Difficult Conversations: Initial Teacher Education Trainees' Perceptions Of The Impacts Of Poverty On Children In English Primary Schools.

Elizabeth Margaret Jane Farrar

Bishop Grosseteste University

August 2022

Doctorate of Education

Abstract

This study aimed to gain an understanding of trainee teachers' perceptions of poverty and the effects on primary school children, including aspects such as learning, attainment and language acquisition. Previous research with ITE trainees is limited but has suggested that they may hold stereotypical deficit views about children and families in poverty, which can negatively impact the learning and progress of such children. This requires further research, taken against the backdrop of a rising number of children being affected by poverty. The study took place over a three year period from 2017 to 2020 at a university in the East Midlands. Participants were volunteers from three Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes. Each participant completed a questionnaire, providing numerical data to describe the demographic makeup of the sample (n=23). Qualitative data were collected from three single snapshot focus group meetings with sets of participants from each of the programmes (n=6; 5 and 7). These were followed by three focus group meetings with a group of trainees from the full time programme (n=5), which were convened across the duration of their one year course. Visual images were used to facilitate the focus group conversations with the addition of a Diamond Nine activity for the final group (n=5). The findings showed that the trainees most often viewed poverty in terms of income and lack of material possessions. They expressed negative opinions couched in derogatory language, often equating poverty with a lack of aspirations, care and supervision on the parents' part. However, there were indications of some shifts in perceptions during training. Understanding of the link between poverty and language acquisition was not apparent. The findings suggest that it is important for ITE courses to offer trainees opportunities to facilitate the disruption of stereotypical beliefs by engaging meaningfully with issues of social justice.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandfather, George H. Glover (1914 – 1987), who has been the driving force and inspiration behind all of my academic endeavour and my whole career.

I would like to express sincere appreciation to my supervisor Professor Chris Atkin who has supported me throughout this study, and whose help and advice has been invaluable. Also many thanks to my second supervisor Claudia Capancioni. I am very grateful to Dr Steve Puttick who gave me the confidence to set out on this project from the beginning. Special thanks to my fellow EdD student Annabelle Larson, who has been a steadfast source of much encouragement, inspiration and friendship. Thanks also go to my work colleagues who have offered support in many and varied ways. Much appreciation to my participants, whose enthusiasm to discuss the topic was invaluable to my work.

Finally, I would also like to thank my husband Bryan and our children, Edward and Henrietta, for their unstinting encouragement and support over the last six years while I have been completing the doctorate. I couldn't have done it without any of you and I am eternally grateful for your forbearance! Edward and Henrietta, you are my pride and joy, and as you are about to embark on your doctoral and undergraduate journeys respectively, I will endeavour to be your cheerleader and advocate as you both have so staunchly done for me.

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Preface

As a teacher educator I believe it is vitally important to ensure that children living in poverty will have teachers who can champion their cause, understand their barriers and help them be the best they can be (Pierson, 2013).

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on children's well-being, rights and futures, serving to exacerbate existing inequalities in England, across the UK and beyond according to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2020). The disruption caused by school closures in particular has thrown the challenges faced by pupils in England who are living in poverty into sharp relief. Digital exclusion exacerbated the divide caused by low income, as schools tried to ensure that learning continues during the closure periods. Some children lacked access to the necessary IT equipment and had no provision of a fixed broadband connection, others had nowhere in their home to do schoolwork (CPAG, 2020a). During the second period of school closure in early 2021 the shift to online learning resulted in reports of pupils being obliged to write essays on their mobile phones and children queuing to wait for their turn to use the one computer in the house (Wakefield, 2021), yet for some the situation was even worse. Ofcom estimated that between 1.1 million and 1.8 million in the UK had no home access to either a PC, laptop or tablet, and that over 880,000 children lived in a household which only had a mobile internet connection (CPAG, 2021; Wakefield, 2021). The inequalities in home learning environments during online learning risked widening the gap in attainment for disadvantaged groups, with the long term impact still to be assessed.

There was a great deal of controversy around provision of Free School Meals during the 2020 lockdown period, leading to the government issuing vouchers for eligible pupils (DfE, 2021b; Dimbleby, 2020). The footballer Marcus Rashford brought the issue of food poverty to the attention of the media, with the resultant task force convened bringing considerable pressure to bear on the government to extend their voucher scheme into the school summer holidays, and subsequently holidays beyond (BBC News, 1 September 2020; Haves, 2020). This led to Baroness D'Souza bringing the matter to the House of Lords,

questioning whether there was a need for a permanent change to provision (D'Souza, 2020; Haves, 2020). Therefore, the consequences of the Covid pandemic have served to raise public awareness of the issue and extent of food poverty, but this is not a new problem, nor one that will fade away along with the pandemic. As Dimbleby (2020) notes, there are around three million children at risk of going hungry during school holidays, around double the number eligible for Free School Meals, as the qualifying parameters do not adequately encompass all those in need. The use of foodbanks saw a 22% increase in the Trussell Trust network alone over the winter of 2020/21, with over half of those using a foodbank never having needed to prior to the pandemic (Trussell Trust, 2020, 2022).

Even before the pandemic there had been a 52% rise in the number of children living in destitution in the UK between 2017 and 2019 (Hetherington, 2020), and 4.5 million living in poverty during 2018/19 (Joseph Rowntree Foundation [JRF], 2021). The effect of the pandemic on poverty is as yet uncertain, however the highest level of in-work poverty was already seen in lone parents, out of all family types (JRF, 2022). This is likely to have worsened due to the likelihood of them working in the sectors worst impacted, and their ability to work being dependent upon childcare which may have been unavailable during the lockdowns (JRF, 2021).

My own interest in the impact of poverty on pupils in school first arose during my seven year tenure as Headteacher of a small rural primary school in the North Lincolnshire region from 2009. Visitors to the school, including Ofsted inspectors, would assume that the catchment area, which incorporated three villages, consisted mainly of affluent private housing and therefore that the pupils would be from families in the higher socio-economic groups. This, however, was certainly not the case. The occupants of the larger houses and the farm owners were either from older generations with grown up children who had left the area to seek employment, or whose children were sent to fee paying schools. Amongst the local housing stock was a large amount of council owned accommodation and private rented properties, which constituted the homes of almost all of the pupils on roll. Unemployment was widespread

amongst the parent body, and those that did work had jobs which would be classified as skill level 1 by the Standard Occupational Classification (ONS, 2020). In the whole school only two parents worked in what could be classed as professional occupations (ONS, 2020), and were known to have continued in education beyond the age of 16. The number of children eligible for free school meals was higher than the actual uptake, which appeared in part to be due to parents' reluctance to declare income on official forms. Less than one fifth of the children lived at home with both birth parents, with relationship turbulence being commonplace. Substance abuse in the locality was known to be prevalent and the school worked closely with the local community police officers to uphold its safeguarding duty to the pupils. The area suffered from severe rural deprivation, with no shops, pubs or other public services in the villages, coupled with an infrequent bus service to the nearest town over 11 miles away. Several families did not own a car and relied on the bus as their only means of transport. The challenges that all of these factors brought to the school were wide reaching and working in this community completely reshaped my own understanding of the impact of poverty on children and their education. The resultant issues with language acquisition were acutely apparent and I came to understand this as a key component of the broader educational barriers these children encountered. The first-hand experience of witnessing the effect of poverty on children's vocabulary and the barriers to learning created by this was a particular area of interest to me as it could be witnessed so clearly in the children's spoken language and written work.

In 2015 I left the school to become a teacher educator at university, based with a postgraduate teacher education programme team. This led me to thinking about the experiences and understandings of poverty that the trainee teachers may have, and what impact this might have on their developing practice. The critical incident which really crystallised the focus of my study occurred when a trainee burst into tears during a tutorial, saying she had no idea that 'people lived like that' after undertaking a placement in a school which was located in an area of high deprivation. Witnessing this incident confirmed there was a need to gain more insight into the trainees' perceptions, in order to gauge whether there is a necessity to address these by tackling social justice more

consistently through the programme and providing specific opportunities to discuss the impacts of poverty. The postgraduate programmes have very little time available in which to deliver a great deal of content, so anything additional being proposed would need strong evidence to support its introduction. Therefore, an intention of this research study was to raise awareness of the trainees' perceptions of poverty and establish whether there was anything to suggest a need for additions or adaptions to the teacher education programmes offered by the university. Wider dissemination beyond this would also be impactful for other teacher education providers.

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it." – Atticus Finch. (Lee, 1960, p. 36).

Atticus Finch is trying to teach his young daughter that to really understand another person it is necessary to put aside your own point of view and consider the other person's patterns of thinking and reasoning. Atticus is a character who shows sympathy and compassion for others, including those he dislikes. He understands the importance of knowing a person's background and situation before judging them, and wishes for his daughter to build empathy by seeing this new perspective in reflecting on the possible motivations for another's actions which she has witnessed. In this way, the quotation reflects a central theme to this thesis - how important it is to gain an understanding is of other's lives to ensure that unintentional or misinformed judgements are not made.

I said pretend you've got no money, She just laughed and said;
Oh you're so funny, I said; yeah
I can't see anyone else smiling in here,
Are you sure?
You wanna live like common people, You wanna see whatever common people see

- Cocker et al., *Common People*, 1995.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Education confers an array of benefits to both individuals and society, besides the fundamental value of being educated, contributing to greater productivity and economic growth (OECD, 2021). There are wider effects as education in turn drives innovation by a workforce equipped with deeper knowledge and skills cultivating original and pioneering ideas, therefore leading to an expansion in the quantity and quality of available employment. There are economic benefits on an individual level, but also beyond as investment in education generates public returns (OECD, 2021). When people are better educated they are able to attract higher incomes meaning they pay more taxes over their working lives, and also cost less for society in state welfare payments (Friedman & Laurison, 2020). Given these long-term, wide-ranging benefits the importance of access to high quality education starting from early childhood is evident, particularly in the drive to increase social mobility and reduce poverty (Archer & Merrick, 2020; OECD, 2018).

In 2010, the Marmot review stated that children who grow up in poverty have a greatly increased chance of suffering lower educational achievement and poorer health than children from wealthier families (Marmot et al., 2010). In almost all countries that participated in the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), students who were disadvantaged were less likely to attain the minimum level of proficiency in reading compared to peers from their country (OECD, 2019, p. 17). The 10% most socio-economically advantaged students outperform their 10% most disadvantaged counterparts in reading by the equivalent of more than three years of schooling, and this gap has effectively remained unchanged over the past decade (PISA, 2018). A follow up to the 2010 Marmot review (Marmot et al, 2020) found that ten years later the child poverty rates in England had increased to pre-2010 levels, with

more than four million children growing up in poverty. Low educational attainment is the main factor in poor children becoming poor adults (McGuiness, 2016). School children from low-income households are 23% less likely to be in sustained employment, and three times more likely to be in receipt of out-of-work benefits, by the age of 27 than their peers from more affluent families, (DfE, 2018b, pp. 5-6). Targets have been set for young people following statutory school age which recognised that advantages conferred by education extend to higher education, resulting in the widening participation schemes which have been in place for over 30 years (Selby, 2018). This agenda recognises that some social groups experience barriers to accessing higher education and these had to be addressed in order to improve their graduate outcomes and employability for these groups (Connell-Smith & Hubble, 2018). The target for half of all school leavers to attend university was set by Blair (1999) and this was first achieved twenty years later in 2019 (Higher Education Statistics Agency & Department for Education, 2021). However, Neophytou (2019) noted that it would take another 100 years to achieve the targets for disadvantaged young people accessing the more selective universities. In 2020 the goal for university access was scrapped in favour of a change in direction to make the development of technical and vocational skills the area of focus in addressing the levelling up agenda (Williamson, 2020), suggesting a move away from the widening participation agenda.

After the Equality Act (2010) was introduced in October 2010, with Section 1 designed to address socio-economic inequalities in the public sector, the public sector Equality Duty provision came into force in April 2011 (Government Equalities Office & Human Rights Commission, 2015):

> An authority to which this section applies must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage. (Equality Act, 2010, p. 13)

The Equality Act (2010) could therefore have been used to tackle inequality due to socio-economic status and social class, but once installed in 2010, the

Cameron-Clegg coalition government decided not to take forward the public sector duty regarding socio-economic inequalities (Government Equalities Office & Human Rights Commission, 2015). Since the legislation was introduced successive governments post-2010 have declined to enact this aspect in England, despite that 20 of the 35 European countries have made socio-economic duty a protected characteristic (TUC, 2019). This inequality is clear throughout the education sector but also in the workplace, as graduates from working-class backgrounds continue to enter the job market earning less than those from middle-class and private-school backgrounds with the same qualifications. Those whose parents are employed in managerial and professional occupations are more than twice as likely as working-class graduates to start on a high salary, regardless of the class of degree level they attain (Friedman & Laurison, 2020; TUC, 2019). The Equality Trust continues to work with a number of other groups and MPs to campaign for the socio-economic duty (Equality Act, 2010, s1) to be triggered, as it is acknowledged this would be a powerful tool to address inequality in England (Equality Trust, n.d.).

The need to address the difficulties faced by the 4.3 million children living in poverty in the UK (CPAG, 2022) is set against a backdrop of underfunding within education itself (Andrews & Lawrence, 2018). State schools in England are under pressure to tackle the effects of poverty as the adverse impact on educational outcomes is well known (DfE, 2015; Marmot, 2010; Strand, 2014; Thompson, 2017). There is a notion of caring about children within the teaching profession (Nguyen, 2016) which suggests a depth of commitment to the aim of ensuring that all children have the opportunity to achieve outcomes commensurate with their capabilities. However, for individual teachers the problems may sometimes become overwhelming (Blandford, 2017) and the solutions proffered often futile, whilst on a national level, measures suggest child poverty is rising (CPAG, 2022; JRF, 2022). Teachers need a sound understanding of issues of social justice, and knowledge of the social, cultural and economic circumstances of their pupils and their families to be able to teach all groups and individuals effectively (Cooze & Parker, 2015; Ellis, Thompson, McNicholl & Thomson, 2016; Gazeley & Dunne, 2007; Gorski,

2012; Jensen, 2009). The 'ITT Core Content Framework' (DfE, 2019a, p. 9) states trainees must learn that high quality first teaching is of particular importance to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, having a long term positive impact for this group. The Teachers' Standards document (DfE, 2011) does not explicitly identify poverty or disadvantage, but the requirement to secure good progress for all groups is inherent throughout the text. Therefore, in order to meet the requirements of their own professional standards, the expectations of the schools in which they will work and the needs of their pupils, robust training can be deemed necessary to ensure trainee teachers are able to meet these obligations effectively.

