

  ➢ No participant has been able to successfully challenge issues in their lives and as a result have accepted their 'lot'

- After all the informative sessions provided it is evident that all participants took on board the information engaging on a more critical level towards the final session but not one of them were able to process the information in a way to 'actively' benefit them post research.

8.3 Secondary Schooling and Educational Experiences

In this section, I report the main findings of the critical exploration of the state schooling and educational experiences of my participants. For ease of reading I have broken the findings down into the following sub-headings: _i). Schooling and environment ii). Teacher and peer relations iii). Curriculum and hidden curriculum iv). Educational attainment._

8.3.1(i) Schooling and environment

The need to become an adult or the urgency to grow up is evident throughout the childhood memories of my participants and this continued to be a clear theme throughout the secondary school interviews. All of them had been 'normalised', at the family level, into believing that leaving school at the first opportunity was in their best interests and in some cases, there was a _'sooner the better'_ attitude. Nevertheless, my participants overall experiences left them feeling belittled and intimidated and it is evident in my conversations with them how their secondary schooling and educational experiences contributed to their carefree attitude, to their 'normal' behaviour(s).

For this part of my research I went further than just entering into a conversation with my participants. With their permission, we took their journey to secondary school from where they used to live just as they did as young people. Facing their schools had been a fairly difficult task for each of my participants, it emerged from the beginning of the interviews that their schooling was associated with negativity. There was not one single reason for the negativity, rather an interplay between several processes as I discuss.

Standing, facing the secondary school JD attended made her feel tense. I observed her body language as she became awkward and almost stiff like. She looked away to talk about her experiences. I could see that schooling had cast a dark shadow over her young life as she spoke with a dry voice. Reflecting upon my next few observations I realised that both Mary and Leigh appeared the same but with Leigh there was a real sense of sadness as if she was fighting back the tears facing her secondary school.

> I didn't like school. I made friends with those who nobody else wanted to make friends with and I got bullied by the other popular kids. My anxiety, although I didn't know it was anxiety back then, got really bad and I dropped out [...*of school*] at the beginning of year 11 so I didn't do my GCSEs. The education welfare officers and my teachers, they didn't bother they let me of with it cos it was year 11 and mum got me volunteering where she was working so they didn't bother with it they didn't try.

> (JD, secondary school interview)

> I just wasn't interested in school. The teachers there used to not be that helpful and they used to make me feel intimidated. I was never encouraged or anything like that. I did what I had to, to get through the day and when I left I went to work in a factory cos that's what you had to do.

> (Mary, secondary school interview)

There were some similarities between all my participants' body language but Kat and Nell were less awkward and certainly angrier. They faced their secondary schools pointing to areas that stood out in their minds as most troubling.

It was nice to get out of the school environment because I had a shit time with everything really. I hated all of it. I didn't feel like I got any support […*from the teachers*]. I didn't even have the choice when we got […*our GCSE*] options. I basically left school with nothing.

(Kat, secondary school interview)

My English teacher used to be like *you're a nightmare, an absolute nightmare* but I used to sit in that class sometimes and think I'm stupid and they dint try and encourage me any other way so that made me even more thick. Miss D*****, she dint even have to say anything she just used to look at me in disgust and that was enough. She was just vile to me so am gonna be honest with ya, I couldn't wait till I left school.

(Nell, secondary school interview)

I can't physically remember a day that I really enjoyed, I don't. There isn't, I can't think of anything. Nah, this […*school*] wasn't a happy place I couldn't wait to leave.

(Leigh, secondary school interview)

Throughout the school day my participants would leave the school premises whenever they could even when it was not permitted. Their body language, and facial expressions in places, gave of a sense of them feeling trapped, most noticeable when they giggled and laughed as they spoke of being out of the school environment. Being free from the drudgery of having to be inside the school gates gave each of my participants a sense of power; a sense of control. Their resistance was clearly liberating if only briefly.

Lunch time I was supposed to be packed lunches. Mum didn't allow us to be home dinners and I didn't wanna take sandwiches in. R******, used to write a note cos she had really lovely handwriting and she forged a note from my mum to get me a lunch pass, so I'd sneak out with them and pray that the person standing on the gate would read my lunch pass and let me out [giggles]. I kept on taking notes telling them I forgot my lunch pass although I never had one.

(JD, secondary school interview)

I always walked home with a friend called L***** at lunch times. She lived a couple of streets away. We used to go to ma house and watch home and

away [giggles] and eat our packed lunch, we didn't want to stay at school. We preferred to go home and chill and that was that.

<div align="right">(Mary, secondary school interview)</div>

We were allowed out [...*of school at lunch time*] and I used to go down to P******* C**** shops and we used to always get an ice lolly [laughs] and sometimes we used to go to my friends' house so we could chill.

<div align="right">(Kat, secondary school interview)</div>

I spent all my time at B******** school with my friends [giggles]. To be fair I was never here [...*at this school*]. I would come in, clock in show face and I'd leave and I'd go B********.

<div align="right">(Nell, secondary school interview)</div>

We used to go out through the back of the school and go to the shop or we used to go down the bottom and we'd come out by the housing estate and that's where the chip van was. We used to do that cos we could get away from it all.

<div align="right">(Leigh, secondary school interview)</div>

My participants time at secondary school spanned a decade collectively. JD, Mary and Kat attended the same school which once was a local authority maintained school and a feeder school for the local surrounding primary schools but later became a grant-maintained school offering a specialist route into technology and Leigh attended a grant-maintained school offering a route into the arts whilst Nell attended a Catholic school. All schools either *were* or *became* selective with the grant maintained schools selecting a percentage of its' pupils according to aptitude.

Each of my participants spoke less of the actual environment of their school, for example, the décor and available resources and I believe that to be because they had no other secondary school environment to compare it to especially as their friendship groups attended the same school as them, speaking more about the tensions and atmosphere of the school environment itself, i.e. the unequal nature of school. My participants spoke of being in *'dunce'* classes where there was a lot of disruption and a lack of teacher control whilst in some respects their friends would be in the *'better'* classes.

<div align="center">160</div>

My participants had been brought up to behave in a way that was acceptable outside the family unit and to accept their position in the social hierarchy, which more often than not went unchallenged. During the informative sessions within the interviews I spoke to my participants about how their class backgrounds and upbringing had normalised the shaping of their behaviour and how they thought about people they regarded as better off than them; about those in authoritative positions and how schooling simply reinforced those thoughts and behaviours through a 'culture' different to their own thus reproducing class inequalities. During these informative sessions my participants appeared to understand what I was saying but where they did not quite grasp the information, they would ask me to explain in another way.

As far as my participants were concerned, they had drawn the short straw or so to speak, they all said there was nothing they could do about challenging their situation and it was clear from the way they engaged in their conversations with me that they felt uncomfortable at the thought of challenging someone viewed as having authority. In this respect they were unable to actively use their agency. They had not recognised the space to resist as Giroux (1983; 2001) had discussed.

8.3.1(ii) Teacher and peer relations

The memories of schooling for all my participants were vivid. Overall not one of them enjoyed school and all were subjected to bullying in one way or another. Teachers and peers were the most common reasons for bullying and this was mostly in the form of mental bullying. Being working class, poor and disadvantaged meant my participants grew up believing work and earning money was more important than gaining educational qualifications and this negatively impacted upon their academic learning ability. This resonates with Skeggs and Loveday (2012) on 'value practice' whereby my participants embodied a 'value-struggle'. Teachers fed into this negativity, clearly using their position in an authoritative way to 'confirm' how powerless my participants were in the school environment.

> I was ok in my lessons as long as I didn't get asked […*by the teacher*] to read out cos then my asthma would kick in, my chest would go tight, my throat would go croaky then I'd get all sweaty and stuff because of my anxiety. If I was put on the spot I didn't like it. I'm ok if I know what I'm doing, if I know what's coming up but you put me on the spot and I can't do it. I used to get really embarrassed.

> (JD, secondary school interview)

My science teacher used to intimidate me. It was her mannerism and it was always in front of people that she would say something, now looking back she should have taken me to the side and said something like you're not getting very far with this maybe we should do this or maybe we should do that but it wasn't, it was all that's not good enough so that's what you believe that you are not good enough.

(Mary, secondary school interview)

I had to do RE and I hated it, I think it's cos I wasn't that smart at it. My teacher would pick me out if I didn't put my hand up…obviously that made me feel intimidated and embarrassed. I knew some stuff but I wasn't the best at remembering and I felt quite intimidated by my classroom cos literally everyone was quite smart and I wasn't.

(Kat, secondary school interview)

My teachers used to make me feel really small. My RE teacher used to belittle me in front of everyone, she made my life hell. She threatened to cut my hair cos I had long hair and it was my pride and joy.

(Nell, secondary school interview)

My maths teacher was horrible he didn't care. He made me feel thick, because I'm not just daft but because I couldn't grasp it and maybe if he had told me a different way or spent more time with me I might have been a hell of a lot better off with my maths.

(Leigh, secondary school interview)

There was an expectation from my participants of *'teachers supporting all pupils'* but this clearly did not happen in their respect and there was little room for them to develop in terms of self-esteem. In fact, they were often at the opposite end of supportive teachers which resulted in my participants blaming their educational misfortunes on their teachers, evident in quotes such *as 'they didn't bother', 'they didn't try', 'the teachers there used to not be that helpful', 'I didn't feel like I got any support'* and *'she used to just look at me in disgust and that was enough'*. These quotes are very touching and the unfairness of teacher support is most obvious when compared to other more affluent students.

I can't remember other kids being put on the spot, it was always me. It was like with bullying, [*…the*] teachers knew but nothing was ever done.

<div align="right">(JD, secondary school interview)</div>

You never got support from the teachers or anything like that. I remember Miss P******* [*…the music teacher*], didn't like the ones that came from a poor background. She didn't have the time of day for them and you could see it in her whole demeanour and the way she spoke (Mary puts on a posh voice), I never done anything for her to not like me.

<div align="right">(Mary, secondary school interview)</div>

I don't remember teachers being supportive but I do remember those that were smarter wouldn't be asked questions or put on the spot as often as I was. I had one science teacher who knew I struggled he was ok but he never really did anything about it.

<div align="right">(Kat, secondary school interview)</div>

I got penalised [*…by my teachers*] for my brothers [*…naughty behaviours*] straight away, no matter what I was gonna do I didn't stand a chance. Sometimes if we were messing around walking through the door…it didn't matter who was there or who I was with. It didn't matter what happened it was always me who got put out. I'd be like he just through my book out the window but yet it's me who's gotta go collect it and stand outside for the rest of the lesson no questions asked.

<div align="right">(Nell, secondary school interview)</div>

My maths teacher used to look at me like *ugh* if I put my hand up, as if here she goes again and my PE teacher was just as bad. He used to hate me because I wouldn't go up and over the ladders, he used to say well you're still gonna do it but you can go up and down it twice in front of everybody else.

<div align="right">(Leigh, secondary school interview)</div>

The bullying nature and unfairness of the teachers negatively impacted upon my participants and their sense of 'self' and furthermore with affluent peers also confirming their dominance over my participants low self-esteem comes as no surprise. Although their peers did not overtly appear to class themselves as better

than my participants, their comments and name calling certainly made my participants know they were at the bottom of a social hierarchy in the school environment. JD, Kat and Leigh took this dominance to heart and bullying stood out as a strong theme amongst them whereas Mary and Nell often pushed the dominance to the back of their minds and engaged in 'class clown' type behaviours messing around and getting into trouble from the teachers. This type of behaviour was not apparent with the other three participants and it appears Mary and Nell were not bullied at the same level either. Mary and Nell had developed and maintained a level of control and power that the other three did not. It could be said they masked their shame either through their silence or through actively using their agency (Skeggs & Loveday, 2012).

> I used to hate walking into the form room in the morning because for the length of time we were in the room until the teacher came if people were gonna pick on me they were gonna pick on me. They'd be snide comments and everyone else would giggle and you really wouldn't feel like being there.
>
> (JD, secondary school interview)

> Those that were better off than us would always make you feel really small, they used to be the teachers' favourite, but I tried not to think about it. I would have a laugh and mess around and I did get into trouble and I did get detentions.
>
> (Mary, secondary school interview)

> Kids were bullies, I always got bullied by *those* kids on the other half of the year group because I wasn't like them.
>
> (Kat, secondary school interview)

> I'd get the odd comment like tramp from the other kids but I had a big group of friends and we used to dig each other and things like that so I didn't really bother about it.
>
> (Nell, secondary school interview)

> I used to get to school around half past 8 or something like that. I used to walk down here and right round there and there was maths and that's where my form was. I'd meet with [*…my friends*] D**** & N**** and if one of them hadn't turned up I'd start to panic because I'd be more worried about what

would happen to me during the day cos I wouldn't have my group and there wasn't anybody I could go to.

