SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE WHITE WORKING-CLASS MALE AND FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

by

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Acronyms

Acronym	Full Meaning
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
DfE	Department for Education
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate Secondary Education
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
IFS	Institute for Fiscal Studies
KCL	Kings College London
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning
MSM	Mainstream Media
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
WP	Widening Participation
WWC	White Working-Class
WWCB	White Working-Class Boys
WWCM	White Working-Class Males

<u>Abstract</u>

The lack of educational attainment amongst WWCM in England has long been a concern of politicians and educationalists. Considerable academic research exists surrounding this educational phenomenon however, much of this research focuses on how societal barriers and class relationships within schooling contribute to WWCM academic failure. Whilst current research provides us with historical innate working-class attitudes and positions reproduced throughout generations, it does not consider WWCM who are academically successful or any nuances or motivations that may be 'difference makers'. In contrast, this research focuses on a small group of WWCM from diverse regions of the U.K who have navigated the minefield of education, obtaining both undergraduate and in some cases post-graduate qualifications before pursuing professional careers in education. Narrative research was used to obtain rich, lived data from WWCM who have 'beaten the odds'. Findings from this quantitative research suggest that an early mindset of linking work ethic to economic reward is an important reproductive factor in the academic progress of white working-class boys. A strong familial working 'working-class' ethic was experienced by all participants interviewed for this study. The findings suggested a strong understanding of work ethic accompanied by positive role models and a more holistic development will aid the educational progress of this subsection of society. Nonetheless, whilst conducting my research it became impossible to ignore the cultural divide confronting the United Kingdom. We are currently witnessing a social transformation in British society. A rise in immigration, identity politics and a negative media portrayal has contributed to a sense of 'white neglect' felt by WWCM. Therefore, it can be reasoned that alongside confronting historical barriers to educational attainment, WWCM must now contend with the negative perceptions and ridicule foisted upon them by the middle-classes, Government and to a greater extent the media.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Table of contents

Table of Contents

Table of contents

Table of contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

> We are problems that want to be solved / We are children that need to
> be loved / we were willing', we came when you called / But, man, you
> fooled us, enough is enough.
>
> Pink 'What about us'

The harshness and reality of life are sometimes difficult to accept. Throughout history, society is littered with examples of oppression against different groups who hold no power and are deprived of basic rights and liberties. Recent history provides us with examples of groups aiming to right these wrongs. Black lives matter, the LGBT Foundation and WOMANKIND are examples of such organisations. However, we live in strange times; through our haste to right historical wrongs, we are in danger of disregarding everyday issues faced by the WWC. Political commentary suggesting that, 'Whiteness in this instance is rooted in innocence and victimhood' (Goodfellow, 2016) and inflammatory rhetoric from academics such as Gloria Wekker who suggests that being white is,

> not seen as ethnic positioning at all. Like an animal well adapted to its
> environment, it camouflages itself as part of the societal landscape. Yet
> it works in insidious ways. It places white peoples' experience as the
> most important and works on the basis that they need to be protected
> from the impure "other". It structures the world we live in
>
> (op.cit. 2016)

do little to contribute to social equality. These powerful suggestions which have been adopted by the mainstream media and middle-class society pour scorn on the 'uneducated, racist, misogynistic' white working-class man, his voice powerless, unheard, and parodied. Ironically, this failure to critically engage with a demographic that feels disenfranchised and politically neglected only contributes further to the widening social inequality these groups are endeavouring to eradicate.

Introduction

Whilst I make no apology for the subject of this research, I am fully aware of the sensitive nature and personal feelings it may evoke. Nonetheless, as a middle-aged white working-class man born and raised in South London, these are my educational experiences. I am, as a WWCM not void of a political voice however, I am part of a demographic subject to accusations and doxing should I question or debate a specific narrative. I understand that my experiences are not those of all. I would not expect persons raised in affluent areas of the country and from other socio-economic backgrounds to have had the same lived experiences. Nonetheless, I ask that whatever the readers' political affiliation or social status this paper be read with an open and enquiring mind.

> …those students from poorer backgrounds who make it to university
> are likely to be intellectually as well as socially remarkable.
> (Clegg, 2011, p. 95)

Before beginning my journey into higher education as a mature student, I had never considered my own academic story. However, the positive experience of lifelong learning has allowed me to view my past and provide a rationale for my own educational experiences. As a white working-class male born in South London in 1970, I experienced what Skeggs (1997, p. 56) describes as 'the negative allocative function of the education system'. As an adult now working in education and reflecting on my own formal educational experiences, I can recall somewhat clearly the initial feeling of being an 'outsider', the feeling of not fitting into the surroundings and the experience of educational rationing. The sensation of being an outsider the proverbial fish out of water which Bourdieu defines as hysteresis (Grenfell, 2008, p. 57) may have stemmed from commencing my education in the January of 1974 [late July birth date] as opposed to the typical September start dates afforded to those born earlier in the academic year. As one of only two students starting in January, we were entering an environment where relationships between staff and pupils had already been fostered. This, however, does not explain what in hindsight was educational rationing. Identified as a working-class student my memories are of drifting through the education system with minimal teacher-student interaction or feedback. Left to my own devices it was assumed that I would find blue-collar employment when leaving school at fifteen. Looking back on these experiences I can

Introduction

identify predominantly middle-class teachers who focused primarily on the aspirations of middle-class students. Collins cited in Richer suggests: 'schools are middle-class agencies; in essence they provide for the continuity of the stratification system by transmitting the values and lifestyles of the middle classes. (Richer, 1974, p. 523)

In his 1974 research Richer hypothesises that working-class students [based on father's occupation as a measure of social class] would, based on chance receive significantly fewer teacher/student interactions; working-class students will attain significantly fewer conversations and working-class students would be most deprived in a teacher-centred environment. Using ethnographic research Richer suggests that: 'middle-class teachers consciously or unconsciously prefer interaction with middle-class children and hence differentially seek them out'. (Richer op. cit. p. 531)

Fast forward over four decades to 2020 and the underperforming or lack of achievement of WWCM academically is still a societal issue faced by the education system in England. Using the eligibility for free school meals [FSM] as an indicator of class The Department for Education [DfE] data shows that amongst FSM students the Chinese ethnic group had the highest average Attainment 8 score (57.6) and WWCM pupils had the lowest (31.6) see Table 1.

Table 1:

Average Attainment 8 score by ethnicity and eligibility for free school meals
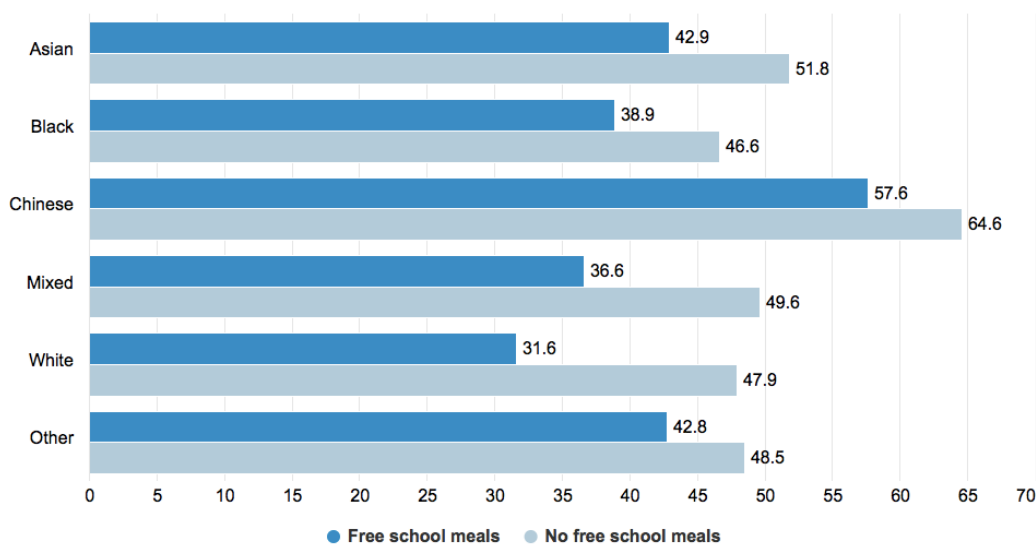
Source: Table 1 from GOV.UK GCSE results (Attainment 8) (2019)

Introduction

This underachievement of WWCM in education has been well documented with this specific ethnic group being the lowest achievers at GCSE age (16) of any socio-economic grouping (Strand 2014). They are 'perceived to follow a trail of underachievement from school onwards into employment and adulthood in our post-industrial society' (Quinn et al. 2006, p. 735).

Throughout the years, research has lent itself to identifying reasons for the lack of educational attainment amongst WWCM and how to break that trend [Ingram 2009; Stahl 2014; Demie and Lewis 2014;]. Nonetheless, what of the WWCM who have achieved academic success? What made their academic journey different from that of their peers when national data tells us in the majority they fail. There is minimal research that identifies reasons or nuances that may be the difference between academic success or failure.

This study aims to identify key factors that have enabled five working-class males, from various regions of the United Kingdom, to obtain academic qualifications against the odds and, whom themselves as adults have found employment in the field of education. Autobiographical research was the methodological approach chosen for this study. Throughout history, quantitative data has been used to highlight the academic failure of WWCM. The use of qualitative data through interviews and focus groups tends to focus on white working-class boys [WWCB] failure to engage with education and the reasons as to why they do not engage (Travers, 2014, p. 12). The use of autobiographical research for this study was chosen for the rich detailed personal experiences it can provide. Merrill and West (2009, p.1-2) recognise the importance of biographical research:

> ... we are all, it seems, biographers now and want to tell our stories. ...
> This is an age of biography, and telling stories seems ubiquitous. ...
> Biographical methods have claimed an increasing place in academic
> research and are alive and well (if sometimes marginal and contested)
> in various academic disciplines such as literature, history, sociology,
> anthropology, social policy, and education.

The power of the personal voice in educational research can provide information that other methods cannot (Pitman 2013). This research aims to tease out not only the unique experience

Introduction

of each individual but also the commonality between their educational experiences.

The Research data was gathered through the medium of two semi-structured interviews carried out over a six-month period. The first interview allowed the participants to recall their childhood years, family dynamics and to focus on three specific questions.

- How do white working-class men who have been academically successful account for their achievements

- In what ways do academically successful white-working class men interpret their educational experiences

- What variables contributed to these white working-class men obtaining academic success over their peers and counterparts

Interview two allowed the participants to consider their recollections from the first interview and delve more deeply into the familial and habitus processes that helped sculpt their educational outcomes, providing narrative material which is abundantly detailed and personal to the individual.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter one will begin by asking the question who are the working class of twenty-first century Britain? Quantitative data provided by the World Economic Forum and used to analyse global social mobility will be examined to highlight the economic standing of Britain's working-class in comparison to the rest of the world. This paper will then consider the influence of middle-class capital in education and the role this plays in class inequality. Chapter 1.1 will then attempt the complex process of defining working-class in the twenty-first century. I will address what it means to be white and working- class from a personal perspective, looking briefly at feelings of inadequacy when entering distinctive fields. 1.2 will look at social justice and the WWC. 1.3 will consider Bourdieu's hypothesis on symbolic violence and the middle classes and its effect on working-class educational attainment, whilst 1.4 will look to confront the crisis of identity suffered by white working-class men in today's multi-cultural society, paying particular attention to the negative cultural portrayal of this specific demographic in the media. 1.5 will aim to identify the impact of the Brexit referendum and vote with reference again to the negative depiction and classification of white working-class men. This section will consider the de-industrialisation of Britain and the

Introduction

effects of increased immigration and cheaper labour on the working-class workforce, particularly that outside of the London bubble. A personal lived experience will be used to add weight to the narrative. Finally, a brief conclusion will assess how the areas covered in chapter one plays a part in this research and the barriers they create when considering the progress, both socially and educationally for white working-class men.

Chapter two will provide a literature review focusing on four specific areas. Opening with current research that exists on the drive for WWC educational attainment, the literature review will then consider media representation focusing on the 'chav effect' and the writing of Owen Jones before considering the lived experiences of the white working class with reference to the work of Reay *et.al* and strangers in paradise. The chapter will conclude by considering the work of Bourdieu and his theory of reproduction, capital, field, and habitus.

Chapter three is split into five parts and will examine the methodology used throughout this research. Part one will consider research design. Part two will consider research strategy, whilst part three will focus on data collection techniques and analysis framework. Part four will consider any limitations of this study. Part five will focus on ethical considerations.

Chapter four will consider the lived experiences of the research participants. A brief background synopsis will be provided for each participant including details focusing on socio-economic status, influences and aspirations and familial support. There will then be an in-depth case study of Scott which will focus on three sub-themes: class and identity, familial influence, and external influence. This will then be cross-referenced with the findings from the other participant interviews to inform any conclusions and findings from this research.

Introduction

Acknowledging the overuse of the term white working class in this thesis / conscious bias

This thesis for my master's degree is the continuation of previous research conducted for both the pilot and final dissertation towards my Bachelor of Arts degree. Whilst I acknowledge that there are clearly other ethnicities facing similar struggles within the education system, as a white man from a working-class background I feel more confident reflecting on my own personal experiences within education.

'White is a broad heading within classifications of ethnicity which can be used to make comparisons against other aggregated groups such as black and Asian' (House of Commons Education Committee, 2014 p. 11). I acknowledge that the 'white' group may consist of other sub-sections such as white Irish, Gypsy/Roma and 'other white' such as those of other European ethnicities, however, this research will focus primarily on white British males [Children of white British parents] who have achieved success within the field of education.

I apologise for the lack of acknowledgement of other ethnicities throughout this research however, I feel that while a large amount of research has already been conducted into achievement and ethnic minorities [see research carried out by the National Union of Students, 2019 and Richardson, 2013 as examples] relatively little has been conducted into WWCM. As WWCM is my personal background it seems opportune to investigate this educational phenomenon.

Whilst writing this thesis and considering the subject of the research I recognise that my findings will contain elements of conscious bias. By accepting this I can develop a deeper understanding of how aspects of my life such as my childhood; family; education and nationality have contributed to my thought process with regards to my experiences as both a white working-class boy and now as an adult male in education. This development process is recognised by Skovron (2020):

> As we mature and develop, we use our experiences to reconfirm or
> reveal the errors in our decision-making process. Over the years this

Introduction

> process transforms us from babies born without any bias or prejudice into adults rife with unconscious and conscious bias.

It could be argued that this research is conducted of a non-representative sample as it excludes other working-class ethnicities as well as those from other subsections of the 'white' category. However, 'social research will often place individuals into mutually exclusive ethnic group categories' (Nandi and Platt, 2012, p. 2). Historically, it can be contested that the indigenous white working-class have failed to negotiate the field of education successfully, a phenomenon which continues to manifest into the twenty-first century. Nonetheless, in today's multicultural Britain it can be challenged as to who is the indigenous British. Historically the UK has faced waves of Celtic, Saxon, Norman, Irish, Polish etc immigration, all of which have contributed to developing a multi-cultural society. This process of historical immigration has compelled the white-British majority to 'rethink its identity and institutions in relation to diversity' (Samanani, p.1). Researching ethnic inequality is not without challenges, therefore, when conducting any research into fixed ethnic inequalities it is important that careful consideration is given as ethnic identities are complex and fluid (Salway et.al., 2009). Social division is also a key consideration when conducting research into ethnicity, this is acknowledged by Salway et.al. (2009, p. 4) who state that 'at the heart of these issues is the tension between treating ethnicity as one of the major social divisions in modern societies and avoiding giving it essentialist explanatory power'. When considering research into WWC inequality Garner (2011, p. 3) recognises that 'Research on white identities is not about homogenising white people', suggesting instead that the study of white identity is a 'critique of power'. Garner's research into white working-class identities states key aims of deconstructing the idea of a single homogenous white 'community' alongside understanding how class; gender; culture nationality and religion are utilised as markers of distinction and hierarchies between white groups. Therefore, to elicit potential answers and develop solutions to this educational inequality the use of specific uncompromising ethnic social data is a prerequisite. For this research, the term indigenous will refer to WWCM from non-immigrant backgrounds.

Introduction

Introduction edit * (May 2020)

Whilst conducting this research project the world in which we live has changed dramatically. Labelled as the 'defining global health crisis of our time' (United Nations Development Programme, 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has presented not only a global health crisis but also a social, economic, and political crisis that could take anywhere from 2021 to 2031 for the economy to return to 'pre-corona virus normal' (Scott and Stewart, 2020). Scott and Stewart (op. cit. 2020) also observe that the inequality gap could widen with low-wage workers being the hardest hit; unfortunately, it seems education will follow a similar path. This potentially widening educational attainment gap is recognised by Foster and Stanton (2020) who suggest that experts are 'fearing that lockdown will have a permanent impact on the most disadvantaged'.

Schools in England closed on the 20[th of] March 2020 to all but the most vulnerable pupils and children of key workers and were not scheduled to re-open before June 8th, 2020, with a phased return, meaning some students will not return earlier than September 2020, missing six months of their education. As a research paper concerned with inequality in education, particularly that faced by the white working-class it is important to recognise the impact that this enforced quarantine will have on an already underachieving demographic.

Teaching has, however, continued albeit remotely. Those involved in education have had to think 'outside of the box' to provide new innovative ways for their students to continue their academic journey, nonetheless, it is students from less affluent backgrounds that continue to fall further behind throughout this pandemic.

The lack of resources available to disadvantaged pupils will undoubtedly provide a further barrier to their learning. Poor or no internet connection, sharing a laptop with siblings or parents as well as lack of parental support are considerations that must be considered when assessing this 'new world' education provision. As Wilson (2020) recognises there are currently 1.3 million children in England entitled to FSM, many of whom are now 'prisoners in their own homes', many of these may live in smaller even cramped dwellings with no outside spaces and

Introduction

shared with a large family and siblings. Juxtaposed to this are their middle-class counterparts who may be afforded quiet work areas, possess laptops or tablets, and have good internet service as well as the support of parents more familiar with and accomplished in dealing with schoolwork. Those less affluent might well be expected to participate in distance learning in an environment that is noisy, provides minimal resources at best, and has no well-educated adult at hand to provide support. It is hard to imagine an environment less conducive to learning. Wilson (2020) references data obtained by TeacherTapp [an app which questions 6000 teachers daily] which suggests that at the end of the first week of lockdown 10% of students [of teachers questioned] have no access to either a device or the internet. My own experiences of remote teaching throughout this period have reinforced these findings with many of my students having to share the family laptop or attempt to work on their mobile phone.

The potential of an ever-widening attainment gap has been recognised by the DfE Pupil premium deputy director Vicki Stewart cited in Whittaker and Boothe (2020) who warns:

> The predictions are stark – up to a 75 per cent widening, we are all working very hard to think about what actions we can take to support schools in mitigating against the widening of that gap, and how, in the slightly medium longer-term, we can support schools as part of their recovery phase to narrow that gap.

As an advocate of life-long learning and as a developing researcher I appreciate the DfE recognising the potential impact that this pandemic could have on disadvantaged students. However, after previously conducting educational research for my BA and now continuing with the MA a more cynical observation would be to identify this pandemic as another barrier to the historical, educational oppression suffered by the working classes.

Introduction

1.1 Who are the white working class?

'Class remains a key factor in the explanation of inequality'

(Ball, 2003, p.17)

The concept of class is much contested in sociological theory. Giddens (1973, p. 19) proposes that questions of social class form the central concern of sociology. Others such as Pakulski and Waters (1996) proclaim the 'death of class' in today's post-modern society, arguing 'that classes are dissolving and that the most advanced societies are no longer class societies' (op. cit. p.4). It is, however, impossible to claim 'the death of class' when we live in a country surrounded by inequality. The 2019 State of the Nation report carried out by the Social Mobility Commission (2019, p. v) states:

> Being born privileged in Britain means that you are likely to remain privileged. Being born disadvantaged, however, means that you will have to overcome a series of barriers to ensure that you and your children are not stuck in the same trap.

The notion of class inequality in Britain has more recently been perpetuated by the issue of Brexit. Social and economic inequalities have been highlighted with reference to the 'London metropolitan elite' and less affluent areas of the country. Nonetheless, politicians and political commentators have been careful to avoid the term working class instead preferring to use vocabulary such as 'hard-working families' to describe those perceived to be at the lower end of the socio-economic scale (Gavron, 2009). Notwithstanding this new political rhetoric, the existence of class inequality is recognised by Sveinsson (2009, p.4) who states that:

> Socially, Britain remains dominated by class divisions, with class identities relatively similar in shape and strength as they were 40 years ago.

When considering social mobility globally the United Kingdom as a G7 economy currently ranks twenty-first below Singapore with a value of 74.4 on The Global Social Mobility Index Ranking, (see Figure 1).