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (n.d.), poverty occurs when a person's resources fall well below their minimum needs. However, the definition of poverty is challenging, as it can be calculated and described in a variety of ways. There is no single best measure, as it is a complex problem which needs a range of measures to demonstrate different aspects. The definition of poverty is considered at 2.2 in the following chapter, before exploring how it is identified in schools and the pupil groups it encompasses. The current trends and trajectories in poverty statistics are discussed to identify the extent of the problem in England generally, and more specifically within the school population. The possibility of lasting long-term effects following the experience of poverty in childhood is examined. The so-called attainment gap is discussed, along with initiatives that have been introduced to address it. The disadvantaged pupil group is further investigated to explore various issues including gender, social class and school type. The role of schools in addressing the impact of poverty on educational outcomes is also considered, along with that of initial teacher education and the effect on pupils of teachers' perceptions about poverty together with the need for those entering the profession to receive effective training in the light of the results. In order to ensure that all groups can be effectively catered for teachers need to have a clear understanding of possible barriers to achievement. They should feel able to provide constructive and focused support to drive progress and secure the improvement of all their pupils' attainment, regardless of their circumstances. This applies equally to trainee teachers (Cooze & Parker, 2015; Ellis,

Thompson, McNicholl & Thomson, 2016; Gazeley & Dunne, 2007; Jensen, 2009) and therefore it falls within the remit of the ITE providers to take steps to ensure trainees are equipped to do this.

There has been a very limited amount of research in the UK into trainee teachers' perceptions of the effects of poverty on pupils (H. Jones, 2016; Thompson et al., 2016). What is available suggests trainees may have quite naive opinions about the effects on children's learning (Ellis et al., 2016; H. Jones, 2016; Robson et al., 2021; Thompson, 2016). These attitudes may be based on deficit models which ascribe low educational attainment to problems located within the children themselves, their parents and their community. The trainee teachers' own background and their passage through education might expose them to a different type of life experience to children from families living in poverty, meaning that their understanding of the difficulties faced by these pupils could be both insufficient and flawed (Gorski, 2012; O. Jones, 2011; Plummer, 2000). The Department for Education (DfE) collects data on teacher characteristics for its annual census, but this only includes age, gender and ethnicity (DfE, 2021d) meaning that the proportion of teachers from a disadvantaged background is not known. Nevertheless, the teacher plays a pivotal role in the life chances of disadvantaged children particularly. As noted by the latest PISA report (OECD, 2019), children from more affluent families may find many open doors to a successful life, but children from poor families often have just one chance in the form of a good teacher and a good school that provide the opportunity for them to develop to their full potential. Those who miss out on that are rarely able to catch up, because as OECD data show, subsequent education opportunities in life tend to reinforce early education outcomes (OECD, 2019, p. 19).

This study investigated the perceptions of the impact of poverty on pupils in English primary schools as expressed by trainees undertaking an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme at an East Midlands university. This Higher Education Institution is situated in a county which spans 57 Lower-layer Super Output Areas, of which 17% are in the 10% most deprived and 33% are in the 20% most deprived areas of England (Ministry of Housing, Communities

and Local Government, 2015) according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation rankings, suggesting that the partnership schools used for teaching practice placements and the primary schools in the area which may employ their newly qualified teachers have a reasonable likelihood of serving communities and families affected by poverty. The Index of Multiple Deprivation and Lower-layer Super Output Areas are geographic measures which are proxies for economic disadvantage, often used by local authorities (Sutherland et al., 2015). The more general picture across England suggests that poverty levels are not reducing, and, although official poverty data for the pandemic period is yet to be published (JRF, 2022), with the increases in inflation and in energy prices there seems little prospect of reversing the trends seen since 2012/13. Child poverty had already risen by four percentage points to almost a third of children by 2019/20 (JRF,2022), before the impact of the unprecedented price rises seen in 2022, particularly with the removal of the energy price cap coinciding with the outbreak of war in Ukraine, leading to a peak of a 200% increase on 2021 levels during March 2022 (OBS, 2022; ONS, 2022c).

Initial Teacher Education courses in Primary education are offered at the institution for both undergraduate and postgraduate applicants. The Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) confers qualified teacher status (QTS) and takes the form of a one year full-time, or a two year part-time programme. There are two full-time options, one being based at the university with trainees spending the statutory 120 days of the 10 month course in placement schools. The other is the School Direct programme, for which trainees are recruited by a school where they are then based, coming to the university for one day per week in the autumn term, along with a small number of additional days over the remainder of the programme. The part-time course includes short blocks of full-time school placements in both years along with one day per week at the university throughout the first year. To be eligible to enrol on the postgraduate course, applicants must hold an undergraduate degree in a suitable subject, along with the equivalent of grade C/4 or above in English, Maths and a science at GCSE level (UCAS, 2022).

There is a lack of research in the area of ITE and social disadvantage, with very few studies exploring trainee teachers' perceptions of poverty or teacher educators' role in addressing issues relating to poverty in schools (Robson et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2016, p. 219). Further research is needed to investigate trainee teachers' attitudes towards this topic and to consider how best to support them in alleviating the impacts of poverty (Robson et al., 2021; Thompson, 2017). The added value of this study can be viewed against the backdrop of increasing poverty with the highest inflation rate for 30 years (ONS, 2022a), the energy price cap removal and accompanying rise in fuel poverty following in the wake of the pandemic. With 31% of children in school living in poverty (CPAG, 2022), the need for effective teachers delivering high quality first teaching is evident now more than ever as this figure seems set to increase (JRF, 2022). There has been no previous research at this institution, or within its geographical region, to explore the perceptions of ITE trainees about poverty, therefore this study will bring new knowledge to the field. Being a low tariff university, it may be that the demographic of trainees enrolled are more likely to have been drawn from disadvantaged backgrounds and therefore may be less likely to exhibit stereotypical deficit views (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009; Gorski, 2012; Leighton, 2018; Thompson et al., 2016). However, this is not yet understood, as research has not previously taken place to confirm or refute this possibility. There is the need to raise awareness for the purposes of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course design, whether more needs to be done on the topic of social justice. This is a professional doctorate study and as such the aims and objectives are based in practice and striving to improve provision.

This study examined the perceptions and attitudes towards poverty held by trainees on the three PGCE programme routes, and whether they showed understanding of the potential effects of poverty on children in school. The objectives of the study were:

- to determine whether trainees exhibit stereotypical deficit viewpoints about poverty, and about the children and families affected by it;
- to explore whether the trainees' understanding of the impact of child poverty is developed across the duration of the programme;

- to benefit the participants by allowing them to discuss the topic and reflect on their own and others' understandings of the issues raised;
- to give some indication as to whether there is a need to do more in our institution to support the ITE trainees in exploring their own opinions and beliefs about poverty;
- and, to prompt a wider discussion about how effectively the ITE programmes prepare trainees to support the progress of all pupils they teach.

During the research, one of the participants often made references to various songs which reflected themes picked up in the conversations. One of these songs was Common People (Cocker, et al., 1995). The lyrics of this particular song emerged to resonate with the findings, and this is further discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.34. Quotations from it are used as epigraphs throughout the study. This idea expressed within the song of social class identity and stratification links to Bourdieu (1984), whose work was central to this project.

The research questions the study sought to illuminate were:

1. How do trainee teachers describe poverty amongst primary age school children in England?
2. What are trainees' perceptions about the impacts of poverty on children in schools?
3. What aspects of poverty do the trainees particularly emphasise, if any?
4. How do the trainees understand the impact of poverty on language acquisition?
5. Are there any perceptible shifts in opinions over the duration of the programme?

The review of literature undertaken in the next chapter considers the impact of poverty in schools and what the implications of trainee teachers' perceptions of this may be. Beginning with government documents and statistics relating to poverty and children, the review then focusses on the education sector in England and how the role of primary schools has developed in regard to working with children living in poverty. Acknowledging this evolving role of

schools in addressing social inequalities, the implications for teacher education are explored.

Smoke some fags and play some pool, Pretend you never went to school
But still you'll never get it right, 'Cause when you're laid in bed at night
Watching roaches climb the wall, If you called your dad he could stop it all

- Cocker et al., *Common People*, 1995.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction.

Poverty continues to be prevalent in even the most affluent societies, and this is exacerbated in England by the level of income inequality being particularly high compared to other Western countries (Bell, 2021; ONS, 2019). In 2020/21 in England 16% of children were living in households described as 'absolute low income households', with 23% living in households of 'absolute low income after housing costs' as defined and reported by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP, 2022a, p. 7). In 2016–19, 19% of children were living in persistent low income households (Francis-Devine, 2022; JRF, 2022). If these children were spread equally across all schools, that would equate to between five and seven children in every class of 30, depending upon which poverty measure was selected. To consider this another way, 21.6% of primary aged children were known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) at the time of the January 2021 schools' census (DfE, 2021a; National Statistics, 2021). This means that in an average class of 30 children, at least six pupils would be eligible for FSM. Every region of England has seen a rise in FSM numbers since 2020 (DfE, 2021c). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation UK Poverty Report (JRF, 2022) also notes that the picture is showing no indications of improvement. Since 2012/13 child poverty has been increasing and rose by four percentage points to almost a third of children by 2019/20 (JRF, 2022). The current cost of living crisis means that yet more children will be affected, as the inflation rate currently stands at 9% and is forecast to reach 10% later this year (Bank of England, 2022), with absolute poverty predicted to rise by 1.3 million, including 500,000 children (Francis-Devine, 2022). Whichever statistics are used, it is apparent that in an average class there could be at least six and possibly as many as nine children who fall into the category of being in a situation of financial disadvantage. No class is "average" - there are areas of high deprivation where classes have far in excess of these numbers and

equally schools serving areas of greater affluence, reflected in their lower numbers of FSM children. However, overall many teachers will have children in their classes who are affected by poverty (NEU, 2021). A recent survey by the National Education Union (2022) showed that the majority of state-school teachers have witnessed impacts relating to poverty in their pupils, including being ill, tired, disruptive in lessons and unable to concentrate. Therefore, a child's home circumstances matter in regard to their educational outcomes and life chances.

The structure of this chapter is guided by the research questions to explore what poverty is and which groups are affected by it, how great the problem is in schools, and what the potential impacts of poverty appear to be on children's educational outcomes. It also considers whether the attitudes of teachers towards poverty can have any effect on pupil attainment and what the implications of this might be for trainee teachers and teacher educators. This follows the research questions, as the study sought to discover how the trainee teachers described poverty amongst primary age school children and what their perceptions were of its impacts, including children's language acquisition.

The chapter briefly considers the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, as this began just at the time of the last data collection activity for the study. Therefore, it will sketch over the changes and implications related to the pandemic, as these were not known or understood by the participants at that time. Although some of the more recent statistics will be provided in order to give some consideration to trajectories and to the current situation, much data are yet to be gathered and published which will properly illuminate the full impact of the pandemic with regard to both the economic and educational outcomes (JRF, 2022). This study explored data collected in a pre-Covid-19 era and therefore it is important to understand such context, before speculating on implications in the light of recent events.

2.2 Defining poverty.

Poverty is recognised to be a problematic term. Whilst most definitions concern what constitutes the minimum necessities of human need, there is no commonly agreed definition of what that might specifically be (Goulden &

D'Arcy, 2014; Robson et al., 2021). That a person lives in poverty does not necessarily mean they have none of their needs met. Poverty can be said to encompass those whose lack of necessities has a persistent and wide ranging impact on their lives, meaning that they are more likely to suffer other indicators of poverty, such as ill health and financial stress (Lansley & Mack, 2015). However, it has been argued that some of these indicators are not connected to poverty; that social problems may be aggravated by poverty, but poverty is not a necessary factor in the occurrence of these problems and may actually have no part to play (Veit-Wilson, 2013). The key to arriving at a definition appears to be through what the members of the society in question perceive to be the minimum needs, and that those deemed as eligible to be considered as such are undergoing an enforced lack of these necessities for an unspecified length of time (Lansley & Mack, 2015; Goulden & D'Arcy, 2014; Ravallion, 1992; Veit-Wilson, 2013;). Poverty therefore can be seen as relative, changing over time rather than as an absolute. This is supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation which publishes reports based on the Minimum Income Standard (MIS). MIS itself is not a measure of poverty but is based on research gathered from the public, which indicates a sufficient income to afford a minimum acceptable standard of living. Within JRF reports MIS is defined as an adequate income level below which households struggle to achieve a socially accepted living standard (Padley et al., 2017).

One consequence of the multiple definitions of poverty is a variety of measurements and statistics around poverty which tell us a range of things. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (n.d.), poverty is when resources fall well below minimum needs, whilst the government looks at the median income to establish whether someone is living in relative poverty. This is the midpoint at which half of the working population earn more than that amount, and half earn less. 60% of this middle amount is calculated, and anyone who earns less than this figure is deemed to be living in relative poverty. The Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2022b) Average Household Income report states that that the value of median income for households in 2021 was £31,400, setting the threshold for relative poverty at £18,840. Other measures include absolute income poverty, where households have less than

60% of the median income in 2010/11 uprated by inflation to give a stable benchmark to consider poverty levels over time; material deprivation, defined as being unable to afford certain essential items and activities; and destitution, which means lacking access to basics such as shelter, heating and clothing (JRF, n.d.). Relative and absolute income poverty are presented after direct taxes and National Insurance, including Council Tax, and can either be presented before housing costs (BHC) or after housing costs (AHC). These include rent or mortgage interest, buildings insurance and water rates (JRF, n.d.). It seems that defining poverty to the exact pound of income may be difficult and not always helpful, with some individuals and households moving in and out of eligibility dependent upon the measure being applied. However, the broader picture indicates that poverty is widespread. In 2019/20 there were 14.5 million people in the UK living in poverty, equating to 22% of the total population according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation statistics, with over half a million children being in destitution at some point during the year (JRF, 2022).