All my participants spoke about feeling *'lonely'* resulting in them internalising feelings, hiding how they really felt. Mary and Nell showed more outward resistant type behaviour that took some of the pressure off from feeling lonely, it gave them an escape route but for JD, Kat and Leigh that was not the case.

What is obvious during the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the period when my participants attended secondary school, and during a period of huge changes to state education, with the introduction of the National Curriculum and league tables, streaming and setting had become a popular feature of secondary school classrooms just as it had been during the 1950s and 1960s (see for example Jackson and Marsden, 1962; Hargreaves, 1967; Ball, 1981). Those from working class backgrounds often found themselves in the bottom sets with teachers who were 'suitably' qualified to teach them.

8.3.1(iii) Curriculum and hidden curriculum

As my participants were mostly in bottom set classes they were subjected to low levels of knowledge, knowledge that was descriptive and with no encouragement of 'active' critical engagement from the teachers; they had been labelled as too *'thick'*. Although, it is evident from my conversations with them, each of my participants could have been capable of engaging on this level but any critical thought they had was internalised through the fear of being *'shut down'* because it was not normal for them to behave in such a way. They also feared '*embarrassment'* should they not fully understand. JD, Mary and Leigh spoke of keeping things to themselves so no-one laughed at them and Nell spoke about trying to ask *'why'* but was told she was *'being stupid'* by her teachers which resulted in her being sent out of the classroom. Kat spoke of feeling critical in her RE lessons as she did not agree with being taught about God when she did not believe in him but felt compelled to keep her questions to herself. It is clear to see how my participants inequalities had been reproduced (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) and how they had been subjected to a 'banking' concept of education (Freire, 1974).

The actions of my participants, as I had observed them, were in line with what they had told me. They appeared embarrassed if they did not know something during our informative sessions, they would look away or find a distraction that would,

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momentarily, throw us of the topic of conversation. I spent time reassuring each of my participants, sometimes rewording what I had said, other times seeking answers to questions I asked to simply confirm in my mind if they had really understood. I always asked them if they had any comments or if they would like to ask me any further questions.

Critically exploring the schooling and educational experiences of my participants revealed how they were not exposed to critical development and there was no form of *praxis;* no way for them to reflect upon how or what they were learning.

> If there was anything I could do I didn't get noticed except one time in French but I knew I couldn't cope with things cos I was dropped down in sets. I never knew what I was doing wrong.
>
> (JD, interview three)

> I suppose I did learn some things cos you always learn something don't you? But I didn't really learn a lot cos them teachers made me feel like I was thick.
>
> (Mary, interview three)

> I can't stand in a room with anyone talking a load of gobbled de gook to me I'm more you need to show me. You can stand and talk to me and I'll probably look at you and you could say it 10 times and I still wouldn't get it. The teachers didn't have time for that, they just made me feel thick.
>
> (Nell, interview three)

> With me the teachers used to blab blab blab blab and I'd be like hold up that's too much information in one go and I'd look at someone else and be like how have you managed to do all that & then I'd be distracted. The teachers only had one way of teaching and it didn't work for me.
>
> (Kat, interview three)

> There was always too much information, just too much to do [*…in relation to school work given by the teachers*] and there was never any time to reflect on what you had done.
>
> (Leigh, interview three)

Furthermore, the type of school knowledge my participants were exposed to, entertained a more practical and vocational curriculum which resulted in them

experiencing shying away from other knowledge they viewed as more 'academic' or where they would need to think on a higher level.

I asked each of my participants if they felt they knew what school knowledge was and if so could they contribute to new knowledge within the curriculum areas. Whilst all of them said school knowledge is *'about learning',* although recognising *'knowledge is a part of everyday life',* none of them felt empowered to contribute to school knowledge. Kat did say she believes everyone can contribute to knowledge but she was unable to give further comment when I asked her how.

> I'm unknowledgeable, most of the time I feel thick unless its life experiences I seem to become passionate about those who get bad chances but I wouldn't know how to make it better. I didn't know how to contribute to school knowledge either, we weren't allowed to do that.

(JD, interview six / repeat)

> I had some knowledge [...*at school*] but it would depend what the subject was about really but no I wouldn't say I could contribute to knowledge, no way [giggles].

(Mary, interview six / repeat)

> I believe knowledge grows and grows more everyday not just for a person but also in life as the world grows so does knowledge and I think everyone can contribute to be honest but in school the teachers made you feel stupid if you asked questions and if you didn't answer something correctly.

(Kat, interview six / repeat)

> I was always thick at school. I wouldn't have a clue [...*how to contribute to knowledge*]. Even now I wouldn't know how to but why would I need to, am just not interested in all that.

(Nell, interview six / repeat)

> I didn't know how to because we wasn't taught to do that at school.

(Leigh, interview six / repeat)

There is a sense of my participants schools offering a more working class type of education but it is offered to their detriment. None of their knowledge developed outside of school is regarded as important inside of school and as Reay (2017,

p.65) notes this 'has resulted in the invidious divide between vocational and academic knowledge'.

Moreover, I asked each of my participants if there were any areas of the curriculum they were taught about social class or the history of the working classes. Although I was not completely surprised with their answers I was surprised with their attitudes to learning about the history of their class. All my participants recall vague memories of learning about the Victorian period or the Industrial Revolution but none of them could recall anything specific and all dropped History as a subject at GCSE level as this was an optional choice. Nell told me she did not care about *'living in the past'* and said even now she is *'still a bit naïve'*.

Clearly none of my participants had a deep understanding of social class and none of them felt interested, likely due to them having no real connection to the meaning of social class and a lack of empowerment towards school knowledge had contributed to a lack of critical engagement. The compulsory curriculum lessons my participants were subjected to often saw them *'copying from textbooks'* or from what '*the teacher had listed on the board*' whilst optional vocational curriculum lessons such as dance and computing saw them simply following instructions. School in general had treated them as not worthy of getting on and achieving nor worthy enough of connecting to their class plight and as a result all my participants felt *'worthless'* and unchallenged by the school curriculum.

In addition, following non-written instructions was a big part of the hidden curriculum. Each morning and afternoon my participants showed their attendance in their 'form' or 'house' group knowing that if they were late they would be punished through an after school detention. They experienced lining up in a corridor and they knew to be quiet, the same experiences were felt during assembly time. Homework was usually done on time, even if incomplete and not understood, so *'it was out the way'* to avoid punishments. My participants had learned how to behave yet none of them behaved in a way that advanced them in relation to their class position. Their class inequalities had been reproduced. Although there are pockets of resistance, JD, Kat and Leigh were more accepting of their place at school, they tried to keep their heads down or so to speak; a tactic used to *'get through the day'* but Mary and Nell showed much more resistance through their *'naughty'* behaviour; a tactic also used *'to get through the day'* but more so *'to have a laugh'*.

Besides, being poor disadvantaged my participants in terms of resources at home, they often had to share with siblings. But being so poor had a negative impact when

it came to the opportunity of going on school trips and my participants also had to rely on hand me downs for clothing and uniform.

> I started the choir…I weren't that great at it. I used to mime at times but I started that cos it got us out of school sometimes on trips and stuff but you didn't have to pay for them [giggles].

(JD, interview three)

> My mum and dad couldn't afford holidays let alone school trips. I remember taking part in after school clubs though cos they were free.

(Mary, interview three / repeat)

> I don't remember any school trips like the kids have now but even if there were trips I wouldn't have gone. I'm guessing they would've been too expensive.

(Kat, interview three)

> My mum used to give me my brothers tops. I was the third eldest so I always had to have hand me downs. It was embarrassing but I guess that's why I was a bit of a tomboy. I used to get stuff from my cousins for school as well but you were grateful if that makes sense.

(Nell, interview three)

> I didn't get to go on any school trips, not that I remember school offering many trips but there's no way my parents could afford it.

(Leigh, interview three)

Although my participants spoke of their schooling and education experiences in a mostly negative way there were elements of positiveness. For example, teachers, on occasions, would verbally praise good work and these moments were echoed throughout the school interviews in week three and the school journey interviews.

> Most people hated French but…I was the 1st person in that class that got an A grade…cos like I was good at French.

(JD, interview three)

There was the English teacher and I done a poem once and he read it out and said how descriptive it was and that it was really good.

(Mary, secondary school interview)

Sport was what I loved. My teacher he knew I'd go for it and he'd push me and I actually liked that and there was another PE teacher who told me I was good. I played for the football team, I played hockey, I played netball. I liked to do those sort of things actually, although I'm small I played in defence for netball and that was always a strength of mine. It was a good experience.

(Kat, secondary school interview)

They (the teachers) couldn't give me lunch time detentions because I was the main sport person they couldn't do without me in sport so if they gave me a lunch time detention I couldn't turn up to the running, the rounders, the tennis, basketball, netball whatever. They did try but my PE teacher was like nuh you're not giving her detention we need her she's the main person of the team.

(Nell, secondary school interview)

Mrs Crosby, now she was lovely she was my English teacher and I was in the middle set for that and she was always really supportive and if I messed up somewhere she would always take me to one side and say look work on your punctuation, this is what I mean by, she would always tell you and I got on all right in English.

(Leigh, secondary school interview)

From these conversations it is obvious that my participants felt they could achieve with the right support, with positive praise. These pockets of empowerment were however, in short supply.

What's more, there were also moments where my participants would take control, they could turn what they perceived as a negative situation into something that would benefit them.

I signed up to the choir, I couldn't sing but it would get me out of school lessons because we had to sing at different venues and we'd go on the school bus.

(JD, interview three)

I remember Miss P******* went into the wee cupboard where all the instruments were kept, she was in their ages, so someone dared me to lock the door so we [*…my friend and I*] locked the door [laughs] cos the key was on the outside and she was going like that on the door (Mary gestures with her hand) saying let me out let me out. So then I started panicking and I thought we're in deep shit here cos all the other [*…children*] will grass. It was L**** [*…my friend*] that turned the key but they dared me to do it and I went with her. We got done for that. Imagine doing that to a teacher, it's terrible but we were never good enough for her.

(Mary, secondary school interview)

I'd take shit, shit, shit, shit, shit and then I'd say something. I went for this boy in my class once because I had enough of him [*…bullying me*]. I never attacked anyone but it just came out. It made me feel horrible but at the same time I felt better in myself.

(Kat, secondary school interview)

We [*…my teacher and I*] actually set up a petition in early year 11 to try and get GCSE PE in cos we only had core PE. I was so sporty and even if I was at B******** school I'd come back down here for my PE lessons. It was the only thing I had that was good in my life. All my mates knew not to mess about with me when I was in PE. It was the only thing I was good at. That was the only time I felt powerful.

(Nell, secondary school interview)

There was a boy in my year who used to call me fat amongst other names, he used to think he could just go around groping girls and whatever he thought he just felt like and he actually managed one day to get me up against a tree and put his hand down my top. I was tired of feeling on the edge of being scared so I kicked the shit out of him he put me in a situation that I had to get out of. I felt like I was the one who came out on top for a change although it was never in my nature to behave like that.

(Leigh, secondary school interview)

JD and Nell saw opportunities that helped them to escape. JD spoke of struggling in classes academically and with her peers and although she was not particularly fussed with music, she saw an opportunity in joining the school choir to get her out

of some areas of schooling on a regular basis. Nell avoided regular lunch time detentions through her love of sport and through her commitment to her PE lessons. Mary showed deviant behaviour(s) that momentarily empowered her, and not just because she was dared too but because she felt as if she was not good enough. Mary spoke a lot through our conversations about feeling small with the majority of her teachers. And both Kat and Leigh were pushed to breaking point to also feel momentarily empowered. All my participants had moments of empowerment if only brief but this was always followed by disempowerment for example, JD reported feeling embarrassed to sing and would often mime, Nell would still receive detentions but more so after school, Mary would be put on report or have other consequences such as detention whilst Kat and Leigh ended up feeling like they were not very nice people. Similar findings can be seen in the work of Willis (1977) in the sense that the lads in his study used their agency to resist the status quo but subsequently end up in working class positions. The positives were not enough to out-way the negatives. Overall my participants experiences of schooling and education had reproduced their class inequalities, it had shaped their thoughts and behaviours to what they believed was normal.

8.3.1(iv) Educational attainment

That aside, some of the biggest struggles my participants had were with curriculum subjects such as English, maths and science and they were generally in lower sets copying from textbooks. This had been argued by Le Grand and Bartlett (1993) as 'silt-shifting' in the marketisation of education where schools compete against one another discussed in chapter four. These lower ability sets also 'rationed' my participants opportunities for future careers (Gilborn and Youdell, 2000). Evidently, not one of them were able to look into or pursue the potential career they would have liked and moreover only Kat re-took her GCSEs in English and maths post-school as this ran alongside a course in learning life skills.