Introduction

Figure.1: Global social mobility index ranking 2020 (World Economic Forum, 2020 p. 7)

Rank	Country	Score
1	Denmark	85.2
2	Norway	83.6
3	Finland	83.6
4	Sweden	83.5
5	Iceland	82.7
6	Netherlands	82.4
7	Switzerland	82.1
8	Belgium	80.1
9	Austria	80.1
10	Luxembourg	79.8
11	Germany	78.8
12	France	76.7
13	Slovenia	76.4
14	Canada	76.1
15	Japan	76.1
16	Australia	75.1
17	Malta	75.0
18	Ireland	75.0
19	Czech Republic	74.7
20	Singapore	74.6
21	United Kingdom	74.4

Key findings from the WEF suggest that underachieving countries such as the UK underperform in four specific areas; fair wages, social protection, working conditions and specifically linked to this research lifelong learning. As a member of the G7 the United Kingdom have one of the most advanced economies in the world and with the other six members of the G7 represent 58% of the global net worth (World Economic Outlook Database 2017)

Introduction

Despite its wealth and standing as a key member of the G7 the WEF (op.cit. 2020) conclude that:

> In most countries, individuals from certain groups have become historically disadvantaged and poor social mobility perpetuates and exacerbates such inequalities. In turn, these types of inequalities can undermine the cohesiveness of economies and societies.

The findings of the WEF identify the paucity of social mobility in the United Kingdom however, social mobility affects all working-class communities irrespective of ethnicity. To recognise the plight of one specific ethnic group one must acknowledge that others exist. Data provided by the Government (GOV.UK, 2019) recognises that the WWCB is underachieving educationally in comparison to students from other working-class ethnic groups. As a student from a white-working class background, whose memories of formal education in the 1970s and 80s are of drifting through school with limited teacher-student interaction I am intrigued as to why my own specific ethnic socio-economic group are still seemingly at odds with education?

When researching the lack of attainment of WWCB in education the influence of middle-class social reproduction must be considered. Bottero (2009, p. 10) argues, 'Class inequalities persist because middle-class families have been able to mobilise and convert their resources to help ensure their children's educational and labour-market success'. Ball (2003, p. 12) describes the use of middle-class capital in education as 'the work of the hidden hand'. The hypothesis of both Bottero and Ball link to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. Bourdieu's theory explored the premise that although the purpose of education is supposedly a vehicle for social mobility, instead it reinforces the existing social class structure. Bourdieu (1973, p. 80) interprets cultural capital as 'linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with a culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture'.

Whilst Bourdieu's theories of familial habitus and reproduction undoubtedly provide a framework from which to begin research, the educational underachievement of WWCB is far more complex than any cultural insufficiency. Historically the working class have suffered educational marginalisation, this is acknowledged by Reay (2009, p. 23):

Introduction

> The schooling of the working classes was always to be subordinate and inferior to that of the middle classes, designed to contain and pacify rather than to educate and liberate.

Hoffman (1998, p. 324) lends weight to the argument put forward by Reay, observing that 'Identity has become the bread and butter of our educational diet'. Several academics have referred to social class as an 'often invisible aspect of identity' (Martin, Williams, Young, 2018, p. 9), suggesting that social artefacts such as cars, branded clothing and iPhones make it difficult to identify an individual's social class by appearance. Social class is inherited, we learn the traits of our class through interactions with those closest to us [see Bourdieu Chapter 3.7]. Tyler (2010, p. 393) supports this theory, proposing that, 'Class is both a personal and social construct, and cannot be accomplished alone'. Understanding social class is complex and becomes more so when considering that social class identity is not fixed but fluid and dynamic. When exploring social class, Martin et.al (2018, p. 11) suggest that individuals possess three social class-related identities.

1. A social class of origin
2. A current felt or perceived social class
3. An attributed social class

The complexity of social class identity is identifiable when reflecting on my own life story. My social class of origin by birth is working class [1] Nonetheless, despite this position within the socio-economic hierarchy I have also inherited a strong work ethic both physically and academically which has enabled me to find employment in the field of education, a traditionally middle-class profession. [2]. However, [3] highlights the complexity of social class. Friends and family who have known me since birth will perceive me as being working class. In these situations, I feel comfortable, able to 'be myself'. However, others who know me professionally will suggest that I am middle class, I own my own home, I own my own car and I am in professional employment, all virtues of the middle classes. This accumulation of cultural, economic, and social capital, however, does not change who I am on the inside or delete my upbringing, they make me the individual I am today. Personal life experiences have shown me that it is possible to inhabit and relate to multiple social class environments,

Introduction

nonetheless, the idea of becoming altogether comfortable when surrounded by individuals from different backgrounds with different life experiences highlights the nuances that exist when deliberating identity and class. It is significant to acknowledge that at fifty years of age I am still not completely comfortable navigating the 'middle-class' environment and as such understand and empathise with the complexities faced by WWCB in predominantly middle-class educational environments.

Traditionally, middle class aims for the education of their own children originated from their own economic requirements and their socio-political perspectives of the world. Education for the offspring of the middle classes embodied the economic position of the class and demanded an education that would impart the relevant knowledge and skills that would be required for future productive professions (Green, 2013). The social elevation of the middle classes and the historical oppression of the working class in education was best defined by Tawney (1931, p. 142) who observed: 'The hereditary curse of English education, is its organisation along lines of social class.'

Now, two decades into the twenty-first century Britain and class inequality is once again at the forefront of political agenda. However, there are now other variables viewed as reasons contributing to the oppression of the indigenous white working class [WWC]. Immigration and the free movement of people from EU countries have been perceived by the WWC as a further barrier to their social mobility. Prior to the Brexit vote of 2016 came a rise to prominence amongst the WWC of political parties such as the United Kingdom Independence Party [UKIP] and the BREXIT party who it can be argued found a political foothold by exploiting the fears of the white working class. The blaming of immigrants for the lack of jobs and housing as well as 'immigrants putting a strain on UK school places' (BBC, 2010), have become staple headlines for some sections of the middle-class media elite.

To understand why WWCB are failing in education we must first acquire an empathetic interpretation of their own perception as to their role and function in society. Only by developing an understanding of the mind-sets and social barriers faced by WWCM can we begin to formulate a blueprint to elicit change. Nonetheless, this is difficult to do when it can be argued that as a social group, they are made to feel disenfranchised by not only the media but other socio-economic groups. This is recognised by Skeggs (2009, p. 44) who infers that

Introduction

all WWCM want is a decent life, without struggle and constant worry, to be respected and not to be judged as wanting by those that have no understanding of their social position.

It can be reasoned that many of the social and economic struggles confronting the WWC today share comparisons with those faced by the working class historically. It can also be considered that in today's multi-cultural society this specific group feel additional pressures. The rise of right-wing political parties since the turn of the century point to a demographic that feel they have lost their social standing. Gidron & Hall (2017) recognise this, suggesting that 'The Brexit referendum exposed deep political divisions within British society', before adding that the WWC support or Brexit and right populism stem from status anxiety 'rooted in broader processes of social marginalisation'. Manstead (2018, p 274) provides reasoning for these feelings of prejudice, proposing that they are influenced by the change in attitudes to poverty and stating an upward trend in societies belief that those who live in need do so because of a lack of motivation and laziness accompanied by a 'decline in the belief that people live in need because of societal injustice'.

It appears that the WWC of twenty-first century Britain are a demographic still trapped in a cycle of disadvantage which begins at birth and continues into the field of education. For social mobility to become a true vehicle for both the economic and cultural development of the WWC, education must be compelled to develop strategies that breakdown historical barriers linked to both poverty and disadvantage.

1.2 Social justice and the white working-class, a personal perspective 2010- present

Social Justice is dependent on four necessities, human rights, access, participation, and equity (Soken-Huberty, 2021). In 2010 the Equality Act came into force in the United Kingdom. Implemented to consolidate, update and supplement existing anti-discrimination laws such as the 1976 Race Relations act and the Disability Discrimination act of 1995, it covered the same group of individuals as previously though, it also added a new set of specific 'protected characteristics' to legislation. Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation were all rightly protected against discrimination. However, despite the broad protections offered by the 2010 act the characteristics of social class were excluded. Implemented by the New Labour

Introduction

Government [1997 -2010] it seems impossible to think that a political movement borne from the frustrations of the working class (Webb, 2020) could overlook the overriding characteristic of the very demographic it was founded to represent. Somewhat ironically in July 2019, Labour shadow MP Lynn Brown when discussing the fact that there are now half a million more children in poverty now than in 2010 suggested that 'Labour will create a new Social Justice Commission with the freedom to scrutinise policies and push for change, and match that with a Minister for Social Justice to drive our agenda for fairness forward' (Labour.org, 2019). Social justice is about those in the poorest and most disadvantaged communities being given the opportunity to succeed and prosper, therefore, it can be argued that Labour had thirteen years in power to implement changes that would offer the working classes both a voice and the same rights as the other nine protected characteristics and that Brown is doing no more than paying lip service to the voters who abandoned the Labour party during the 2019 general election. During their time in office Labours lack of success with regards to social justice is recognised by McNeil (2020), suggesting that despite New Labours success with welfare to work schemes, improving homelessness and placing more children in early years education the disadvantaged were still without a voice and 'excluded from the decision-making processes that shaped their lives', focusing specifically on areas such as care, services, and importantly public and political forums. Whilst it cannot be argued that Blair's New Labour Government and the 2010 equalities act were a victory for social liberalism it can be debated that the exclusion and lack of voice felt by the working-class fed the rise of national populism and the inception of political parties such as the UK Independence party and ultimately Brexit.

Recalling my own experiences growing up on a council estate in the 1970's I was able to sense something was different. Nonetheless, as a child you are not as socially aware or able to identify these differences. As an adult I can recognise the stigma associated to social housing and the perception of class. Handled differently at school, no support or attention from teachers becomes a way of life. As a young child you are unaware of the consequences and barriers that class may present as an adult whether that be in education, healthcare, communication, or employment. Chance and Warwick-Evans (2020) recognise that class-based discrimination in the workplace is still a problem suggesting that individuals from a working-class background in professional occupations will earn on average 17% less than those from wealthier backgrounds even with the same qualifications. However, whilst Chance and Warwick-Evans

Introduction

highlight the pay disparity, they do not recognise the snobbery and rhetoric inflicted upon the working class from their middle-class counterparts. My own personal experiences are enough to convince me that the nine protected classes should become ten, yet the problems faced by WWCM, and women are, by some sections of society deemed as immaterial, mocked by the media, historically ignored by successive Governments. Therefore, is it any wonder a section of society feels anything other than ignored? We live in a society where we are being asked to accept a gender identity continuum, we live in a society where a disabled, Black, or gay person can rightfully not be discriminated against, yet as a society we continually accept the disparagement of the working class be that on television, in the press or in education. I have personally experienced this, my South London accent, tattoos, the way I dress have all been used against me in an attempt 'to push buttons' and challenge me particularly when I was a newcomer to teaching. Nonetheless, I and the participants of this research were able to deal with these incidents and prosper, perhaps because of our childhood experiences and the resilience that instilled in us. However, this is not the same for others.

It is import nonetheless, and despite my own personal experiences to consider any potential obstacles that would make adding class to the protected list difficult. The main consideration would be class identification. When filling out forms, for example employment, education, and healthcare would people identify as working class? Chance and Warwick-Evans (op.cit) also address the point of class fluidity however, they suggest this would not be an issue as individuals will often change religion, gender, and disability status throughout life.

1.3 Defining working-class

Attempting to define working-class in the twenty-first century is a difficult and complex affair. It can be contested that no such definitive definition exists in society today (Bennett, Savage, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal and Wright, 2009 p. 249-259). Conversely, Savage cited in Hanley (2015) suggests the existence of a new seven class schema. This new framework exposing a growing disparity in both wealth and power between the 'elite' and 'precariat'. Savage proposes that historical distinctions between the middle and working classes no longer hold true, instead, suggesting a new range of groupings that consider the reality of social mobility for an enlarged lower to upper-middle class. Savage suggests it is the bottom two groupings of this new hierarchy, which he labels as 'traditional working class' and 'precariat' that have faced

Introduction

most suffering in both 'relative and absolute terms' (Hanley, 2015). Their social mobility hampered due to low paid employment, zero-hours contracts alongside a lack of social connections.

Savage also introduces what he recognises to be the 'technical middle class'. A grouping that has as much financial capital as the established middle classes, however, holding considerably less cultural capital. As a working-class man, I am clearly able to recognise and relate to Savages hypothesis. Born in Lewisham, London in 1970 to a retail worker, himself the son of a market trader and a mother whose father worked for the gas board, I was one of two sons raised in the notorious tower blocks of the Ferrier Estate [social housing] in Kidbrooke, South London. Despite this and being fully aware of our social status my father's work ethic and drive received recognition from his employer who on retirement afforded my father the opportunity to purchase the business over several years. Some may suggest this is luck, others will say right time, right place, however, the reality is that this 'guardian angel' had recognised my father's hard-work and was offering him an opportunity. An opportunity that required more hard work and time away from his family, nonetheless, this opportunity almost instantly changed our lives, and my parents were able to purchase a small maisonette. This upturn in economic resources made my family homeowners essentially a comfort afforded to the middle classes, however as Savage et al (2015, p. 79) acknowledges 'economic capital is not enough by itself to define class'. As a family our sudden economic upturn did not enhance our cultural capital it did, however, result in our upward mobility into what Savage terms the 'technical working' class. Parents equipped with cultural capital can pass on the aptitude for academic success to their children, who are then able to convert this cultural capital into credentials [qualifications] enabling them to obtain privileged positions themselves (Bennett et al, 2009). Bourdieu (1990) labels this as reproduction. As with most WWCB of my era, I finished my schooling prior to my sixteenth birthday and following a well-trodden working-class path moved into blue-collar employment within the building industry. Through hard work and effort and following the example of my father I was eventually able to own my own business buy a house and live what would be described as a middle-class lifestyle. Nonetheless the innate feeling of being born into a working-class life never truly dissipates. This feeling of inadequacy is best defined by Kuhn (1995, p.98)

Introduction

> Class is not just about the way you talk, or dress, or furnish your home; it is not just about the job you do or how much money you make doing it; nor is it merely about whether or not you went to university, nor which university you went to. Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your psyche, at the very core of your being. In the all-encompassing English class system, if you know that you are in the 'wrong' class, you know that therefore you are a valueless person

This feeling of inadequacy led to me facing an internal battle that I did not fit into the social fields I was now occupying, a feeling which Bourdieu would describe as 'hysteresis', the proverbial fish out of water. This emotion became more evident when moving into the field of education. As an individual who by his own admission ghosted through his formal education, the feeling of 'blagging' or somehow cheating the system to become an educator never really diminishes. Kraus *et al.* (2012) identifies this as 'perceived control', suggesting that these feelings manifest from a perceived lack of control related to situational attributions such as social inequality (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Model of the way in which middle- and working-class contexts shape social cognition (Kraus *et al.*, 2012)
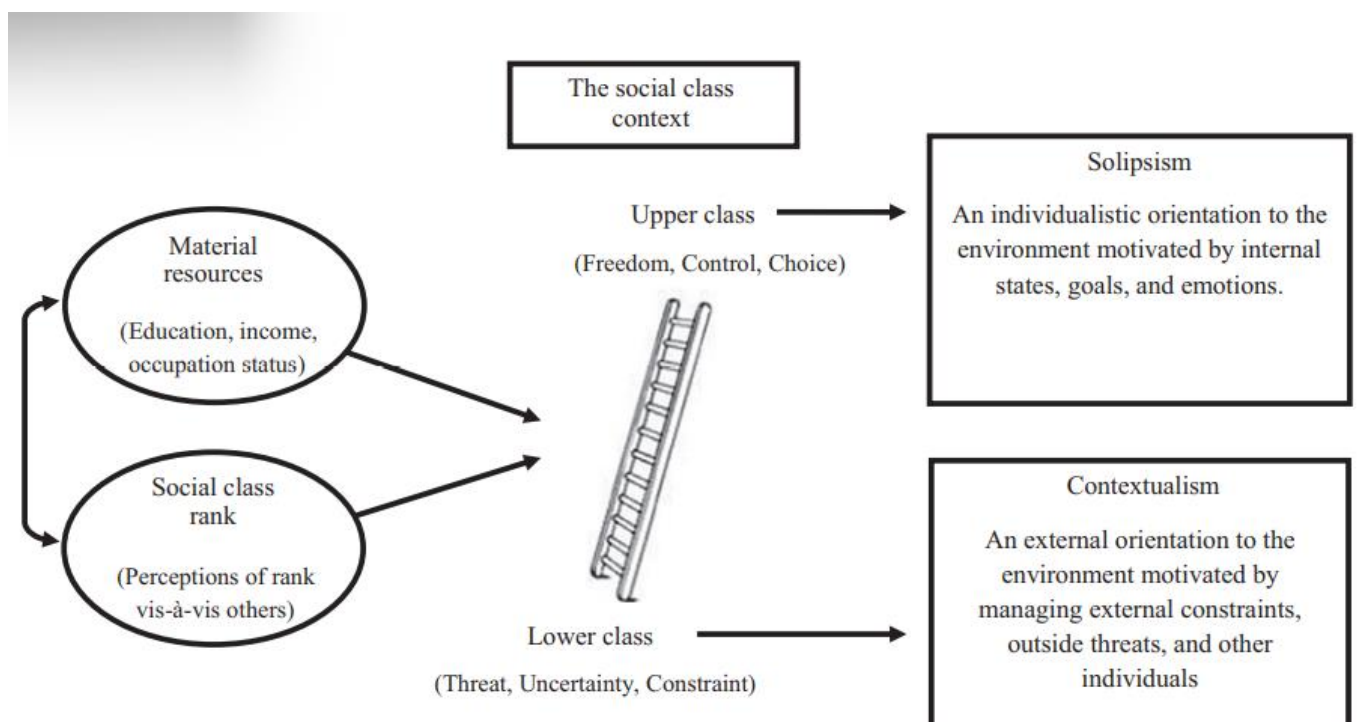
Introduction

As will become apparent throughout this research this feeling of 'inadequacy' has been felt by all the participants interviewed despite their professional achievements. In an age where even the less affluent in society can attend University procure material possessions such as iPhones, widescreen TVs and designer clothing, to be working class is not a status or badge of honour, it is a feeling that resonates deep in the soul, it is innate and to a certain extent inherited.

As referenced earlier to define what it means or feels to be born working-class is ambiguous at best. In today's globalist economy rags to riches and riches to rags stories are commonplace, nonetheless as Bourdieu recognised there is more to class than economic capital.

1.4 Symbolic violence and the middle classes

> 'why are the middle classes not held accountable for the levels of symbolic violence that they enact in daily encounters with others'
>
> (Skeggs, 2009, p.44)

Bourdieu believes that the concept of symbolic violence is fundamental in understanding the reproduction of social class inequality (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is fundamental in understanding how social class inequalities are reproduced. Bourdieu reasons that individuals hold agency in reproducing their own subordination through the acceptance of notions and structures that play a role in subordinating them. Bourdieu suggests this is an act of violence as it leads to the subservience of individuals and symbolic in terms of being achieved without duress.

Bourdieu's work on cultural reproduction proposes that educational achievement is enabled by the possession of cultural capital and higher-class habitus. Bourdieu contends that class inequality in education is replicated as children from working-class backgrounds do not possess these advantages and therefore will fail to obtain the qualifications to prosper in society. Bourdieu suggests that those holding these credentials are more likely to also hold dominant positions in society therefore reinforcing social inequalities.

> "... it [education] is in fact one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent

Introduction

> justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage, that is, to a social gift treated as a natural one."

> (Bourdieu, 1974, p. 32)

Jenkins (1992, p. 104) defines symbolic violence as 'the imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate'. Bourdieu and Wacquant (2002, p. 167) state, 'it is the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity'. Green cited in Reay (2006, p. 292) identifies England as the most categorical example of the dominant classes using the education system to secure 'hegemony over subordinate groups'.

Historically, it is unfeasible to deny that education has been used as a tool to maintain control of the working class (Freire 1970, Burke, and Harrison 1998). This systematic oppression is reinforced by Lowe (1867, p. 8) who argued, 'If the lower classes must now be educated … they must be educated that they may appreciate and defer to a higher civilisation when they meet it'.