Destitution is defined as severe poverty, without the means to eat, be clean and stay warm and dry (Wincup, 2020), where a family of four has less than £140 a week to live on after housing costs (Michael & Pratt, 2022). The total number in poverty comprises of 8.1 million working-age adults, 2.1 million pensioners and 4.3 million children (JRF, 2022). Pre-pandemic statistics showed rates of working poverty to be rising, already hitting a new high of 17% in working households. Both single and large families were affected, with families of three or more children reaching a record high of 42% in early 2020 (McNeil et al., 2021, p. 4). Of children living in lone parent families, 1.5 million were in poverty in 2019/20, which equates to 49% of this group (JRF, 2022). These figures are forecast to increase still further with the removal of the fuel price cap leading to unprecedented price rises of 54% in April 2022 and a further 40% in October (OBS, 2022), signalling an upsurge in fuel poverty as more households are likely to fall into financial difficulties as a result (Francis-Devine, 2022).

2.3 Identifying poverty in schools.

When considering attainment data and poverty for school pupils, FSM eligibility becomes the criterion used (Craske, 2018; Education Committee, 2021; Hancock, 2018; Mazzoli Smith & Todd, 2019; Shain, 2016; Watson, 2018). The Pupil Premium Grant funding was first introduced by the Cameron-Clegg coalition government in 2011 to provide additional school funding for children classed as being from deprived backgrounds, who were identified through their eligibility for free school meals, and also for children who had been in local authority care for six months or more (DfE, 2010; Jarret et al., 2016). The criteria for the funding was then extended in 2012 to include children who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the previous six years (known as Ever6 pupils) and again in 2015 to include children who have been looked after for one day or more, have been adopted from care, or have left care under a special guardianship order, a residence order, or a child arrangements order (DfE, 2015). Accompanying the funding, schools were then held accountable for their effective use of the money through the Ofsted inspection framework and performance tables. These were extended to include data on the attainment of pupils funded, including the progress made by these pupils and the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers (DfE, 2015). Details of how the funding has been spent and its impact are deemed as statutory information, to be published online annually via schools' websites (DfE, 2015).

Main (2014) and Main and Bradshaw (2012) developed the Child Deprivation Index in an attempt to understand the relationship between children's own wellbeing and child poverty. This scale considered children's own perceptions of their needs. A checklist of objects and activities deemed to be essentials was collated through focus groups with children, and included things such as pocket money, clothes that fit and family trips and holidays. For their survey, children were asked to indicate whether they had, lacked, needed or did not need the specified things. The children's status in respect of free school meals and having adults at home in paid work was considered alongside their responses. Adams et al. (2011) argued that both of these are strong indicators for income poverty, identifying children who live in households expected to be

eligible for minimum income benefits, yet highlighted how they are at the same time unsuccessful in indicating many children in income poverty, as the majority of these children live in households which have at least one working adult. This illustrates how problematic and challenging it is to identify need through the proxy of FSM eligibility and demonstrates how much more widespread poverty is beyond the numbers indicated by that measure. An Education Committee report (Halfon et al., 2021) echoes this, criticizing the use of FSM as a proxy for disadvantage, noting how it reduces disadvantage to a binary, with children either in or out of this category. They suggest a range of other factors need to be considered, including the length of time a pupil has been FSM eligible and whether families are above the poverty line but still experiencing financial hardship (Halfon et al., 2021). This relates directly to the first research question 'How do trainee teachers describe poverty amongst primary age school children in England?', through which I explored the participants' understanding of how poverty might be manifested in primary school.

2.4 Disadvantaged pupils.

The DfE (2018a, p. 24) define 'disadvantaged' as extending beyond children who have been eligible for FSM at any point in the preceding six years to also include those who are looked after by the Local Authority and those who have previously been in care. The disadvantaged pupils' attainment gap index (DWP, 2021) is used to demonstrate the difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and all other pupils at Key Stage 4. This does not show a year on year improvement; the most recent data shows it stayed persistently at around 3.66 from 2012/13 then widened to 3.79 in 2021 compared with 3.66 in 2019/20 and 3.7 in 2018/19 (DfE, 2021a). The DfE attributes this to the Covid19 pandemic bringing a more challenging situation for disadvantaged pupils (DfE, 2021a), attributed to their less supportive home learning environment and loss of social, emotional and cognitive skills (Longfield, 2020). However, there was an increase in the gap in the 2019 GCSE results, before any impact from the pandemic. Consideration of the relevant quality and methodology document (DfE, 2022) also reveals that the definition of disadvantage has been changed, as discussed previously, between 2012 and 2015 to broaden the categories included in the statistics. It then changed again

with the introduction of new eligibility criteria from April 2018 (DfE, 2022). These changes could be seen to reduce the validity and reliability of the data for the purposes of direct comparison, and called into question whether it demonstrates a reduction in the attainment gap if children in different circumstances have begun to be included. As children who have been looked after for more than one day, rather than only for six months or more, and children who have been adopted are now included, it is difficult, if not impossible, to discern whether these children are affected by poverty, despite the label 'disadvantaged' being ascribed to them in this context.

2.5 Defining social class.

Socio-economic class, is often termed as socio-economic status (SES) and combines occupation with education, wealth and income to rank people in comparison to others in society (Avvisati, 2020). A further factor is the social status attached to some professions such as doctors, the priesthood and professors, and to educational attainment indicated by academic degrees (Bathmaker, et al., 2011; Friedman & Laurison, 2020). Accordingly, lower status professions, such as blue-collar jobs or the service sector, carry little prestige and sometimes stigma (Cole, 2019). The term ‘social class’ may be used interchangeably with SES, however, social class refers specifically to characteristics that are harder, or less likely, to change, rather than economic status and employment which potentially alter over time. There are socio-cultural features that a person is socialised into from birth. These are different traits, lifestyle, knowledge and behaviours, some of which are perceived as superior to others (Cole, 2019). Social class therefore can be argued to be determined by a person’s level of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) and how this enables them to navigate society. Savage (2015) explores the complexity of the class structure in England, and proposes a socio-economic strata consisting of seven different levels, going beyond the economic alone by including factors related to social class, rather than just SES. Many different factors are perceived to be indicative of a particular class. For example, being a first generation university student may be taken as a proxy of class, with an assumption that this denotes a working class background (Friedman & Laurison, 2020; Stephens et al., 2014; Wainwright & Watts, 2021). According

to Blandford (2017), being the first person in the family to go to university is also an indication of social mobility, arguing however that simply going to university is not sufficient to effect this change. There is also the added complication of which university is attended, and Cipollone and Stich's (2017) notion of shadow capital, which is discussed in section 2.22.

Social mobility is seen as vital to improving the life chances of children living in disadvantaged families (OECD, 2018; Social Mobility Commission, 2021). However, Plummer (2000) and Reay (2017) present the issues arising from achieving social mobility, showing it is not necessarily a wholly positive experience. They describe the difficulties of the accompanying move away from family identity and being left with a sense of dislocation in no longer belonging to the social groups of either their present or their past. Skeggs (1997) describes feeling like an imposter among academic colleagues whilst simultaneously believing her family had been let down by her not fulfilling the traditional female role they expected of her. Working class, poverty and disadvantage tend to spontaneously group together (Halfon et al., 2021) with FSM eligibility often used interchangeably with working class in reports and data (National Literacy Trust, 2021). Class and disadvantage are often conflated in schools, with Reay (2017, p. 139) pointing out the distinction drawn in her research between 'nice' middle class children and 'horrendous' working class ones, with class segregation being commonplace in the state education system. Moves made to improve the provision for schools in disadvantaged areas do not always have the anticipated effects, for example Smart et al. (2009) reported that participants on the Teach First programme when placed in challenging schools, although well meaning, were actually reinforcing middle class values and working class othering, therefore enacting class reproduction as described by Bourdieu (1986).

Tyler (2008) contended that class distinctions were not in decline, but according to Skeggs (2005) social class had gone underground, as inequalities of class have been supressed and dismissed to the point of becoming a distasteful subject for discussion. In the context of this, the language around an underclass has flourished, with the term 'chav' becoming synonymous with the white working class (O. Jones, 2016; Tyler, 2008). Various false stories

circulate as explanations for the origin of the word ‘chav’ (Bennett, 2012), but regardless of its etymology the term indicates a vilification of the working class (Hayward & Yar 2006; O. Jones, 2016) and is attributed to stereotypical deficit views. In agreement with Tyler (2008), O. Jones (2016, p. 8) defines ‘chav’ as encompassing ‘any negative traits associated with working-class people – violence, laziness, teenage pregnancies, racism, drunkenness’, being a term of disgust and class contempt when used by a middle-class person. Far from being a classless society, England is deeply divided with low social mobility reducing the opportunities available to achieve success regardless of background and circumstance (Lampl, 2019).

2.6 Trends and trajectories in poverty statistics.

Prior to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, more recent trends in poverty figures appeared initially to offer some hope of improvements. The Department of Work and Pensions annual report, Households Below Average Income (DWP, 2018; DWP, 2022), found that absolute low-income measures for children had in fact seen a gradual decrease since around 2012/13. The percentage of children in absolute low income had reached a historic low. Following a period of stability since around 2010/11 the percentage of children in low income and material deprivation saw a slight decrease in 2016/17; a reduction of 2% since 2014/15. However, the report noted that compared to the overall population, children remain more likely to be in low-income households, which echoes the findings in the UK Poverty 2017 report from The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (Barnard, 2017a). A contemporary House of Commons briefing paper, issued in April 2018, appears less optimistic, revealing that, in 2016/17, 4.1 million children – 30% of children nationally – were classed as living in households of relative low income after housing costs, whilst 3.5 million children – 26% of the total number – fell into the absolute low income category (McGuiness, 2018). Projections released by the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggested the number of children in relative low income was set to increase rapidly between 2015/16 and 2021/22 under the then government policies (Hood & Waters, 2017). The increase in the proportion of children in relative low income after housing costs was expected to be in the order of 7% within 4 years. Whilst the rate of absolute low income was expected to decrease

slightly for some groups of adults, for children it was expected to increase by around 4% (Hood & Waters, 2017). These figures do not make for encouraging reading as the suggestion was that the outlook for children living in poverty was not an improving one, and this has since been further impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent economic conditions.

The overall longer term trend for numbers living in poverty appeared to be moving in a positive direction, but when examined by groups marked differences appear. For example, whilst the proportion of senior citizens in poverty reduced considerably since the 1960s, poverty rates for children have risen over the last 50 years (McGuiness, 2016, p. 16). McGuiness (2018) points out that the commons briefing discusses income-based poverty measures, and that such measures have been attacked by government ministers as failing to recognize the actual root causes of poverty and thus leading to policy responses that only seek to bring people from marginally beneath the poverty threshold to being marginally above it. This could be viewed as an attempt to ameliorate the poverty statistics in order to garner political support, to potentially sway the popular vote and so retain power.

The message from McGuiness' briefing papers (2016; 2018), supported by the projections from the IFS (Hood & Waters, 2017) conveyed there was little to suggest an improvement in the statistics for child poverty was on the horizon. The Social Mobility Commission's report (2016) concurred, highlighting the impact of austerity measures with accompanying changes to benefits and their effect on the parents of current school age children. They had lower incomes than their predecessors at the same age and home ownership was in sharp decline for this generation particularly. Barnard (2017b) warned that the trends seen in decreasing poverty were likely to reverse in the next few years as child poverty was on course to increase from 30% to 37% by 2021. This would have meant another 1.2 million children falling into poverty, with numbers rising to 5.2 million in 2021/22. According to Barnard (2017b) the biggest reasons for this were changes to benefits and tax credits, particularly the freeze on many working-age benefits. State benefits which top up low pay and those for people out of work stayed the same, but prices continued to rise with inflation reaching 5.1%, the highest in a decade (Michael, 2021), before climbing yet further to

9%, the highest rate in 40 years (ONS, 2022d). The statistics relating to poverty following the impact of Covid-19 are yet to be seen, but this can only have exacerbated the situation forecast by Barnard (JRF, 2021).

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, median household net income had shown a very minimal growth, however relative child poverty continued to increase, so by 2019–20 it was 4% higher than in 2011–12 (Cribb et al., 2021). For children living in lone parent families, the poverty rate is 49% (CPAG, 2022; JRF, 2022). Keiller (2018) reported that children living in poverty were more likely to live in social or private rented housing, with these being significantly more expensive than owner-occupied housing and causing after housing cost poverty rates to rise. Although 75% of all children living in poverty were from a household with at least one person in work (CPAG, 2022), the impact of housing costs on income could call into question the reliance on eligibility for free school meals and the Pupil Premium Grant as an indicator of poverty as this is awarded on the basis of income before housing costs. Hobbs & Vignoles (2010) consider FSM eligibility to be a coarse measure in any case, which is primarily used as it is the only data collected by the DfE relating directly to family income, and is therefore an accessible if rather blunt tool. It is a crude measure of economic capital, unable to reflect social or cultural capital, although Hobbs and Vignoles (2010) propose that it works as a reasonable proxy on some levels. The House of Commons Education Committee's report (2014) noted that it would be useful to collect data from a range of Departments which could be combined to give a more robust picture of children's socio-economic status rather than the continued reliance on FSM eligibility, but this does not appear to have been heeded – as discussed previously in section 2.3 of this chapter, the Education Committee was still making the same observation 7 years later (Halfon, 2021).