> I know I wanted to work in mental health [...*but*] I've got no education cos I dropped out of school.
>
> (JD, interview three)

> I don't remember school ever being encouraging and I remember I always wanted to be a nurse but my mum didn't have the money [...*for me to go to university*] so I knew I'd have to go and work in a factory.
>
> (Mary, secondary school interview)

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I've always had a love for performing arts and at some point, when I was younger I tried to hide it, I think I used to get worried about what other people would think. But when I got to seniors' school my drama teachers didn't teach me much, I didn't get enough information and I didn't have the confidence.

(Kat, secondary school interview)

I actually done PE in the school cos that's what I wanted to be a PE teacher and erm basically I had no encouragement it was a case of you need to have brains to get that and you've got none, honestly. I had to do my own work experience in my own school cos they wouldn't actually let me go out cos they thought I had behaviour problems.

(Nell, interview three)

I think the careers advise we had was about an hour and basically you'll never amount to anything is what they said. I wanted to be vet but I knew that I'd never be able to do that cos I couldn't afford to go to university and my parents couldn't afford to put me through university.

(Leigh, interview three)

Careers advice was scarce and work experience was viewed by my participants as something they *'had to do'* and all received their GSCE results which meant nothing to them in terms of accessing further education/higher paid work. My participants held aspirations, small glimmers of possibility but any hopes they had of achieving them were squashed and all my participants were left feeling like failures. All my participants left school with just a handful of qualifications between them. On the face of it however, none of my participants were bothered because they all knew they would find a job where qualifications were not the be all and end all and all valued working in whatever job they could get as a necessity to earn money. But had there been real opportunity for them to unlock their potential at school they may have achieved their aspirations.

Of course, if my participants had have secured good educational qualifications at grade 'c' or above in their GCSEs then they could have potentially gone onto acquire higher level qualifications from college and university. This may have resulted in them being upwardly mobile post-schooling. There is a wealth of studies to support this fact (for example see Sullivan, 2001; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009; Crawford, et al., 2010; McKnight, 2015).

8.4 Adulthood

When asked *'has your education had a positive impact in shaping your career since leaving school?'* all my participants felt as if I was asking the question as a joke. It was almost as if each of them regarded education as beneficial to the future careers of others as their education had meant nothing to their lives beyond school. Clear from responses such as *'What mine? No way',* and *'Not in the slightest'* As a result, all except Kat have been unable to access or commit to further education although Kat's further education has not led to employment in a related field nor to higher education.

Moreover, it is evident since leaving school and becoming adults, my participants have either remained in a relatively similar social class position as their parents or they have ended up in a worse social class position.

> I don't have anything [*…in terms of education, a job or savings*]. I can't even move out of here because of a debt I have from a rechargeable repair. This is housing association but it's the council who say as long as you don't have rent arrears which I don't have then they don't have a problem, but because of this rechargeable repair they're using it against me so I'm in a worse place now as an adult.
>
> (JD, interview one)

> I've always worked like my mum and dad but I've got nothing to show for it I don't have any savings or anything like that.
>
> (Mary, interview one)

> I wouldn't say we're worse off than my mum and dad were. We're in the same position really cos my mum and dad didn't get any help cos they were a married couple and it's the same for me and A*** [*…my husband*].
>
> (Nell, interview one)

> I'm definitely worse off than my parents. We didn't have much growing up but I have less now as an adult especially as the government want to put down the benefits so I'm not even claiming right now, I have put in a claim for PIP (Personal Independence Payment) but they've taken months to get it back to me.
>
> (Kat, interview one)

I think in general people will look at me and think you've made a mess of it so it's your own fault that's how I think my mum feels because she always worked. I haven't worked since A**** [*…my daughter*] was born.

(Leigh, interview one)

Although my participants spoke to me on a deep and personal level regarding their experiences of being poor and they were aware of other people who were either better or worse off than themselves, disassociating themselves from those who looked poorer, not one of them spoke to family and/or friends about their feelings. They often 'dumbed' down the extent of their problems because they did not want their family or friends to think they were *'failures'* and by doing so they have never identified their class issues with other similar people. All my participants learned at school to internalise their 'failures' and consequently nothing had changed in adulthood. Throughout their lives they report always feeling alone in that respect.

Having been socialised as a working class person with inequalities as normal and with schooling and education contributing to the reproduction of such inequalities together with the fear of being judged as a failure and feeling alone, no participant since becoming an adult has either tried or successfully engaged in unlocking their potential desires to promote their upward social mobility on a personal level.

I want better for my family and I do try to find a job but my job coach has told me to start at the bottom like with cleaning but there's always someone better than me who will get it.

(JD, interview six)

I'd like to do better but a lot of jobs you have to fill applications in online and I'm no good at that, I've tried but I'm just no good [giggles].

(Mary, interview six)

I've tried and I've hit every brick wall going [*…to get onto a nursing course*] so what's the point. It's not gonna happen so like now I'm cleaning for a living and its hard work physically and it's not very well paid either.

(Nell, interview six)

I've been to a couple of groups [*…in performing arts*] but they don't make me feel welcome so I want to run my own group for kids. I have a script planned

and when it's the right time I'll go for it but I'm not in the right place at the moment.

<div align="right">(Kat, interview six)</div>

I've been out of work for 10 years now so what good will I be? I don't have any up to date qualifications and I've got no relevant work experience so I'll probably end up stacking shelves or something. I've got to start at the bottom even though I don't want to.

<div align="right">(Leigh interview six)</div>

As adults, my participants appear to be battling with themselves. They have been led to believe they must accept what they have and any struggles that occur are on a personal level because of their own failure(s).

What is fascinating, having got to know my participants on a personal and individual level and looking for any tensions and contradictions in what they had said, is how they presented themselves during the group sessions and straight away I observed changes in my participants appearances. It was obvious that my participants felt as if they would be judged. They dressed tidier, their hair was neater and all but Nell had applied makeup. They had spent their childhoods socialised as having to 'fit' in and noticing socio-economic differences throughout schooling had affirmed a 'normal' way to behave in an unusual environment.

During the group sessions we spoke about the common sub-themes I had analysed. In week one talking about post-school experiences, my participants had immediately presented themselves as happy and positive to each other and felt discussing their 'coping strategies' light heartedly was a way to reinforce this 'false' sense of self. It was as if they needed to test the ground with each other, to suss them out and it was a way of them feeling secure with themselves. However, it was not long before we all spoke about the need of *'fitting in'* to a mainstream society as a reason for this falseness and how each of us found it a 'normal' thing to do. Nell opened up about struggling *'to see other people's problems as a problem'* if she had not experienced them and all of us aired the collective view of feeling *'my problem is mine and yours is yours'* and how *'you shouldn't complain'*. Every one of us discussed not always fitting in with old (school) friends now as adults and that the thought of talking about our problems to them made us feel like *'a twat'*, *'stupid'* or *'a dunce'*.

One of the biggest coping strategies relating to life struggles discussed was around alcohol dependency. We eased into the conversation seeing the funny side of things to begin with.

> You know when you've got a problem [*…with drinking alcohol*] when a Sunday morning comes and it's like let's get on it, hair of the dog [everyone laughs].
>
> (Nell, group interview one)

> Yep, that's been done a few times, the next morning I'm thinking oh my god there's only one thing that is gonna sort this out and that's a drink. The trouble is the minute you have that drink in the morning you're off your face for the rest of the day, you just can't function.
>
> (Leigh, group interview one)

> I'm just greedy for it I can't help myself [laughs], but there's nothing else to do when I'm in the house alone.
>
> (Mary, group interview one)

Although Kat and I joined in with this conversation, JD remained quiet and I knew from previous interviews with JD that alcohol (and drugs) had been a real problem for her and the reasons for abusing alcohol consumption was what had led to its' dependency. What had started off in the group conversation as a laugh and a giggle quickly turned to a more serious note.

> I think here [*…in this country*] you get 2 days off a week and it's like you have to ram it in cos it's like you don't have to think about the same mundane routine.
>
> (Nell, group interview one)

> With me, especially at the minute and I'll be honest with you a lot of things are going on in my life and I'm drinking more than normal [begins to get tearful].
>
> (Leigh, group interview one)

> That's to block it out, that's exactly what drink does.
>
> (Mary, group interview one)

I asked the group what drinking alcohol in large amounts and on a regular basis meant to them as I did not share this level of dependency in common with any of them. I was intrigued by their continuing discussion. Each of them spoke of drinking when *'not having anything else to do'* and how drinking made them *'feel relaxed enough to forget what's chipping away'* at them. Alcohol was a way to help them *'sleep'* and they all felt they might as well drink because they had *'given up'* anyway. Alcohol posed more of a problem for both JD and Leigh and although JD had moved on from those *'dark days'* she had previously spoken to me about, Leigh was still really struggling. For her, drink was all she could think about especially if she had not had one, adding to her already levels of anxiety and stress. It was clear all my participants struggled to find any sense of self-worth, internalising their worthlessness which impacted upon their coping strategies in a negative way.

In week two of the group interviews we continued with discussing coping strategies but more so with a focus on barriers to upward social mobility. Barriers included *'not being able to afford to pay the bills'*, *'stress, depression and anxiety'*, *'having a lack of help with benefit entitlement'* and *'not having a job'.* Each of the barriers heightened depending on what coping strategy was employed so for example, JD, Mary, Kat and Leigh spoke about a *'bury your head in the sand'* scenario whereby they would ignore bills coming through the door instead of dealing with them as they had no money to pay them. All my participants spoke about *'the pressure'* of having to deal with things when they do not really know how to because doing so puts them '*in the limelight'* and none of them felt they have the confidence for that.

Although we laughed and chatted as if we were a group of friends that had known each other for many years I could see where my participants lacked in confidence and moments of embarrassment would prevail. Under no circumstances, through lack of ability, were they able to ask uncomfortable questions nor lead a discussion in our topic area. Nell on many occasions did dominate our conversations but she would go off topic and I would then have to bring the conversation back on track and try to engage the others. Throughout all the conversations the one that I found most upsetting was the one around homelessness. None of my participants have ever been educated to a level that developed in them real life emancipatory skills, none of them cope in a positive way when the going gets tough and all of them have either experienced the brink of homelessness, i.e. threatened with a section 21,[59]

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[59] A section 21 notice is where a landlord can evict a tenant when the agreed period of tenancy expires. If the agreement has been broken a section 8 can be served such as with rent arrears. For further information see https://www.gov.uk/evicting-tenants/section-21-and-section-8-notices

sofa surfed[60] or had a close friend or family member who had experienced this or homelessness.

> I know a guy, he's a good friend of mine and he's been homeless for years. It breaks my heart because I do try and help him with food and that sometimes but it wasn't his fault. He split up with his wife, he lost his house, his kids and he couldn't get any help [voice goes quiet].
>
> (Kat, group interview two)

> It just shows you how quickly things can spiral downwards.
>
> (Researcher comment, group interview two)

> I'm in a similar situation at the moment. The landlord has given us a section 21 which means we have to leave our home we've lived in for over 10 years and there's nothing we can do about it. I've been to the council but we have to go on keyways and that all takes time. I don't know what we're gonna do.
>
> (Leigh, group interview two)

I felt at this point after the homeless conversation that it would be a good idea to talk about our upbringings and how our inequalities were born out of a capitalist society and as such have been reproduced through schooling and education, as this was the first opportunity of an informative session at group level. Despite having previously provided my participants with informative sessions on an individual level, it was as if they had forgotten. Not one participant before this point, had mentioned anything they had learned just a few weeks earlier.

I asked questions such as *'how much of how you cope with things as an adult would you say is through learned behaviour?', 'where do you feel the learned behaviour has come from?'* and *'why do you feel that way?'.* As my participants engaged in answering the questions, we moved into discussing our 'class' experiences. These discussions however, revolved more around homelife and not one participant had given their schooling a second thought. Although we had spoken about schooling and education on an individual level it was a period in their life that had passed and with no further engagement in 'formal' education. The misfortunes and/or failures of my participants were clearly regarded as a fault within their own family units both

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[60] Sofa surfing is considered a hidden form of homelessness as homeless people stay with friends or family on their sofas and have no permanent fixed abode. An example of one story can be found at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42427398

past and present. It was normal to make 'mistakes' and suffer from them. My participants did not recognise or connect with how they had been switched off from education as a potential reason for their sufferings.

> My education hasn't defined who I am. I've learned to stand on my own two feet.
>
> > (Kat, group interview two)
>
> Yeah, I wouldn't say my education is anything to do what I haven't got right, it is what it is.
>
> > (Mary, group interview two)
>
> Well look at me I worked my butt off in my final year and yeah I didn't get any c's or above but I didn't get ungraded like I was predicted. I did that for me, I wanted to prove to myself I could achieve something and I did.
>
> > (Nell, group interview two)

Although Nell achieved graded exam results and she knew she had been switched off from education she had not realised that being switched off was what she shared in common with the others and as a result all had lacked in gaining skills such as problem solving. A key skill for rectifying 'mistakes'. This highlights how state schooling and education reinforces inequalities as 'normal'; reinforcing working class characteristics. In the case of those poor and disadvantaged, schooling and education serves no purpose for individual or social change and no purpose for developing a critical consciousness.