Bourdieu's hypothesis of symbolic violence focuses on the suffering of a specific demographic [working class] who possess a deficiency of social, economic, and cultural capital together with a traditionally embedded habitus that leads to an acceptance of domination. Bourdieu theorises that education and schools are complicit in maintaining this domination and social inequality by endorsing meritocracy. 'At school, children learn whether they are smart, motivated, meritorious, and deserving…or not' (Croizet *et al.*, 2017 p. 105). School is where a student's individual merit is recognised. Receiving the same educational resources and comparable to others of the same age through standardised testing, the aim of education is the provision of equal opportunity for a student to be graded based on their individual merit. Nonetheless, it can be argued that despite the perception of equal opportunities, instead, the classroom magnifies social inequality. Students from middle-class families enter education with a distinct advantage. Academic achievement in the classroom is centred around practices closer to the cultural dispositions of the middle classes such as academic attitude; language; knowledge; bodily posture and models of agency (Croziet, op. cit. 2017). This argument is supported by Ball (1993, p. 17), 'The market [education] works as a class strategy by creating a mechanism which can be exploited by the middle classes as a strategy of reproduction in their search for

relative advantage, social advancement and mobility'.

Reay (2017) disputes the expectation that twenty-first-century education is providing equal education for all. Supporting the arguments of researchers such as Green (1990), Ball (1993) and Croziet (2017), Reay contends that 'we are still educating different social classes for different functions in society'. It is both the wealth and predisposition of middle-class habitus that have the greatest influence on academic success. Able to exercise their cultural and economic capital, they can guarantee their child's academic success through private tuition, extra resources, and enrichment activities (Reay, 2017 op.cit.).

Symbolic violence against the working class is demonstrated in education by middle-class teachers and parents who label this specific socio-economic group as 'potent' and 'threatening to others'. Increasingly, when deciding on school choices they become the social subsection to avoid. Senior management in educational institutions openly discuss the prospect of taking on too many students from working-class families, whilst middle-class families will look to avoid sending their own children to schools with 'rougher elements' (Ball *et.al.*, 1996)

It can be challenged that rather than serving its purpose as a vehicle for social mobility and equality, education has intensified the class divide. The 'not for my child' rhetoric adopted by the middle-classes has led to educational prejudice against the working-class. Viewed as less valuable assets to schools than their middle-class counterparts it is this socio-branding that makes a 'mockery of the bland, homogenising discourse of official and government rhetoric' (Reay & Ball, 1997, p. 98).

1.5 White working-class male Identity and cultural representation

In recent decades the impact of de-industrialisation, reduced manufacturing and globalisation have impacted the employment prospects of this group. The transitioning of Britain into services dominated economy has resulted in a range of professions and jobs that require qualifications and skills not possessed by working-class men on leaving education (Egerton & Savage, 2000). Historically, despite lacking the currency of academic achievement WWCM

were able to find an occupation that provided not only a salary but also the potential for lifetime employment (McConville, 1998).

The masculinity and resistance of working-class youth exhibited when leaving school, accompanied by traditional working-class male traits such as aggression and sexism are not attractive qualities to potential employees in industries which require everyday interaction with customers. Willis (1978, p. 130) describes this working-class male resistance as 'counter school culture', submitting that the WCB is already, 'practised in the institutional deflection of the requirements of an external system from their own vital energy and interests are more adept than their future peers at knowing, settling, and controlling their own activities'. This historical, predominately working-class trait of inherited resistance and anti-authoritarianism means that for the first time in post Second World War Britain the prospects of working-class males experiencing better employment prospects and a higher standard of living than their parents have begun to vanish (McDowell, 2002).

Alongside the de-industrialisation of Britain, the mockery and defamation of the WWC in both popular cultural representation and the MSM (See Figure 3) have intensified the process of class distinction.

Figure. 3: A selection of MSM headlines contributing to the defamation the WWC and identity politics
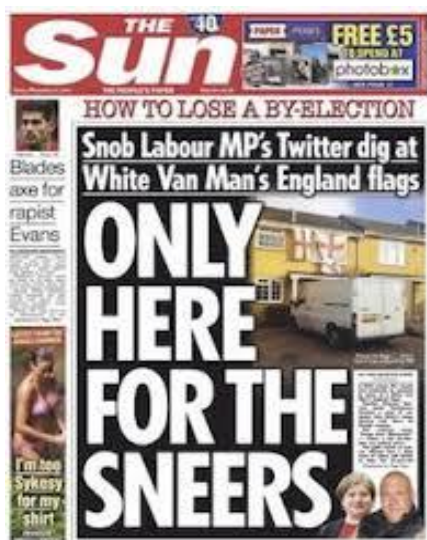
Smith, M. (2019)   The World News (2019)

Introduction

The Only Way is Essex is must-see television, but this mixture of reality show and scripted situations gives a one-sided view of Britain's chavland

TEENAGER APOLOGIZES FOR "WHITE PRIVILEGE" CNN
Royce Mann | 14-year-old poet

Cadwalladr, C. (2011)   Yaun, K. and Price, L. (2016)

As a WWC man, the images portrayed in Figure. 3 sadden me. In a society where we preach equality for all, this imagery is divisive. It is not difficult to consider society's anger if these images mocked gender, sexuality, or people of colour yet, we accept it when it is aimed at the WWC. 'White privilege' a construct centred around the experiences of a white middle-class academic (McIntosh, 1988) may well exist for the middle classes or those with an abundance of cultural capital, however, try explaining its meaning to a WWC boy from a rural area, living in poverty with no idea where his next meal is coming from and no future employment prospects, the current media rhetoric and mockery unlikely to increase his future opportunities.

Ford and Ferguson (2004, p. 79) suggest that this mockery is a style of 'disparagement humour' which 'denigrates, belittles or maligns an individual social group'. Television must also be held accountable, shows such as ITV's The Jeremy Kyle show have attracted large audiences airing the issues of vulnerable economically poor people denigrated by the host for the amusement of an audience who, clearly feel they hold social hierarchy over the guests. However, ITV is not alone, Channel 4's comedy/drama show *Shameless* which ran for eleven seasons told the story of a delinquent northern family and centred on British working-class culture. Despite winning numerous awards and being sold to foreign TV networks it can be argued that despite depicting love and familial bonds its representation of working-class characters focused on alcoholics

Introduction

and ne'er-do-wells. It can also be contended that it is patronising to the northern working class, depicting them as not only feral and unemployed but as living their lives in public houses. Channel 4 continue this negative representation of the working-class with their reality prime time TV contribution *Benefit Street*, whilst Channel 5 have a similar offering in *Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away!* These are programmes that it is difficult to refute are based around the suffering of the working class. However, as commercial stations, it can be debated that they are trapped in a vicious circle, compelled to make TV that attracts viewers, which in turn attracts advertisers, who provide the financial wealth to continue making programmes that the public wish to view. It is a more complex argument when considering the BBC. Regarded as a bastion of middle-class Britain and funded by the public, Lockyer (2008, p. 121) proposes that 'Sending up the dynamics and intricacies of the British class system has been a central ingredient of British television comedy [BBC] since the 1950s'. Medhurst (2007, p. 145) points out that 'the history of sitcom has been preoccupied to the point of obsession with class'.

The failure of British television to acknowledge the persistent mockery of the WWC in its programming was further highlighted in June 2020. Following racial tensions caused by the death of George Floyd in the USA and the influences of political groups such as Black Lives Matter the BBC decided to remove the comedy show 'Little Britain' from all streaming services, with the BBC stating that, 'times have changed since it first aired' (bbc.co.uk, 2020). Discussing the shows withdrawal, the stars of Little Britain, David Walliams and Matt Lucas both commented, with Lucas stating that, 'If I could go back and do-Little Britain again, I wouldn't make those jokes about transvestites. I wouldn't play black characters' whilst Walliams added that 'I would definitely do it differently in today's social landscape' (op.cit 2020). Whilst no one in today's society would advocate the act of 'black facing' or the mockery of the LGBT community whilst making TV shows, what was evident from both the BBC and stars of the show was the exclusion of an apology to the WWC community for the portrayal of the 'chav' character 'Vikki Pollard'. Remarkably, when searching for Vicky Pollard on the BBC's own website (http://www.bbc.co.uk/comedy/littlebritain/characters/vicky.shtml) the following 'character guide' appears:

> Vicky Pollard is your common-or-garden teenage delinquent, the sort
> you can see hanging around any number of off licences in Britain,
> trying to persuade people going inside to buy them 10 fags and a bottle

> of White Lightening. Whether nicking stuff from the supermarket or swapping her baby for a Westlife CD, Vicky reacts to any accusation with indignant outrage, while filling you in on 'this fing wot you know nuffin about'.

Conversely, searching for Little Britain's BAME characters returns no hits suggesting that they have been removed from the BBC site.

To incessantly show a lack of disregard for the WWC community is as indefensible as the ridicule of BAME and LGBTQ characters on Little Britain. However, also inexcusable is the failure of the BBC to similarly acknowledge that their depiction of WWC youths as feral; hanging around off licences; having babies whilst at school and being permanently high on drugs and alcohol, is both stereotypical and socially immoral.

In 2017 the BBC director of radio and education James Purnell provided data on the socio-economic background of employees at the BBC. Purnell stated that 17% of staff and 25% of the management team attended private school – a number significantly above the UK average of 7%, he also confirmed that 61% of staff came from families in which the main earner held a higher managerial and professional job. This data highlights what can be acknowledged as a lack of diversity in employee recruitment that manifests in its programme schedule, a point reinforced by the Chief Executive of OFCOM Sharon White who reported that the BBC is 'overly focused on middle-aged, middle-class audiences' (Feenan, 2017).

Whilst holding the privilege of being the countries national broadcaster, the BBC have a responsibility to reflect and represent the diverse communities found in twenty-first century Britain. Whilst the BBC has started to address this issue with employment [see Figure 4] and specific programming aimed at females; disability; LGBT and ethnic minorities. [see Figure 4.1], it can be argued that they have failed or ignored to acknowledge the indigenous WWC population.

Introduction

Figure. 4 BBC Employment targets by 2020   Figure. 4.1 BBC Onscreen targets by 2020

Workforce (All staff and Leadership levels)	2017 Target	2020 Target
Women (all staff)	n/a	50%
Women (leadership)	n/a	50%
Disability (all staff)	5.3%	8%
Disability (leadership)	5%	8%
Black Asian and ethnic minorities (all staff)	14.2%	15%
Black Asian and ethnic minorities (leadership)	10%	15%
LGBT	n/a	8%

Onscreen Portrayal	2017 Target	2020 Target
Women on screen, on air and in lead roles	n/a	50%
Disability on screen and in some lead roles	5%	8%
Black, Asian and ethnic minorities on screen, on air and in lead roles	15%	15%*
LGBT on screen and in some lead roles	n/a	8%

*Includes lead roles in addition to overall portrayal

British Broadcasting Company (2016)

When considering the representation of WWCM on television we must acknowledge the fact that there is an element of society that will form an opinion of this specific demographic based upon, on-screen portrayal. However, can we expect an impartial representation from a section of the media which may be ill-suited to represent the working class. As Feeney (op.cit. 2017) acknowledges:

> The well-off, privately schooled, Oxbridge-educated executive living in an affluent part of London or in the Home Counties that sends his or her children to private school may be incapable of understanding the experience of significant numbers of the poor or struggling-to-make-ends-meet rural or inner-city manual workers.

1.6 The Brexit effect

It can be argued that the social derision afforded to the white working-class has been magnified

Introduction

because of the vote to leave the European Union [EU] in 2016. The Brexit vote, it seems has caused further division amongst the social classes particularly in areas outside of London. The situation it can be contended has become inflamed by a predominantly middle-class pro-EU demographic repetitively condemning leave voters as 'Turkeys voting for Christmas' and as 'stupid', 'spiteful' and racist (McKenzie, 2019). This constant disdain was further compounded by senior political figures such as Sir Vince Cable who, in an interview compared the old and those that voted leave as jihadis, stating that, 'For the Brexit martyrs, paradise beckons' (BBC, 2017).

This harsh rhetoric aimed at the white working class it can be reasoned is from a middle class that has remained relatively unscathed by eight years of austerity. Historically devoid of a voice, Brexit was the opportunity for working-class communities to be heard. The political and London elite have historically struggled to consider areas outside of their metropolitan bubble. The Midlands and the North are examples of areas devastated during the 1980s and 1990s due to mine closures and de-industrialisation. Communities which survived on skilled employment for both men and women have been devoid of work and investment for decades. McKenzie (2018) indicates that these areas are now 'fertile grounds' for exploitive industries that target and attract inexpensive migrant workers from Eastern Europe at the expense of local labour. For generations, the working class from these communities have been left behind and believe they have been left out 'of the purposeful act of wealth being redistributed'.

As a white working-class man approaching fifty years of age my own personal lived experiences evoke empathy and understanding with these communities. When reflecting on my own social mobility I have personally experienced the impact of immigration and cheap labour due to the large increase in net migration in the late 1990s (Devlin & Bolt 2014). Throughout this period and at the beginning of the new millennium I had worked extremely hard to be able to start my own business renovating and redecorating hotel rooms, primarily in central London. The business employed a minimum of fifteen 'tradesmen' at any one time. The company based its reputation on the quality of work therefore all employees were experienced operatives with a proven track record and as such were remunerated accordingly. Unfortunately, during this period main contractors began to favour using cheaper unskilled labour beforehand and then employing my company to carry out any snagging [correcting poor

workmanship]. It must also be noted that during this period that many of my employees had families and held mortgages and therefore we were unable to compete with companies whose labour force were primarily young single men of eastern European descent, with as many as twelve sharing rented accommodation, a term recognised by these men as 'hot bedding'. Due to this procedure [hot bedding/shared costs], we were unable to compete financially during the tender process and therefore lost work, as a result, we had to reduce the number of tradesmen we were able to employ. Whilst many argue that immigration had not affected employment during this period in history, I would suggest that those commenting had not been in a profession which required [at the time] minimal professional requirements to obtain employment.

In 2020 it can be argued the picture has changed. Foreign labour with reference to the building industry have upskilled, however, unskilled factory/warehouse employment has increased with particular reference to the Midlands and Northern towns, therefore they are now facing similar problems to those of the building industry at the beginning of the century. The human race is now living through a period in history which should be far superior to that of our ancestors, scientific and technological breakthroughs should allow for a better quality of life for all regardless of religion, ethnicity, or sexuality. Unfortunately, rather than being provided with opportunities to enhance social mobility and economic prosperity, it can be considered that the white working-class male is caught in a cycle of generational poverty, now equally if not more disenfranchised than at any period throughout history. This disenfranchisement of the WWC is further compounded by recent Government data which states that between April 2016 and March 2018, despite the total net worth of private households increasing by 13% to a figure of £14.6 trillion, the net financial wealth of those in the lowest wealth decile had increased to negative £4900 broadening the social inequality gap even further (Office for National Statistics, 2019).

1.7 Conclusion

This research aims to identify the current societal perception of the WWCM, its impact on their education and any nuances however small that contribute to this specific demographics' educational success. To negotiate this successfully requires an understanding of working-class

Introduction

lives and experiences that may provide historical, as well as twenty-first century barriers to academic achievement.

When contemplating symbolic violence, Payne (2003, p. 1) suggests it is key to understand that 'schools and businesses operate from middle-class norms using the hidden rules [see Figure 5] of the middle class' and that, 'these norms and hidden rules are never directly taught in school'.

Figure. 5 Hidden Class Rules (Payne, 2003, p. 3)

Hidden Class Rules		
Generational Poverty	**Middle Class**	**Wealth**
The driving forces for decision-making are survival, relationships, and entertainment	The driving forces for decision-making are work and achievement.	The driving forces for decision-making are social, financial, and political connections.
People are possessions. It is worse to steal someone's girlfriend than a thing. A relationship is valued over achievement. That's why you must defend your child no matter what he or she has done. Too much education is feared because the individual might leave.	Things are possessions. If material security is threatened, often the relationship is broken.	Legacies, one-of-a-kind objects, and pedigrees are possessions.
The "world" is defined in local terms.	The "world" is defined in national terms.	The "world" is defined in international terms.
Physical fighting is how conflict is resolved. If you only know casual register, you don't have the words to negotiate a resolution. Respect is accorded to those who can physically defend themselves.	Fighting is done verbally. Physical fighting is viewed with distaste.	Fighting is done through social inclusion/exclusion and through lawyers.
Food is valued for its quantity.	Food is valued for its quality.	Food is valued for its presentation.

Therefore, it remains pertinent to suggest that without this understanding of 'class rules', WWCM will fail to negotiate education successfully and continue the cycle of WWC educational reproduction.

Introduction

These rules which Bourdieu defines as *Doxa* are, 'a pre-reflexive intuitive knowledge shaped by experience, to unconscious inherited physical and relational predispositions' (Deer, 2010, p. 120). Whilst these *Doxa* contribute to reinforcing social structure and facilitating societal values and classifications, the perception of WWCM by other socio-economic groups also play a part in shackling the progress of this specific group. Laureau (2002) proposes that social class constructs parent/teacher relationships that favour middle-class parents and pupils. Notwithstanding this historical prejudice, it would be at best negligent to disregard the present-day influence that the media and certain political affiliations play in the societal discrimination of WWCM.

Identified as chavs, obsessed by violence, sexism, and nationalism the 'feckless white working-class' (McCartney, 2018) must contend with the media practice of mocking through negative, stereotypical character portrayal, all of which indisputably contribute to the middle-classes historical contempt of the working class.

The struggle of the working class, class politics and class identity are embedded deep within the cultural norms' practices, and history of British democracy (Savage et al., 2015, p. 393). Therefore, when researching the social and academic exclusion of the working class it would be pertinent to consider how we rid middle-class society of symbolic violence? Though in practice it may prove difficult to free the white working-class of this historical inequality which it can be established has removed both their agency and voice.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

When considering education and social class it is difficult to argue that students from working-class backgrounds have been marginalised. In 1858 Sir Charles Adderley stated that,

> any attempt to keep the children of the labouring classes under intellectual culture after the very earliest stage at which they could earn their living, would be as arbitrary and improper as it would be to keep the boys at Eton and Harrow at spade labour
>
> (Quoted in Simon 1965, p. 120)

Reflecting on the thoughts and words of Adderley who, at the time of this statement was the Vice-President of the committee of Council in England highlights the historical educational neglect suffered by the working class in this country. If this diatribe were to be voiced in today's modern society, we would rightly expect political recourse. However, the truth is, one hundred and sixty-two years later we are still deliberating over the educational inequality faced by this specific social grouping.

Research conducted by Reay and Ball (1997, p. 89) suggests that when considering working-class choices in education, 'decision making in education is infused by ambivalence, fear and reluctance to invest too much in an area where failure is still a common working-class experience'.

To understand the status of the WWC in education we must also understand how they are viewed by society. Often mocked in the media and labelled with derogatory terms such as chav, the working class of modern-day Britain must first overcome both political and social barriers that hinder academic progress.

Literature Review

The drive for educational attainment and the societal perception of the WWC are reviewed to better identify social barriers and stereotyping that must be initially overcome by the WWC to allow for educational progress and social mobility to take place.

This section of the paper will consider the following areas

- What research exists pertaining to the drive for WWC educational attainment
- Media Representation of the 'chav': Owen Jones
- Lived Experiences of the WWC: Reay *et al:* Strangers in paradise
- Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, capital, field, and habitus

Gash (2001, p. 1) identifies a literature search as, 'a systematic and thorough search of all types of published literature to identify as many items as possible that are relevant to a particular topic'. The search engine Google provided access to primary research studies; journals; newspaper articles and any Government data linked to the failure of WWCM to successfully negotiate the field of education. Google scholar, Shibboleth and Open Athens were employed to access academic papers, journals and eBook's relating to the questions posed. Throughout this search, only databases that could provide full unrestricted access to research were considered. All research accessed was pertinent to WWCM and the English education system.

The following key terms were used to identify literature relevant to this research:
White working-class education; barriers; framework; socio-economic status; habitus; reproduction; familial relationships; emerging issues.

When considering suitable research literature, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria were established.

Inclusion criteria

- Published in English

- Conducted in the UK

- Specific to WWC

- Linked to identified questions

Exclusion criteria:

- Unable to access full text

- Based outside of the UK

- Primary focus on other specific ethnic groups

The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme [CASP] checklists were implemented to ascertain the trustworthiness; validity; reliability and ethics of all literature considered relevant to this paper [see appendix 4].

2.2 The Drive for WWC educational attainment

The emphasis on WWCB access into higher education has emerged in recent years (Canning 2016). However, a report published by the National Education Opportunities Network [Neon 2019] suggests that 'More than half of England's universities have fewer than 5% poor white students in their intake' (Coughlan 2019). The report recognises that whilst applications from other ethnic groups are increasing those from white students are declining, particularly amongst working-class men whom the report states, 'are amongst the most under-represented groups in university' (Coughlan op. cit.).