2.7 Numbers in schools affected by poverty.

The Department for Education's school census figures collected in January 2018 led them to assert that the proportion of pupils eligible for and claiming free school meals was at the lowest since 2001. However, the data shows there were 26,600 more primary school pupils than in 2017, and 101,100 more since the 2016 census. This decrease in the proportion of FSM pupils may have been affected by the overall increase in numbers. The other question that

arises from this report is how the Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) programme has impacted the reported headline decrease in FSM pupils. The summary report (DfE, 2018c) states that it does not include pupils claiming a free school meal under the UIFSM programme, which provides free school meals for all Key Stage 1 pupils regardless of their household income or benefit claims (DfE, 2018c, p. 6). It seems sensible to assume that removing all data regarding FSM eligible pupils below Year 3 and also the increasing number of children in school overall may account for the apparent decrease in FSM numbers. Parents of infant aged children are encouraged to apply for free school meals as this then attracts Pupil Premium Grant funding for their school, but since there is often no obvious direct benefit for the individual child, some parents may not have completed the application process. It is not clear whether data regarding the number of infant age children who are entitled to FSM is collected from schools, but there do not appear to be any statistics available to indicate how many infant children are eligible and whether or not they are claiming. This makes it difficult to compare like for like the proportion of the FSM population before and after the introduction of the UIFSM programme in 2014. However, Iniesta-Martinez & Evans (2012) reported that 21% of statutory school age children were eligible to claim FSM yet only 18% did so, showing that even before the UIFSM programme was introduced there were children slipping through the net. No follow-up reports have been issued to enable a comparison to be made to more recent data. There is also the added difficulty which CPAG (2020b) note, that an estimated two in five school-age children who are below England's poverty line were not entitled to free school meals due to the strict eligibility criteria.

The most recently available school census figures (DfE, June 2021) begin to demonstrate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, as the number of children eligible for FSM increased from 17.3% in 2020 to 20.8% in January 2021, with in excess of 427,000 pupils becoming eligible for FSM since the first lockdown began in March 2020. If regional poverty is considered rather than the overall figure for England, it can be seen that, in the North East, FSM numbers rose as high as 27.5%, whilst the lowest figure for any region stood at 15.1%, up from 12.9% in 19/20, and every region saw an increase during the period from 19/20

to 20/21 (National Statistics, 2021). Due to the way FSM eligibility is calculated, it is not clear how many of these additional children have continued to meet the qualification criteria, but the indication is that the pandemic has had a visible negative impact on the financial situation of many families. However, in 2019 one in five children were known to be living in what is classed as persistent poverty, which JRF define as being for three out of the last four years (JRF, 2022).

2.8 Poverty and the attainment gap.

It is important to consider the effects on children's learning, as the second research question sought to explore the trainees' perceptions about the impacts of poverty on children in primary school. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) suggests that if children are not fed, warm and feeling safe as minimum requirements they are less likely to be able to learn effectively. One in five children were living in a home that was not adequately heated even prior to the current energy cost crisis. One in ten do not possess a warm coat and suitable footwear and one in twenty are under fed (Lansley & Mack, 2015); possibly resulting from the statistic that 27% of children were living in absolute low income households in 2020/21 (DWP, 2022) and 25% of children live below 75% of MIS (Davis et al., 2022; Padley et al., 2017) as previously discussed. This suggests, therefore, that a potentially large proportion of pupils are not having their basic needs met as defined by Maslow, and therefore are not arriving in school predisposed to learn successfully. The National Education Union survey (2022) confirms this, finding that when questioned about witnessing impacts of poverty in their classrooms, 87% of the 1,788 state school teachers responding had seen children affected by tiredness, 66% reported children with clothing issues, 57% had children who were hungry and 55% noted children were frequently ill. These difficulties correlate directly to Maslow's hierarchy (1943) and supports the concern that learning and engagement in the classroom are being negatively impacted for disadvantaged pupils by a lack of basic needs.

The House of Commons Education Committee (2014) instigated a survey to establish the reasons for the impact of the negative outcomes on learning demonstrated through the attainment gap data, noting that other FSM eligible

ethnic groups performed better than the white British group (DfE, 2021a). This report proposed a variety of underlying reasons for the persistent underachievement of the white British FSM group, including poor parenting skills, higher rates of absenteeism, genetics and culture. Lenon (2018) attributes educational inequalities to incomes inequalities and the impact these have on the ability of parents to provide the necessary support, meaning children from disadvantaged families start school behind and are never able to catch up. This claim is supported by other research, including the OECD (2019, p. 19), who observe that data demonstrate the gap persists for most of those children.

The clearest demonstration of the impact of poverty on children in school is seen with the gap in academic outcomes between those eligible for free school meals and the rest of the school population. The most recent DfE revised Key Stage 2 results (DfE, 2019d) show that in 2019 47% of FSM pupils reached the required standard in reading, writing and mathematics, in contrast to 68% of all other pupils. This attainment gap has remained at a similar level over recent years. The Key Stage 2 SATs were not administered in 2020 or 2021, and therefore the 2019 data set is the most recent.

The gap persists, increasing throughout secondary school so by the time pupils reach the stage of GCSEs at the end of Key Stage 4 the data indicate that in 2019 44.7% of FSM pupils achieved grades 9 – 4 in both English and Maths compared to 71.8% of all other pupils (DfE, 2020b). This shows little change from 2016, which was the last year of grades rather than numbers, when 39.1% of FSM children gained 5 or more A* - C grades, including Maths and English, whilst 66.7% of the remainder achieved this benchmark (DfE, 2017a). GCSE examination grades awarded in 2020 and 2021 were calculated through teacher assessment, and therefore were disregarded for the purposes of this review as not being fully comparable to previous data. In 2019, when Key Stage 2 tests were last taken, a 21% gap at the end of primary school translated through to a 27.1% difference in attainment by the end of Key Stage 4. Whilst only 0.8% fewer of non-FSM pupils gained Maths and English GCSE combined; for the FSM pupils this fell from 47% achieving as expected at the end of Key Stage 2, to 44.7%, so 2.3% lower. For all the political rhetoric

around the “closing the gap” agenda (Laws, 2013), there is little evidence of success in the statistical measures. It would appear that of the young people growing up in socio-economic deprivation and poverty, a disproportionate number fail to achieve positive educational outcomes in contrast to their more affluent peers (Ferguson et al., 2007; Lenon, 2018; Sosu & Ellis, 2014; Strand, 2014). Their progress through school seems to make matters worse rather than better. Whilst Sosu and Ellis (2014) made their observation about Scottish education, it may also be applicable to the situation in which the English system finds itself. This is supported by Andrews et al., (2017) who report that despite all intentions to close the gap, it only narrowed by three months between 2007 and 2016, with FSM pupils in England actually falling further behind the rest of the cohort at a rate of two months for every year they spend in secondary school.

The difficulties in addressing the attainment gap seen between the socio-economic groups are complicated still further by the current framework in England, which encourages choice and competition. Higher SES families will take whatever measures are necessary to enable their children to get the best they can out of the system, and these families have the social and economic capital to support their continued advantage. Ball (2003) describes the education market as a strategy designed to preserve the advantages of the middle classes. Regardless of any initiatives introduced to address the gap, this is made far more difficult if the target striven for is being moved ever further away by the competition for academic success (Ball, 2003; Gewirtz, 2001; O. Jones, 2016; Reay, 2017; Shain, 2016; Tomlinson, 2005).

When considering the statistics produced through statutory testing, there is a definite gap in attainment between children eligible for FSM and the remainder of the pupil population. Over ten years ago, Goodman and Gregg (2010) reported that by the end of Key Stage 2 only around three-quarters of children from the poorest fifth of families - measured by parental socio-economic position - reached the expected level at Key Stage 2, in contrast to 97% of children from the richest fifth. As shown in Table 2.1 below, despite the changes to the end of Key Stage 2 tests in 2016, which saw the overall percentage of all children achieving the expected standard fall by 16% from

2015, the gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils who achieved this benchmark continued to follow the trend seen in previous years, with FSM pupils 22 percentage points below non-FSM pupils (DfE, 2016). In 2017, perhaps as schools became more accustomed to the new style tests, there were increases in attainment, with FSM pupils rising to 43% and non-FSM to 64%. This also equates to a 3% narrowing of the discrepancy between the two groups (DfE, 2017a). Between 2017 and 2019, which was the last year when SATs were administered prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the gap between the two groups remained steady at around 21%.

Table 2.1: Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics England, 2013 to 2017 at the end of Key Stage 2 for pupils in state funded primary schools. (DfE, 2019d)

Year	Achieved level 4b or above in reading and mathematics, and level 4 or above in writing		Reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics	
	% FSM	% All other pupils	% FSM	% All other pupils
2013	45%	67%	-	-
2014	49%	71%	-	-
2015	52%	72%	-	-
2016	-	-	35%	57%
2017	-	-	43%	64%
2018			46%	68%
2019			47%	68%

The journey to GCSE results does not lead to any improvement in the situation. The DfE Characteristics report (DfE, 2017a) shows that there was a 10% reduction in the disadvantage gap index since 2011. Over the six year period this gap showed changes ranging from an increase of 1.6% to a decrease of 4.3%, with the average being -1.7%. There have been changes in the methodology used by the DfE for the measures of attainment and progress related to the move to numerical scores for GCSEs, but the attainment gap is still very much in evidence. The revised statistics for 2017 (DfE, 2018c), as summarised in Table 2.2 below, show quite noticeable differences between the

FSM and non FSM groups, particularly when looking at the higher grades achieved and in a wider range of subjects, as required by the English Baccalaureate.

Table 2.2: Attainment at GCSE in 2017 for FSM and non-FSM pupils (DfE, 2018c).

	% 4/C+ in English & Maths	% 5+ in English & Maths	% English Baccalaureate at 4/C+	% English Baccalaureate at 5+ English & Maths; C+ other subjects
FSM	40.3	21.7	10.3	8.6
Non- FSM	67.4	45.8	25.8	23.3

In 2016, the Key Stage 2 and GCSE outcomes were very similar for both groups (DfE, 2016b) whilst, in 2017, they appear to have worsened considerably for the disadvantaged group, differing by -13%, but have also fallen for the remaining pupils, by -6%. It is difficult to attribute any particular reasons to these outcomes, and the changes to methodologies used by the DfE from the previous five plus A* - C grades to progress 8 and attainment 8 measures, along with a change to numbers rather than grades with both 4 and 5 equating to a grade C (Ofqual, 2018; Rear, 2017), and the definitions of disadvantage, along with the changes to the test and exam formats, as well as in the curriculum at both primary and secondary school all make comparisons awkward at best. It is possible to see from the summary in Table 2.3 below however, that despite this there is still a persistent gap in educational outcomes between the children from low socio-economic status groups and those from more affluent households.

Table 2.3: Attainment at GCSE in 2018 and 2019 for FSM and non-FSM pupils (DfE, 2020b; DfE,2019c).

		% 4+ in English & Maths	% 5+ in English & Maths	% English Baccalaureate at 4+	% English Baccalaureate at 5+
2018	FSM	40.0	21.8	10.4	6.1
	Non-FSM	67.7	45.8	26.1	18.2
2019	FSM	41.4	22.5	11.1	6.4
	Non-FSM	68.5	46.6	27.2	18.9

As Table 2.3 indicates, the gap between the two groups remains steady with any changes in either direction being mirrored by both groups. The teacher or centre assessed grades for the GCSE examinations in 2020 and 2021 were subject to much controversy and in 2020 particularly the final grades were considered to have been subject to potential bias, including disadvantage for socio-economic status (Ofqual, 2021). These assessments have been disregarded for the purposes of this study because there is no comparative material from previous years.

Having considered the attainment gap and seen that it continues to persist throughout primary and secondary education, it is pertinent to explore the efforts that have been made in addressing the issue. The latest policy speak for initiatives directed to this objective have moved on from ‘narrowing the gap’ to now being ‘closing the gap’, which reflects the continued drive for schools to perform ever more effectively (Laws, 2013). The complex and expansive nature of the issues around child poverty in relation to educational experiences means solutions lie beyond schools alone (Bourdieu, 1984), and despite the school improvement work of the last 50 years, Hargreaves (2014, p. 697) notes that, ‘the gap between free school meals (FSM) children and others has barely shifted and schools in the most disadvantaged areas are amongst the slowest to improve’. Little progress with closing the gap has been made in England over the last decade, and any seen has been very slow and inconsistent. On average, disadvantaged pupils have been found to fall two months behind their

peers for each year spent at secondary school so that by the time of GCSEs they are almost two years behind (Andrews et al., 2017). In the 1960s the government attempted to reduce the achievement gap with Educational Priority Areas which were intended to increase parental involvement and try to aid pupils in getting more out of their schooling. This attracted criticism as it implied that the children and their families were somehow culturally or linguistically deprived and so that the fault for the children's low attainment lay with the families, not the schools (O. Jones, 2016; Plummer, 2000; Shain, 2016). When the Sure Start programmes were introduced around 40 years later, the key was still seen to be in increasing parental engagement. The research behind the initiative was drawn largely from work in the US, and sought to address the issues of social disadvantage early in life, not least so that public money could be saved later on when the cycle of intergenerational social exclusion was broken (Melhuish & Hall, 2007).