To further engage my participants, I added in our first visual element and as an informative session I provided them with a 'job' sheet and a made up factory scene.[62] Having asked my participants to rank in order the job they were most likely to apply for in a factory I was not surprised with the results. Straight away JD went for the cleaner as her first option because she had been told to take on a cleaning role by her job coach and she believed that was all she was *'good for'*. Leigh and Mary felt they could cope with clerical work as they had prior experience but both felt if a factory operative (FO) was the only position available they would *'settle for it'* whilst Kat and Nell both chose the FO. When I asked why no one chose the

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[62] There is a discussion on the factory task in the footnote of chapter five.

supervisor or managerial roles they all said they felt those positions were above them and they would not *'feel comfortable telling other people what to do'*.

Asking them if they would like to have a go at being the supervisor, manager and FOs for the visual hands-on task, Nell and Mary immediately took on the operative roles and roped JD into the supervisory role. Kat was manager and unfortunately Leigh had a call and had to leave. I observed after giving Kat a sheet of instructions as factory manager. Kat was comfortable with 'bossing' JD around and there was no room for a 2-way conversation, she had simply fulfilled the role as she envisaged it. JD was very uncomfortable and would giggle her way through occasionally asking me if she was doing things correctly. Both Nell and Mary got stuck into their task having a chat and a giggle at the same time. When I asked them why they chatted and giggled whilst working they both agreed *'because if you get it wrong it's JD's job to spot it and let us know'*. I informed my participants this was because they had been used to following low level instructions their whole life, they had adapted to thinking on a lower level than what they may be capable of. All my participants took on the roles without the use of critical thinking skills. They had organised themselves easily and without taking on complicated tasks. For the final part I asked them to discuss who gains and who misses out from the new creation and can we do anything to change the inequalities and if so how. Evidently critical thought began to come into play.

> Well yeah I made that pie and I get more money than Mary now but we all have to make it and those at the top profit from it.
>
> (Nell, pie making task)

> It's not fair really. Why should them arseholes at the top reap the rewards…
>
> (Mary, pie making task)

> We could make a union that makes things more fair for everyone.
>
> (Kat, pie making task)

> And how could we go about doing that?
>
> (Researcher comment, pie making task)

> We could stop working [laughs].
>
> (Nell, pie making task)

But if we do that we might get sacked and they'll still make your pie but you won't get paid for it.

(Mary, pie making task)

Yes but we could give them notice and do it properly, make them actually listen to us in that time.

(Kat, pie making task)

What my participants were displaying for the first time was how they contributed to knowledge, or in the case of the task, making something new. They connected on a level I had not seen up until now and they spoke about how competing against others was *'pointless'* because they were *'never gonna win'* but the task made them realise some competition '*was healthy'* and they were good enough to take part. Furthermore, they had connected in a way meaning they could stand together. They could see the history of their class and class inequalities beginning to make sense, evident in our continuing discussions. What had been different with this informative session was the visuality and hands-on nature of the task. This task also prepared them for the additional intervention.

For the final week I asked my participants to bring some information surrounding the discussions we had had.[63] We began by reading out some of the notes we had recorded prior to the interview session and what I found interesting about this research task was how quickly it turned into a debate. Everything my participants had told me during the individual interviews and how I had come to know them unfolded before my eyes. I could see how they thought of other people's issues in an isolated way and they blamed those issues on others being lazy or as deserving of those issues.

You see them walking around [*…the b**** g*******] with black eyes cos they've turned on each other over half a can of cider or something. It's their own fault.

(Nell, group interview three)

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[63] The research task encouraged my participants to look at facts and figures of the areas we had discussed for example, depression and mental health, loneliness and homelessness. I asked them to have a look on the internet and/or to ask friends/families to prepare them with some information that we could further discuss as a group. The idea was to connect to the 'reality' of the inequalities on a wider scale.

They've got to such a point they've gone below the low point and they don't actually know what to do with their lives so they drink cos they've got nothing else for them.

(Leigh, group interview three)

But as the debate got underway, I could see my participants at different levels in terms of thinking but also how they believe others take the 'easy' option when the going gets tough although I had observed them doing the very same thing with the visual hands-on task just a fortnight earlier. What they had not realised was the commonality of the 'easy' option they shared because they believed their difficulties were *real*. Furthermore, what was obvious was how they had been deprived of effective communication. None of my participants had been able to 'talk' about problems in their life and being 'shut down' through their school years left them unable to have a voice. In this scenario their voices came through and they began asking critical questions.

I don't actually agree with that, it's an easy option to do what they wanna do.

(Nell, group interview three)

It is easy but if they […*the government*] stopped their benefits so they couldn't buy alcohol then they'd have to do something else you would think or they'd turn to crime.

(Leigh, group interview three)

It's hard to define a bunch of homeless arseholes with the genuine homeless who can't afford to live.

(Mary, group interview three)

Yeah but why is anyone really homeless? It's because of circumstances beyond their control. There's no jobs so they can't earn any money and the government take the piss when it comes to benefits so there are no alternatives.

(Kat, group interview three)

And as the debate further continued, making poor decisions became a topic of highlight.

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People on a budget buy the wrong things cos they can't afford to eat properly. You can get a jar of curry sauce for 28p so you're gonna choose the cheaper option.

(Nell, group interview three)

The people that are constantly eating the shit stuff are constantly feeling ill and can't go to work whereas if they were to eat more healthily they'd be more productive in the first place.

(Leigh, group interview three)

Yes, but there is always a surplus army of labour. People that eat poor are blamed for making those choices, they choose to eat that way so there will always be other people waiting to replace them.

(Interviewer comment, group interview three)

We should learn to make our own food cos that's something you're not taught. You do food tech in school but what do you actually remember by the time you've left?

(Mary, group interview three)

As a group my participants began to connect their issues with wider issues, they began asking critical questions and although they were not at a stage of knowing how to overcome them, they were interested in learning more. By extracting information from my participants and through holding informative sessions I provided them with the opportunity of taking control of their lives in a more productive way.

8.5 Discussion Part (II)

In this section, I argue in favour of Bourdieu's notion of capitals and social reproduction theory. I discuss the conclusions I have drawn from the findings part II and relate them to the literature.

8.5.1 Capital and social reproduction theory

For Bourdieu (1986) the status quo of middle class ideology is both legitimated and maintained through schooling and education. This is clear within my findings. What is most evident is how schooling and education mirrors a working life, how it plays a role in reproducing class inequalities through shaping the thoughts and behaviours; the dispositions of my participants. This occurs through structural processes such

as with a hierarchical order and rules, setting and streaming and through teacher and peer relations and the hidden curriculum. All these areas have resulted in my participants submissive behaviours.

Through relying on one another to function as a family, as a whole unit, my participants habitus developed from relations that had reflected the social relations of the mode of production. Similar can be seen at school as friendship groups were made with those from very similar backgrounds. Without doubt, the habitus of each of my participants, having been socialised within their primary familial units, and having embodied their cultural capital, clearly came into conflict with the institutional habitus of secondary schooling (Bourdieu, 1986). If we relate to Bourdieu's concept of *field* it is clear that my participants struggled to acquire the knowledge and different forms of capitals. Their level of cultural capital differed and this made it difficult for them to get on and succeed.

My participants lacked in the institutional form of cultural capital evident with them having limited to no qualifications. Within just a few years of leaving school my participants have become either precariously employed or completely disengaged with the labour market resulting in them having little economic capital. The lack of opportunities my participants have suffered is as Wright (2015) discusses and relates to opportunity hoarding by the middle class; by those who are viewed as having the appropriate credentials. Some positions that Nell and Mary had applied for, for example, were closed off to them on the grounds of qualifications. Nell had attempted to access the necessary qualification but found the obstacles in her way overwhelming and gave up.

My participants have limited social capital as the friends they once had in school largely disappeared from their lives upon adulthood. The communities they live in show no form of solidarity and the fear of being judged for not having possessions of any great value narrows the opportunity for them to network on a wider social scale.

Whilst my participants experiences have been (re)produced it is possible that they could use their agency to resist and overcome their difficulties because 'dispositions are long lasting…but they are not eternal' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.29). But whilst my participants did show pockets of active agency they were less able to do so longer term. The dispositions of my participants have been so negatively formed that they have become trapped. Oppression runs so deep that it proves difficult to overcome.

8.5.2 Freirean thought

The overall experience of schooling and education is one that silenced my participants. By this I mean, internalising their emotions, their thoughts, their feelings. Through fear of being shut down or getting it wrong they became observers rather than actively engaged in the learning process. As Freire (1993) would say, they have become *'spectators not re-creators'* (p.47).

During their time at school my participants had suffered being ridiculed, they had been shamed and intimidated by their teachers and their peers and they therefore learned to internalise these emotions. All my participants had felt intimidated by most of their teachers on a regular basis. Being asked to contribute to a lesson when they felt they had nothing to add was an area flagged up most. This resulted in my participants feeling *'thick'* or like a '*dunce'* as if they could not do it. All my participants were generally in bottom sets and struggled with curriculum areas with the exception of Nell and Kat in their PE lessons and Leigh in her English set. The occasional praise from the teachers was welcomed by my participants but this was in short supply. All felt powerless and unable to contribute to knowledge. Their learning reflected nothing connected to their reality; their need to work. They had been subjected to a 'banking' education (Freire, 1970).

It is through the hidden curriculum where I feel my participants suffered what Bourdieu and Wacquant (2005) refer to as a form of symbolic violence. Throughout their schooling experiences my participants observed what others wore, they listened to stories of holidays and more. They knew they were not in the same league. In lesson time my participants observed how teachers favoured the more affluent students. At break times they escaped. They left the school premises taking themselves away from all that oppressed them. They did not reflect from their actions as they returned to school. There was no form of praxis (Freire, 1970).

8.5.3 Defining working class

The material life conditions of my participants show, as adults, they have limited/no qualifications and limited/no skills, they were either in between jobs or unemployed and/or benefit dependent. They had no savings and struggled to make ends meet, they were saddled with debt and often buried their heads in the sand rather than faced their fears, fears such as financial difficulties. They grew up in areas where more affluent children would not associate themselves in either the area or with the poorer children. Their individual attributes showed a lack of engagement in the political arena and with class consciousness and all participants suffered with poor

health particularly with mental health. More obvious was the insecurities each of them displayed; the unsustainable futures for their family/s.

As adults my participants do not own the means of production, and whilst I agree with Marx, they own their own labour power, three of my participants choose not to use their labour power, but such a choice is not as a result of their own free will. I would argue this is not resistance by Giroux's (2001) definition because choice, in this respect, is bound up in their personal struggles, their struggles of the 'self' rather than from the recognition of dominating capitalist relations. The resistance my participants show is more reactionary towards their struggles.

Mary, Leigh and JD have been long term unemployed in adulthood and at times suffer with severe depression and anxiety. Mary's health was the key factor to her unemployment but she has recently entered the labour market again. Kat wanted to be unemployed because she despised working in the local factories. She used her health issues as a way out and felt she had to constantly fight the system for what she believed she was entitled too. Nell is precariously employed. Nell holds dental nursing qualifications but quit working in the industry because she desperately wanted to be a nurse but her qualifications are not transferable and she cannot access further or higher education mainly due to a lack of finances.

In relation to behaviours, JD had her children temporarily removed from her care by social services due to her drug and alcohol dependency. A member from Leigh's family reported her to social services because of her alcohol dependency. Mary struggles with her teenage son.

But having got to know my participants and their personal circumstances it became clear that although they were in the lowest rungs of society, scratch beneath the surface and it becomes clear they do cling onto the idea of making changes for the better, evident with their views of wanting their children to get an education and have a chance of gaining more from life than they had. With time and patience, despite the inequalities they had faced, I was able to engage them in informal sessions, they were educable, although at this stage they had not challenged the information I provided them with. For me, from the moment we are born, we are immersed in 'a game of survival' in which we compete on a battlefield. If we think about social class, we can see that our journeys begin on the battlefield at different and unequal levels.

8.6 Chapter Conclusion

The significance of this chapter has been to highlight how social inequalities are (re)produced and maintained through the English state education system and the effects into and throughout adulthood.

This chapter has evidenced how reproduction occurred through teacher and peer relations with teachers favouring the affluent students and through the bullying that my participants were subjected to. There were times where my participants showed resilience and resisted the conditions they faced. However, these moments were few and far between leading to only short bursts of active agency.

Reproduction also occurred through the curriculum with a process of selection and having different ability sets and through the hidden curriculum. As a result, my participants were subjected to negative experience(s) of class and class relations. Being working class poor and disadvantaged for them ran deep inside the 'self'. These are very real experience(s) occurring as a result of mass inequalities; inequalities inherent within a capitalist system. State schooling and education, as a first line of defence for the capitalist system, had legitimised the inequalities my participants suffered and reinforced class related experiences as normal just as Louis Althusser (1971) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) had argued. This led to a lack of opportunities for my participants post-school with some *fields* closed off to them.