Research conducted by the Institute for Fiscal Studies [IFS] (Crawford & Greaves, 2015) finds that White British pupils in the lowest socio-economic quintile group have participation rates [HE] that are more than 10 percentage points lower than those observed for any other ethnic group (IFS, op. cit. 2015).

Among the reasons Crawford and Greaves identify for this lower participation is that ethnic minority families may place a higher value on university participation than White British families. Likewise, the chief inspector of schools for England Amanda Spielman suggested during an interview (Adams, 2018) that the families of WWC children 'lack the aspiration and drive seen in many migrant communities'. Nevertheless, it is worth recognising this statement was made in defence against evidence suggesting that OFSTED make harsher judgements on schools in deprived areas of the country. Interestingly, however, similar results are found in a report conducted by Kings College London [KCL] (2016). KCL note like Crawford and Greaves, that parental expectations and experiences play a significant role in influencing both the perception and participation in Higher Education of WWCB. The report which is focused on the widening participation [WP] of WWCB in HE obtains data from both an Academic and practitioner round table alongside case studies carried out at universities that appear to have a high proportion of WWCB in their student population. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that these 'Case Studies' consisted of a 20-minute telephone call with a senior member of the widening participation team at each university. Whilst this type of case study provides data that can help identify initiatives and intervention programmes to encourage participation, such as the use of Further Education [FE] feeder courses aimed at facilitating

progression to HE, it does not attempt to draw data from students it identifies as working class. To understand why WWCB fail to make the transition into HE it is vital to uncover nuances, however minute, that have influenced the progression of WWCB who have found success in the field of Higher education. Whilst it can be argued that academics and practitioners will provide an experienced platform from which to negotiate this problem, we must question how many have experienced the social and educational barriers faced by WWCB.

When considering the report carried out by KCL and the progress of WWCB into HE it is important to consider what is meant by widening participation and question its success with regards to the educational progression of WWCB.

In 2018, a briefing paper by Connell-Smith and Hubble suggests that despite the WP agenda in HE as being in place for decades, Government targets set in 2015 to, 'double the proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds going into higher education' by 2020 are falling short of the mark. Connell-Smith and Hubble identify a decline in HE applications by WWCM which UCAS (2017, p. 22) confirm, stating that, 'non-FSM pupils remain twice as likely to enter HE than FSM pupils'. Data analysis identifies that despite a minimal increase of 0.3% [FSM entry rate] over the previous year [2016] the percentage point gap between non-FSM and FSM student entry rates increased to 16.9% [+ 0.3% on previous year]. It is also applicable to note that the white male group [FSM] have the lowest entry rates by ethnicity (op. cit. p. 25). Whilst Connell-Smith and Hubble (2018) acknowledge that WP schemes attempt to remove barriers, raise aspirations, and increase access to HE the use of the term WP is broad. This is recognised by Gorard et al, who contend that despite its common use the term 'WP' does not have a clear meaning and has been understood by some to mean increasing student numbers or recruiting more from the comprehensive system. Gorard et al suggest that a stronger equity focus would guarantee that WP was about greater access in HE for students from underrepresented groups in contrast to their (qualified) populace share (Gorard et al, 2006).

Whilst the strategy of WP as a tool to address the discrepancies in the take-up of HE by WWCB is commendable, there is concern surrounding its progress. Research conducted by Reay, Crozier and Clayton aimed at identifying a sociological understanding of students drawing on both social and academic aspects with regards to HE finds that 'the universities with the most success at widening participation also have the highest drop-out rates' (Higher Education

Funding Council for England [HEFCE] 2006 cited in Reay et.al, 2010, p. 107). This research which follows a mixed-method approach of student questionnaires and case studies finds that there is a significant difference in the participation of students from a working-class background at different types of university. Citing data gathered by the Sutton Trust (2007) Reay et.al state that of 300,000 applications made by students from less affluent backgrounds just over 1% obtain a place in one of the top 13 universities [Press league tables].

Similarly, research carried out by the Social Market Foundation (2017) focused on student retention at university and factors explaining student dropouts confirms the findings of Reay et.al, acknowledging that despite the UK's success in expanding the number and diversity of students attending university through the WP strategy, drop-out rates are creeping up with the gap between the most advantaged and disadvantaged students widening. This research which contains analysis drawn from institutional data and interviews with senior university officials identifies a clear correlation between the proportion of students whose parents work within the National Statistics Socio-economic classes 4-7 lower-level occupations [see Figure 6] and university drop-out rates [see Figure 7]

Figure. 6 **NS-SEC Analytic classes 4-7 (Office for National Statistics, 2016)**

Class	Employment Status
4	Small employers and own-account workers
5	Lower supervisory and technical occupations
6	Semi-routine occupations
7	Routine occupations

The above table [Figure. 6] was produced following a 1994 'Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' review on government social classifications. The NS-SEC developed using the

Goldthorpe Schema (see Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992) is a sociological classification widely used in pure and applied research and as the official socio-economic classification in the U.K. Split into eight classes; with (1) relating to Higher managerial and professional occupations and (8) having never worked or being long term unemployed, the purpose of the NS-SEC is to provide an indication of socio-economic status based on occupation.

Figure. 7 **Relationship between socio-economic score and drop-out rates by institution (Social Market Foundation, 2017, p.16)**
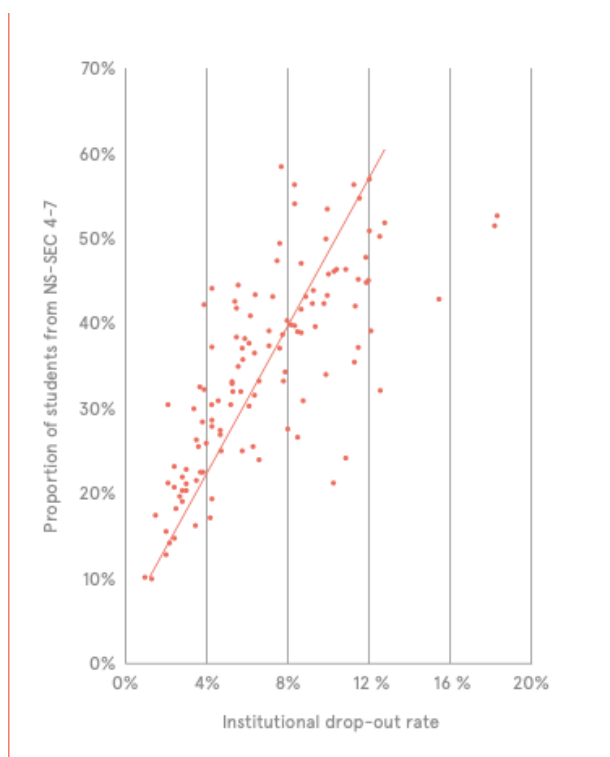
There is substantial evidence that differences in socio-economic background affect retention rates (Crawford 2014, Social Market Foundation 2017,). A report conducted by Future Track (2014), found that students whose parents had not attended university or whose parents work routine or semi-routine jobs [4-7 Figure. 6] are more likely to drop out of university (Social Market Foundation op.cit.). Figure 7 shows a clear correlation between university dropout rates and students whose parents are employed in occupations 4-7 on the NS-SEC scale [Figure.6].

This innovative research [Social Market Foundation, 2017] discusses practices that could help improve the retention rates of socio-economically challenged students including universities offering employment to students as a means of engaging, helping financially and regulating hours alongside identifying and supporting struggling students and helping develop networks.

Whilst acknowledging the findings of Reay et.al and the Social Market Foundation with regards to WP and working-class students it is important to consider the complexities of the language used when adopting methodologies such as questionnaires, focus groups and surveys when investigating WP [Reay et.al]. Methodology research conducted by Collins et.al. (2018) titled 'Asking the right questions: Opportunities and challenges of survey methods in widening participation research', suggests that 'When asking students about WP issues, we need to challenge what may be hidden, unconscious assumptions that specific characteristics could be associated with shame or stigma' (Collins et.al, 2018, p.67). Collins et.al. advocate the use of clear and direct questioning concerned with the characteristics of WP to aid practitioners and researchers to expose inequality where it exists, concluding that to challenge inequality we must, 'move away from euphemism and towards clear, unambiguous language that assumes neither pride nor stigma in any characteristic'. (op.cit. p.67).

2.3 Media representation; 'The Chav effect

 Mockery can be recognised as a form of 'disparagement humour', which 'denigrates, belittles or maligns an individual or social group' (Ford and Ferguson 2004, p.79). It is important, when considering social barriers to academic success that we understand why the media view the WWC as legitimate social targets for ridicule. Tyler (2008) suggests a 'perverse appropriation of identity politics' as a cause of disgust amongst middle-class journalists, citing prominent Times journalists James Dellingpole (2006) who claims that middle class identity is the most discriminated against subsection in society, often subjected to violence and terrorisation by the working class therefore, defending middle class entitlement. Dellingpole (2006, p.25) adds further fuel to the fire stating that the 'Vicky Pollards and Wayne and Waynetta's of this world, have got it coming to them', and that the function of the satire aimed at the working class is

'not only to make us laugh, but also, with luck, to draw our attention to the things that are wrong with the world and help mock them into extinction'.

The use of the word extinction highlights the class disgust felt by journalists such as Dellingpole. Would his article be published and acceptable were he discussing the extinction of a particular race or sexuality? The answer would be a resounding no. Society would rightly show contempt at such heinous words. However, when discussing the WWC this rhetoric is viewed as acceptable even comedic. Classed disgust and contempt identify and maintain social differences. This is acknowledged by Miller (1997, p.50) 'Disgust helps define boundaries between us and them, me and you. It helps prevent *our* way from being subsumed into *their* way'. There is much evidence of middle-class coding to identify the WC (Stallybrass and White 1986; Finch 1993; Roberts 1999) have documented and analysed the disgust aimed at the WC.

The introduction of the word 'Chav' by the media as a term of abuse to distinguish the white working class from the white upper and middle classes (Tyler 2008) has become a go to phrase for the middle classes when describing the WWC. Building on the middle-class contempt and disgust for the WWC, the term, derived from the Romany word child is associated with feral Burberry wearing youths who smoke skunk and consume alcohol whilst hanging around on street corners, or 'lard-gutted slappers who'll drop their knickers in the blink of an eye' (Delingpole 2006, p. 25). In his book Chavs (2020 edition), Owen Jones questions how the hatred of working-class people has now become socially acceptable. He asks the question, when did it become ok for privately educated millionaires to portray working-class characters in a derogatory manner for the entertainment of the middle classes (2020, p.2). The use of this derogatory term is recognised by Tyler (2008, p.17) suggesting that the word 'chav' has now become 'a ubiquitous term of abuse for the white poor'.

Throughout his work, Jones offers social commentary on the media's bias portrayal of news stories. Comparing the tragic disappearance of Madeline McCann, the child of affluent parents both university educated and Doctors with the disappearance of Shannon Matthews the daughter of an unemployed mother of seven. Jones references the 1148 media stories devoted to Madeline McCann as well as the reward of £2.6 million offered in comparison to the

Matthews case which received a third of the media coverage and a reward of £25000 put up by the Sun newspaper. The question which is posed is why the life of the child of professional parents is worth fifty times more than that of a WWC child. Jones references Daily Mail journalist Alison Pearson who stated 'This kind of thing doesn't usually happen to people like us' (Jones 2020, p.14), suggesting that when Pearson says people like her she means people from middle class backgrounds. Whilst both cases were horrific for obvious reasons it is interesting to observe further comments made by Pearson which highlight the 'them and us' class-based scenario. Commenting on the Matthews case just once when it seemed Matthews would not turn up alive Pearson stated, 'Like too many of today's kids, Shannon Matthews was already a victim of a chaotic domestic situation, inflicted by parents on their innocent children' (Jones, 2020, p.15). When the McCann's began to receive criticism for leaving their children alone Pearson was one of their strongest defenders stating, 'The truth is the McCanns were not negligent, none of us should presume to judge them' (Jones op.cit). The disparity between coverage of the two cases by the media is obvious and is recognised by Jones. The daughter of professional, photogenic parents, regular church goers, the picture of an idyllic middle class British family, easy to empathise with for the middle-class media. However, what was not so easy for the journalists to empathise with was the child who grew up on a northern council estate, whose mother had seven children by five different men and attended press conferences in a track suit with her pulled back.

The influence of the media on class perception is one that cannot be underestimated. There is an air of superiority felt by the middle classes, the psychological feeling of 'being better than'. It is a phenomenon that I have witnessed when interviewing students and parents moving into sixth form. The middle-class parent who believes their child should be sitting 'A' Levels and not BTECs because they are 'for other children', despite it being the right choice for their child. The humiliation of telling their counterparts that their own child is studying a vocational qualification being just too shameful, as if it makes them bad parents.

In the conclusion to his work Jones recognises a class of people that have been driven out of the workplace, the media, and the political establishment. One must only consider politics over the last thirty years to identify this. The removal of power from the trade unions, the change in

direction of the Labour party have helped obliterate the voice of the working class allowing them to become targets of ridicule in both the media and society.

2.4 The lived experiences of the WWC

To understand social barriers facing the WC it is important to explore and listen to life stories and lived experiences. When considering these stories, it is essential that the middle-classes can empathise and critically analyse issues that are faced by the WC. Conversely, Manstead (2018) advises that the WC score higher than the middle-classes on measures of empathy.

Merrill and West (2009, p.1) believe that biographical research offers detailed insight into the 'dynamic interplay of individuals and history, inner and outer worlds, self and other'. When considering factors that contributed to the academic success of the WWCM interviewed the work the work of Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009) is pivotal in understanding the link between habitus, field, and academic success. Their research (Strangers in Paradise) focused on the life stories and lived experiences of nine working class students who are attending an elite university. Using Bourdieu's concept of habitus, field, and capital the paper looked to explore nuances that contributed to these students becoming the first in their families to attend university.

In their study Reay et al, found that most of the students interviewed had felt like a fish out of water, not when moving into a predominantly middle-class higher education but conversely in their largely WC comprehensive secondary schools, one student recalled being labelled a swot by his peers and another subjected to bullying. Despite this hysteresis Reay et al, describe the students in their research as possessing highly developed academic dispositions. It is recognised that these students can successfully navigate two different fields (family / schooling). Reay et al suggest this is due to the process of self-conscious reflexivity (McNay, 2008), the students being able to develop a self-awareness and a propensity for self-improvement which becomes ingrained into the habitus. However, this is challenged by Adams (2006, p, 524) who advises that 'reflexive capabilities' rarely provide motivation for the

upward mobility of the working classes, suggesting instead that social and self-awareness lead to pessimism.

The primary strength of Reay, Crozier and Clayton's study is the robust detail provided by the individual histories of the students interviewed. However, there are disadvantages to this research. The researchers clearly identify that all students interviewed possessed highly developed academic dispositions and the ability to prioritise academic work at the expense of (school) friendships. Nonetheless, it can be contended that these academic skills are not the norm for a majority of WWC students. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue that social inequalities are reproduced in the school system and that the norms and values, such as those exhibited by the students in Reay et al's study are more familiar to children from middle-class backgrounds, allowing them to outperform their working-class peers. This trait allowed those interviewed to attend an elite university. However, what of the students who scrape through their formal education and are unable to attend a Russell group university. Clearly additional research is required focusing on WC students who do not possess the academic self-awareness expressed by the subjects of Reay's research to identify the experiences and motivations that allow the WWCM interviewed in this research paper to achieve academic success.

2.5 Bourdieu

> Every sociological practice, theoretical or empirical, rests on an implicit or explicit metatheory-a general conceptual framework for the understanding of human social life
>
> (Brubaker, 1985, p. 749)

To develop an understanding of how the white working-class men in this research have achieved educational success, Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, capital, field, and habitus will provide a framework to rationalise the upward mobility successfully navigated by this group.

Nash (1990, p. 440) describes Bourdieu's theory as, 'essentially an exclusion theory', suggesting that on average working-class children will fail in a school system that is purposely

designed to disregard them by neglect. Bourdieu's theory contends that an individual resides in society within different social and institutional spaces, which he calls fields. An individual's location in these fields will be reliant on their capital. However, Bourdieu's identifies capital as more than just financial wealth. Bourdieu recognises that capital is a generalised resource that can assume monetary and non-monetary alongside tangible and intangible forms (Anheier, Gerhards & Romo, 1995). Bourdieu (1990) identifies three forms of capital that will influence the progress of working-class students: economic, social, and cultural.

2.5.1 Economic capital

Refers to financial wealth and assets. Economic capital can be directly converted into a financial worth which in turn can be used to provide the children of the wealthy with an expensive education through the private system, provide extra tuition or even relocate to another catchment area with higher-achieving schools. Bourdieu suggests that economic capital underpins all other forms of capital (Horne et al, 2011).

Lareau (2011) informs that economic capital can be used to advance an individual's position in society. Suggesting that family income can be used to access extracurricular educational opportunities which in turn can lead to the development of valuable social networks. This theory is supported by Crosnoe and Cooper (2010) who recognise that the educational opportunities available to children from working class backgrounds can be limited due to financial limitations.

2.5.2 Cultural capital

Bourdieu's theory suggests that power in society is transferred, and social class maintained through the amount of cultural capital an individual possesses. Cultural capital allows middle-class parents to convey advantages to their children through mediums such as opera; dance; theatre; art and literature, with the ability to converse on such high-class subjects allowing children possessing cultural capital to progress and achieve educationally, and helping to reproduce social class (Bourdieu, 1986). Yang (2003) suggests the possession of cultural

resources is the main indicator of academic success amongst students in both science and mathematics.

Bourdieu observes that the more capital you hold, the more powerful your role in society. He suggests that families that hold this form of high culture will in-turn pass it onto their children. Therefore, ownership of cultural capital when aligned with social capital provides the ability for an individual to network with others who hold similar knowledge and experiences. Bourdieu defines this as, 'the reproduction circuit associated with schooling and formal education', submitting that, 'Those parents equipped with cultural capital are able to drill their children in the cultural forms that predispose them to perform well in the educational system through their ability to handle 'abstract' and 'formal' categories' (Bennett et.al, 2009, p.13).

2.5.3 Social capital

Bourdieu (1986) proposes that the possession of social capital gained from social networks and friendship groups will provide the individual with resources which can be invested with expected benefits. Throughout life, we will develop bonds and relationships based on common identity and experiences. These relationships can potentially provide contacts and opportunities that can be converted into personal advantage allowing for economic prosperity. Woolcock (2000, p.3) recognises how the paucity of social capital effects those lower down the ladder of social hierarchy, suggesting that 'A defining feature of being poor, moreover is that one is not a member of – or is even actively excluded from-certain social networks and institutions, ones that could be used to good secure jobs and decent housing'. Woolcock's theory is supported by Rogosic and Baranovic (2016) who propose that disparities in educational success can be attributed to different levels of existing social capital, which is produced in networks and connections of families that school's serve. The lack of social capital can follow WWCB throughout their childhood into their adult lives and employment. The adage 'It's not what you know, it's who you know' is extremely relevant when considering employment. Research conducted by LinkedIn (2017) states that in 2016, 70% of people were employed at a company where they already had a connection.

2.5.4 Habitus

Habitus denotes the physical embodiment of cultural capital, ingrained habits and dispositions established through our lived experiences. Bourdieu proposes these 'internalised structures' and 'schemes of perception' structure the individuals out-look on life and their 'apperception' of the world in which they exist (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 86). However, when discussing dispositions Bourdieu's definitions, 'tendency', 'propensity', 'inclination' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 506) are vague at best. Nash (1990, p.46) argues that the theory is, 'ambiguous' and overloaded'. Despite The suggestion of Nash, several educational researchers have referenced habitus in their work (Reay 1995, Cooper and Dunne 1998, McLeod 2000). Though, Sullivan (2002, p.11) believes the main use of habitus is 'to give a veneer of theoretical sophistication to empirical findings'.

Notwithstanding the findings of both Nash and Sullivan this research is predominantly concerned with familial habitus and its role in the participant's socialisation, reproduction of social class and understanding of social inequality. As Bourdieu (1972) cited in Reay (2004, p.434) recognises, 'The habitus acquired in the family is at the basis of the structuring of school experiences'.

2.5.5 Field

Bourdieu proposes that the social world is divided into a multiplicity of areas or 'fields'. These fields exist in society and encompass areas such as politics, education, religion, employment, and art. Each field will possess its own unique rules and forms of capital, however, the rules and hierarchies within these fields are not permanent and 'are subject to constant struggles between classes and class fractions of different capital magnitude and composition which objectively tend to aim at rule preservation or changes in accordance with their capital endowment' (Winzler, 2014, p. 2). Whilst it is possible for these fields to overlap Bourdieu considers each field relatively independent. Fields may vary according to how much autonomy they acquire from the entirety of the social field. Any given field is discernible by a high level of specificity, it will possess its own history; a specific configuration of agents will operate within it and fight for a stake; it induces its own habitus and upholds a distinctive set of beliefs.