Following Sure Start, the idea of raising aspirations took hold, with the implication of this being that low SES families needed to act and think more like higher SES families and then the children would achieve (Gewirtz, 2001; O. Jones, 2016; Plummer, 2000; Power, 2008;). This notion pervades the choices of use of the Pupil Premium Grant funding, as discussed by Shain (2016), schools can be found to be spending this money on enrichment provision which attempts to emulate the perceived middle class experience and to raise aspirations with a wide range of activities such as music and horse riding lessons and heavily subsidised school trips, including visits to universities (Ofsted, 2013; Ofsted, 2014; Sutton Trust & EEF, 2015). As Gerwitz (2001) points out, there are deep seated reasons why low SES families do not behave in the same manner as the archetypical middle class family (Bourdieu, 1984) and the initiatives introduced fail to get to the real heart of the attainment gap issue. They are compensatory measures, a sticking plaster rather than an effort to drive through radical changes which challenge inequality and move towards an effective cure. Cummings et al. (2012) argued that attempting to raise aspirations, even assuming they may be low in the first place, is not a useful basis for educational policy and is unlikely to produce improvement in educational attainment. However, as Leighton (2018) argues, a lack of

aspiration is the case for some working class families. Dix (2018, p. 98) notes that not many working class people were explorers, and asserts that aspiration is limited by the ghettoisation of the working class, suggesting that school trips are vital if teachers are to attempt to counteract this. Blandford (2017) supports the argument, describing the effects of her own family's lack of aspiration. The OECD (2019, p. 19) also endorse this view, when noting that disadvantage impacts negatively on attainment and attributing it not just to lack of material resources but to a lack of 'aspirations and hope'.

Another initiative is the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), which was launched in 2011 by the Sutton Trust charity, with a £110 million founding grant from the government (DfE, 2010). It was intended to generate and support the effective use of evidence in tackling the attainment gap, spending £190 million on 190 projects involving over 12,000 schools, nurseries and colleges up to 2019 (EEF, 2019). The amount of funding and diversity of the projects demonstrates the complexity of the attainment gap, with no simple or rapid solutions evident. The foundation aims to extend the educational evidence base, filling gaps in understanding and looking to identify projects with a high potential to close the disadvantage gap (EEF, 2019). However, in 2018 the Education Policy Institute reported that it would take 50 years to close the gap entirely (Hutchinson et al., 2018) and Slater, the DfE permanent secretary from 2016 – 2021, recently noted that since 2015 the government's focus on closing the gap has moved to academisation, resulting in a halt to the progress seen between 2010 and 2015 (Slater, 2022).

2.9 Profile of the disadvantaged group.

The underpinning policy belief seems to be maintained that academic achievement can only be secured by low SES pupils if they shun their own social background and assimilate themselves with the beliefs, language and behaviours seen in the middle classes (Plummer, 2000; Gerwitz, 2001; Gazeley & Dunne, 2005; Shain, 2016). However, the consequences of children conforming to the expectations of their social group cannot be disregarded, and is considered at length by Plummer (2000), who suggests that the failure of working class girls has gone unnoticed for a long time. Plummer (2000) points out that academic success serves to distance working class children from their

families, and explores the ‘class oppression’ a grammar school education creates (2000, p.xi) as children try to conceal their social class identity. This is a theme also broached by Walton (2018), who reports being annoyed and upset by his working class family’s remarks that he had become middle class since being employed as a headteacher. Whilst some have hailed grammar schools as successfully increasing social mobility, the political debate prior to the 2016 General Election around opening new selective schools reignited longstanding arguments about opportunity, accessibility and standards, demonstrating how this issue deeply divides opinion on their true contribution to reducing the social divide. Reay (2017, p. 34) reiterates Plummer’s arguments in referencing Theresa May’s claim that a meritocratic Britain could be achieved principally by expanding grammar schools (May, 2016). Reay (2017) also supports Plummer’s view that working class children lose all sense of belonging in grammar school, finding themselves cut off, isolated and confused. Social mobility is viewed as dislocating the educationally successful working classes from their communities of origin, regardless of gender (Reay, 2017, pp. 175-6). Blandford (2017) pushes against this argument, suggesting that there is confusion around the concept of social mobility being linked to class migration, but rather that it is embodied by the pursuit of improved life chances. Government policies appear to arise from the misguided notion that children need to be rescued from their social background. This theme is pursued at length by Reay (2017), who also picks up Connell’s argument (Connell, 1989) in asserting that there has been over a century of middle class domination within the state school system, with the symbolic power of the state school sector continuing to be viewed as embodying all that is best about English education. Despite being apparently abandoned following the 2016 election, the proposal has since rematerialized in the form of creating new annexes to existing selective schools which some Secretaries of State for Education, such as Damien Hinds, have apparently supported (Busby, 2018; Shipman & Griffiths, 2018).

Tomlinson argues that for working class boys it has never been socially acceptable among their peers to be studious whilst middle class males can still be viewed as masculine whilst succeeding academically, as for some Asian

cultures (2005, p. 198). However, girls do not fare much, if any, better as the 2019 GCSE results shown below in Table 2.4 demonstrate. The gap between FSM and non-FSM boys' attainment of grade 4+ in English and Maths is 27.6 percentage points. For the girls it is a 26.6 percentage point difference, so only 1 percent less than the boys. However, for those gaining both Maths and English at Grade 5+, the gap between the two groups of boys is 23.3 percentage points, whilst for the girls it is greater, standing at 25.2 percentage points, as shown in Table 2.4 below. The gap between the FSM girls and boys is the greatest of the three groups at 8.3 percentage points, with that between the white British boys and girls being 7.6 and the non FSM is 7.3 percentage points. In all groups in both measures, the girls outperform the boys.

Table 2.4: Attainment at GCSE in 2019 for White British and FSM split by gender (DfE, 2019c)

	% English & Maths Grade 4+	% English & Maths Grade 5+
White British boys	60.9	39.2
White British girls	68.5	46.0
FSM boys	37.3	20.0
FSM girls	45.6	25.0
Non FSM boys	64.9	43.3
Non FSM girls	72.2	50.2

Whilst it could be argued that the gap reduces between the FSM and non-FSM groups for both genders in the measures of higher achievement, this is a reflection of the overall lower attainment and only a quarter of FSM girls and a fifth of boys achieve grade 5+ in English and Maths in contrast to the non-FSM group which achieve more than double this. Regardless of the nature of the attainment gap, it is clear that it exists, and that the symbolic violence exerted by the school system on the working class group extends to both males and females (Blandford, 2017; Bourdieu, 1991; O. Jones, 2016; Reay, 2017). The gap has ceased to close and there is evidence that prior to the pandemic it had in fact begun to widen (Hutchinson et al., 2020).

2.10 Impacts of poverty on language development.

Poverty, however defined, can be seen to have a negative effect upon the likelihood of children achieving to their full potential academically. Children from low SES families often begin school already behind their peers from higher SES groups, and this is especially noticeable in the area of language and communication (Hancock, 2018). This 'word gap' is acknowledged in the DfE's report 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential (2017b, p. 8), which sets out the government's ambitions for improving social mobility through education and thus closing the gap. Over four years later the gap remains and grows. As Read (2016) points out, the risk of falling behind is much higher for children growing up in poverty, stating that in 2015 38% of 5 year old boys eligible for free school meals fell behind in early language and communication, which is almost double the national average of 20% (Read, 2016, p. 5). The 2018/19 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) data (FFT, 2019), for example, shows that 56.5% of pupils who were eligible for free school meals achieved a good level of development, which includes language and communication, by the end of the EYFS in contrast to 74.3% of all other pupils. The attainment gap in 2019 for the three areas of language and communication was around 10% lower for FSM eligible pupils compared to all others, whilst the Literacy Early Learning Goals showed the biggest lag for FSM pupils of all the areas, with Writing having the largest difference of all (FFT Education Data Lab, 2019), as shown in Tables 2.5 and 2.6 below.

Table 2.5: Attainment gap for FSM students by Early Learning Goal (FFT Education Data Lab, 2019)

Areas of language and communication	Listening and attention	Understanding	Speaking
% difference between FSM and all other pupils	-10.82	-10.6	-10.53

Table 2.6: Attainment gap for FSM students by Early Learning Goal (FFT Education Data Lab, 2019).

Literacy	Reading	Writing
% difference between FSM and all other pupils	-17.53	-17.89

The disparity is still evident in children two years older, at the end of Key Stage One, when the language measure is taken only through the medium of literacy skills. As Table 2.7 below demonstrates, the gap between the two groups in 2019 increased by around 1% compared to the EYFS results. The statistics for the Year 1 Phonics screening check show that that 70% of FSM eligible pupils reached the expected standard, in contrast to 84% of the non-FSM eligible group (DfE, 2019b). Whilst children are struggling with gaining proficiency in communication and language, as demonstrated in the 14% gap for phonic skills, they are unlikely to be successful in acquiring the skills to read and write effectively. This gap increases to 18% by the following year when the end of KS1 reading assessments take place, as shown in Table 2.7 below.

Table 2.7: Key Stage 1 assessments in England, 2019. (DfE, 2019d)

KS1 assessments	Reading	Writing
% FSM pupils	60	53
% All other pupils	78	72

As discussed earlier, the gap at Key Stage 2 widens to 21% and still further by GCSEs to 27.5% for English and Maths at Grade 4+, although these measures include a wider range of subjects, either Maths as well as English or the EBacc subjects. The way progress is measured and data is collated and reported changes not only over the different assessments carried out at various points across the education phases, but it also changes over time as different governments, education secretaries and departments make adjustments, modifications and reforms to their published data reports. This makes it more difficult to extract specifics and to make precise comparisons, but the broad

picture still clearly demonstrates that there is a disparity in the attainment of SES groups (Halfon et al., 2021).

The Ad Astra project undertaken by Puttick et al. (2020) worked with a group of school located in predominantly white working class ex-mining regions of the East Midlands. Poverty was understood in these schools as having five dimensions; poverty of language, of aspiration, of material resources, of experience and emotional poverty (Puttick et al., 2020). These were used as a basis for planning and reflection in the schools, providing a framework for provision to address the different aspects of each of the areas. It was noted that the teachers in these schools consistently believed emotional poverty to be the most important of the identified dimensions, with much being done to compensate for what they perceived children's home lives to be lacking as they tried to make the school 'homely' (Puttick et al., 2020, pp. 147-8). This conflicts with those who would argue poverty of language is the most important aspect to address, as without the necessary mastery of language children will not have the cultural capital they need to be able to understand and question the world (Beadle, 2020; Bourdieu, 1992; Fairclough, 2015; McGarvey, 2018).

The acquisition of language is critical to children being able to access their education and the curriculum effectively so they can make successful progress throughout their school lives (Beadle, 2020; Thompson & Dingwall, 2018). The fourth research question, 'how do the trainees understand the impact of poverty on language acquisition?', sought to consider the extent to which the participants articulated this aspect as a consequence of poverty. Having the necessary language skills enables children to think and reflect on their experiences, fuelling the desire to explore further and in so doing to become self-motivated, independent learners (Hancock, 2018; Tough, 1982). How children acquire language is discussed next, in order to consider whether variables within this process may have some effect on the differences seen between the competencies of the low and high SES groups. As children's knowledge of language can be seen to be a crucial factor in their chances of making good academic progress (Beadle, 2020; Kastner et al., 2001), the possible connections between low socio-economic status and weaker linguistic

skills are investigated with a view to considering whether and how these effects may be possible to mitigate to some degree within the school system.

Snow describes language as: ‘a highly complex skill … acquired with a very low failure rate’ (1986, p. 87). Exactly what ‘failure’ might look like is unclear, but there is a widely held view that some children do not acquire sufficient language to enable academic achievement in comparison to their peers (Demie & Lewis, 2014; Goodman & Gregg, 2010). Following the Covid-19 lockdowns, teachers have reported that some children are starting school even unable to say their own name (Woolcock, 2022). Bernstein (1975) suggested that the quantity and quality of linguistic exchange a child is exposed to at home is a strong indicator of their likely academic attainment. This is supported by Hart and Risley’s 1995 US longitudinal study involving 42 families from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The study set out to determine if and how the language exchanges in the families impacted on the children’s language and vocabulary acquisition. Over a four year period it was claimed that children from high SES families experienced over 30 million more words than those deemed the lowest status. It should be noted that there is no account taken of the potential effect of the observer on the conversations held during the data collection exercises in this study, and the number of words children experienced during that one hour period of the monthly observations then being extrapolated out to produce the numbers quoted as totals over the entire period. These methodological limitations could be suggested to reduce the validity of the study (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009). There is also the question of whether exposure to words necessarily translates directly to vocabulary size, or whether two separate measures were required. However, when the children reached nine to ten years of age a follow-up study which used various language development, vocabulary and reading comprehension measures, revealed a high correlation between the children exposed to more words and those showing a better rate of academic progress. This showed the initial study results as being a strong predictor of language skill over six years later (Hart & Risley, 2003).

Mercer and Littleton (2007, p. 2) suggested that the SES group gap that is evident as in Hart and Risley’s findings relates to opportunities to develop language as a tool for learning and is nothing to do with the differences which

reflect social origins. They believe that a lack of experience in ways of using language to develop problem solving capacity is what impacts negatively on academic attainment, recommending that schools should explicitly teach the type of language required to facilitate reasoning and working collaboratively, which would support learning and help to develop positive intellectual habits (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Tough (1982) also argues that the real problem with children from families in poverty is not that they lack language, but rather that the way in which they use it does not support their learning. As well as the number of words the children experienced, Hart and Risley (2003) also considered the nature of the utterances within the three SES groups in their longitudinal study, observing that children from the lowest SES families were exposed to a greater proportion of negative utterances than the children from other groups. This equated to the children in professional families receiving 560,000 more positive affirmations than prohibitions, producing a ratio of 6:1. Children in the lowest SES group were recipients of 144,000 fewer positives and 84,000 more prohibitions as compared to even the median SES group, with their ratio being 1:2 affirmatives to negative utterances arising from 125,000 more negatives than positives (Hart & Risely, 2003, pp. 5- 6).

Disparities in the rate and sequence of language development are known to occur, but then studying a sample of children will enable many differences to be identified between them, in any number of categories we choose to construct (Wells, 1986). The speed as well as the course of development can be examined, in relation to possible reasons for variations and also to the results of these – for instance the effect on school attainment. Wells (1986, p. 112) proposed a framework which would enable findings to be considered and within this states that social background is not seen to have a direct influence on children's linguistic behaviour. Rowland (2014) disagrees, citing many studies that have found children from high SES families acquire more language earlier than children from low SES families. The reason suggested is the language rich environment that appears to characterise high SES groups, but why they have this environment is not apparent. Rowland (2014) offers two possibilities, one of which may be the differing language skill sets of the parents. Research has found a correlation between parents' level of education and language use,

including the understanding of complex sentence constructions (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Street & Dabrowska, 2010). The other possibility suggested by Rowland (2014) is that SES groups have contrasting views about child language development, and this then has an effect on how they communicate with their children. Other studies have reported findings which support this hypothesis (Huttenlocher et al., 2002; Pye, 1991; Rowe, 2008).