Upon and throughout adulthood my participants struggled with the 'self' whilst simultaneously becoming disengaged with the wider social, economic and political spheres. Although they had the potential to use their agency to overcome their class inequalities they had merely acted in the world rather than upon the world.

In the next chapter I relate to the Freirean concept of praxis and discuss the findings from the visual intervention that enabled my participants to engage with problem-posing and problem-solving methods and through relating to this form of praxis, the development of a critical consciousness.

CHAPTER NINE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS PART (III) – Using a Visual Intervention in Critical Ethnography (VICE)

9.1 Introduction

Having co-created a short film as part of the *visual intervention*, I present part (III) of my findings in this chapter. This section enabled me to explore the role of agency through a Freirean form of praxis. The findings in this chapter relate to my additional research question; evident in the data selected.

9.2 A Summary of the Key Findings

<u>Key Findings part (III)</u>

<u>The Overall Intervention</u>
The intervention has enabled all participants to recognise they could learn new knowledge, contribute to creating new knowledge and accumulate capitals. They also developed in terms of consciousness.
  - ➤ All participants developed in terms of self-confidence.
  - ➤ All participants developed organisation skills evident through working collaboratively to select arts-related methods to assist them with making participatory film.
  - ➤ All participants created knowledge.
  - ➤ All participants critically questioned their inequalities and critically reflected upon their common experiences.
  - ➤ All participants showed evidence of incorporating problem-posing/solving methods into their everyday lives.
  - ➤ All participants accumulated some form of capitals.

9.3 Participatory Film as the Product of VICE

As my participants had already been through the school system and had lived experiences of inequalities I felt I could not resonate with entering into a 'collective' dialogue through action (or performance) from the beginning as envisaged in the work of Boal's FT. For me, to do this may have not only put me on a researcher pedestal as discussed in chapter five but my participants may have shied away from imparting personal information with complete strangers,[64] and inflicting new

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[64] Had I conducted an action or performance related research project then we would have been complete strangers to each other in the beginning. However, as the visual intervention was

information upon them may have resulted in a negative response. My concerns with this proved to be accurate when I asked my participants during the follow up interviews what they thought of making a participatory film as part of the visual intervention. Their responses resonated with the initial comments I had received during the pilot stage.

> I was intrigued to know if taking part in your research would reduce my anxieties but if I had to be part of a group to start with I wouldn't have done it.
>
> (JD, follow up interview)

> There's no way I would've done any acting, no way [giggles]. I just wouldn't have done it, not at the start.
>
> (Mary, follow up interview)

> I think if you'd come in and been like bang bang[65] then I'd be like nah go away I probably wouldn't have been as open and outspoken and as deep cos obviously it was quite deep.
>
> (Nell, follow up interview)

> I enjoyed making the film, it brought everything to life but I'm glad we done it last because we got to know each other first. I think if we'd done it from the group sessions at the beginning it would've been different because you hide your struggles, you don't want other people to think you are a failure.
>
> (Kat, follow up interview)

> I don't do people, I'm not a people person [giggles] so I wouldn't have got involved with it. No, it was good the way we done it although I didn't do the film part.
>
> (Leigh, follow up interview)

9.3.1 Developing self-confidence and organisation skills

Using arts-related methods during the process of the visual intervention at this latter stage in my fieldwork enabled my participants to express themselves in a show and

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conducted at the latter stages of the research we had time to get to know each other and build the trust enough to not class one another as strangers.

[65] This all guns blazing scenario is how Nell referred to the prospect of engaging with action or performance related research at the initial stages of the fieldwork.

tell scenario similar to methods used in Boal's (2000) *Theatre of the Oppressed* and others that have used theatre techniques to challenge their oppression. I found my participants had developed in terms of self-confidence beforehand making it easier for them to engage, evident in their responses: *'I wasn't really looking forward to acting but being with you all made the experience a good one', 'the way we come together was just so natural and it definitely made things easier for me'* and *'working with you before the group sessions helped me with my anxieties'.* I also found that my participants had organised themselves,[66] and the arts-related methods they had selected, particularly after two participants were unable to complete the intervention in to its' final stages, without conflict,[67] in what Boal (2000, p.106) would refer to as 'making the body expressive' using 'their bodily resources for self-expression'. For example, during the process of making the participatory film and upon critically reviewing it personally, I concluded that:

- A drama enabled all participants to *look* at, and process the inequalities they had lived with.
- Poetry enabled all participant voices to come through for effectively expressing themselves.
- The music piece selected for the film affected the mood of the film but reflected the deep hurt all participants had felt at being on the outside of society.

At the point of the critical film review my participants could *listen* to the words they had expressed; they could *see* their lives unfold in front of them and get a *feel* for each-others worlds in a way that 'fine-tuned' their senses (Boal, 2000). They were in a position where praxis was occuring (Freire, 1993). They had reflected on previous group 'themes' and took action in the form of the arts-related methods to which they reflected again enabling them to take action in their individual lives. They had entered a cycle of reflection and action.

9.3.2 The space for new knowledge

A key issue with learning new knowledge was my participants lack of confidence *with* and understanding *of* the world around them; the very fact that they had accepted the status quo put them in a 'magical' state of consciousness (Freire,

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[66] My participants organised themselves in terms of who was taking on what role to act out the themes for the film. They chose the themes that best fit their everyday life and all agreed on which arts-related methods would best tell their story.
[67] Using theatrical methods such as drama in this way can be imposing on non-actors but as Boal (1974) suggests by *inviting* people to perform reduces the conflict.

1993). Having reflected upon my own education and learning new information I, too, had been through this state so I was well aware that introducing my participants to the use of various arts-related methods was not only a completely new way for them to engage with learning but one that would take them out of their comfort zone. I observed how we related to each other during the initial ice-breakers activities and soon realised that my participants were becoming active rather than passive learners because they questioned things more easily. I made similar observations during the visual factory task from the informative sessions discussed in chapter eight and it was obvious to me that when my participants could physically move their bodies in a given space they felt less awkward with learning. This resonates with Boal's (1995) drama games and use of theatre space. It could be said at this stage my participants were entering a 'naïve' state of consciousness (Freire, 1993) and drawing from my observations and diary entries of participant conversations from the visual intervention would suggest this. For example, it is evident my participants were arousing their epistemological curiosity through questioning the '*why us*' and *'how'* to the *'what does this mean'*; they began to recognise the cause of their inequalities as *'it's not just life…'*. This shows, at this stage, my participants were not suffering from a 'camera obscura', they were connecting to the historical process of their reality.

9.3.3 Problem-posing and problem-solving

The participatory film shows how my participants problem-posed. They all knew the themes they held in common to be reflected on and ranked the themes in no particular order of how they would appear in the film. Although they had been asking the *'why's',* already mentioned, at this stage in the intervention, my participants were still falling back into a stage of naivety, not realising how they would reflect from watching themselves or how this would lead to them taking action for their individual and/or wider social change.[68] This is evident in their conversations with each other.

> [*Mary to Nell and Kat*] I don't think I'm gonna be clever enough to see further than the end of my nose [*laughs out loud*].
>
> (Diary entry verbatim – Mary)

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[68] A natural phenomenon according to Freire (1993).

[*Kat in response to Mary*] I'm not sure what we'll think until we see it in action.

<div align="right">(Diary entry verbatim – Kat)</div>

[*Nell in response to Kat and Mary*] Don't put yourself down [*…Mary*] none of us know how it's gonna turn out but we've come this far, it'll be interesting.

<div align="right">(Diary entry verbatim – Nell)</div>

Post-film for me is where things became very interesting because in all honesty I felt just as Mary, Nell and Kat had. I, too, was not sure just what kind of impact the film was going to have and if this visual intervention could really complement the informative sessions previously held. However, it is evident amongst my participants upon them critically reviewing the participatory film that they were thinking in terms of problem-posing.

> It hit a nerve cos even the parts I didn't put forward they still hit a nerve cos I could relate to them…it makes you think well it makes me think of my own mess of a life. I've always seen myself as worthless but now I'm recognising the mental health and depression side of me has been there since I was a kid and it's not my fault.

<div align="right">(JD, critical film review)</div>

> It's powerful. It was tough to watch cos it's very negative but now I've seen it I want to take the negative and try and turn it into a positive a little at a time. I would say that sketch we did with the medical stuff was reality for me. I hit a point and it made me feel like I don't want to be like that.

<div align="right">(Mary, critical film review)</div>

> I felt like my heart was really beating, like what must others be going through. It hurt [*…emotionally*] but it's affected me in a positive way. I need to prioritise and I want to help others, I can help others to understand it doesn't have to be like that.

<div align="right">(Kat, critical film review)</div>

It was very emotional [*pauses*] it was reality wasn't it? Even the bit that wasn't your life was an eyeopener. Seeing it was more than just words, it's

made it more real and you think oh my god. I'm getting goosey's[69] thinking about it. But it's made me stronger I'm more determined to make things better for me and ma kids.

(Nell, critical film review)

It was like oh my god, this is my life. I know it's like this but it has really struck a chord with me. Seeing it has really changed things for me, it was like looking in the mirror and telling yourself, right, it's time to change.

(Leigh, critical film review)

At this stage I was also aware of the Hawthorne effect where I had played a role in the intervention with my participants and I wondered if in the follow up interviews they would have been able to continue with problem-posing and problem-solving methods in their daily lives. The follow up interviews laid bare just how my participants have been able to overcome some of their inequalities and in doing-so the strategies they have put in place particularly at the individual level. They had not only connected their issues to wider issues, asking critical questions, but they had arrived at a stage of knowing how to overcome them. The film had impacted upon them, and upon me in a way we had not expected; it was more powerful than we could have ever imagined. Freire (1993) suggests this is because prior to the intervention we were living in the moment, we had engaged in dialogue but we had only reflected and without action it was merely verbalism. We had not come full circle in terms of praxis. Until now.

Reflecting on the film has made me realise I need to pay attention to why things are happening so I can change it. I've already set myself a challenge to go for a full-time job cos I owe it to my kids to show them things can be better.

(JD, follow up interview)

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[69] Goosey's is just short for goose bumps.

It's changed my thinking with you shouldn't be believing the professionals all the time cos the doctors were telling me to take this and that and I never questioned anything. And I know from my job now, the doctor will prescribe the same thing cos he'll get money for that. My whole thought has changed. My mindset has changed.

(Mary, follow up interview)

I'm gonna be honest with ya, words are just words, it's not until you actually put it into physical form that it makes you realise, no hold on a minute what the hell is going on. I quit ma job and I feel better for it cos I've been able to be a mum to C******* and R****. Don't' get me wrong I haven't become a bum or nothing, I'm doing a course I've always wanted to do but for now I'm enjoying ma kids.

(Nell, follow up interview)

I've been thinking about doing a counselling course but I also want to do my own drama group, I've written a playscript and I'd like to work with kids a bit like what we've done but I'm not ready for that yet. I would say I'm in a better place now though.

(Kat, follow up interview)

I've been doing some research at the library and I'd like to pick your brains about a few things actually because I really want to make a go of running a business. This is the new me [giggles].

(Leigh, follow up interview)

The visual intervention had some success with my participants thinking about or actively engaging in wider social change albeit less so than at the individual level but this may be due to the timescale post intervention as I conducted the follow up just three months after the critical film review or it could be what Freire (1974) refers to as 'unfinishedness', this would explain my participants as being in a state of continuous growth and development. The latter can be seen in my participants response to moving forward and engaging in political life as all said they '*would vote at the next election*'.

All participants felt they could make a difference to someone else's life but only Nell had put this into practice at the point of the follow up interviews. When I asked them how they could help those who are disadvantaged and struggling all spoke about

the importance of *'understanding what someone's been through'* through *'talking to the homeless',* and *'listening to others problems'* furthermore, my participants felt *'looking out for causes that you can relate to and joining them'* would be a good way *'to get involved'.*

9.3.4 Developing and raising consciousness

Freire felt for class consciousness to be developed a critical consciousness or *conscientizcao* first had to occur and as I have evidenced so far, it is clear a critical consciousness had been developing amongst my participants and they had recognised wider issues that related to social class. This recognition had not led them to become destructive fanatics of the status quo just as Freire (1993) had stated. My participants had connected 'to the historical process as responsible subjects' (p.18). During the follow up interviews, to explore the level of class consciousness, I revisited the information I attempted to engage my participants with throughout the informative sessions prior to the visual intervention to connect their class inequalities to wider social struggles. I asked my participants if they recognised why they have suffered in silence for so long and if they recognised how their inequalities had been reproduced not only through family but through their schooling and education experiences. Their responses were rather forthcoming when relating to society, different to how they had responded to me previously.