Literature Review

The field will be highly differentiated and will possess strict boundaries, beyond which the field ceases to have any impact on practice (Peillon, 1998, p. 215).

2.5.6 Conclusion

> Assume that whatever you want to study has, not causes, but a history, a story, a narrative, a 'first this happened, then that happened, and then the other happened, and it ended up like this.'
>
> Becker (1998, p.60)

As a white working-class male who, by my own admission failed to understand the importance of education in my formative years, I now view these early educational experiences through a somewhat different lens. Comfortable to coast along and follow the well-trodden working-class pathway into blue-collar employment, I never questioned a lack of attentiveness or interaction from my educators or my own ranking in the classroom's societal hierarchy. However, as an adult now employed in the field of education, I can view my past experiences through the process of life story and critical reflection. Sutherland (2013, p. 111) observes that when considering the importance of critical reflection on our own academic development we are required, 'to look beyond our own circumstances to the external factors, policies and people that might influence the choices we make and the actions we take'.

Throughout my primary and secondary education, I did not present a problem to the teachers. I was not badly-behaved or the type to disrupt learning in a classroom environment and therefore avoided any behavioural consequences. When my mother and father attended parents evening, I would be described as happy-go-lucky and at worse a little cheeky, not interested in learning but, as one teacher offered, 'Darren will get by in life and always find employment based on his personality'. Dunne & Gazeley (2007, p. 451) argue that by teachers failing to acknowledge social class identity they are, 'Maintaining the educational conditions, in which middle-class pupils were encouraged to achieve while the underachievement of many working-class pupils was normalised.

Literature Review

When applying the theory of critical reflection to my own educational experiences and teacher/student interactions throughout my formal education I feel a sense of dejection. As a working-class man I have never shirked responsibility or apportioned blame for my social position, on the contrary, I am able to admit my own contribution to a lack of attainment during my school years. Nonetheless, as an adult now working in education and considering my own good practice it is important to reflect and consider the role played by not only the education system but by those entrusted with the privilege of educating society.

The five working-class men interviewed for this research were all educated in different regions of England. Raised on council estates they have all avoided the phenomenon of working-class educational failure. Having traversed familial issues and adversity their biographies provide an informative insight into the experiences, influences and luck required for the successful navigation of education rarely afforded to WWCM.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

> The finest meshed sociological net cannot give us a pure specimen of class, any more than it can give us one of deference of love. The relationship must always be imbedded in real people and real context
> -E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*

In his seminal work 'The Making of the English Working Class' (1968), Marxist historian E.P. Thompson describes the concept of class as a historical relationship 'embodied in real people and real context' (Thompson, 1968, p. 8). Thompson uses the notion of 'class consciousness' to interpret how working-class men deal, on a cultural level with their lived experiences [inherited or shared]. Thompson hypothesises that throughout life, men because of these experiences will 'feel and articulate' their personal experiences, comparing with other men whose interests may be both different and conflicting, emphasising however, that the class experience is determined 'by the productive relations into which men are born – or enter involuntarily' (Thompson, op.cit.).

To understand the educational success of the white working-class men in this study and to identify how they have resisted the trend of academic failure, it is fundamental that we study their habitus, familial and social interactions alongside their individual personal educational experiences. The five WWCM taking part in this study have all achieved employment and success in the field of education. To recognise how this success was attained biographical research in the form of life stories has been identified as the method best suited to providing a rich, detailed account of their individual life and educational experiences, placing an emphasis on any sociocultural differences.

3.2 Research design

I make no apologies for the autobiographical nature of this research. My own personal experiences and social interactions have granted me an insight into the minds of middle classed

educationalists. When beginning my career in education I was conscious of being judged therefore, I watched, listened, and observed. Looking to fit in, I was mindful of my appearance, I believed that every time I was in conversation that I was subject to an in-depth analysis regarding my south London accent and enunciation. It seemed that this in particular 'was fair game' for friendly banter, although it seemed my quick-witted responses cultivated throughout many years in football changing rooms and streets of south London were not so well received. How dare I mock those who were socially superior and had followed the traditional paths into education. Nonetheless, this was the first time I had truly considered social class in the workplace. On reflection I now see this as a significant turning point in my own personal development. I took this as a challenge, I developed an 'I will be better than you and show it' mentality. I focused on my profession, observing good practice, being innovative in planning and design, for want of another phrase and almost certainly linked to my sporting experiences, I wanted to win.

When considering the topics of both my degree and MRes I knew that I wanted my research to focus on barriers faced by WWCB in education. These were issues that were personal to me. Throughout my career in teaching, I have met other educationalists from similar WC backgrounds and the more we discussed education the more I wanted to know their stories. It also seemed, whether by coincidence or luck that the WC teachers that I met were all involved in physical education departments, consequently enabling me to foster relationships and build confidences. Therefore, when deciding the topic of my research and deciding on participants I had already made numerous acquaintances that were suitable subjects to research.

It is important to recognise that the individuals interviewed for this research paper attended formal education between the early 1970's and 2000, therefore their social experiences will differ from those of WWCB in today's education system. Educationally, they would have to deal with multigenerational disadvantage (UK Parliament. 2021). However, as Furedi (2020) recognises, the class hatred of the WWC historically expressed by the right-wing upper class is now promoted by the left, particularly those that are advocates of identity politics. Therefore, it can be contended that the WWCB of today have to deal with the historical derision from the middle classes as well as a new loathing from the left which places the WWC male as the pantomime villain in a social utopia.

Methodology

Nonetheless, the perception of situations and experiences are personal to any individual. Through the investigation of these individual experiences, the researcher can gain direct access to a 'solid base of pure knowledge' (McIntosh & Wright, 2018 p. 4). This is reaffirmed by Scott (1992, p. 24) who acknowledges, 'What could be truer…than a subject's own account of what he or she has lived through'. The WWCM interviewed for this research project, have it seemed broken free from the shackles of white working-class educational attainment and reproduction. Notwithstanding their individual starting points, these working-class men have viewed education as a vehicle to, 'change people's lives, even transform them' (Fryer, 1997, p. 24). The purpose of this research is to understand why these WWCM have gained this understanding and participated in formal learning when historically WWCB have systematically failed to navigate the field of education. It can be acknowledged that some WWCB are successful learners whilst many underperform (Jackson, 1998). This is reinforced by quantitative data provided by the Department for Education (Strand, op. cit. p. 10) which states that 'all ethnic minority groups achieve higher exam success at age 16 than White British students of the same socio-economic statuses. Whilst this quantitative research can supply us with data and statistics it does not inform causality or context.

When challenging the negative labelling of learners in educationally marginalised groups, biographical research has been used as an effective tool in providing this specific sub-section of students with a voice (Merrill & West, op.cit.). The impact of biographical research in education is recognised by Coffey (2002, p. 6) who proposes that 'The biographical or narrative turn has had an impact on the ways in which educational experiences, processes and policies are researched and understood'. Jaeger-Erben (2013, p. 157) suggests the use of biographical research if the researcher wishes 'to investigate subjective perceptions of social reality and a person's construction of meaning and identity'.

3.3 Research strategy

> A life story is the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another.... A life story is a fairly complete narrating of one's entire experience of life as a whole, highlighting the most important aspects.
>
> (Atkinson, 1998, p. 8)

Methodology

The methodological position adopted in this research is life story reflection. Life story reflection falls within the narrative research approach (Norton, 2017). Narrative research sits within the framework of sociocultural theory, challenging the researcher to observe and recognise how human action is related to the social context in which it occurs (Moen, 2006).

An awareness of the narrative approach can be found in the innovative work of the educational theorist John Dewey (1938) who used a three-dimensional narrative structure approach of interaction, continuity, and situation to identify meaning, central to his philosophy of experience in both a personal and social context (Wang and Geale, 2015)

As previously identified all of the research participants interviewed for this thesis are employed in the field of education. Hay (2004, p. 2003) advocates the use of life story research and its importance as a reflective tool in education, suggesting that 'Narrative, in a variety of genres, is a contemporary tool for the exploration of teacher identity'. This opinion is supported by Connelly and Clandinin (2016, p. 2) who recognise that this style of narrative inquiry is, 'Increasingly used in studies of educational experience' submitting that, 'Education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories'.

The use of biographical research in this thesis will provide details of key events in the participants lives such as birthplace; education; work; familial; peer and mentor relationships that have played a part in nurturing and shaping each individual participant's educational pathway. This method of inquiry will be best suited to inform and establish context to the lives of the five white working-class males participating in this research.

When exploring the historical phenomenon that is the failure in education experienced by white working-class males and when considering social problem solving, it is important that the process must address the natural environment or 'Real world' in which it occurs (D'Zurilla et.al 2004, p. 11). To develop an understanding of this cultural academic failure we must first recognise any nuances that have enabled success amongst the same demographic. Teachers from working-class backgrounds will have personal practical experiences that can help

Methodology

empower change. Clandinin and Connelly (1995, p. 25) recognise the importance personal experience plays in teaching practice:

> Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation

Broom (2015, p. 79) argues that the specific goal of social studies is to empower students, however, her research recognises that historical teaching practices, 'will often have the opposite effect of disempowering students'. In Britain today there is an increasing worry for the educational welfare and progress of white working-class boys. There are many that believe this is impacted by an education system that cannot meet the cultural needs of its learners (Ball, 2009; Gillborn, 2010; Strand 2014). Lampert, Burnett & Lebhers (2016, p. 35) believe, 'That the experiences of working-class teachers must be made more visible, with their voices promoted and heard'. The aim of this research is to provide not only a voice but also an understanding of cultural and educational barriers that impact the progress of this specific socio-economic group. To enable educational progress, we must develop a comprehensive understanding of these barriers from the experiences of white working-class men who, have successfully navigated a predominantly middle-class education system. Lampert et.al. (2016), argue that students respond more positively to teachers whose disposition and background are like their own, often feeling less alienated and more motivated, whilst white middle-class teachers send messages reinforcing working-class concepts of power distribution and societal hierarchy.

Whilst conducting a narrative research approach it can be expected that the education professionals considering their own life experiences and self-understanding will do so through critical reflection. The use of critical reflection will allow the individuals participating in this research to provide insight and meaning to their experiences. Brookfield paraphrased in Shandomo (2010, p. 101) proposes, 'Part of the critical reflective process is to challenge the prevailing social, political, cultural, or professional way of acting'. The method of critical reflection will allow these white working-class men to interpret and construct new knowledge from both their ordinary and extraordinary experiences.

Methodology

The use of personal narrative is an effective method for developing an understanding of how the self evolves over time. The use of the self-narrative method enables the researcher to secure valuable information and develop an understanding of the individual's position in society, culture, and history (Atkinson, 2012). The use of this method will allow the white working-class males taking part in this research to express their lived experiences, struggles, lessons, and lifetime knowledge that has enabled them to achieve educational success.

3.4 Data collection techniques and analysis framework

This method of research used for this study was autobiographical life stories. Conducted over a period of six months it focused on gathering data from five WWCM who have achieved academically [HE] and moved into the field of education. The five educators whose life stories formed the basis of this research were chosen because of their WWC background and commitment to the field of education. Initially, semi-structured interviews based around three questions [see introduction p. 5] were conducted with each participant. The questions selected, although designed surrounding the discourse of educational underachievement amongst WWCB were to be addressed from the lived experiences of WWCM who have negotiated this field successfully.

The first interview [exploration phase] was a starting point to develop a rapport with each contributor and to encourage them to begin reflecting on their own personal life journey. The initial interview focused on obtaining a chronological life history [growing up, formal education, family, influences etc]. It is important to recognise that the experience of reflecting on personal and lived experiences is both a unique and unfamiliar process for the WWCM participating in this research process and as such is fundamental to appreciate that data obtained from life story interviews is often deeply personal. This concern is recognised by Harrison (2008, p. xxxix) who acknowledges that 'life story and life history interview itself raise issues of potential trauma and its opposite with claims that such interviews are often therapeutic'. This potential trauma is acknowledged by Plummer (2001, P. 224), 'life story research always means you are playing with another person's life'. When conducting this style of research, it is essential to understand that the individual's memory is the key element. It is the component

the researcher works with to (re)construct elements of analysis that may help in understanding the subject matter (Abrahão, 2012).

Data was collected from the first interview, transcribed [see Appendix 3 for example of analysed data] and read through thoroughly to enable familiarity. Much consideration was given to the method of recording participant interviews. It was decided that the process of recording and transcribing would prove advantageous over notetaking. Despite the simplicity of writing as the participants narrated, it was felt that this procedure could lead the researcher to omit critical comments, as well as the emotions and body language, conveyed via the narrative. Despite the time-consuming nature of transcription, the researcher believes that by recording and observing the participant, not only will rich detailed qualitative data be recorded but any nuances would be better observed. A second interview [the co-operative phase] followed which concentrated on exploring aspects [relevant to this research] in greater detail with an emphasis on any nuances that had influenced their educational progress.

It is imperative to this research to analyse the life story data, comparing the experiences of the WWCM interviewed and to reflect on their narrative with respect to the findings in the literature review [see Figure. 8 for reflective progress].

Methodology

Figure. 8 **The Reflective process,** adapted from (Biggam, 2017, p. 334)
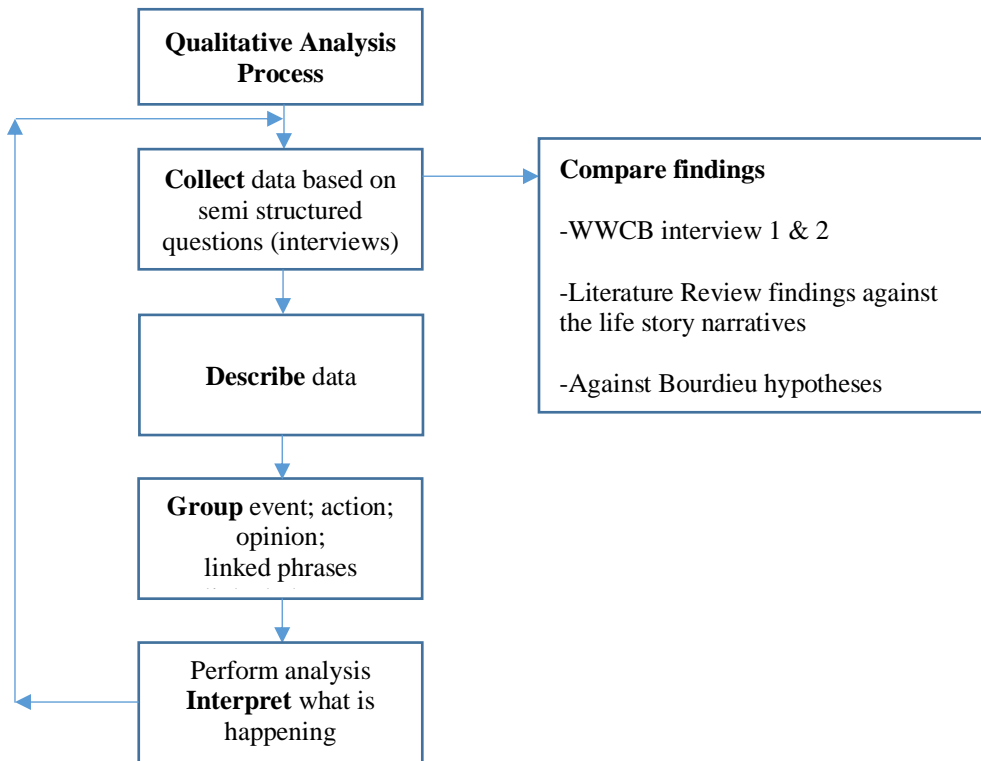
During the reflective process, the data was coded into three themes [Class & Identity, Familial Influence, External Influence]. The system of coding implemented throughout this study is based on the work of Merrill (Merrill & West, 2009). Merrill suggests that when analysing individual transcripts, the researcher should be, 'looking for shared experiences and patterns which connect across the transcripts so that the individual stories become collective ones' (op. cit. p. 133). Merrill recognises that by adopting this approach to the coding of participant interviews we can better identify, 'different dimensions of the narrative and how these relate to a wider theoretical understanding of class' (op. cit. p. 144). To better provide the reader with an understanding of links throughout the life stories, the work of Jasper (2016) employs an intext annotation linked to themes that, 'in the opinion of the researcher', refer to research specific themes (Jasper, 2016, p. 58). This system will be implemented throughout the individual life stories presented in this research although, as Jasper recognises the inclusion of some letters may not be immediately obvious to the reader, in other cases they may 'appear to be obtuse' (op. cit. p. 59). Nonetheless, it is hoped that this process of referencing will allow the reader to better understand the thoughts of the researcher.

Methodology

The in-text codes that will be used throughout the individual narratives look to identify three themes I believe are relevant to developing an understanding of any nuances that may have contributed to the educational attainment of the WWCM interviewed for this study. The themes selected below also provide a link to the Bourdieusian framework identified in chapter 3.6 which will be used to rationalise the upward mobility successfully navigated by this group.

(C&I)   Class and Identity

(FI)   Familial Influence

(EI)   External Influence

It is, however, important to note that despite similarities that may occur throughout the process of coding, each life story is personal to the individual. To better understand and identify key findings from this research, Scott's interview will be used as an individual case study implementing the 'Jasper' coding system. Findings from Scott's narrative will then be cross-referenced with those of the other participants in this study to identify similarities experienced throughout their individual life stories. Table 3 will look to identify the experiences of class and identity. Table 4 will consider familial influence, whilst table 5 will relate to external influences.

I have elected Scott's interviews as the initial case study because it is the educational journey that most resembles my own. A late birthday and blue-collar pathway, prior to identifying a love of education are experiences we both share and therefore, it could be argued would support my existing beliefs. To eliminate the risk of what could be considered confirmation bias I have elected to compare the lived experiences of the participants whose life stories differ from my own, although it must be acknowledged as WWCB in education we will have experienced similar social inequalities and experiences.

When considering research paradigms and the educational underachievement of WWCB this study aligns itself with the methodology employed by Santamarina and Marinas (1994, p. 268-269), who implies, 'life stories are understood as dialectically inserted in a system. Without being disconnected from the moment of enunciation or utterance, they are treated as stories of people (individual or group) that are constructed from within the micro and macrostructures of the social reality to which they refer'.

Methodology

3.5 Limitations of study

> Trouble awaits those unwary souls who believe that research flows
> smoothly and naturally from questions to answers via a well
> organised data collection system
> <div align="right">(Hodgson and Rollnick in Robson, 2011, p. 406)</div>

It is important when considering this study into WWCM to identify and recognise any limitations that transpire. Firstly, it can be argued that the small sample size [5] used in this investigation reduces the authority of the research and increases the margin for error which can affect the findings. However, some qualitative researchers report that sample size is not an issue in qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2005). It can also be deliberated that the non-positivism paradigm adopted throughout this research lends itself to the findings of Morse (2000, p.3-5) who reasons that the more obvious the nature of the topic the smaller the sample size as, well as advocating that the richer the data, the smaller the sample size required. This is supported by Malterud, Siersma and Guassora (2016, p.1753-1760) who submit that the more specific the characteristics of the participant in relation to the purpose of the research, the smaller the sample size.

Secondly, the choice of audio transcription is a procedure that remains 'relatively unexplored' (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p. 318). For this research, a transcription application [Otter] was used to record and transcribe all interviews. However, it must be acknowledged that there can be technical issues surrounding this fledgeling software. On numerous occasions throughout each interview, words were misinterpreted and recorded incorrectly. This resulted in each interview being re-listened to thoroughly and changes of wording made where required. It is also important to acknowledge the findings of DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (op. cit.) who recognise the difficulty of capturing the spoken word into text form when transcribing. Researchers must acknowledge sentence structure and remain conscious of misinterpreting words alongside the recognition that a misplaced comma may change the structure of a whole sentence. Consequently, the recording and transcribing of interviews throughout this study proved to be a time-consuming process.

Methodology

A third limitation of the study, conscious bias is acknowledged in the introduction to this research.

Finally, this research was conducted throughout the Covid-19 [corona virus] pandemic which initiated a lockdown, in the United Kingdom effective from March 2020. As a result of lockdown there was an extended delay between the initial and second interview. Throughout the pandemic other methods of interview were considered [Zoom, Microsoft teams] however, it was felt that to fully observe the body language and emotions of the participants a face-to-face interview would provide a more suitable platform. The mutual interpretation of body language between the researcher and participant during the interview process is recognised by Mariampolski (2011, p. 2) who states that 'Understanding body language is very important on two levels. It is a necessary tool for interpreting the respondents' attitudes and feelings', alongside the recognition that, 'Researchers also need to be aware of their own non-verbal communication in order to maximize rapport and to control negative attitudes'. Whilst this delay did not impact the content or description of participants lived experiences, it did prove challenging in arranging second interviews. All the participants in this research are employed in the field of education and as such faced an educational challenge in the delivery of on-line provision to their students alongside the provision of grades and data required by examining bodies. Therefore, the logistics of arranging a face-to-face interview together with the participants finding the time to be interviewed proved to be demanding and time-consuming.