2.11 Language use and social class.

A child who demonstrates poorer than expected communication skills for their age at the time of starting school (DfE, 2021e; Locke et al., 2002; Woolcock, 2022) will in turn find the development of the secondary language skills of reading and writing more challenging than their more verbally competent peers (Farrar, 2019). Bernstein's socio-linguistic theory showed that speech is generated by principles shaped by social class (Bernstein, 1975). Middle-class speech tends to be explicit, universal and abstract whereas working-class speech tends to be more restricted, implicit, particular and concrete. Bernstein (1975) suggested that middle-class children can move between restricted and elaborated code and can identify the context in which each should be used more readily. Working-class children do not have access to the elaborated code or the understanding of where it should be used. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) suggest that the language and curriculum found in school corresponds with the elaborated code of the middle class, relating to Labov (1970) and Halliday (2003), who suggest that those found to fail academically do so because their language is different from the norm in schools. Halliday (2003) notes that the teacher's stereotypical attitude towards a working-class child's use of language can play a part in bringing about educational failure, as children play out low expectations. Bourdieu believes that early childhood experience for more privileged children results in the intergenerational transfer of cultural capital, which includes symbolic mastery in the ability to use language to a certain level to enable understanding and the ability to critique the subject (Bourdieu, 1992). This therefore reproduces classed advantage, with this understanding of the world being assigned high value in educational settings as well as society in general (Friedman & Laurison, 2020). The knowledge of certain facts allows access to reading, which in turn leads to increased understanding and

possession of further facts (Beadle, 2020). This lack of cultural literacy then puts the pupil at a further disadvantage as they are marked out as different for poor general knowledge, exposing themselves as deficient, as Hirsch (2008) notes, trapped not only by poverty but also by the helplessness of their incomprehension.

Another aspect to be considered is the impact of reading on children's linguistic capabilities. It has been found that children with parents who read more to them are exposed to a wider range of vocabulary than children with parents who tend to read less (Fernald et al., 2013; McGillion et al., 2017). The accelerated vocabulary growth produced by reading to children early in life has the potential to rapidly increase the size of a child's vocabulary and as a result to improve school readiness (Rowe at al., 2012; Senechal et al., 1996). This is another aspect which contributes towards the more developed linguistic capabilities seen in children from higher SES families, as reading has been found to be more habitual for those groups than for children from lower SES households. There has also been found to be more instances of adult readers, particularly males, who act as role models to young children in higher SES households (Senechal et al., 1996; Thompson & Dingwall, 2018). The attainment gap is apparent in the phonics screening check, administered in school at the end of Year 1, with only 70% of FSM eligible pupils reaching the required standard of phonic decoding, in contrast to 84% of all other pupils (DfE, 2019b). This shows the difference in the reading skills of pupils about to enter their second year of the Key Stage One curriculum, with three out of every 10 FSM eligible children not at the expected standard for their year group. Furthermore, supporting the findings of Senechal et al. (1996) and Thompson & Dingwall (2018), only 65% of the FSM eligible boys pass the screening check, against 75% of FSM eligible girls (DfE, 2019b).

2.12 The role of schools in addressing the impact of poverty on educational outcomes.

It is evident that there are a range of factors which come in to play to produce the disparity in attainment seen in the statistics from school tests and examinations. The evidence suggests that the policies and initiatives put into place by successive governments over the last 50 or more years have done

little to narrow the socio-economic gap. In the foreword to the 2010 White Paper Gove, the then Secretary of State for Education, referred to the attainment gap as a 'tragedy' brought about by 'accidents of birth' (Gove, 2010, p. 6) and placed the full accountability for addressing the gap with the school system. This view has been contested since the time of Bernstein's (1970) claim that education cannot compensate for society (Lenon, 2018; Nightingale, 2018; Shain, 2016). However, there is much to suggest that teachers and other professionals misjudge the aspirations of disadvantaged pupils and their families and the value they place on education (Creasey, 2018; Cummings et al., 2012; O. Jones, 2016; Reay, 2017). Teachers may be operating from a deficit model and there may be discrepancies between their principles, beliefs and attitudes and those of their pupils' (Plummer, 2000; Reay, 2017; Thompson et al., 2016). In their critique of the Hart & Risley (1995) study, Dudley-Marling and Lucas (2009) argue that teachers must challenge the deficit discourses surrounding low SES pupils and take responsibility for addressing the differences in their pupils. Rather than attributing these differences to children's social and family backgrounds teachers must seek ways to build on the strengths these groups possess and moreover, must work on the assumption that all children are capable of success (Michaels, 2013). The media and political discourses place blame for poverty on individuals and families (Knight et al., 2018; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013). This supports Gove's move to place all accountability with the school system to address the so-called 'tragedy' (DfE, 2010, pp. 6 – 7), although it is not an accident that the dominant class reinforce the existing system that perpetuates their advantages and reduces choices through the oppression of the working class (Bourdieu, 1984,1986). This symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) is discussed further in section 2.31. The Teacher Standards (2011), however, do not explicitly mention any requirement to engage with poverty or social disadvantage (DfE, 2011). To meet Standard 5 teachers must demonstrate competence in adapting their teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils and some of the groups are specifically named. These are children with special educational needs; those of high ability; those with English as an additional language and those with disabilities (DfE, 2011, pp. 11-12). Whilst this is not proposed as an exhaustive list, children affected by poverty are conspicuous by

their absence from it. The Standards (2011) are written to apply to all teachers and not all will work in areas of high disadvantage, but society tends to be unequal and as previously discussed in this chapter, 31% of children live in poverty, with over half a million children experiencing destitution at some point in 2019 (JRF, 2022). Of the 8.1 million working-age adults in poverty, over 5.5 million live in families where at least one person is in work (JRF, 2022) so it cannot be assumed to be restricted to schools serving communities with high unemployment figures. It would seem therefore pertinent to suggest that trainee teachers could only benefit from some understanding and awareness of this position. Securing a place on an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) course would seem to imply a successful journey through the education system, and presumably the possession of a fairly positive opinion of it as demonstrated by the desire to forge a career in the profession. From this point of view, trainee teachers may well have a contrasting background and experience to pupils and families living in poverty, meaning that their understanding of the issues and needs of these pupils could be insufficient (H. Jones, 2016; O. Jones, 2016; Plummer, 2000; Reay, 2017).

In the early 2000s, Payne became a leading figure in the U.S. education system, having first published 'A Framework for Understanding Poverty' in 1995, professing to train teachers in how to help children in poverty by developing the attitudes and culture of the middle class (Payne, 2005). This attracted much critique from a range of education researchers, as a number found there was no significant and reliable cultural, world view, or value difference between those people living in poverty and those from any other socio-economic group (Wiederspan & Danziger, 2009), where Payne (2005) asserted that people in generational poverty were aggressive, disliked authority and were unable to regulate their own behaviour. Critics stated that there was, however, consistently seen to be a set of systemic, organisational, repressive conditions which disproportionately impact those in low socio-economic status groups, including a lack of access to quality housing, clean water, nutrition, education, healthcare and other basic needs (Gorski, 2008). Payne may have been working in the U.S., but the notion that the solution for children living in poverty is to be coached in the ways of the middle class reflects the argument

that some English schools' spending of the Pupil Premium Grant funding is focussed on the intention to bring about the 'middle-classification' of the working class (Gerwitz, 2001; Kulz, 2017; Shain, 2016). Payne (2005) states that as middle-class values predominate in schools it thereby follows that pupils in poverty cannot achieve academically without being taught middle-class philosophies, speech patterns, and behaviour norms. As Gorski (2008, p. 136) notes, "Payne (2005) exploits virtually every common stereotype of economically disadvantaged people: bad parenting, violent tendencies, criminality, promiscuity, and questionable morality". It was found that teachers receiving training, "from Payne's framework attributed a litany of vices to poor people including substance abuse, violence, sexual promiscuity, lack of ambition, and ignorance", although it could be argued that these attitudes were already held by the teachers before their training (Gorski, 2008, p. 138). Either way, this highlights the importance of any teachers' professional development programme in disrupting deficit views and banishing myths about the solution to poverty being to fix or change the poor, rather than the system that creates them. Without this, schools could, however unwittingly, be contributing to the persistence of the attainment gap.

More recently, there have been three projects specifically aimed at addressing poverty in schools in England, working with Children North East and CPAG (NEU, 2021). These projects, Poverty Proofing the School Day, The UK Cost of the School Day project and The National Education Union's No Child Left Behind campaign, have been identifying and reducing cost barriers in schools and working to raise staff awareness of the implications of poverty for pupils. These projects acknowledge that whilst schools cannot compensate for the inequality in society, they can make a difference (NEU, 2021, p. 8). By taking steps such as providing a full curriculum for all pupils, valuing the knowledge and experiences of all children and ensuring all staff understand the context and local community, schools can begin to erode the grip poverty exerts on children and young people (Gorad, 2010; NEU, 2021).

2.13 Effects of childhood poverty beyond statutory school age.

The continuing focus on raising the attainment of children from low income households is driven by the knowledge that the impact of poor academic

achievement is most often carried lifelong. McGuiness (2016, p. 7) notes that only one in eight children from a low socio-economic status (SES) family is likely to become a higher income earner as an adult. Research findings support this view that those spending their childhood in poverty have little hope of rising out of it in later life (Connell, 1994: Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Gazeley & Dunne, 2005; Goodman, 1971; Goodman & Gregg, 2010; Littler, 2018). This bleak outlook is also the view of McGuiness (2016, p. 25), who states that low educational attainment is the main factor in poor children becoming poor adults. Yet the attainment gap stubbornly persists throughout the compulsory education system. An ad hoc report by the DfE released in July 2018 shows that individuals eligible for FSM during Year 11 were 23% less likely to be in sustained employment at age 27 than their peers who were not eligible for FSM, and those eligible for FSM were also three times more likely to be in receipt of out-of-work benefits at the same age than their non-FSM peers (DfE, 2018b, pp. 5-6). There are assumptions and caveats on this data, but taken as presented it does appear to support the argument that poverty during childhood has a long term impact stretching into adulthood, and reinforces the economic justification for interventions to narrow the attainment gap.

While Payne (2005) suggests a range of stereotypical characteristics of those in generational poverty, Kidd (2018) argues that the chain of poverty passed from generation to generation is extremely difficult to break and that grouping children together as one homogenous mass, in the manner of Payne (2005), fails to recognise there are individual circumstances for every child. There are clear differences between situational and generational poverty identified, with situational poverty potentially being very short lived and having less long term negative impact. Kidd (2018) asserts that those living in generational poverty have had no experience of anything better to draw upon, with parents having little awareness of the possibilities for their children. Even when parents do have aspirations and ambitions for their family, they are unable to support their children towards achieving them. Ridge (2002) discusses children seeing their parents having to go without food themselves in order to feed their families, and Kidd (2018) notes how generational poverty is relentless, trapping families into a life of unremitting and oppressive burdens of debt, with negligible hope of

opportunities which might lead to something better. Blandford (2017) concurs with this view, calling for equality in the ability to make choices, connecting this to what social mobility should mean for the working class. Addressing these intergenerational factors is seen as critical to breaking the cycle of poverty (Blandford, 2017; Kidd, 2018; McGarvey, 2018), otherwise the children living in poverty today will become the parents of the children living in poverty tomorrow.

Considering academic attainment in schools and the attainment gap, it is then possible to look at the next stage of education to discern whether children who were FSM eligible continue to lag behind their peers. Whilst state educated pupils with the same prior attainment achieve more highly in their degree outcomes than those from independent schools (Green & Kynaston, 2019), the same cannot be said for those who were FSM eligible pupils (Hubble et al., 2021). The latter group are much less likely to attend university in the first place, particularly a prestigious one, and are more than twice as likely to drop out before their second year (Hubble et al., 2021; Stephens et al., 2014; Wainwright & Watts, 2021). The reproduction of class advantage continues with levels of education dictating access to elite occupations. Only around one in eight working-class people holds an undergraduate degree, and this being a prerequisite for many professions, such as medicine, dentistry and law, as well as a requirement for access to many top jobs, means that almost 90% of working class people are immediately excluded from the field of potential candidates (Friedman & Laurison, 2020). The link between education and social class remains strong, and provides a reason as to why many working class people remain in the same level of occupation and social class as their parents. Jenkins' (1982) critique of Bourdieu argues that the notion of cultural reproduction ignores the possibility of social mobility in regarding the working class as a homogenous group. Jenkins (1982, p. 278) believes that there is less determination than allowed for by Bourdieu and more agency, otherwise none of the working class would have ever ascended beyond their supposed predestined position. This may be the case for a small minority, but 30 years on from Jenkins' work there are still more privately educated Westminster School pupils going to Oxbridge than FSM eligible pupils from everywhere in Britain combined (Green & Kynaston, 2019). Although there are those with a

working-class background that do hold positions in some of the more elite occupations, their career trajectory and success tend to fall short when compared to those from a more privileged upbringing (Friedman & Laurison, 2020; Green & Kynaston, 2019). Faber (2017), however, rejects accusations of determinism as unfounded, pointing out that Bourdieu does allow for social change and such interpretations are too simplistic. Friedman and Laurison (2020) agree, positing that the social and cultural capitals held by individuals are the key to sustained career success, pointing to the significant pay gap that is evident even between those in the same jobs who hold similar educational qualifications but herald from different social classes.