> I never really thought of anything like that it's not something you see but now I can see that others struggle because of the system. We might not have the same problems like with depression and stuff but we're cut from the same cloth.
>
> (JD, follow up interview)

> It's because we're all working class and we're the poor arseholes that have been shit on from those at the top. I realise that now. I do.
>
> (Mary, follow up interview)

> If I'm honest with ya I would never had a conversation with JD, I would generally never even approached her whereas now I know [*…that we share similarities*] deep down they're[70] no different from me, do you know what I

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[70] Nell was referring to 'they're no different from me' as people she regards in a lower social ranking to her.

mean? I mean now I look around and see people looking rough and I think what do you do, why are you down on your luck sort of thing.

(Nell, follow up interview)

I think it's important to learn about other people's problems and not just think the problems are our own…if you know of someone struggling and you could do something about it why wouldn't you?

(Kat, follow up interview)

It's sad, sad that we're broken down and made to feel we're no good. I've realised from doing this intervention it's important to know what's going on in the world so we can work together to change things.

(Leigh, follow up interview)

However, these initial responses did relate more to wider society and although we had discussed the role of schooling throughout the informative sessions it made me wonder if my participants had connected the 'reproduction' of inequalities to their schooling and education experiences. I proceeded to ask them the following question: *'would you say your thoughts and behaviours have been shaped by your schooling and education experiences?'* their responses soon made me realise they had.

I'm recognising how my anxieties started at school and how my background was the issue and I don't want that to be an issue for J***** and N******.

(JD, follow up interview)

It really does make you think a bit more, definitely. It's thinking about what went on in school and how class, being in a lower category is the problem and I can see that with J****.

(Mary, follow up interview)

I literally gave up cos school didn't give a shit, do you know what I mean? So, yeah I would say it has shaped my thinking but since doing this [*…intervention*] I see things differently and since I've been at home, like I'm helping ma kids with their homework and C******* has moved up 2 sets and R****'s reading has improved.

(Nell, follow up interview)

You can see how places […*such as work*] can be quite judgey with poorer people like school was. I would say since watching the film I realised how I never reviewed anything I would normally just let things go without question and it's because you are not taught to do it in school.

(Kat, follow up interview)

Yes it has and it's definitely a problem and you can see it in so many people our age and even in younger people like A****. People like us […*in terms of our class*] get hit by every direction […*from teachers and peers*].

(Leigh, follow up interview)

9.4 Accumulating Capitals

The intervention broke down barriers between my participants 'self' and 'others' they learned to trust and found they could support each other. Previously, I had noted, during the group sessions, how my participants had not formed fully trusting relationships as a group, evident with how Nell paired with Mary and pushed JD out with the visual factory task discussed in chapter eight. Now post intervention all of them recognised how they could support each-other, they had developed trusting relationships and felt part of a group. They had accumulated social capital.[71]

Social challenges have always been an issue for me but working with you on a one-to-one before the group sessions helped me to relax and we all participated together.

(JD, follow up interview)

It makes a difference […*to all our lives*] when you know other people are going through similar problems and we learned that through a practical activity.

(Mary, follow up interview)

We built up trust and friendships and by the end of it you realise they are just as emotional and fragile […*as one's self*] and it made me realise how much help we can give to overcome stuff…like when I helped JD understand a

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[71] I am aware that the term 'social' capital is loosely defined but I am using it to refer to 'sociability, social networks and social support, trust, reciprocity and community and civic engagement' (Morrow, 1999, p.74).

cleaners job is physical hard graft and it shouldn't be thought of as the job to go for to start from the bottom.

(Nell, follow up interview)

I think because we had built up trust with you we learned how to trust each other and be comfortable with who we are and we were all involved with helping each other to make the film.

(Kat, follow up interview)

I don't ever trust anyone so to talk about my problems was a big thing but we've all become friends from this.

(Leigh, follow up interview)

Since meeting with all my participants at the follow up interviews I have realised the friendships that developed during the intervention have continued. All chat to each other via social media, Nell and Kat occasionally socialise in the pub whilst Nell, Mary and Leigh find time for having a catch up. I, too, have kept in touch with them via social media and I have met up with Mary and Leigh on a couple of occasions. Most recently, JD has suffered a setback with her mental health and she contacted me for help. After talking her through the steps she had learned and put into place during the intervention I encouraged her to watch the film again and refresh. From this, JD has taken positive steps to rebuild her life and she reached out to the others to talk about her problems, something she would have never done before. Furthermore, my participants have connected with their child/ren's schooling and education in a way that I had not envisaged. For example, Leigh has spent time talking to her daughter about the difference between acceptable behaviours at home and with that at school to help her to understand the *'need to be adaptable and get on'* and Nell represented a friend's child during a meeting with the headteacher.

In this respect, all my participants had accumulated some forms of cultural capital. Kat and Nell for example, had discussed getting back into education during the interviews but only Nell has been successful at enrolling on a course post intervention. As she tells it *'watching the film made me realise I wanted to change things and I've always wanted to cut men's hair so I'm doing a barbering course now'*. In terms of embodied cultural capital all my participants had developed skills and behaviours that served them well within their own family units but during their time at school they had learned to either engage in 'class clown' type behaviours or

become submissive. During my observations from the intervention, I had seen them express themselves verbally and through showing emotion. The latter behaviour had been seen as a weakness when they were growing up and they had learned to hide deep emotions. The intervention opened their minds to working in a way that helped them to either work towards or to overcome some of the 'habits' that they had internalised.

> I see myself as worthless…and it wasn't until I watched the film when I thought this is me [*pauses*] I want to overcome my anxiety.
>
> (JD, follow up interview)

> I'm used to getting shown what to do and learning something different has made me think differently about things and what I can do.
>
> (Mary, follow up interview)

> I've never liked going into new groups or anything like that but am gonna be honest with ya, since doing this I'm not afraid to try like with doing this barbering course, I phoned a few places asking for voluntary work experience. I wouldn't have done that before.
>
> (Nell, follow up interview)

> Doing this [*…intervention*] has helped me to prioritise things. I don't ignore bills anymore, it's had a positive impact and it's helped me with paying bills.
>
> (Kat, follow up interview)

> I want to break the cycle I'm in and I know I'll get there. Doing this intervention has opened my eyes to how easily I push things aside and don't deal with them.
>
> (Leigh, follow up interview)

Out of the three forms of cultural capital the objectified form is the least form to have been accumulated by my participants. All but Nell rented their houses although Nell could no longer afford her mortgage after she split from her husband and has subsequently moved into a rented property. Nell and Mary were the only two participants to own a second hand car but not one of them owned any material objects of substantial worth either *symbolically* 'which presupposes cultural capital' or *materially* 'which presupposes economic capital' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.20). This may be due to how they prioritised their lives as all my participants regarded such

material objects as *'irrelevant'* or classed them as *'leisure items'* and firmly placed them at the bottom of their list as *'not needed'*. Ownership of goods was less important to them than planning a weekly food budget for example.

In terms of economic capital, all my participants had lived with being economically poor either because they were benefit dependent or in precarious work or in a job that was poorly paid. At the follow up, I came to realise that not much had changed with their financial situation, however, and in relation to their thinking of the future, they were all able to identify areas of how to increase their economic capital.

> A year ago I wasn't even trying with anything I was just crying about everything but now I've even been to a 40 hour a week [...*job*] interview and I will go to others to make things better for our future.
>
> (JD, follow up interview)

> I'm still not getting anywhere with money. I did go for an interview [...*at the doctors surgery*] but I didn't it as I didn't finish the test paper...but it hasn't put me off at all I'll keep on trying because I'm just as good as everyone else.
>
> (Mary, follow up interview)

> Doing this barbering course hasn't improved us financially, we're probably worse off right now but I'll volunteer and work for nothing to get experience and take it from there cos I'll be better off in the long run.
>
> (Nell, follow up interview)

> I'm in control of what I do, I've got in control of my bills and I've stood back and thought I need to take that step forward and get into performing arts, I know I'll gain from it in the future.
>
> (Kat, follow up interview)

> My grandad passed away and left me some money and I've been planning on doing a house clearance business where I can updo the furniture and resell them.
>
> (Leigh, follow up interview)

9.5 Discussion Part (III)

In this section, I discuss the conclusions I have drawn from the findings part III and relate them to the literature.

Freire (1993) believed the awakening of a critical consciousness was only possible through problem-posing education that moved away from traditional 'banking' methods of teaching. The methods employed for this visual intervention methodology has shown just that.

After the critical film review I had conducted with my participants, I determined not only had they been able to reflect on their lives visually but also, this had an immediate effect on them in terms of their sense of agency and empowerment. Clearly, theorising about their lived experiences of social inequalities became meaningful when they were able to watch themselves in action. Giroux (2002), using film as a pedagogical tool, found similar in his classrooms when he showed film to offer 'students alternative views of the world' (p.3). Giroux reports students as beginning 'to question critically their own investment in the film' (p.8); in other words, the students connected their experiences in broader terms through the medium of film.

It is evident that upon developing a critical consciousness a class consciousness also prevails as I have demonstrated. My participants attitudes towards society have changed particularly as they want to understand why others are marginalised and how the oppressive forces at work relate to them and others and furthermore how they can change it. Developing critical consciousness is a never-ending process, instead it is a continuous cycle that weaves from magical to naïve to critical (Freire, 1993; 2015).

The follow up interviews evidenced that a visual intervention such as with the use of participatory film is a form of *praxis* combining knowledge (theory) with practice (action) and my participants have been able to critically self-reflect and evaluate to construct new knowledge. Through disrupting the status quo and contributing to emancipatory knowledge this methodology has proved to complement a Critical Ethnography and moreover, has enabled the voices and experiences of my participants whose stories may have been marginalised (Thomas, 1993; Carspecken, 1996; Denzin, 2009; Madison, 2012). Moreover, developing a critical consciousness has not, as Freire noted, led to my participants joining or leading any revolutionary movements. They have simply become 'responsible subjects' avoiding any 'fanaticism' towards the status quo. This finding is in line with findings in chapter

eight and highlights the tension discussed in chapter four in relation to the Marxian concept of a working class revolution because it shows that although active agency is possible, when one feels freedom from oppression in this way as a responsible subject one can connect to causes of their choosing and in doing so transformation is less aggressive.

9.5.1 Capitals

Bourdieu (1986) believed social reproduction is best understood by exploring the level of *capitals* an individual has, as discussed in chapters three and four. His work on habitus tells us that reproduction is something learned over time through socialisation, and in practice, one's norms and behaviours become so internalised that habitual responses to engaging with something new reflects this. With this in mind, relating to Bourdieu's capitals post intervention is necessary for understanding how my participants have developed in relation to accumulating and mobilising their capitals, reducing their inequalities and if they have benefitted in terms of upward social mobility.

At the point of the final follow up interviews, I have determined that in terms of accumulating and mobilising social capital my participants have been able to connect with the common norms and values of the others in the group and they have built up the trust to call on one another for friendship which has led to them recognising the advantage of developing new social networks. In accumulating social capital my participants have been able to engage with their child/ren's education which will hopefully lead to educational success in the future.

In terms of accumulating cultural capital Nell is actively participating on a training course whilst Kat is considering enrolling. All my participants have developed new skills and behaviours that has broken with traditional forms of feeling worthless and acting submissive with those they regard in a higher social ranking. They feel confident to approach new situations and recognise they are good enough to contribute to new knowledge. However, they have neither accumulated 'objectified' cultural capital or economic capital but they have been equipped with the tools to make beneficial changes in these areas in the future. This has demonstrated how the forms of capital are inter-related and linked to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984).

9.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the final research question through offering a discussion on the use of a visual intervention as a form of praxis. It has complemented the dialogue developed for the critical theoretical framework.

The significance of this chapter has been to evidence how a visual intervention enabled my participants to engage with a platform for critical self-reflection and reflection in the wider socio-political sphere. Raising and developing a critical consciousness whereby my participants could become aware of their social class situation and develop critical thinking skills was never going to be sufficient enough through simply asking them questions about their upbringing and their schooling nor by simply providing them with relative information. To be involved with critical ethnographic research, and as the researcher, I needed to connect with my participants and their experiences, and my participants as the researched, needed the opportunity to connect their inequalities with wider society, to feel a part of that society.

In this chapter I have evidenced how the use of problem-posing and problem-solving methods were developed and how this led to the development of consciousness. Moreover, I have identified where my participants have accumulated capitals. I was aware of the Hawthorne effect where my participants may have altered or engaged in behaviours due to my presence of co-participating with them. However, the follow up interviews revealed this was not the case. My participants have been able to put the methods into practice. They had become creators of new knowledge. Whilst this shows they were active agents and not simply victims of their social class position they are still members of the working class. Freire (1993) points out that developing a critical consciousness does not mean one will become single minded and dangerous to the status quo but rather one will be in a position to connect with the world.