3.6 Ethical considerations

> Research in the narrative study of lives yields information that cannot be dissociated so readily from one's fundamental human values and meaningful life experiences
>
> (Smythe and Murray, 2000, p. 318)

This research has been reviewed and sanctioned by the Faculty of Education at Canterbury Christ Church University.

All participants in this research are over the age of eighteen and are employed within the field of education. As a researcher, I am aware that the individuals hold positions of authority and

that their stories are personal. I am aware of possible consequences should the participants be identified, therefore for the purpose of this research all participants will be identified using pseudonyms to assure anonymity. Anonymity in this research is advantageous as it allows the subjects of the interview to express views without culpability to the educational institution in which they work.

The purpose of this research was explained in full to all participants. Any findings and conclusions obtained from this research will be made available to all participants upon request.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants [see appendix 2] prior to commencing this research. The participants were made aware they could withdraw consent to participate in this research without explanation at any time following The British Educational Research Association [BERA] procedure.

Throughout the process of this research, all participants were treated fairly, sensitively and with dignity and freedom from prejudice in line with [BERA] guidelines.

When carrying out biographical research it is important to recognise that when exploring an individual's life history, the researcher is at risk of unearthing sensitive topics that may provoke an emotional response. This is recognised by Eliot (2011, p. 2) who suggests that 'any research that involves the participation of human subjects requires consideration of the potential impact of that research on those involved'.

3.7 Conclusion

> Assume that whatever you want to study has, not causes, but a history, a story, a narrative, a 'first this happened, then that happened, and then the other happened, and it ended up like this.'
> Becker (1998, p.60)

As a white working-class male who, by my own admission failed to understand the importance of education in my formative years, I now view these early educational experiences through a

somewhat different lens. Comfortable to coast along and follow the well-trodden working-class pathway into blue-collar employment, I never questioned a lack of attentiveness or interaction from my educators or my own ranking in the classroom's societal hierarchy. However, as an adult now employed in the field of education, I am able to view my past experiences through the process of life story and critical reflection. Sutherland (2013, p. 111) observes that when considering the importance of critical reflection on our own academic development we are required, 'to look beyond our own circumstances to the external factors, policies and people that might influence the choices we make and the actions we take'.

Throughout my primary and secondary education, I did not present a problem to the teachers. I was not badly-behaved or the type to disrupt learning in a classroom environment and therefore avoided any behavioural consequences. When my mother and father attended parents evening, I would be described as happy-go-lucky and at worse a little cheeky, not interested in learning but, as one teacher offered, 'Darren will get by in life and always find employment based on his personality'. Dunne & Gazeley (2007, p. 451) argue that by teachers failing to acknowledge social class identity they are, 'Maintaining the educational conditions, in which middle-class pupils were encouraged to achieve while the underachievement of many working-class pupils was normalised.

When applying the theory of critical reflection to my own educational experiences and teacher/student interactions throughout my formal education I feel a sense of dejection. As a working-class man I have never shirked responsibility or apportioned blame for my social position, on the contrary, I am able to admit my own contribution to a lack of attainment during my school years. Nonetheless, as an adult now working in education and considering my own good practice it is important to reflect and consider the role played by not only the education system but by those entrusted with the privilege of educating society.

The five working-class men interviewed for this research were all educated in different regions of England. Raised on council estates they have all successfully avoided the phenomenon of working-class educational failure. Having traversed familial issues and adversity their biographies provide an informative insight into the experiences, influences and luck required for the successful navigation of education rarely afforded to WWC men.

Chapter 4

Participant's life stories

Who looks outside, dreams, who looks inside, awakes.

-C.G. Jung

4.1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on five teachers from working-class backgrounds who currently work in South London. Notwithstanding their socio-economic backgrounds, they have, against the odds successfully negotiated the field of education to find employment in a predominantly middle-class occupation.

The men whose life stories provide the narrative for this study are aged between twenty-eight and forty-eight. Despite now working in London, the subjects of this research spent their formative years residing in different parts of the country which is reflected in their lived experiences. However, despite these regional disparities all the men have identified clear markers that proved to be pivotal in their educational successes.

What also proves to be a point of interest and reoccurring theme throughout these interviews is the influence of sport in paving an educational pathway for the participants of this study. All the men participating in this research commenced their educational employment as PE teachers prior to being promoted to senior leadership roles. It can be debated that many skills required to achieve any success in sport are transferable to teaching. Skills such as teamwork; leadership; time management; competition and sportsmanship; handling pressure; management and responsibility and commitment are all characteristics that are possessed and valued in both sport and education, and which cannot be discounted as valuable tools to enrich the educational progress of WWCB.

There are, of course, other mitigating factors that have contributed to the educational attainment of the participants which have only been identified through the process of reflection. Self-reflection enables the individual to build emotional self-awareness and gain a better

understanding of our strengths, weaknesses and driving factors thus enabling an ability to adapt to changing situations and circumstances (Christina, 2015). The process of reflection clearly evoked deep emotional responses from the participants in this study, with all commenting on the therapeutic nature of their reflections.

I have provided the reader with an individual context for each participant alongside a brief synopsis [table form] that acknowledges key factors identified during the interview process. It is hoped this method of coding will provide the reader with an understanding of each participant's background. These tables are broken down into three fundamental areas.

- 1.Socio-economic status
- 2.Influences and aspirations
- 3.Educational support [familial]

Table 1: Provides basic particulars surrounding the participant's familial situation whilst in formal education.

Table 2: Considers external influences on education alongside parental education and career aspirations.

Table 3: Looks to identify any familial educational support provided throughout formal education. The parental support is RAG rated [Red; Amber; Green] to provide the reader with a rudimentary understanding of the subject's parental educational support prior to reading their story.

The life stories presented in this research are recounted in no specific order and, for reasons of professional anonymity, pseudonyms have been used to safeguard the identity of those interviewed. I had considered presenting in chronological [years at school] sequential order, however, the reality is that the historical academic underachievement of WWCM is exactly that 'historical' and, despite ever-shifting political landscapes this socio-economic anomaly has remained an educational minefield that has failed to evolve.

Life stories

'Narratives incorporate temporality, a social context, complicating events, and evaluative conclusion that together make a coherent story' (McAlpine, 2016, p.33). I feel that to gain a true understanding of the lived experiences of those participating in this study 'their voice' must be heard, consequently, the stories have a minimum of academic intervention, allowing the reader to form an opinion based on the 'real world' experiences encountered by those participating in this study.

Life stories

4.2 Individual context

4.2.1 Simon

Table 2:

1. Socio-economic status	
Area of UK: Growing up	Brighton
Fathers' occupation	Plumber
Mothers' occupation	Housewife
Marital status	Divorced
Accommodation	Flat / House
Rented/owner/council	Council / Owned
Family size	4
Sibling number	2
Local family	Grandparents

3. Educational support: Familial	
Parental support	Amber
Attended parents' evenings	Yes
Relationship with your peers	Strong
Read to at home	Yes
Books/newspapers in home	Tabloids; Sun/Daily Mail
Time spent together as family: meals/trips/other	Green
Member of family who was biggest influence educationally	Brother

2. Influences / aspirations	
Your school (type)	Comprehensive
Parental education	Dad:2nd modern Mum: Grammar
Educational influence (non-family)	History Teacher RE Teacher
Educational experience	Average
Strongest subject	PE
Career aspiration (whilst in formal education)	Football
FE/HE aspirations	Not early / however…

I first met Simon around fifteen years ago at a gym in South London. It was not our experiences in education that formed our early relationship, although that would soon become a basis for our debates and discussions, it was instead our passion for football that shaped our formative interactions. At that time, as well as teaching we were both involved in coaching and managing at non-league level and as such our conversations were football centred. As our meetings became more frequent our conversations became more personal and we soon realised we had much in common. Both from working-class backgrounds we began to discuss our experiences

and pathways that had allowed us to progress to our then-current situations. At the time I was new to teaching whereas Simon had worked his way up to a deputy head position at a tough South London Comprehensive. Simon became a sounding board for my early experiences in educational employment and, I recall the relief of realising I was not alone as a WWCM surrounded by predominantly middle-class, opinionated educationalists.

Whenever I meet with Simon I am captivated by the love, empathy, determination and drive he shows for developing the individual. Our conversations, like most, can stray down many differing social rabbit holes such as life, work, and politics, however, what resonates with me and, what I have learned from our discussions and debates is that not everything in life is black and white. To truly understand an individual and develop a relationship we must be open-minded, understanding and to quote Simon 'good people'.

Life stories

4.2.2 David

Table 2.1:

1. Socio-economic status	
Area of UK: Growing up	Wythenshawe, Manchester
Fathers' occupation	Steel Fixer
Mothers' occupation	Cleaner
Marital status	Divorced
Accommodation	Flat / house
Rented/owner/council	Council house / owned
Family size	5
Sibling number	3
Local family	Grandparents

3. Educational support: Familial	
Parental support	Red
Attended parents' evenings	No
Relationship with your peers	Good
Read to at home	No
Books/newspapers in home	Tabloids
Time spent together as family: meals/trips/other	Some
Member of family who was biggest influence educationally	Sister

2.Influences / aspirations	
Your school (type)	Comprehensive
Parental education	2nd modern
Educational influence (non-family)	PE Teacher
Educational experience	Average
Strongest subject	PE
Career aspiration (whilst in formal education)	Football
FE/HE aspirations	No

Although I have known David the longest of all participants in this study it is reasonable to say that on a personal level, I know him the least. I first encountered David in 2004 during what was to be my last year playing competitive football. A tough-tackling Mancunian, David was a no-nonsense defender, aggressive in his play with the personality and the vocal ferocity to match. At the time I had not moved into education and was still involved in the Construction industry, had I been asked to guess David's occupation it's fair to say education would have not been a supposition I would have made. Football is a strange world. When socialising after games conversation would more often or not be about the game, therefore, it was rare to discuss our occupations. Four years later and now in educational employment [2008], I attended a collegiate day where I would bump into David, discovering that as well as working in education

he was the deputy head at a comprehensive in South London. It would be another eleven years before our paths would cross again this time at a gym in South London. Eleven years is a long time and we spent at least thirty minutes playing the recognition game before eventually realising the other person was who we thought. On catching up I found that David was now in his third headship at a large comprehensive in South London. During our conversation, I explained that I was about to start my MRes in education exploring the educational attainment of WWCB. On hearing the subject of the study David immediately asked if he could participate in the research and we arranged to meet at his school a few weeks later. Arriving at the school it quickly became apparent how proud he was of the institution. Prior to the interview taking place, David guided me around the expansive site where he interacted with many his pupils. What became apparent during my tour of the premises, which caters for more than 1500 students was how David knew the first name of every pupil we encountered. Throughout both interviews, David's love of education and the innate desire to as he put it, 'make a difference every day' was intrinsic and clearly moulded from his own lived experiences.

Life stories

4.2.3 Peter

Table 2.2

1. Socio-economic status	
Area of UK: Growing up	Croydon
Fathers' occupation	Police
Mothers' occupation	Various
Marital status	Married
Accommodation	House
Rented/owner/council	Rented / owned
Family size	5
Sibling number	2
Local family	Grandparents

3. Educational support: Familial	
Parental support	Green
Attended parents' evenings	Yes
Relationship with your peers	Good
Read to at home	Yes
Books/newspapers in home	Tabloids
Time spent together as family: meals/trips/other	Yes
Member of family who was biggest influence educationally	Brother

2. Influences / aspirations	
Your school (type)	Comprehensive
Parental education	2nd modern
Educational influence (non-family)	N/A
Educational experience	Average
Strongest subject	PE
Career aspiration (whilst in formal education)	Not sure
FE/HE aspirations	No

Of all the WWCM interviewed for this study, Peter's upbringing was what I would regard as being the closest to a middle-class background. The middle child of three, his family had already commenced the social climb and economic growth associated with social mobility.

The first interview with Peter could best be described as 'vanilla'. It proved difficult to draw any valid conclusions from our first meeting and I was concerned as to how to approach the second interview. After careful consideration, I decided to ask Peter to recount stories from differing points of his educational timeline in the hope that I would find an area to explore. This method proved to be instrumental from a research perspective in unearthing rich, detailed context that steered Peter's educational journey. This method also evoked an emotional

response alongside the recognition of events that have proved instrumental in forming his ideology and values. Clearly moved at the end of interview number two Peter explained how 'this is the first time I have ever thought and talked about this', before stating somewhat emotionally 'you have no idea how therapeutic this was'.

I first encountered Peter on our first day in educational employment. We both started on the first day of term at a school in Chislehurst on the Kent / South London borders. As 'newbies' we followed the PE tradition of new employees desk space being closest to the office door and phone. Over four years of sharing a desk together our professional relationship and respect developed. I was impressed not only by the style of his teaching but also the way he dealt with pupils who were not afforded the same regard from other members of staff. It was clear that Peter was able to empathise and build solid relationships with students which have contributed to his success as an educational practitioner.

Life stories

4.2.4 Ben

Table 2.3

1. Socio-economic status	
Area of UK: Growing up	Dover; Kent
Fathers' occupation	Chef
Mothers' occupation	Various
Marital status	Divorced
Accommodation	House
Rented/owner/council	Council
Family size	5
Sibling number	2
Local family	Grandparents

3. Educational support: Familial	
Parental support	Amber
Attended parents' evenings	No
Relationship with your peers	Good
Read to at home	No
Books/newspapers in home	Tabloids
Time spent together as family: meals/trips/other	Occasionally
Member of family who was biggest influence educationally	N/A

2. Influences / aspirations	
Your school (type)	Grammar
Parental education	State
Educational influence (non-family)	Best friend's parents
Educational experience	Average
Strongest subject	PE
Career aspiration (whilst in formal education)	Football
FE/HE aspirations	No

At 28 Ben is the youngest of the subjects in this study. Despite being the only participant to attend grammar school he has the most fractious relationship with educational employment which, could be explained by age and his own educational experience. What became apparent throughout this process was the other participant's commitment to both the educational and holistic development of the individual student. This is a philosophy that is currently absent from Ben's teaching armoury and is a clear area for development. However, what is also evident is not only the other participants time served in education but also the comfort afforded by age and experience. Ben is relatively new to teaching, only obtaining his QTS in 2019. Having spent two years working with Ben there is a certain selfishness of youth that manifests in his outlook. At this point in time teaching is a job that pays a wage and not necessarily a

vocation. Clipped with his answers it could be deemed that he is not bothered nonetheless, having worked with him for two years it is clear to identify an outstanding teacher under the façade of bravado and anti-authoritarian stance that Ben portrays.

Life stories

4.2.5 Scott case study

Table 2.4

1. Socio-economic status	
Area of UK: Growing up	South London
Fathers' occupation	Retail
Mothers' occupation	Various secretarial
Marital status	Married
Accommodation	Flat
Rented/owner/council	Council
Family size	4
Sibling number	1
Local family	Grandparents/uncles/aunts

3. Educational support: Familial	
Parental support	Yes
Attended parents' evenings	Dad (Mum embarrassed)
Relationship with your peers	Strong
Read to at home	Yes
Books/newspapers in home	Yes (tabloids)
Time spent together as family: meals/trips/other	All
Member of family who was biggest influence educationally	N/A

2. Influences / aspirations	
Your school (type)	Comprehensive
Parental education	Secondary modern
Educational influence (non-family)	N/A
Educational experience	Good / social reasons
Strongest subject	Sport
Career aspiration (whilst in formal education)	Football
FE/HE aspirations	None

At fifty years of age, Scott is the oldest participant in this study and the individual whose educational journey closest resembles my own. Growing up and being educated in the 1970s/80s we can both identify and relate to situations of the time that led to us following a similar pathway. Entering blue-collar employment on leaving school Scott's life experiences and route into educational employment offer a different perspective to that of the other participants. I first met Scott through a mutual football acquaintance. The world of non-league football is relatively small, and we would often bump into or play against each other and there was always mutual respect. Over the years our conversations moved away from football, and we spoke about our lives growing up which, eventually led to many shared stories about our school lives and experiences. When we meet, we automatically slip back into our working-

class personas, heavy South London dialect and jingoisms. It is like we are two young boys again who have somehow inherited wisdom that now allows us to be more analytical and critical in our thinking. I enjoy meeting up with Scott, I do not feel like I am being judged, it is comfortable, and the feeling is mutual. We can speak freely about societal issues without fear of offending which, in the identity politics led United Kingdom of 2020 seems to be the middle-class societies go to prerogative. It is not often in life we can truly be comfortable in ourselves without feelings of hysteresis, it is however, truly empowering when we can.

Scott was born in Lewisham, South London in 1972, his younger brother followed two years later. His father who was born in 1950 had grown up in Bermondsey, a rough working-class area of South London which at the time had become deprived due to the rapid decline of the local wharves and warehouses, caused by the deterioration of the docks. His mother was also born in 1950 and raised in a prefab in Lewisham.

Throughout the 1960s/70s and following the demolition of local authority prefabs, the London borough of Lewisham witnessed the construction of several council estates built with a conscious attempt to provide social amenities to support community and local identity (Municipal Dreams, 2017) **(C&I).** At the time they were built, the flats would have had amenities such as bathrooms and indoor toilets which would have been viewed as five-star accommodation in comparison to the stark, drab, and cold box like prefabs with no such facilities. However, the design of these estates, often tower blocks and dark alleyways would soon lend themselves to social issues. Despite these problems, Scott has good memories of his early years on the estate.

> Honestly, I loved it. There was a definite sense of community. I was only young, but I can recall close relationships with our neighbours. Playing on the balconies with their children. I also remember a distinct lack of cars. We lived in squares and the car parks would often be used for inter-square football tournaments between the blocks although these would often end with a punch up **(C&I)**.

Despite Scott's recollection of community, 1970s Lewisham and the surrounding areas had become home to many of the Caribbean Community and the area soon became the focus of intense and violent political activity by the National Front. This came to a head on the 13th of

August 1977, culminating in violent clashes between the NF and counter groups christened the 'Battle of Lewisham'. Later disturbances in the area saw the first use of riot shields by the police on the UK mainland.

> Growing up initially I recall the estate being very white, yet down the road in the centre it was very different large communities of West Indians so already in the 70s very diverse. I remember Lewisham had a market behind the shopping centre where all the stalls were owned/run by West Indians. I remember as a kid maybe 10/11 years of age being told not to go to Lewisham by my mum but ignoring it jumping on the bus going to the market and buying Jamaican patties with my mates but other than that there wasn't much mixing between the two communities that I can recall **(C&I).**

Notwithstanding, ignoring his mum's request to venture into the centre of Lewisham it is clear to see the love respect that Scott has for both of his parents alongside recognition of their work ethic.

> Definitely. Probably best if I start with my dad. What can I say an incredibly hard worker, still is even in retirement. My earliest memories are of living on the estate, 1 car, no phone and dad always (so it seemed) at work (6 days a week) he had a day job and part-time work in the evening. In the summers I remember him working later and he was rarely home before 10 pm. At the time I really didn't understand but on reflection, that man was working all the hours he could to provide, and I guess move us off the estate **(C&I) (FI).**

Throughout both interviews, the impact and observation of the work ethic of both parents have a profound effect on Scott. From an early age, the value of hard work was obviously apparent although he recognises on reflection how tough those years must have been for his mother.

> What's the saying? 'behind every good man is a good woman'. Ain't that the truth. I guess mum was his rock. I think it's important to add that they had me at 19 so we are currently talking about two people in their early twenties and looking at society today I think that's pretty amazing that they had that family and work ethic at such an early age **(C&I) (FI)**

Life stories

Although in hindsight Scott can recognise the value of a strong work ethic, he was unable to replicate this in his formative school years. It seems that his early educational experiences are tainted, he has strong memories and ideas as to why this may be the case. He recalls that due to an August birthdate he started his primary schooling in January 1975 whereas most of the students in his class had started in September 1974. Not only were several students up to eleven months older, but they also had the benefit of four months extra to adapt to a classroom environment which, can be a daunting experience at such an early age. Alongside this, they also benefit from the experience of developing relationships with other students and teaching staff. Scott recognises the impact a late start had on his learning at primary school and attributes this to 'muddling' through his primary education (**EI**).