Cipollone & Stich (2017) present the notion of shadow capital, which is bestowed by universities which fall outside the historically elite group. Although their research was carried out within the American education system, it could be argued to be just as applicable to the stratified English system, if not more so. The system in England is distinctive in comparison to other affluent countries in that participation in private schools is exclusive to the wealthy, and in turn is far more likely to lead to a place at one of the elite universities than attendance at a state school (Green & Kynaston, 2019, pp. 3 - 7). Cipollone and Stich (2017) argue that the high value capital accrued from elite universities is anticipated by low tariff university students, but shadow capital is the actual result with its much lower exchange value compared to the dominant capital. This then demonstrates how the inequality in education continues far beyond the school gate.

2.14 Implications for schools.

H. Jones (2016) carried out a study giving trainee teachers the opportunity to discuss their views around the issues of poverty. Through this research it became apparent that without the opportunity provided by such conversations the trainees may not have necessarily even been aware that others did not have the same opinions, values and beliefs as themselves. It is important that systems are in place to enable teachers to become aware of the harm that can be done by prejudice, labelling and low expectations which arise from deficit views of disadvantage (Gorski, 2012; Leighton, 2018; Thompson et al., 2016).

Gorman's research (2005, p. 704) was within a different profession, but may be equally valid amongst teachers as lawyers, as he suggests that we are much more likely to notice things which confirm a stereotype we subscribe to than if it is something that opposes our view. We also have strong tendencies to attach more negative qualities to a group we do not belong to, and we draw on what we know from stereotypes to furnish us with information about groups which we are not part of (Gorski, 2012). Therefore, because of these predispositions if a teacher has not been able to properly explore their own value system and the stereotypical ideas they may hold, to challenge their cultural and social assumptions about the impact of poverty or to question the deficit model they may accredit to disadvantaged pupils, then the prospect of low expectations and less effective teaching of these children appears to be a real risk (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009; Gorski, 2012; Leighton, 2018; Plummer, 2000; Reay, 2017; Thompson et al., 2016; Walton, 2018).

First-hand examples of the negative impact of teacher stereotyping and deficit viewpoints are not difficult to find. Leighton (2018, p. 390) shares painful accounts of how seemingly off-hand, casual but consistently negative comments made by teachers during his secondary school career had a devastating impact on his motivation and engagement, making him feel as though he was 'the stupidest person in the room'. He speaks compellingly about the effect of his teachers' low expectations for the boys from his council estate, and how this, coupled with his family's acceptance that he would follow on in their footsteps to a life of manual work, would have succeeded in sealing his fate had he not been championed by two new teachers arriving at his school. These teachers facilitated his transformation, resulting in a place at the Old Vic Theatre School and a remarkable subsequent career as not only an actor, but among other things, a university lecturer, actor, director and international speaker. This clearly demonstrates how the values and beliefs held by teachers drive their interactions with their pupils, and when these arise from a stereotypical deficit viewpoint they can have far reaching negative implications (Ampaw-Farr, 2018; Gorski, 2008; Plummer, 2000; Reay, 2017; Thompson et al., 2016).

Providing opportunities for teachers and other adults in the school community to discuss issues of poverty and to investigate and share their own opinions is suggested to be a vital step in helping to both address the deficit model and avoid potential mismatches between the understandings of staff and the needs of the children (H. Jones, 2016; Thompson et al., 2016; White & Murray, 2016). This begins in teacher education, where social justice teaching needs to be a fundamental component of preparation for the classroom, not an additional extra bolted on or squeezed in when possible (Goodwin & Darity, 2019; NEU, 2021).

Teachers need to be aware of the effects of poverty on their pupils, but also the part that they themselves can play in redressing the balance (NEU, 2021). Hindman et al. (2012) discuss the so-called 'Matthew Effect', which results in the children who start school with the strongest skills are the ones who show the fastest progress, which exacerbates the problem of the initial attainment gap (Ferguson et al., 2007). They believe that teachers who systematically expose children to high-quality teaching within a language rich environment facilitate their swift acquisition of new vocabulary, thus enabling those who are initially less adept linguistically to catch up with their more proficient peers. This view is supported by the findings of Huttenlocher et al. (2002) who found that children with teachers who produce many complex utterances containing more than one clause are often more adept at both understanding and producing complex sentences themselves. They discovered that the rate at which children developed grammar was strongly related to the proportion of complex sentences used by their teachers, and that this was demonstrated irrespective of the child's linguistic starting point. These findings make it very clear that habitually simplifying language for children is actually unhelpful with regard to language development. Ensuring in school that all adults' speech is rich and varied with ample use of techniques such as expanding, recasting and posing open questions will contribute positively to developing the communication skills of all pupils (Cleave et al., 2015; Huttenlocher et al., 2002).

The stereotypical view of working-class households as socially disorganised and intellectually deficient is contested by Moll et al. (1992), who suggest teachers need to recognise the funds of knowledge that children living in

poverty bring to school. They advocate teachers seeking a deeper understanding about the pupils' households and experiences by looking beyond the stereotypes and developing strong relationships with the families (1992, p. 137). Moll et al. (1992) acknowledge that funds of knowledge contrasts with the term 'culture', but argue the need for strategic knowledge and relationships within the local context which can then be utilised to inform classroom practice.

2.15 The role of initial teacher education and trainee teachers' perceptions of poverty.

There is a strong argument for a link between children living in poverty and poorer educational outcomes (DfE, 2015; Marmot, 2010; Strand, 2014; Thompson, 2017). If it is the case that teachers might be able to some extent begin to compensate for this (NEU, 2021), there are implications for ITE provision. Considering the continuing concerns about the attainment gap in schools there is little research examining the beliefs held by trainee teachers regarding the impact of poverty on this group of pupils (Ellis et al., 2016; Gazeley & Dunne, 2007; H. Jones, 2016; Robson et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2016; White & Murray, 2016). The first research question, 'How do trainee teachers describe poverty amongst primary age school children in England?', along with the second question, 'What are trainees' perceptions about the impacts of poverty on children in schools?', directly address this gap in the literature.

Trainees may have deeply engrained opinions about the causes of the achievement gap. H. Jones (2016) advocates that trainees should have the opportunities to come to understand the reasons for disadvantage, consider how they might aim for equity and how education may be limited in its powers to compensate for disadvantage. They should have an awareness of how their own opinions and values may, whether consciously or subconsciously, affect their own expectations and assessments of pupils (Plummer, 2000, p. 31). For example, gifted and talented children are often identified through their ability to communicate orally. These will be children who arrive at school able to learn quickly, with a wide vocabulary and a well-developed sense of social conventions, attributes related to oral ability and often ascribed to intelligence. The question should be asked as to whether those children are truly really

gifted and talented, or whether they are just comparatively advanced due to home support which has coached them in these qualities (Hart & Risley, 1995; Rask & Paliokosta, 2012). The research carried out by H. Jones (2016) suggests that trainees welcomed the chance to discuss opinions around poverty and this demonstrates that without the opportunity to have such conversations trainees will not necessarily be aware that others may not hold the same values, beliefs and opinions as they do themselves. Harm can be done by teacher prejudice, labelling and low expectations arising from deficit views of disadvantage (Gorski, 2012; Leighton, 2018; Thompson, 2017) and this needs to be avoided (NEU, 2021).

Along with the importance of supporting language acquisition as discussed in section 2.25, it is critical that trainees understand school's wider role in tackling the impacts of poverty. As promoted by the National Education Union (NEU, 2021, pp. 8 - 13), schools can make a difference by challenging and removing the constraints that poverty places on pupils, ensuring an equity of provision and creating an inclusive experience for all children. Perceptions of poverty can be seen to be important as the NEU guidance (2021) specifies talking to children about poverty in order to reduce stigma and negative attitudes, which implies the teacher is not operating from a deficit model themselves. If they are to be able to facilitate such conversations, and 'remodel negative language' (NEU, 2021, p. 17), then teachers need to be aware of their own values, opinions and beliefs to ensure that they do not inadvertently exclude children in poverty or discriminate against them in their own use of language (NEU, 2021, p. 19). The NEU (2021, p. 22) acknowledges that 'many people' believe poverty is no longer an issue or have the opinion that people in poverty should find employment or work longer hours, with the implication being that teachers would not think these things. It is important therefore that trainees do not hold deficit stereotypical viewpoints so that they are able to actively participate in the inclusive ethos expected in schools.

Thompson et al. (2016, p. 4) discuss the paucity of research in England which has explored the extent to which teacher training programmes prepare new teachers for the inequalities arising from poverty. The question of whether awareness of the difficulties faced by low SES families can be raised through

investigating the use of the Pupil Premium Grant funding in schools, and if the reasons for the challenges faced are properly understood, require further research. Also the extent to which trainees hold, or are aware they hold, stereotypical ideas about disadvantaged pupils is another area which would benefit from exploration. This research study sought to address the lack of research by further building on the small amount which has already been carried out (Ellis, et al., 2016; Gazeley & Dunne, 2007; H. Jones, 2016; Robson et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2016; White & Murray, 2016). The fifth research question, 'are there any perceptible shifts in opinions over the duration of the programme?' aimed to discern whether any impact from undertaking the PGCE programme could be seen.

Limited research has been conducted around unconscious, or implicit, bias in the classroom with regard to poverty or social class, but there are studies which demonstrate that this phenomenon can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, where the stereotyped group begins to behave as expected even when this was initially not the case (Dee & Gershenson, 2017). Having low expectations of the abilities or behaviours of particular pupils is something that must be avoided, as this will be communicated to the children whether consciously not, resulting in negative outcomes (Ampaw-Farr, 2018; Leighton, 2018). The school workforce consists of 90% white British teachers (2018d), taken along with the recruitment to an ITE course requiring passes at GCSE level in English, Maths and a science, it can be seen that whilst there are no data collected on the social class or previous FSM status of teachers, only 44.7% of FSM eligible pupils gained English and Maths at GCSE in 2019 (DfE, 2020b) before the added factor of a science, so the proportion of these pupils that would be able to access a course conferring qualified teacher status is comparatively low. This may then translate into an effective screening out of many with experience of living in poverty, meaning that the teacher workforce may be in general middle class, white and relatively affluent (Small, 2018). Those that do herald from more disadvantaged backgrounds may be assimilated into the profession, with a shift in their identity as they take on middle class values and beliefs commensurate with their colleagues (Walton, 2018).

Of the few studies that specifically consider trainee teachers' perceptions of poverty, the difficulty of discussing what can be a sensitive topic is highlighted. Researchers observe how talking about any aspects of disadvantage and poverty can be challenging as participants struggle not to offend, to say the wrong thing, or say what they believe a teacher should say, and this can be made worse by the introduction of issues of social class into the discussion (Dunne & Gazeley, 2008; H. Jones, 2016). Dunne and Gazeley (2008) explored the connections between teachers' understandings of social class and underachievement, wanting to see how this impacted on their pedagogies. They found there was a strong tendency for teachers to feel very uncomfortable about discussing social class, with some even declining to contribute. Reay (2017) stresses the importance of understanding the significance of social class in education, considering class identity and the effects of this on educational experience as a great concern within the current system. Reay echoes Bourdieu's notions of social and cultural capital, which illuminate the ways in which social inequality has been reproduced through the education system. White and Murray (2016) also found difficulties whilst they were carrying out research into trainees' perceptions of poverty and effective teaching of disadvantaged pupils. They reported the awkwardness and reticence of trainees in discussing links between social class and poverty, reflecting Dunne and Gazeley's (2008) experience. The research that has been carried out in this area suggests that is it challenging to involve trainees in a meaningful discussion, but when this has been achieved all the studies have found that to a varying extent the opinions revealed show a lack of awareness and understanding of the issues, particularly as highlighted by Reay (2017) and Plummer (2000). The opinions and beliefs aired in the research mirror the dominant narratives which Gilbert (2018, p. iii) calls teachers to challenge, asking questions which enable a readjustment of their mental model around the education of what he suggests are often viewed as 'the feckless poor'. Trainee teachers need to understand social mobility, and not in terms of helping children escape from their working class background, but rather of improving their choices and life chances to make a positive difference for all involved (Blandford, 2017; O. Jones, 2016; Kidd, 2018; Littler, 2018).

Robson et al. (2021) carried out their research with PGCE trainees at a Scottish university finding that the 40% of their respondents self-identified as having a low income which they suggest explains that the trainees were able to recognise the realities and impacts of poverty. In contrast, researching at Oxford University Thompson et al. noted that 82% of their 157 participants could reasonably be assumed to come from backgrounds where poverty was not an issue (2016, p. 221). These differences could indicate the impact of the context of the research study, with Oxford being an elite institution and therefore attracting more middle-class students to its courses. Robson et al. (2021) found their participants showed a clear understanding of the relationship between poverty and attainment. Thompson (2017) discussed the point that there is a different government structure in Scotland and this where Robson et al. (2021) conducted their research, so the solution-focused approach Scotland has with its strong emphasis on reducing inequalities in educational attainment, may have informed their participants' understanding. Robson et al.'s (2021) study also noted that their participants demonstrated a nuanced understanding of poverty, for example by considering political views and the relationship to empowerment. The other studies however report a more naïve approach, with trainees often solely equating poverty with a lack of sufficient household income (H. Jones, 2016; Thompson et al., 2016; White & Murray, 2016). However, Robson et al. (2021, p. 113) did note that their trainees related poverty to appearance and hygiene standards, but contrary to this they were also able to acknowledge pupils may not, 'come in dirty faced and barefoot'. Robson et al. (2021, p. 114) acknowledged that their findings differ from those of previous studies (Ellis et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2016; White & Murray, 2016) in that they did not discover many trainees with deficit attitudes towards the impacts of poverty on pupils. Alongside those cited by Robson et al. (2021) there is also H. Jones' small scale 2016 study in the North East of England. This found a diverse range of opinions expressed, but amongst these there was evidence of some strongly negative opinions (2016, pp. 475 – 476), so this is also in line with the findings from the other English studies. The researchers call for further exploration of the topic, which this study sought to provide, and more robust opportunities for discussion of social justice embedded in ITE programmes (H. Jones, 2016; Robson et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2016).