In the next chapter I conclude my overall discussions bringing together my whole thesis to provide my overall arguments, the limitations on hard to reach groups, implications for policy and practice and to make suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TEN: THESIS CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I set out to explore, critique and analyse the relation between social class, state schooling and education and the (re)production of social class inequalities. I knew from engaging in a review of the literature that marginalised and disadvantaged groups experienced lived inequalities and may benefit from a critical form of learning. At the same time, I recognised a gap in methodology and planned to incorporate an intervention similar to my community projects discussed in chapters two and six to address this issue.

10.2 Research Questions

My findings provided some insights to the following three questions that were generated for this thesis:

1. What is the relation between social class, state schooling and education in England and the reproduction of class inequalities amongst the lower strata of the working class?
2. Can the same participants develop in terms of consciousness for their own individual and for social transformation?
3. Can a visual form of praxis complement dialogue for the participants to transform their previous negative experiences?

10.3 Rationale

My rationale was to broaden knowledge and understanding of this relation through detailed life stories of the lived experiences from five adult participants from the lower strata of the working class. To assist me with meeting the aims and objectives I adopted a critical theoretical framework because I wanted to expose unequal power relations at the root cause of the inequalities and create the space for change.

10.3.1 Class matching

As I am from a similar background to my participants I have addressed the concern of 'class matching' discussed in chapter five. To reiterate, Mellor, et al. (2014) discuss how there is an assumption that working class academics may have a better understanding of working class participants but it was argued by Rhodes (1994 cited by Mellor, et al., 2014, p.138) that class matching can have a 'one-dimensional' focus that 'may lead both researchers and the researched to imagine

that they know each other's lives and invite the expectations of particular responses'. Whilst I feel I had an understanding of some of the lived experiences of my participants such as growing up poor this did not obscure my focus. Through using various methods to collect my data I was able to extract information that did not relate to my own lived experiences and I would therefore argue that you cannot fully 'know' each other's lives.

10.4 Macro, Micro and Meso-level analysis

Overall, I have presented unique empirical evidence that supports the main theories, arguments and debates at the macro, micro and meso levels. This thesis argues that social class does exist and that an *underclass,* rather than existing as a separate class to the working class, can be seen as symbolic of power relations in the sense that symbolic 'violence is exercised upon a social agent' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2005, p.167) through the possession of unequal levels of capital. Moreover, this thesis has demonstrated and argued that schooling and education does play a key role in the reproduction of social class inequalities. It creates the conditions to produce and reproduce capital and thus is damaging to the development of agency amongst the working class poor. However, this is neither permanent nor totally effective, for example, if one has the opportunity to engage in a form of emancipatory praxis. Moreover, methods relating to a Freirean concept of praxis can result in transformation of human suffering through liberatory practice rather than as a class revolution that Marx had predicted. The two are, however, not antithetical. In various contexts they can and do interact with and inform each other.

That aside, it must be said that the working class are not void of potential, either as individuals or for collective, social transformation, whether through interventions such as this or indeed through other individual and group experiences. Whilst I incorporated an intervention for my participants to engage with their own individual and social change, this thesis has shown their lives as full of hopes and dreams; as wanting change for their own children. They had developed skills and techniques useful to navigate their class background. Clearly, they had not simply been victims of their social class positioning.

This thesis has pointed out that the ideological state apparatus of schooling is the site both of social reproduction, and also, the site of actual resistance. This thesis addresses and uses a Freirean inspired concept of praxis, but it is important to note that in the wider literature, in other praxes, there are other versions of critical education within the education state apparatuses and also in wider social and

political arenas. This includes versions of Marxist and communist education and versions dedicated to raising wider social, economic and political consciousness.

10.5 My Original Contribution to Knowledge

Whilst overall the findings related to the existing arguments and debates in the literature, some findings offered further discussion, for example, to the notion of false consciousness. This thesis therefore offers an original contribution to knowledge by adding to Marxist theory on social class and class consciousness.

Additionally, this thesis addressed a gap in methodological frameworks and my findings offer new knowledge on the use of innovative methods. Through bridging a gap between research-led (theory) and practice-led (action) research this thesis offers an original contribution to methodology.

10.6 Exploitation, Alienation and Consciousness

For Marx and Marxists alike, it is the relation to the means of production that determines ones social class. The relationship between the owner and the worker is one based on exploitation; exploitation being the result of the owner, the capitalist, extracting the surplus value from the labour power of the worker. It is evident in my findings that whilst my participants did not own the means of production and upon leaving school they entered the work force with only their labour power, they did not continue to be exploited in this way throughout adulthood. Marx (1867) felt that capital creates the conditions to produce and, by keeping wages low, a 'reserve army of labour' and this could offer an explanation as to why my participants were, at times, unemployed. However, this would only relate to my participants who were precariously employed. JD and Leigh, for example, had not worked for a considerable number of years. They were economically oppressed but not exploited in the same way as my other participants. For Wright (2015b) they would not be in a direct class location. In this respect they 'fall outside…[Marxist] class schema, because they belong to family units having no stable relationship at all with the 'mode of production' – with legitimate gainful employment' (Smith, 1992 cited in Welshman, 2013, p.4). They 'are excluded from accessing material resources through dominating social relations' (Wright, 1995, p.377) resulting in them being labelled an 'underclass' (Wright, 1995) or 'lumpen' by Marx's definition (1848).

If we take the Marxist concept of alienation it is evident in my findings that my participants, during schooling and throughout their working life, exhibited a false consciousness, they had internalised their negativities and as result they became

alienated from the product, the process, their fellow workers and themselves. However, to say they only suffered from a false consciousness, that is to say they lacked an understanding or engagement with the social and economic process that enabled their exploitation is inaccurate, as during some point within adulthood my participants had developed a disengaged consciousness. They had entered what Freire (1993) would call a semi-transitive stage. This was not as the result of recognising common struggles as my participants did not connect their inequalities to the wider historical process but rather as a result of them feeling a sense of injustice, unfairness, such as with government policy, and not having the knowledge or skills to make effective change. They were active agents in their own right but more so in reactionary terms than resistant. Their disengaged consciousness meant it had not been possible for them to come together in a unified way without some form of stimulus or intervention.

Marxist reproduction theory argues that the education system is part of a superstructure built upon the economic relations of production. Althusser (1971) for example, theorised schools as being an Ideological State Apparatus to promote and reproduce dominant ideology. Bowles and Gintis (1976) with their 'correspondence principle' further explored this in relation to the hidden curriculum. It is evident within my findings that through verbal and non-verbal rules and a hierarchical structure the class system is reproduced in hidden forms, and also in not so-hidden-forms. Althusser noted that Ideological State Apparatuses such as schools have repressive aspects such as punishments, and, in this might be included Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence- the demeaning and degradation of those who might be resistant to school processes or who exhibited 'the wrong kind' of cultural, social and economic capital. Although my participants suffered other oppression such as with gender, the most fundamental form of oppression they suffered was class. Whilst my findings show that Marxist reproduction theory, as, for example, in the work of Althusser and Bowles and Gintis, and more recent, contemporary work by Hill, Cole and Rikowski, is still relevant for education research today it does so through a macro lens, sometimes appearing over-deterministic and economistic. In some reproduction theory literature, it therefore appears difficult to understand the role of agency in developing consciousness to challenge or resist the status quo (see, Hill, et al., 2002; Apple, 2006). However, contemporary Marxist reproduction theorists do discuss a dialectic between repressive reproductionism and (potentially) liberating resistance theory. Being aware of an over deterministic reproduction theory, I

therefore argue in favour of a micro-level analysis and for this reason I turn my attention to Bourdieu's forms of capitals and social reproduction theory.

10.7 Forms of Capitals and Social Reproduction Theory

Whilst I believe a social class analysis cannot be fully understood without first understanding the work of Marx as his theory provides the foundation for analytical clarity of social class, Bourdieu's forms of capital adds another dimension. Cultural, social and economic reproduction were very evident within my findings. Each of my participants possessed similar levels of cultural capital reproduced through the generations of their families. They had limited cultural capital in all its' forms.[72] They were economically poor as children due to the limited job opportunities open to their parents but more so due to the period of economic downturn in their home town. As they reached post-school young adults in the 1990s and early 2000's, just like their parents before them, they too were subjected to limited job opportunities. The town in which they lived had much later picked up economically but their job choices were limited to positions not needing educational qualifications; opportunities were closed off to them (Wright, 1995; 2015b). There were no government incentives to stay on at school and parental attitudes would not have supported this.

The neoliberal agenda under Margaret Thatcher was to reward hard work and individual merit in the process of developing a meritocratic society. But this did not happen in the case of my participants. My participants, and the working class in general, have suffered worsening conditions and class boundary lines have become clearer in 'a class war from above' (Harvey, 2005; Prendergast, Hill, and Jones, 2017). With this in mind I argue against Pakulski and Waters (1996) notion that class is dead. It is as Skeggs (2004, p.6) states '…[*that*] some theorists do not value it'.

My participants' levels of cultural capital did serve them well within their family units but less so in the school environment. It was evident that although my participants did struggle to acquire and accumulate capitals not one of them recognised school as playing a role in the reproduction of the inequalities they regarded as normal. All believed their lived inequalities were a fault of their own. Although there were many struggles, each participant, at times, were able to be active in relation to developing coping strategies to challenge their inequalities.

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[72] Forms being embodied, objectified and institutionalised as discussed in chapter three

10.8 Symbolic Capital

The capitalist social relations within my participants schooling was maintained as just and fair. It can be understood through the concept and operation of symbolic violence as a non-physical form of violence to legitimise the reproduction of social class inequalities.

Teachers have a degree of power at their fingertips because they can create spaces, or work to deny, spaces for real social change. In the case of my participants, teachers had used their power to control and dominate. The symbolic capital the teachers held had been given value and meaning through the authoritative relations my participants were subjected to in their families. Furthermore, peers from better off backgrounds displayed symbolic capital through the clothes they wore, the way they spoke and the holidays they had. This was in contrast to the symbolic capital held by my participants, due to their lack of economic capital.

As value and meaning are given to people and objects, symbolic capital is embodied. Symbolic violence works in the field to maintain the status quo by eliminating those with less forms of capitals. This gives analytical clarity to Marx's analysis of class because the exploitation and alienation of social relations are 'camera obscura'. Person-value is attached to individuals based on their ownership to the means of production and this distorts the true nature of the relationships. For unequal relations to be exposed and for society to be transformed Marx believed a revolutionary praxis of the proletariat would be needed and as Bourdieu did not offer a way forward in his theorising I related to Freire's concept of praxis.

10.9 Critical Consciousness and Praxis

The damage to the disposition of agency through exploitative relations, is not irreparable as the VICE has demonstrated. Creating space for dialogue between pedagogy and active forms of learning exposes oppressive forces and actively engages agency. A form of praxis in this sense can and does develop and raise consciousness- socially, economically and politically.

Without this intervention my participants would not have raised consciousness the way they did. This is because they lived in the moment. Whilst they recognised the need for change they engaged in either 'verbalism', reflection without action or 'activism', action without reflection. As Freire (1993) pointed out both action and reflection are needed for transformation to happen. My participants class

experiences had been subjected to reproduction throughout childhood and throughout schooling and education and in adulthood they became disengaged. This resulted in them being less able to connect to the learning process and therefore more likely to react to oppressive forces than to challenge them making conscientisation difficult. This form of praxis was developed through using a VICE - a Visual Intervention (VI) to complement a Critical Ethnography (CE). Space was created within CE to visually extend the informative sessions through creating dialogue between pedagogy and the active forms of learning by exposing, through art practice, the oppressions suffered. The uniqueness of these methods was why the findings came into fruition the way they did.

My findings evidence how my participants organised themselves and used their bodies expressively in the space just as Boal (2000) had discussed. For example, the drama had enabled them to move freely and look at their struggles. The poetry encouraged their spoken word whilst they expressed the deep pain they all suffered through their choice of music selected for the film. Their lives had been captured on a visual platform and they faced it as if looking deeply into a mirror. In doing so they critically questioned their inequalities which resulted in them creating new knowledge. This was made possible as the intervention was participatory. Each participant was able to negotiate the terms in how the film was co-created.

My findings, particularly after the VICE, do not suggest any real reason for the poor to be divided. As my participants became empowered to lift themselves up out of poverty, it did not, as a result, emancipate them from capital nor did it stir within them a desire or commitment for any mass revolution to overthrow capitalism. It did stir in them however, a want to work towards creating a fairer society. For example, they all said they would vote at the next election and Leigh and Kat both spoke of wanting to make changes towards other people's lives through business related ideas. Nell took that step further and had engaged in conversations with a school headteacher for the benefit of a young person. Nonetheless, a Freirean 'revolutionary' form of praxis in developing consciousness highlights a tension in Marx's thinking on consciousness whereby a class *in itself* becomes a revolutionary class *for itself* for a classless economic system.