> As a four-year-old, that can be quite difficult, so I still hold a memory of feeling slightly behind at the beginning, out of place. Looking back, I think I just muddled through primary school, I remember in my transition year which would now be the first year after reception I did well in the exams, but it tailed off considerably from there

It is not hard to understand and empathise with Scott's plight. As a young child at four years of age, entering an environment where relationships have already been fostered would have been an intimidating situation. As a professional employed within education, I would expect that the teacher concerned would identify Scott's situation and do their best to help him adjust to his new surroundings. However, Scott recalls no such support mechanism.

> I don't recall getting much support back then, I was almost left to get
>
> on with it **(EI)**

Despite Scott's early educational experiences and that initial emotion of feeling 'out of place' which Bourdieu would describe as hysteresis **(C&I),** he clearly recalls the impact his grandparents had on his early life, and he credits them with imparting a thirst for general knowledge and world events. As both of his parents were working Scott's grandparents [nan] would collect Scott and his brother from the school where the day's papers would be laid out on the table for them to read, he tells how at an early age he developed a social and political

understanding of what was happening in the world at the time. Reflecting on these experiences he recognises an early thirst for learning, just not in a school environment.

> When we used to go to my Nan and Granddads after school the day's newspapers were laid out waiting for us and we were expected to read them, this meant my knowledge of what was happening socially and politically around the world was a lot stronger than many of my peers, so I guess I had a thirst for learning just not necessarily in school-based subjects. **(FI)**

The concept of strong family connections and a familial support network are not lost on Scott. When discussing his grandparents during the interview his face would light up and it was clear to see the affection, respect and understanding for the role they had played in his social and moral development. At a young age, he also started to recognise the rewards that accompany a strong work ethic. He recognises why he is going to his grandparents every night after school and how hard his parents are working and the sacrifices they are making as a family to both progress and survive although, his parents attempt to hide this from Scott and his brother.

> My Mum would get us ready for school before going to work herself. Despite our social status, my parents worked hard to make sure me and my brother didn't really struggle and what I mean by that is they would have gone without to make sure we didn't which on reflection is something that has continued in my own life **(C&I) (FI)**

After completing his primary education, he moved on to secondary school in the early eighties and at this point, love for sport takes over academia and he recognises that his sporting ability will allow him to coast through his education.

> I lost a bit of weight and started progressing in most sports which then meant I was mixing with students who excelled more in sport/physical education than academics which in the late 70s early 80s or definitely at my school you were either academic or sporty and very rarely did the two mix. In secondary school, all I cared about was sport both at school and outside
>
> In terms of teachers and my own honesty I was probably only concerned with playing on the school teams and the teachers probably just left me alone.

Life stories

Notwithstanding, his honesty and candidness when discussing his own responsibility with regards to his education it is clear emotions are evoked when he reflects on specific periods of his education. One such issue is 'setting'. Scott clearly recalls with some anger comments made to him by teachers. He remembers not only the perceived stigma of being placed in lower sets but also how the teachers taunted the students.

> Then when they started grouping us, well let's just say there was a stigma being in the bottom set and I can recall teachers back then using that fact as a stick to beat us with, you know the kind of 'well that why you're in the bottom set' type of comment **(EI)**

I questioned Scott as to whether he felt comments such as these had any bearing on his relationship with education.

> Honestly? it made me think that they were bell-ends and education wasn't for me. I would never be any good so why waste my time? Might as well enjoy myself and just go to play sport. The weird thing was PE department loved me I was in all the teams and played up years as well and in year 5 (11 today) I was sports captain. Funny story though, I can remember getting into a really heated debate with a teacher not sure what over, but I remember almost mocking him and his shitty job and now look at me **(C&I) (EI)**.

Juxtaposed to the obvious anger Scott feels at being labelled at an early age and, the clear understanding he shows in relation to his family's social hierarchy, he somehow finds a way to forgive or, at least make an excuse for what we in the present day would consider unprofessional behaviour.

> In hindsight some of these teachers were in their 50s which I'm guessing means their teacher training was in the 1950s and the education system then was somewhat different even if somethings haven't changed

Listening to Scott's story a picture of him as a man is beginning to develop. He recognises that as a child he has faced educational inequality during his formative school years yet, he appears

to be happy to acknowledge his own role in that process. He is not looking to make excuses for his behaviour or blame others. This could be explained as being of its time. WWCB were able to leave school and enter blue-collar employment relatively easily it could also be considered that he has, by unconscious observation acknowledged his perceived role in society.

It is also around this time that he sees the hard-work of his parents pay off moving from their council flat to a small maisonette in Lee South London and then into a four-bedroom house.

> My mum and dads work ethic you know, I saw us move from a council estate to a small ground floor maisonette to a four-bedroom house all through my dad's work ethic (**C&I**) (**FI**).

When talking to Scott about his early experiences it is easy to see the theory of reproduction (**FI**) beginning to take root. He is beginning to make a link between hard work and reward. His mother and father have worked all the hours available; he is able to recognise the importance of a strong family, the feeling of we are all in this together, the support, all strong working-class traits, the possibility that an individual is able to progress in life without academic qualifications. This blasé attitude to formal education is underlined when the time comes for Scott to sit his CSE's and 'O' levels.

> Didn't bother, turned up for some didn't bother for others, like I said I was going to work what did I need qualifications for they were only for college or uni.

I then asked Scott how his parents felt that he had 'not bothered', his answer providing an all too familiar working-class response.

> Pissed that I never attended, but I think that was probably more embarrassment having to deal with an irate school on the phone, but I had already been told by my dad that I was going out to work and nothing else was an option. In fact, and this highlights my dad's understanding of work ethic, from year 3 I worked every summer holiday with him with no days off, all my mates were out you know playing golf going to Benbon brothers I think that's what it was called, the amusement park in Margate for the day and I was at work, but what I did love was the money and being in the workplace with older people. (**C&I**) (**FI**)

Life stories

It is evident that Scott's future has been preordained. He is being introduced to work and its rewards at an early age. His father, who he clearly looks up to is, training his son to follow in his footsteps **(FI)**. It is easy to understand why. His father has found moderate economic success through the virtue of hard work. They own their home and are living what in today's society what would be considered a middle-class lifestyle. 'If it's good enough for me'**(C&I)** **(FI)**.

In April 1986 Scott completes his formal education, leaving school with a final report from his headmaster that concludes with a comment for employers **(EI)**.

> Scott has only attended school for physical education and the infantile
> antics of his cronies

With no option of further education Scott can leave school on the Friday and begins work on the Monday. He soon changes jobs and finds a construction apprenticeship through a friend **(EI)**.

> I left school at 15 and took a job at a photography studio kind of
> moving around the departments learning a bit of everything, crap
> money and the boss was not great, I remember falling out with him
> after about a year, never really knew how to keep my mouth shut and
> then a mate who I played football with said the firm he was working
> for was looking for apprentices and he could get me in plus it was
> considerably more than I was earning at the photography studio, in
> fact, I was earning my weekly wage in a day plus it worked with my
> football in terms of getting away if I had a midweek fixture. **(C&I)**

The combination of Football and construction provide Scott with a good income. However, a serious of events begin to ignite a fuse that ultimately alter his future.

> I'd got married and had kids had my own business, but football was
> coming to an end, and I decided I'd have a go at coaching, so I signed
> up to start my badges which I guess was the start. It's important though
> to realise that throughout this period I had my own business and had
> to learn several skills like working out the tax, national insurance etc
> for my employees as well as measuring up and pricing jobs so I guess
> that was really the start of the process.

Life stories

Also, around this time, Scott's younger brother becomes the first person in their family to attend university and obtain a degree in History and Politics. Initially, despite being proud of his brother Scott still had no interest in pursuing any academic qualification

> Yea a couple of things, firstly my brother had gone to uni. Initially, he left school and went to work in the bank but went to night school took some A levels and then went to uni full time. Even then I was like no not for me I was doing ok.

Throughout the interview process, it becomes apparent that Scott is an intelligent man. As a young child, he had developed an early understanding of society and politics, however, you sense that he does things his own way and in his own time. Comments to his teacher and falling out with his first boss alongside owning his own business all lend weight to challenging authority **(C&I)**. Finally, a meeting with his son's teacher would provide the inspiration to pursue a career that would change his life.

> I guess you can say it was certain points aligning, firstly the building trade was changing dramatically and then one week my son went on a school trip and got into some trouble and I was called in to see a teacher. The teacher I met was his PE teacher and we had a couple of mutual acquaintances through football. Anyway, I remember meeting him and my first thought was he can't be a teacher he is nothing like the teachers I had. He was clearly a working-class boy, and I couldn't get my head around how he had become a teacher, he had a strong south London accent, was rough around the edges but was a straight talker and I liked that **(EI).**

Following this meeting Scott was able to access a place on a foundation degree and that combined with his coaching qualifications allowed him to access a full degree program [sports science]. Like many who find education as a mature student Scott became an enthusiastic learner and, feels that as a child education held no value for him however as an adult, he understands its worth, however he still displays a typical working-class emotion of being out of place.

> Loved it. Obviously, a bit unsure at the beginning bit like I shouldn't be there, and I was a little bit older than everyone else but, I soon realised that my subject knowledge and life experience actually gave me an edge over the younger students. If I'm honest it was the right

> time for me, I would have struggled at 19, but with a family to support etc I had to really focus and plan.

On completion of his degree and teacher training Scott began employment initially in a PE department before becoming head of a sixth form in South London. As the interview was approaching its closing stages I wanted to gain an understanding from his point of view on how he feels education has progressed with relation to the perception of middle-class teachers and white working-class students. Scott relayed a story that was shocking in its content and points to an ongoing educational disparity, however, if his explanation regarding his own relationship with staff is an indicator of teacher attitudes towards WWCM then, as researchers we must question how to improve inter-class relations.

> During my placements everything was cool, but when I actually started really well… it was weird, I was older experienced in dealing with people and was able to develop strong respectful relationships with students, especially students that were considered problem students. The teachers for some reason hated this, I can remember numerous incidents.
>
> A member of staff who moved onto the SLT which I find astonishing. So, we were in the staff room one day and he is discussing the manners of a boy in year 7 and he described him as a 'rude little cunt'! It made my blood boil an 11-year-old boy being described by a member of staff like that. `I couldn't keep quiet and rightly or wrongly I let him have it explaining that he knew nothing about the boy's background or lifestyle and instead of just labelling him why not take the time to learn about the boy's life and help educate him with regards to behaviour. It was the only time I have ever felt angry enough to revert back to the type you know teach this stuck up, blinkered arsehole a lesson, but older and wiser I remained completely professional talking about empathy, building relationships, understanding because and this is the truth if he came onto a building site that I had worked on and spoke to a tradesman like that the reality is he would get a right-hander. I couldn't get my head around it you are in a job where your role is to develop these students and I don't mean just academically but as good people for the next stages of their life and this fella who had never known any hardship or struggle throughout his blatant middle-class upbringing, you know the type good schools mummy and daddy paid for him through uni doesn't actually want to teach just wants to label a kid for the rest of his time in education, nah not for me. **(C&I) (EI)**

Life stories

As a WWCM from South London who has followed a similar educational pathway, Scot's experiences are like that of my own and therefore easy for me to recognise. The next section of this research will look to make comparisons and links to experiences reflected on by the other participants who have grown up in different regions of the country.

4.3 Data analysis and comparison

'Class is a communist concept, it groups people as bundles and

sets them against one another'

Margret Thatcher, former Conservative Prime Minister, 1992

Sociological research has indicated that the class system in the United Kingdom still exists (Savage, et.al, 2013). Definition of class, as referenced in this paper (1.3) is a difficult and complex affair. Marxist ideology suggests that class is defined in terms of the individuals association to means of production. Owners of production are classed as bourgeois, whilst the labour are defined as the proletariat. However, as society has evolved so has employment. What was easy to define when people could be classified as owners and workers has become more difficult with the rise of middle-class managers and professionals with class definition now based on wealth, social and cultural capital (Manstead, 2018, p. 269). Manstead suggests that in modern society, social economic status is regarded by people as the primary indicator of class, suggesting that individuals will recognise their status based on their educational attainment and economic status. Manstead's theory is supported by research conducted by Bynerr (2002). This longitudinal study proposes that graduates from lower income backgrounds will develop middle class tendencies should they obtain a higher education qualification. Bynerr's research provided quantitative data based on individuals answers to closed questions regarding areas such as health indicators and employment. However, this research provides no reference to the innate feelings of the participants or how these individuals are perceived by others in society. As Tarrant (2021) recognises, social perception can be biased and wrong, suggesting that it is influenced by social prestige, wealth, and education. In a society where gender, racial and cultural stereotyping are no longer accepted it seems that this is reversed when considering the WWC. It can be contended that WC stereotyping is historically entrenched in the United Kingdom. However, as McKenzie (2017, p. 3) recognises, 'Elites in the political classes as well as middle class 'cosmopolitans' appear to have lost any awareness or reflexivity in understanding or acknowledging working class experience without lapse towards demonizing and sermonizing'. Unfortunately, for the working class of this country, it is the 'middle-class cosmopolitans' in control of the media, who demonise,

constantly reinforcing class stereotypes by delivering a dominant social narrative of a feckless, workshy element of society.

Throughout the participant interviews the perception of class was recollected and identified albeit nuanced or glossed over in conversation. Stephens, Markus and Philips (2014, p. 615), identify this behaviour as 'hard interdependence', a working-class trait linked to the understanding of self that provides a resilience to cope with adversity.

4.3.1 Class and identity

Bourdieu's interprets that the way an individual lives their life may be viewed as manifestations of social class differences, suggesting that through the forming of status groups social boundaries between individuals inhabiting distinctive positions within the social hierarchy manifest, a hypothesis he labels 'classificatory struggles'. Bourdieu proposes that this is one of many methods through which 'symbolic power' is employed (Weininger, 2005). Throughout this paper, reference has been made to societal perception of WWCM. When reflecting on class and identity all the participants interviewed exhibited what could be construed as negative experiences throughout their life journey. These experiences, although not plainly obvious during our conversations, unconsciously relate to working-class constructs.

Table 3:

Class and identity experiences of participants

Name	Personal Reflection (C&I)
Ben	'Not a great area in terms of growing up a lot of immigration problems in my youth growing up quite dangerous at times, especially in Dover.'
Ben	'I wouldn't say I mucked about, I wouldn't say I was academically strong, and even the teachers then warned my parents of me actually taking the 11 plus and going to grammar school, but that in turn spurred me to actually do it and prove people wrong'
David	'We had to move from the second council estate, because I was in a lot of trouble, even at the age of eight and nine, and there were concerns over my two sisters, getting pregnant, to be honest. During that time, Mum and Dad were

	divorced. I did a lot of. I spent a lot of time on my gran, just on the other side of the council estate while, while the family's falling apart bit, to be honest'.
David	'Although we would have been eligible for free school meals at that time, certainly most of the clothes, toys things we had were hand me downs'.
Peter	'So, to go to university, I had to learn to drive, saved up my money my mum outright told me that she was never going to pay for my car, but when I turned 16, I had to start paying rent'.
Simon	'So, I just remember not really doing any schoolwork at home whatsoever so it was almost like they talked about it but there was no meat to the bone from my parents, you know, actually checking what I was doing'.
Simon	'Yeah, mate you he just knew he was loyal, he just you know a few times as I got older, because he's only my tutor for the first few years. So as, as you get older and as a few things happened in school a few skirmishes you'd always remember you know he had your back. So yeah, class act'.

The theme 'Class and Identity' documents brief moments in the early lives of those participating in this research. The reflections of Ben identify immigration in Dover as a threat to his safety, a distinct example of using 'Other' as a means of framing his identity. Ben also experienced what could be middle class 'symbolic violence' from educators warning against him sitting the eleven plus. David reflects on his early life experience of 'council estate' trouble and the family fear of his young sisters becoming pregnant. Earlier in this paper reference was made to Matt Lucas's portrayal of Vicky Pollard in the BBC comedy Little Britain. Described as a WWC teenage mum who would 'swap her baby for a Westlife CD'. The fear of being labelled as a chav or feral by a middle-class society is supported by Miller (1997, p. xiv) who recognises that 'Disgust and contempt motivate and sustain the low ranking of things, people, and actions deemed disgusting and contemptible'. The admiration of loyalty shown by Simon is a familiar WC trait, whilst Peter having to contribute to the household bills is a familiar story that can be recognised as a barrier to WWCM continuing their academic journey once they complete formal education.

4.3.2 Familial influence

The theme of familial influence has been used to identify positive influences on the outcomes of the research participants. Bourdieu and Passeron's theory of cultural reproduction (1977) suggests that cultural values and practices are passed from generation to generation resulting in social reproduction. All the parents of participants in this research were in full employment and except for Ben, were able to experience social mobility thanks to a strong work ethic. This recognition of 'growth' has resonated with all participants providing support to Bourdieu and Passeron's concept of cultural reproduction.

Table 3.1:

Familial Influences

Name	Personal Reflection (FI)
Ben	'Both parents went to college and completed courses. My dad he trained as a chef at college, and he was a successful chef but there wasn't much money, and my mum she went to college and took a secretarial course, but they weren't academically strong or academically driven'.
David	'But then my dad went to work in Iraq to earn some money. And that was the first time in I believe 82 maybe 83 that we moved and bought our first house'.
David	Although we would have been eligible for free school meals at that time, certainly most of the clothes, toys things we had were hand me downs, I didn't have my first bike, brand new until we lived in the house that we bought'.
Peter	I'm the first person in my entire family to get a degree, like going back from wherever, my dad went into went into the police at 16. And my mum worked. So, my dad only ever really knew one job. He did shift work all the way through my childhood. And then my mum. My mum worked as well but she, she worked all sorts of jobs, she worked in the Tiptop bakery in St Marys Cray, Bairstow Eves as an estate agent admin. She worked in a library, just doing that sort of stuff, always worked'.
Simon	'From my point of view, me and my brother were the first people in our family to go to university. Mum was a housewife Dad was a plumber and then Dad, because of his childhood was really an aspirational guy who told us always to

	do the best we could and gave us the best opportunity. At school I actually didn't really do very well but we always had sort of growth mind-set as a family to be successful and that wasn't really necessarily academically that was just to be good people and contribute to society'.
Simon	'So yeah just seeing him evolve grow and we had family holidays that went from Weymouth to then a caravan in Ibiza, to then a hotel a year later and that was the metaphor for our family, so we went to Ibiza and stayed in a caravan with no air con, you know, proper 80's but we were on a caravan site in Ibiza and dad's got as many beers as he wants and there's a table tennis table for the boys so we were, we were all right, you know, but we were yeah you know in terms of cars I said we'd gone from a Cortina to an Escort to a Sierra'.

When considering familial influences, the role modelling of siblings played a significant role in the pursuit of academic achievement for Simon and David.

Table 3.2

Familial Influences [Siblings]

Name	Personal Reflection (FI: Siblings)
Simon	'He's the biggest influence on me [Brother]. He didn't fail his GCSEs he didn't fail his A levels. So, he was bright, a harder worker than me at that stage in life. He went to Greenwich University, which is obviously where I went. He did his degree in PE and science as well. So, I was always you know I had a big brother in the Uni. So, you know, you model that don't you, you try and model it
David	'She [Sister] went to Birmingham University when she qualified, she really sort of drove that passion in me to pursue education'.

4.3.3 External influence

Another factor the participants attributed to their success was the positive role modelling of family 'outsiders'. This is recognised by Morgenroth, et.al. (2015, p. 465) who state that 'Role models are often suggested as a way of motivating individuals to set and achieve ambitious goals, especially for members of stigmatized groups in achievement settings'. It became apparent throughout the interviews that alongside the recognition of familial growth, the external influences of 'others' was recognised as a key contributor to personal growth and development.

Table 3.3

External Influences

Name	Personal Reflection (EI)
Ben	'Yeah, my best friend is still one of my best friends now. His parents very much had a say in my upbringing as well and I was always around their house are sleeping overnight and he was very academically strong. So being around him and his parents had a major influence. They helped when I was doing my eleven plus and revising with them sort of spurred me on as well. They realised the importance of education, socially they would have and still are considerably well off however, they got to where they are through sheer hard work. Originally working class, they started their own company and made a success of it, and they wanted the same for their son and obviously with me being around them all the time they were keen for me to understand the importance of doing well and working hard and understanding how education could shape my future'.
David	'One of the main role models who was head of PE at the time is now the chief executive for Manchester United Foundation, John Shields. He nurtured us really, right through, you know, we did lots of sort of charity work as well. And that's what got us up about six every morning. He encouraged me through that time to go to sixth form college'.