10.10 Limitations of Research for Hard to Reach Groups

Leigh, JD and Kat were alienated in every sense of the word. They had internalised their thoughts, actions and behaviours until they could no longer effectively function within the 'norms' of society – socially, economically, politically/ideologically.

Although Mary and Nell shared similar experiences to Leigh, Kat and JD, they did actively (precariously) engage in the labour market. All my participants agreed to participate in this research because they clung onto the idea of hope for change in their lives. Hope, in this respect, was often subject to limitation as on occasions hope came second place to the demands of their daily lives. It was a struggle to connect their experiences to wider structural inequalities when they lived life in the moment.

Another challenge I faced, more so with the group sessions, was my participants' prioritising of personal issues. Although we were successful with completing tasks, keeping to arranged days and times for meetings proved difficult.

10.11 Implications for Policy and Practice

Whilst policies have been put in place purportedly as meritocratic there are working class children who cannot get beyond structural inequalities they face. Policies should therefore be considered in terms of their negative impacts on the poor, their impacts on equality- not just the meritocratic equality of opportunity, but on equality of outcome.

Research and practice relating to critical pedagogical movements of empowering children and young people in education are evident e.g. in work by McLaren, Giroux, Freire, and also the social democratic policies of post-war Labour government in England and Wales, and in Scandinavia and Finland (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). These large scale empowerments took place as a result of transfer of resources to working class education, to structural features such as (for example in Finland) the installation of comprehensive education.

These macro-policy finance and organisational developments empowered much of the working class simply providing any or better quality education. In England structural reforms such as the provision of free secondary schooling as a result of the 1944 Education Act, the Open university and the opening up of free university education with maintenance grants for the poorer pupils similarly enabled a proportion of working class children to receive and benefit from an education previously largely closed off.

Regarding critical pedagogy, and the work of critical and radical and socialist pedagogues and their work at micro or local school/institution or classroom level, in current, neoliberal England there are limited resources for teachers to access. In addition, the culture of surveillance and 'teaching to the test' described in chapter

four inhibits perhaps most individual teachers and groups of teachers from seeing to empower their working class students (or to develop a class or critical consciousness in general) in working class schools. To refer back to chapter four, the work of Marxist reproduction theorists such as Anyon, Bowles and Gintis, Rikowski, Hill and social reproduction theorists such as Bourdieu and Reay, children and young people in predominantly working class schools, or colleges are subjected to different pedagogy and curriculum content as well as the expectations demanded through the curriculum. Of course, there are critical and radical teachers that push for critical education but the spaces that exist now in neoliberal England are smaller than during the socialist experiments and the child-centred teaching of the 1960s and 1970s (Hessari and Hill, 1989; Jones, 2016).

However, even in such unpromising times and circumstances it is possible to work for the development of critical consciousness and for social justice. Government toolkits need to be available for teachers to develop innovative methods in their classroom with clear coherent guidelines that would not penalise them. This is of course, currently difficult in the heavily prescribed and policed National Curriculum in schools, and in teacher training. Emancipatory and egalitarian guidelines for schooling and teacher education are in the public domain (see Edwards, Hill and Boxley, 2018; Hill, 2018), but do not reach the overwhelming majority of teachers and teacher educators concerned with 'meeting the standards'.

Some teachers may even shy away from using tools they do not understand very well such as with drama or visual interventions. In this vein, teacher training courses, both initial teacher training and in-service training should offer the development of visual methods. This thesis would benefit educational practitioners engaging with participatory and visual methods in their pedagogical practice. Furthermore, the methods used would benefit an all-inclusive classroom.

The VICE demonstrated how disengaged adults became connected to their learning and consciously reengaged with social, political and economic areas to improve their lives. This micro-level intervention can be implemented at macro-level. While not being uncritical about the 2017 and 2019 Labour Party proposal and policy documents regarding education (Labour Party 2017, 2019), there does appear to be a determination to maximise chances for working class children thereby to empower them. This can be seen with, for example, proposals of a 'fairer funding formula' for all schools, 'smaller class sizes' for 5-7 year olds and a 'simpler admissions process for parents'. And it does not stop there. Proposals for free education at Further

Education (college) level would be available to all ages and from all backgrounds. Whilst this may be a good idea in principle I would question how this could work in practice, the extent to which it would or would not reach those in 'the underclass'. Had it been available already my participants would not have accessed it. Nell who looked into going college on an access course could not afford to give her job up and Kat too, who was considering accessing a performing arts course was in a similar situation.

10.12 Suggestions for Future Research

This research could be replicated with working class adults from other poor and disadvantaged communities/neighbourhoods/settings for a nuanced approach. However, as my research was conducted with adults I did not benefit from their in 'the moment' experiences of schooling and education. It may be worthwhile conducting research in the future with post 16-18 secondary school aged children for this reason. This would provide a more nuanced approach to the role of schooling and education in reproducing inequalities. Research with this age group however, would limit the lived experiences in adulthood and the researcher would need to take this into account.

This thesis, through the VICE, has demonstrated how a form of revolutionary or 'transformative' praxis can empower individuals. It is, as Freire (1993) pointed out, through the awakening of a critical consciousness, which is only possible through problem-posing education; an education that moves away from traditional 'banking' methods of teaching. Education is a learning process; it is both formal and informal and it can be life-long. Adults can therefore, through a problem-posing education, develop critical and class consciousness. As they become more aware of the injustices in their environment they will connect and be able to make changes not only to their individual lives but to the lives of their families and in the wider socio-political arenas.

However, I recognise this was small scale research. This research could therefore be replicated with a larger cohort, even, subject to changes in national policy-making, to potential wider research based policy implementation. In a similar vein, I recognise my participants participation in the VICE. If they had they not taken the opportunity to engage in this additional element the outcomes would have been different. The framework for the VICE is adaptable in so far that the arts-related methods can be selected upon participant preference. I would therefore suggest to

future researchers implementing the VICE to keep the framework and adapt it accordingly.

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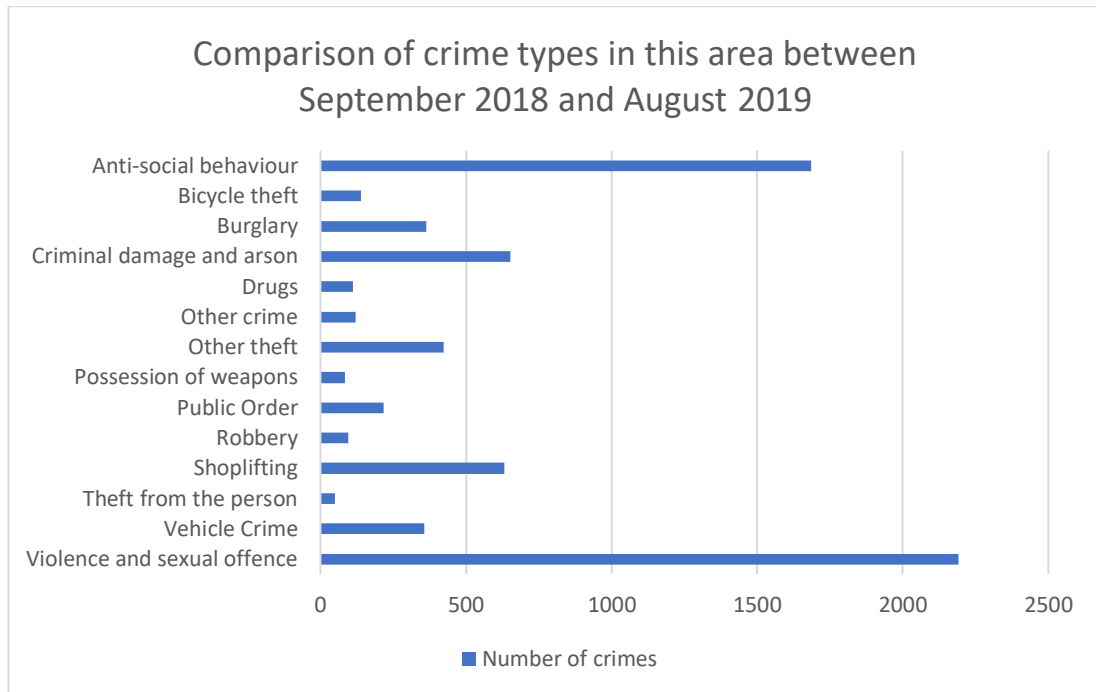
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This table shows the break-down of crime and crime rates in the town. Source abstracted from POLICE.UK

(https://www.police.uk/northamptonshire/SCT111/crime/stats/)

Comparison of crime types in this area between September 2018 and August 2019

CRIME TYPE	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Anti-social behaviour	1685	23.67%
Bicycle theft	139	1.95%
Burglary	364	5.11%
Criminal damage and arson	651	9.14%
Drugs	111	1.56%
Other crime	120	1.69%
Other theft	424	5.96%
Possession of weapons	85	1.19%
Public order	217	3.05%
Robbery	95	1.33%
Shoplifting	632	8.88%
Theft from the person	49	0.69%
Vehicle crime	356	5.00%
Violence and sexual offences	2191	30.78

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – AMENDMENT ONE

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

Title of the project: Raising critical consciousness amongst adults living with multiple disadvantages: A critical and dialogical study through the use of an arts based event intervention.

Main investigator and contact details: Sharon Jones (PhD researcher)

Sharon.jones5@student.anglia.ac.uk

Members of the research team:

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet (Dated 24th November 2015) for the study. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.

3. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.

4. I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.

5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

6. I understand that quotes from me will be used in the dissemination of the research.

Data Protection: I agree to the University[i] processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me.

Name of participant
(print)…………………………..signed………………………….Date………………..

PARTICIPANTS MUST BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP ADD DATE AND VERSION NUMBER OF CONSENT FORM.

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY.

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please speak to the researcher or email them at Sharon.jones5@student.anglia.ac.uk stating the title of the research. You do not have to give a reason for why you would like to withdraw. Please let the researcher know whether you are happy for them to use any data from you collected to date in the write up and dissemination of the research.

[i] The university includes Anglia Ruskin University and its Associate Colleges.

Vignette a. *(from an informative session during Interview 1 with JD)*

Towards the end of this interview JD openly told me about having social services in her life regarding her children. I asked her what she thought of people in authority to build on knowledge of power and control and she replied:

JD – "Social Services, can't stand them. They belittle you, they tell you what you are going to do"

Me – "How does that make you feel?"

JD – "Like I can tell when they're not interested in what I've got to say"

Me – "Where do think this feeling comes from? Erm, if you look back in your life can you recall a time, or times when you've interacted with those in authoritive positions. Who would you say has been in control?"

JD – "Yeah, like your parents and stuff and like teachers, especially teachers that hated you"

Me – Why do think that is?

JD – "Cos I was taught to respect my elders, like with my nana you'd be in trouble if you did something wrong. My nana was very strict…I always had to sit like this (gestures with body) in a little armchair in the dining room"

Me – "And why do you think that with teachers?"

JD – "Teachers just hated you"

Me – "How did you come to this conclusion?"

JD – "You'd know because they'd put you on the spot and they'd have this look…I didn't like it, I used to get really hot"

Me – "How did this make you feel?"

JD – "I felt really small"

Me – "What did you think of those teachers?"

JD – "Like some had favourites and others were useless at teaching. I never got on with them or in those subjects"

Me – "It appears you were used to respecting your elders by being controlled, having to sit quietly and do as you were told, so having a teacher then, that controls you in a way that impacted upon your behaviour such as getting hot, simply reinforced what you thought about yourself and authoritive figures and it has clearly played into how you think now. Does that make sense?"

JD – "Yeah, I never really thought of it like that"

Vignette b.

(extract from week 6 interview with Mary)

Me – "Would you say we've spoken about social class enough to help you understand it?"

Mary – "Yeah I would"

Me – "Can you provide me with an example that tells me what you understand?"

Mary – "Well I used to think of myself as working class cos I didn't speak all posh like but now I know there's a working, middle and upper class because you [working class] don't have any ownership over anything you do you're just there to do as you are told"

Vignette c.

(extract from week 6 interview with Leigh)

Me – "Would you say we've spoken about social class enough to help you understand it?"

Leigh – "See at one point I would have said not really cos I've seen things in the paper and I've heard of things but not that I ever understood it but since you've explained things I get it now"

Me – "What do you get?"

Leigh – "That the working classes get exploited by those at the top, the upper classes. And if you're really poor like they're not given opportunities to help themselves get out of their situation"

This a copy of the original poem before it was refined for the film.

Line 1: I've got a sad empty feeling.

Line 2: My head gets really sore with all the burdens of life. Bills and more bills, stabs like a knife!

Line 3: It's cold, dark and wet; I need a drink just to forget.

Line 4: Everything echoing in my head but there's no one around so what the fuck is that sound!?!

Line 5: Clouds building, tears streaming, wanting to bawl. Why am I made to feel so small.

Line 6: The heat rises stress overload, 1,2,3…& breath.