Life stories

Simon	'I'm going to talk about Mr Hickman he was my tutor. He was a strict bloke, the strictest teacher in the school and he scared the life out of you early doors we were the only tutor group that had to read. We were the only tutor group that had to sit in silence. We were the only tutor group that if you were 5 seconds late you had lines and he gave lines more than anyone else.' 'What he taught me was discipline. And he was, he was you know everyone hated him early doors and then years later you're like oh he's alright, you know, one of them is a grower, but he knew what he was doing he knew exactly what he was doing'. 'He knew that discipline was a really important aspect of life'. 'But he had your back, big time, and he taught me he definitely taught me loyalty'. [Links to C&I]

4.3.4 Individual experiences and social mobility

The participants chosen for this study were selected on the basis of their own life experiences, primarily for having achieved middle-class employment after being born into working class families. The evidence collected throughout the individual interviews suggests that all of the participants have been upwardly mobile in comparison to the social position of their families. Nonetheless, all of the participants interviewed had parents who displayed a strong work ethic, whether that was working abroad to support the family or working more than one job. What is interesting to observe however, is that none of the parents were instrumental in encouraging their children to pursue either further or higher education. This could be explained by Lareau, quoted in Lott (2017) who suggests that 'Working-class families follow … the accomplishment of natural growth … they view children's development as unfolding spontaneously as long as they are provided comfort, food and shelter'. For many working-class families this is in itself an achievement and one that explains the thought process of some parents. During Scott's

interview he references his father informing him that he will be going straight out to work on leaving school. Peter references being told that on reaching sixteen he will be paying rent. It is not difficult to recognise that they are expected to contribute to the running of the house on leaving school and may go some way to explaining why working-class parents do not push their children to further their education, economic survival being the short-term goal. This is in stark contrast to middle-class affluent families where parents are employed in professional positions. They have the economic and cultural capital to allow their children to develop academically as well as furthering their education once their formal schooling is completed. As Williams cited in Lott (2017) recognises, these families also have the means to allow their children to pursue extracurricular activities that will support them in white collar work as well as university applications, this, it could be argued making it even more difficult for the working-class to obtain a place at a good university. With the exception of Ben and Scott all had siblings that provided a familial interest in the pursuit of education whilst Simon, Peter, and Scott all had at least one parent who attended parents evenings, suggesting an active interest in their educational progress. Notwithstanding this parental support, throughout their formal education none of the participants considered the option of moving into either FE or HE, suggesting that whilst they received some encouragement to do well at school, there was no direct encouragement (parental) to progress educationally. However, what is interesting to observe throughout the individual interviews is the importance that role models played in each participants personal development. Witnessing someone close to them achieving being a driving force in convincing them that they could succeed, despite all having a chequered relationship with education. Interestingly with the exception of Scott all provided either a familial (sibling), external influence or a combination that made them feel that they could successfully navigate HE. Though, despite his lack of acknowledgement of a role model Scott recalls his meeting with a teacher (like him) that triggered the thought process leading him to return to education.

Research suggests (Blandon *et.al,* 2007) that there is a strong connection between educational attainment and social position in adult life. During the interview process all participants recalled P.E lessons as both their strongest subject whilst disengaging with academic learning. This disengagement caused by teacher / student relationships or, by their own admission a lack of interest. Despite not achieving 'academically', it is to be noted that all pursued sporting

degrees when furthering their education with the intent of pursuing a professional teaching career, therefore, suggesting that sport could be a vehicle for the WWC to move into a profession that is predominantly perceived to be middle class. It is identifiable that all had siblings or close friends who had attended university prior to the participants which would have provided both experiences and knowledge of university life and what to expect, alleviating any fear of not fitting in.

It is also important to note that with the exceptions of David and Ben all of the participants were read to by their parents during childhood and had reading materials (Books or newspapers) available in the home. Research suggests that reading to your child when they are young will help develop cognitive skills as well as fostering brain development and critical thinking (Kalb & van Ours, 2012). This developed critical thinking is apparent throughout the interviews when considering social mobility. Recognising and making the link (as young children) between hard work and new cars, holidays or buying first properties is evident amongst the participants and goes someway to explaining their earliest recognition of social mobility.

Social mobility must be considered as both intra and inter class. The participants in this research have experienced moving between their own class as well as the middle classes. They have endured relative poverty throughout their early years, experiencing social housing, losing their homes, wearing hand me downs and blue-collar employment prior to successfully navigating the predominantly middle-class world of HE. All of the participants have then moved into a middle-class profession (teaching) successfully navigating a field that has seen them experience classism before attaining positions of responsibility.

4.4 Summary of Research and Conclusions

> They hurt you at home, and they hit you at school
> They hate if you're clever, and they despise a fool
> Till you're so fucking crazy, you can't follow the rules
>
> A working-class hero is something to be
> A working-class hero is something to be
>
> When they've tortured and scared you for twenty odd years
> Then they expect you to pick a career
>
> *Working Class Hero*, John Lennon

This study was conducted over a period of one year, beginning in 2019. The research employed a qualitative methodology through the medium of narrative life stories to identify factors that contributed to the academic success of five white working-class men. The research also considered the current societal perception and media portrayal of this specific demographic. Education, family income and employment were used as indicators of socioeconomic status. Accompanying these social class markers were the men's own life reflections where their own recognition was of growing up in working-class households.

In the first phase of the study, interviews were carried out to gauge the participant's relationship with education and develop an understanding of habitus and familial relationships. Throughout the initial interviews, all participants recognised a positive link between work and reward. Despite the working-class occupations of their families, there was a clear recognition that a strong work ethic brought with it rewards such as car and holiday upgrades alongside property purchases. For all participant's formal education was not considered a priority. Growing up in their respective families there were no familial links to higher education, culturally they would be expected to find employment on leaving formal education. The second, qualitative, phase used semi-structured interviews to explore in-depth the experiences faced by the WWCM alongside factors that contributed to their educational journey continuing after school. The second interview added depth to the research and identified three themes: 'Class and Identity', 'Familial Influence' and 'External Influence'.

When comparing the qualitative results from the subject interviews all five exhibited strong

Summary of research and conclusions

links to the identified themes. All had described feelings and experiences linked to class and identity. All five exhibited positive familial and external influences. Familial influences were linked to the recognition of work ethic and economic growth alongside older siblings being the first family member to attend university. External influences were positive inspirations, guiding the participants towards a life-long learning journey that they all continue to this day.

The findings from this research suggest that elements of Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction (1990) are evident. Bourdieu's theory proposes that cultural reproduction is the social process through which culture is repeated across generations. Whilst Bourdieu applied this theory predominantly to social institutions such as schools and their reinforcement of dominance and privileged positions of those in power, it can be contended that the participants in this research have been caught in a perfect storm of familial reproduction, habitus and field. Being raised in working-class families with strong work ethics and growth has resonated with all. This, alongside positive familial and strong external role models and, just as importantly, no deficiency of aspiration. All have entered the field of education, still considered a predominantly white middle-class occupation (Rickard-Strauss 2014, O'Brien 2018, Shuls 2019) and all have reached senior leadership positions.

Another interesting factor which became apparent when considering 'off the record' conversations with the research participants during this process was the influence of sport, particularly football. All contributors to this paper have competed at a high level of the non-league football pyramid and all are highly competitive by nature. It could be contended that this 'competitiveness' has participated in fuelling the academic success of these WWCM in what is a predominantly a middle-class field. I have enjoyed my own academic journey and I am passionate about the subject of WWCB in education. As such I feel that the link between competitiveness in sport and WWC educational success would be a question to address at PHD level.

Whilst this study provides no definitive solution to the lack of educational attainment of WWCM, it does provide factors linked to their educational success, albeit occasionally veering from the traditional school, university, work pathway. Recognising the link between work and economic growth, alongside strong role models are fundamentals when considering the

Summary of research and conclusions

personal development of WWCM. Further and higher education must also continue to offer pathways for WWCM to further their learning journey, despite a lack of formal education. My own personal experience with education was possible due to pathways being available to me as a mature student. To remove these opportunities would provide further marginalisation to a demographic who may not recognise the importance of education until later life.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. As educators we welcome reflection. Reflecting on our teaching processes and decision-making help to develop and inform our teaching pedagogy. Reflection is hindsight, it is where we view our mistakes, it is where we consider change and what we could do better in a specific situation. Yet students are, in my experiences, constantly reprimanded if they make a mistake. Sometimes that mistake will follow a student throughout his educational journey. We must encourage reflection amongst our students.

A pertinent question for educators is how do we instil in our profession an understanding of the holistic value of education? Education is not just about preparing students for employment; it is about preparing the student for life. I believe as educators empathy is a prerequisite to outstanding teaching. Far too often teachers are too busy to care. Only by changing the ethos of schools and showing a commitment to developing WWCB can we seriously consider a change. Maybe as Terrelonge (2015, p. 220) suggests when considering interventions to improve the attainment of WWCB, 'it is time to consider the SEN and mental health book where they no longer try to fit the individual to the service, but the service to the individual'.

The poignant lyrics in the epigraph at the beginning of this sub-chapter belong to the song working class hero written in 1970, the year in which I was born. Composed by John Lennon they were, at the time, a political commentary/criticism of the disparities between social classes. In a 1970 Rolling Stone interview Lennon stated when discussing who the song was for, 'I think it's for the people like me who are working class, who are supposed to be processed into the middle classes, or into the machinery' (Wenner, 1970). Criticised at the time for the controversial use of expletives (Richardson, 2017), Lennon's cursing was explained by Yoko Ono in a 1998 interview with Uncut magazine, 'it wouldn't be working class if everything was very clean and proper' (Richardson, op.cit.). Now in 2020, some fifty years after Lennon put pen to paper it can be contested that historically, WWCM are encountering their greatest

challenge, and are in danger of falling into an abyss of social oppression. Portrayed by the media as social pariahs, the United Kingdom's haste to correct social inequalities faced by 'other' ethnic groups, has contributed to WWCM being educationally 'left behind', their image and media portrayal now even further from 'very clean and proper' than at any time in history. Where once they had to contend with just a class war they now must contend with accusations of 'racism' and 'bigotry', words bandied around by the middle classes as tools to silence the voice of the working class. We live in strange times. 2020 was an annus horribilis. Faced with a life-threatening pandemic and social uprising, as a society we must be careful not to be drawn into a political agenda that creates division. This is not a race issue; it is a class issue. The BAME students who faced educational inequality in previous years were from working-class backgrounds, similar upbringings, and life stories to that of today's underachieving WWCM. Having fought for hundreds of years to be heard and recognised WWCM now face an additional barrier to their educational progress and social mobility. Education should have no consideration of class, ethnicity, religious affiliation, or sexuality. It should be a vehicle for all to begin their learning journey and progress; to provide a better future and in turn, pass that positive experience on to their children. Nonetheless, despite this morally obvious observation, we live in a time where current societal perceptions of this subsection of society are in danger of causing further marginalisation and educational inequality.

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Appendices

Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter to participants

Appendix * – Letter to participants

Darren Anslow (Address)

<Date>

Dear ....:

I am conducting a research project at Canterbury Christ Church University designed to investigate current societal perception of white-working class men and any factors that may contribute to their academic achievement. As part of my research, I would be interested in interviewing you with regards to the above. The research will be conducted via the method of narrative life stories.

This study has received ethical approval from the Faculty of Education at Canterbury Christ Church University. The data will not be shared with anyone outside the immediate project team of education professionals, and your anonymity will be protected throughout. I will be looking to conduct two interviews over the coming year. Each interview will take place at your convenience; every effort will be made to not interrupt your teaching. At the conclusion of the research, results will be made available if requested.

Participation is voluntary and it is your decision whether you agree to take part.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have either by phone or by email. To withdraw from the study, please contact me directly on 07411xxxxxx alternatively email: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Yours sincerely

Darren Anslow, Researcher

Societal Perceptions of the White Working-Class Male and Factors that Contribute to their Academic Success

Appendices

Appendix 2: Ethical approval form

Adapted form for MRes Ethics clearance

Section A: Applicant Details

A1. Name of applicant:	Darren anslow
A2. Status (please underline):	Student on MRes
A3. Email address:	darrenanslow@mac.com
A4. Contact address:	418 Westhorne, Eltham, Se9 5LT
A5. Telephone number	0741171xxx9
A6 Have you discussed your research project with your tutor or the programme director.	Yes
A7 Has your research project changed in any significant way since the discussion mentioned in A6	No

Appendices

Section B: Ethics Checklist Please answer each question by marking (X) in the appropriate box:

		Yes	No
1.	Does the study involve participants who are particularly <u>vulnerable</u> or unable to give informed consent (e.g., children, people with learning disabilities), or in unequal relationships (e.g., people in prison, your own staff or students)?		/
2.	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to any <u>vulnerable</u> groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g., students at school, members of self-help groups, residents of nursing home)?		/
3.	Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without usual informed consent procedures having been implemented in advance (e.g., covert observation, certain ethnographic studies)?		/
4.	Will the study use deliberate deception (this does ***not*** include randomly assigning participants to groups in an experimental design)?		/
5.	Will the study involve discussion of, or collection of information on, topics of a sensitive nature (e.g., sexual activity, drug use) <u>personal to the participants</u>?		/
6.	Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g., food substances, vitamins) to be administered to human or animal participants?		/
7.	Does the study involve invasive or intrusive procedures such as blood taking or muscle biopsy from human or animal participants?		/
8.	Is physiological stress, pain, or more than mild discomfort to humans or animals likely to result from the study?		/
9.	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences in humans (including the researcher) or animals beyond the risks encountered in normal life?		/
10.	Will the study involve **interaction** with animals? (If you are simply observing them - e.g., in a zoo or in their natural habitat - without having any contact at all, you can answer "No") see note 1 at end		/
11.	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?		/
12.	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		/
13.	Is the study a survey that involves University-wide recruitment of students from Canterbury Christ Church University?		/
14.	Will the study involve recruitment of adult participants (aged 16 and over) who are unable to make decisions for themselves, i.e., lack capacity, and come under the jurisdiction of the Mental Capacity Act (2005)?		/
			/

Appendices

> Please give a brief description of your research plan.
>
> 2 x interviews with 5 participants from white working-class backgrounds who are now employed within the field of education.
>
> Interview one will focus on developing a rapport with the subjects and investigate both their life and educational journey.
>
> Interview two will look to develop any points of interest further.
>
> Interview to be carried out anonymously, subjects will be made fully aware that they are able to withdraw from the process at any time.

Appendices

Appendix 3: Sample of interview data

Culture and identity

Ben
Growing up I was football mad so that's all they saw. It's all I was interested in, to be honest from primary school it was all about football. I played before school, during school and after school I wasn't interested in lessons. So, I think they did see me differently in that respect, so I wasn't really interested in the academic subjects.

Ben
If I'm honest having a trade and doing that type of hard work, eight till five on a building site I didn't want that. I always wanted to go down the football coaching or into teaching, so that spurred me on to do, do my degree and hopefully open up doors.

David
Mum and Dad dad's a steel fixer by trade didn't finish his education. Mum finished her education but didn't have any qualifications so did really bits of jobs cleaning and working in shops and little bit in a bank. We had to move from the second council estate, because I was in a lot of trouble, even at the age of eight and nine, and there were concerns over my two sisters, getting pregnant.

David
Certainly, most of the clothes, toys things we had were hand me downs

Simon
So, I definitely felt that being in the bottom set in year seven and then going home to my mum in tears asking if I'm thick, you know my mum loves me, you know telling me I'm not thick

Familial Influence

David
I've got two older sisters and the one above me had started teacher training in special educational needs, I'd always worked in that field. So, I was quite often, she looked after children with special educational needs like day day-care, even when she was in her sort of late teens, so I'd get involved and then when she said she went to Birmingham University when she qualified, she really sort of drove that passion in me to pursue education

Simon
He's the biggest influence on me. He didn't fail his GCSEs he didn't fail his A levels. So, he was bright, a harder worker than me at that stage in life. He went to Greenwich University, which is obviously where I went. He did his degree in PE and science as well. So, I was always you know I had a big brother in the Uni. So, you know, you model that don't you, you try and model it at least and that was subconsciously an ambition of mine to not let down the family

Appendices

Peter
like being brutally honest and without going too deep into it, I think my relationship with the students that I teach, I do value, holistic in the individuality of the person, as opposed to the reputation. I've been that kid who's always been told ah your brother this, your brother's that, so I will purposely I might make mention to it to build a relationship but, but I will never compare to someone else in someone's family because I know how rubbish that is

Scott
My younger brother was the first in the family to attend University and even then, it was after leaving school and going into employment in the bank before deciding to go to college/evening classes to take 'A' levels.

External Influences

Ben
Yeah, my best friend is still one of my best friends now. His parents very much had a say in my upbringing as well and I was always around their house are sleeping overnight and he was very academically strong. So being around him and his parents had a major influence. They helped when I was doing my eleven plus and revising with them sort of spurred me on as well.

David
But what I did I had a brilliant tutor who was an art teacher who taught some PE and then PE teachers who were wonderful. One of the main role models who was head of PE at the time is now the chief executive for Manchester United Foundation, John Shields who runs all of that. And he also through school, we were we I was on every team. He nurtured us really, right through, you know, we did lots of sort of charity work as well.

Simon
As an example, most people think my PE teachers are brilliant and they were shit, bullies and they were just winning orientated and even then, as a kid I knew that wasn't wanted, but there was a teacher called Ms Lewis that had my back. She was a history teacher; she wasn't even my teacher I met her on a school trip.

Peter
I didn't get on with most teachers however, I had a form tutor Mr Bell he was brilliant. Like he really cared. He would ask how I had got on playing football at the weekend, you know little things like that. Made you think he really cared and because of that you worked hard for him.

Appendices

Appendix 4: Critical Skills Evaluation Programme

CASP Checklist

10 questions to help you make sense of a Qualitative research

How to use this appraisal tool: Three broad issues need to be considered when appraising a

qualitative study:

Are the results of the study valid? (Section A) What are the results? (Section B) Will the results help locally? (Section C)

The 10 questions on the following pages are designed to help you think about these issues systematically. The first two questions are screening questions and can be answered quickly. If the answer to both is "yes", it is worth proceeding with the remaining questions. There is some degree of overlap between the questions, you are asked to record a "yes", "no" or "can't tell" to most of the questions. A number of italicised prompts are given after each question. These are designed to remind you why the question is important. Record your reasons for your answers in the spaces provided.

About: These checklists were designed to be used as educational pedagogic tools, as part of a workshop setting, therefore we do not suggest a scoring system. The core CASP checklists (randomised controlled trial & systematic review) were based on JAMA 'Users' guides to the medical literature 1994 (adapted from Guyatt GH, Sackett DL, and Cook DJ), and piloted with health care practitioners.

For each new checklist, a group of experts were assembled to develop and pilot the checklist and the workshop format with which it would be used. Over the years overall adjustments have been made to the format, but a recent survey of checklist users reiterated that the basic format continues to be useful and appropriate.

Referencing: we recommend using the Harvard style citation, i.e.: *Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2018). CASP (insert name of checklist i.e., Qualitative) Checklist. [online] Available at: URL. Accessed: Date Accessed.*

Appendices

Paper for appraisal and reference:

1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?

Yes, Can't Tell No

Yes, Can't Tell No

HINT: Consider • what was the goal of the research • why it was thought important • its relevance

HINT: Consider

• If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants • Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal

Comments:

2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?

Comments:

Is it worth continuing?

3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?

Yes, Can't Tell No

HINT: Consider

• if the researcher has justified the research design (e.g., have they discussed how they decided which method to use)

Comments:

2

4. Was the recruitment Yes strategy appropriate to
Can't Tell

the aims of the   research?

No

•

HINT: Consider If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants, they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study • If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g., why some people chose not to take part)

HINT: Consider

5. Was the data collected in Yes, a way that addressed the
Can't Tell

research issue?

No

• If the setting for the data collection was justified

• If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.)

• If the researcher has justified the methods

chosen

• If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide)

• If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why • If the form of data is clear (e.g., tape recordings, video material, notes etc.) • If the researcher has discussed saturation of data

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Comments:

Comments:

3

6. Has the relationship Yes between researcher and
participants can't tell adequately considered?

Appendices

No

HINT: Consider

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If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design

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Comments:

Section B: What are the results?

7. Have ethical issues been Yes taken into consideration?

Can't Tell No

HINT: Consider If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g., issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study) • If approval has been sought from the ethics committee

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Comments:

4

8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?

Yes, Can't Tell No

HINT: Consider If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process If sufficient data are presented to support the findings • To what extent contradictory data are considered Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation

Comments:

9. Is there a clear statement of findings?

Yes, Can't Tell No

HINT: Consider whether • If the findings are explicit If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments • If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g., triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst) If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question

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Comments:

5

Section C: Will the results help locally?

10. How valuable is the research?

HINT: Consider • If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g., do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research- based literature If they identify new areas where research is necessary If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used

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Comments:

6