2.16 Identity Theory and Teacher Education.

Gilbert (2018) appeals to teachers to readjust their mental model regarding the dominant narratives surrounding the education of disadvantaged children. Trainee teachers undergo changes in many aspects throughout the duration of their teacher training course and beyond. Their view of the world is changed, and they are presented with challenges to their perceived understandings. Identities are an important influence on how people view themselves and how they understand others, which is a key aspect of the transformation in the professional identity narrative to the role of teacher (Boyd et al., 2015).

Erikson (1968) saw identity as answering questions of who you are and what you stand for, viewing identity as achieving a stable and consistent self. However, Mead (1972) understood identity in relation to linguistically recognised social positions and roles, such as that of school teacher, with oneself as a participant in those roles defined by a historically constituted set of social activities. Mead (1972) believed that identities could be multiple and may include conflicting moral stances. Holland and Lachicotte (2007) present an approach to identity theory following Mead (1972), proposing that identities are developed as products of social and cultural experience, shaped through interactions with others in both social and professional contexts. The formation of professional identity is moulded by the demands and motives involved in becoming a professional (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007, p. 134). These demands are numerous and often in opposition. This illuminates the transformation to becoming a teacher, for example a trainee may have an opinion of a particular social class, but needs to be able to recognise it in order to take on a different attitude when interacting with those children and families in a professional role. If the opposing stance is retained elsewhere within their identity this may still be perceived by the children (Ampaw-Farr, 2018).

As individuals we create our own meanings of and about things that happen around us in order to make sense of them. The social world is shaped by the interactions of the people residing within it. However, as part of a social group there are objective realities that we live among and are born into that we have little power to change (Ballantine et al., 2018). Whilst individuals have some agency, where they are in the structure of society dictates how much that is the

case and how much individuals operate within the strictures placed upon them. Those in power have more opportunity to manipulate, or maintain, the system to their own advantage. Therefore, different social groups have different views of the world (Pring, 2000).

Research suggests that to challenge the social inequality seen in schools, teacher quality and teacher education are key factors (McKinsey, 2007; OECD, 2016). Reay (2017) argues powerfully that the whole education system would need overhauling in order to successfully address the class constraints that constitute symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990) enacted on pupils from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Reay (2017) discusses the separating of pupils of different social classes in schools and the damaging effects of this practice. This is highlighted in the Social Mobility Commission report (2020) as a key recommendation, arguing that more diversity achieved through greater social interspersing in schools would particularly support the educational outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. The segregation of classes reflects the liminal spaces discussed by Puttick et al. (2020) as complex and multifaceted constructions, not only encompassing physical space and environment, but also language and behaviour. Bruner (1960) and Vygotsky (1987) both argued that learning is a collaborative and co-operative venture, therefore requiring adequate linguistic skills to enable the necessary communication. Understanding the links between social class, poverty and language acquisition are therefore critical in teacher education, in order to ensure that an appropriate environment can be created to facilitate learning for all pupils. It can be seen that poverty and social class are intertwined, and that educational outcomes are impacted by the group that pupils belong to. This in turn has implications for teacher education, in ensuring that effective pedagogy is practiced which works to support disadvantaged pupils' needs (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009; Thompson, 2017).

Trainee teachers undergo personal changes in many aspects throughout the duration of their teacher education course and beyond. They experience a transformation from their previous role, whatever that may have been, to that of professional teacher (Izadinia, 2013). As trainee teachers, a significant aspect of their personal identity will arise from their own prior experiences as learners.

Teachers are shaped by their own teachers, so the trainees will have a pre-existing opinion of what a teacher is, based on their years of observations in educational settings (Lortie, 2002). Once they are inducted into the classroom in the role of teacher their view of the world is changed, and they are presented with challenges to their perceived understandings. Considering their own positionality is necessary to become conscious of deep seated opinions and beliefs before they can begin to contemplate the impact these may have on their teaching, as well as on their relationships and interactions with children and other stakeholders in schools and beyond (Gorski, 2012; H. Jones, 2016; Thompson et al., 2016).

Vygotskian concepts contribute to Holland and Lachicotte's theoretical formulation, in that Vygotsky, like Mead, saw self as a complex emergent phenomenon, produced in and by individuals as they interact with each other and the world (Vygotsky, 1978). This is directly linked to the change trainees undergo during their training, taking on the role of class teacher in a professional environment that is often unfamiliar to them in that particular role, encountering children living in circumstances outside their own understanding and experience in many cases (Goodwin & Darity, 2019; Gorski, 2012). The situations which trainees may be exposed to during school placements could be challenging and possibly distressing but will shape and change their identities on many levels. Teacher educators need to ensure that the trainees' understanding of the issues surrounding poverty are, where necessary, part of that change (Ellis et al., 2016; Goodwin & Darity, 2019; H. Jones, 2016).

Considering identity, and how this may develop and change over the duration of the ITE programme, is underpinned by the paradigm of constructivism, as described by Guba and Lincoln (1994). The trainees are not being viewed as empty vessels to be filled up with knowledge, but rather as constructing meaning through their engagement with the world, and more specifically with their school placements and the other trainees within the focus groups in this study. Whilst information might be passively received, understanding cannot be, but rather arises from their ability to make meaningful connections between their prior knowledge, new knowledge, and the processes involved in becoming professional teachers, with particular focus on their beliefs about poverty. This

collaborative process of working together to create knowledge and understanding follows Vygotsky (1978) and his notion of social constructivism. There is no assumption to be made that trainee teachers necessarily hold stereotypical deficit views, and therefore this aspect of their identity may not need to change over the duration of the course, but this study sought to discover whether there were trainees who did provide evidence that this aspect of the training course may require further development.

2.17 Conceptualising Social Class.

Through the discussion it is clear that issues of social class are intertwined with considerations of poverty, low SES groups and attainment. Kraus et al. (2011) propose that social class is the most inexorable basis to social hierarchy rankings. Weber (1993) believed that wealth was not enough to determine these rankings, but that power and prestige were also part of the stratification. Although broadening the Marxist concept of class, critics argued that this view was too simplistic and polarised, failing to take account of the interconnected nature of these descriptions of class (B. Jones, 1975). The Nuffield class schema, which was devised in the 1970s, ranks people into seven main classes according to their profession and employment status (Savage et al., 2013). However, this occupationally based class schema does not efficiently encapsulate the role of cultural and social processes in creating the social hierarchy. Using the BBCs 'Great British Class Survey' of 2011, Savage et al. (2013) produced a more nuanced scale which they suggest demonstrates social polarisation in British society, including divisions within the middle rankings and the emergence of previously unrecognised groups. Bourdieu's theory of capitals (1986) is drawn into this new model, demonstrating how measures of social, economic and cultural capital can be merged to produce a robust description of prevailing class divisions (Savage et al., 2013). It is argued however, that researchers may find the complexity of describing the more abstract notions of social and cultural capital challenging, meaning that socio-economic status, combined with educational attainment, is more concrete and readily quantifiable and therefore more often used (Berger & Archer, 2015). Hancock (2018) notes it has been acknowledged that eligibility for PPG funding is the best measure available to define the working class group in schools. In

conflict with this, the Education Committee report (Stuart et al., 2014), 'Underachievement in Education by White Working Class Children', points out that the percentage of FSM pupils is much lower than that of the general population who self-identify as working class, meaning that if 20.8% of children are currently FSM eligible it cannot therefore follow that 79.2% of school children are middle class when only 43% of the population identify as being middle class or above (Stuart et al., 2014).

2.18 Bourdieu: Capitals, Habitus and Field.

It seems apparent from the consideration of the literature surrounding the topic of poverty and its impact on children in schools that some issues could be usefully considered through the lens of Bourdieu's theory of capital, habitus and field (1984). Poverty is not restricted to the working class, nor does the working class inevitably mean poverty, but in debating these issues and in considering children living in poverty, social class and related assumptions emerge almost unbidden. Bourdieu reasoned that more hierarchical societies tend towards more restricted social mobility (Bourdieu, 1984). Capitals, as defined by Bourdieu, can provide an interpretation of power relations that drive the continued replication of differences between the social groups (Kulz, 2017). Bourdieu argued that each person resides in society within different social and institutional arenas, which he called fields (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Individuals are located in fields according to their capital resources. Bourdieu (1986) identified three forms of capital which he labelled as economic, social and cultural.

Economic capital refers to material wealth, including that which could be converted into money, such as property and land (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). Social capital consists of the actual or potential resources linked to a social network; the connections which bring opportunities or access to other networks that provide advantages and broaden choices. These networks are expressions of power relations, so those from the middle and upper classes can convert their social capital networks into personal advantage (Watson, 2018). An example of these links between social capital and advantage can be seen in the number of Eton and Oxbridge alumni occupying elite roles, such as three quarters of senior judges and three fifths of the Cabinet (Green & Kynaston,

2019, p. 12). Cultural capital exists in different forms, which Bourdieu (1986) described as the institutionalised state referring to educational attainment, the embodied state equating to knowledge, mannerisms and behaviour including the accent or dialect spoken, and the objectified state relating to tangible cultural items possessed, such as works of art and books. Cultural capital is considered fundamental to the advantage that the middle classes gain through education. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argued that middle classes perform so well in education because the curriculum and pedagogy in schools corresponds with the practices of the middle class home, whereas for working class children these key aspects of school are unknown and alien.

Habitus is the embodiment of cultural capital, in the way that the understanding of how to navigate familiar social situations becomes innate over time as socialisation into the particular group takes place (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). For example, habitus enables some people to feel 'at home' attending a black tie dinner, whilst others would find walking down a night time street in a crime ridden area far less intimidating because they are used to that environment. Habitus also encompasses 'taste' for particular food, clothes and music. Gluck (2019) identified clothing choices as being indicative of social class as people may align with their social group via cultural practices used to express personal identity, often being through appearance, such as clothing, haircuts and other features such as piercings. Wearing the 'right' clothes and sporting a particular hairstyle signifies membership of a particular social group, an aspect which may be manipulated by schools through their uniform codes (Kulz, 2017). For Bourdieu, habitus is formed by not only the life experience of the individual, but also of the family and the class to which the individual belongs, making habitus uniform and yet diverse for every individual it encompasses (Bourdieu, 1990b).

Bourdieu (1984) described the world as being sectioned into different arenas, such as education, art, religion and law, labelling these as fields. Each field has its own set of rules and practices, and within those fields there will be people with agency to utilise their capitals to gain positions of power, and those who will not. Whilst encounters in fields that have created the habitus go unnoticed and are like 'a fish in water' for the individual, experiences of new fields can re-shape the habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). However, as Reay (1997;

2004) describes, working-class habitus can be still embodied when individuals within the field of education identify as middle class which generates doubt, anxiety and a sense of alienation, as habitus continues to operate after the objective conditions of its production have been left behind (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 13). Within these fields, Bourdieu noted that the power differential results in what he termed as 'symbolic violence' being enacted through the imposition of the norms of the dominant group on those who are subordinate (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This 'violence' is an unconscious reinforcement by the dominant agents, resulting in the reproduction of the inequalities in society as the powerful thus retain their power.

2.19 Capitals, Social Class and Education.

The exposition of cultural capital as a fundamental key to better educational outcomes has been promoted by Ofsted (2019), who draw on the DfE's aim in the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) stating children will be introduced to 'the best that has been thought and said'. To achieve this Ofsted (2019) devised a new education inspection framework that includes the requirement for schools to develop pupils' cultural capital. The use of Mathew Arnold's phrasing from his 1869 essay 'Culture and Anarchy', alongside Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), has the potential to be used, whether consciously or not, to entrench notions of class structure. The introduction of cultural capital in the Ofsted Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2019) has been highly criticised as elitist and also naïve in the assumption the embodiment of cultural capital can be isolated and taught to the working class (Mansell, 2019). It conveys the clear assumption that some cultures are of higher value than others, and some suggest the question should be posed as to whether this 'middle-classification' of all pupils is either necessary or desirable (Mansell, 2019; Shain, 2016).

The difference in parenting strategies between the working and middle class is explored by Lareau (2011) who suggests that the classes have diverse approaches, with the middle class viewing it necessary to provide extensive support for their children. Seen through consistent engagement in conversation and debate, along with extra-curricular activities and proactive assistance with homework (Fitzmaurice et al., 2021), the intensive nurturing of Bourdieu's symbolic mastery occurs (Bourdieu, 1979). Working class families are equally

dedicated to ensuring their children thrive, but adopt a very different parenting approach (Lareau, 2011). The children spend a lot of time entertaining themselves, in stark contrast to the middle class need to micromanage children's every waking moment. The working class have a much greater belief in their children's independence, as well as having more financial constraints, which together drive the different approach to their role. Lareau (2011), like Labov (1970), emphasised that neither approach is superior from the child development view, however there are educational and societal advantages conferred by the middle class approach, an effect seen in England (Devine, 2004; Friedman & Laurison, 2020; Green & Kynaston, 2019; Reay, 2017), as well as in the US where Lareau's research was conducted. Lenon (2018) contests that the difference in parenting is not by choice but is a financial issue, due to low income families having to work long hours and being under much higher levels of stress, which reduces their opportunities for quality family time. When family time is possible, they lack the financial access to cultural capital which would have a positive impact on educational progress for their children (Lenon, 2018).

The choice of sport and its connection with class is viewed by Bourdieu (1984) as a form of cultural and social capital. He asserts that certain sports are strongly associated with specific classes. Private schools are used by the middle and upper classes to protect and maintain high status positions in sport as well as other areas of the economy perhaps more usually identified, such as politics, law and finance (Beadle, 2020; Reay, 2017). Reay (2017, p. 45) demonstrates this by considering the percentage of participants in the GB team at the Rio Olympic games, citing the number of athletes drawn from private schools being four times that of the proportion attending such schools out of the general population. Over a third of sporting internationals and Olympic medallists since 2000 have been privately educated (Green & Kynaston, 2019, p. 6), along with 37% of rugby internationals and 43% of the England cricket team (Sutton Trust & Social Mobility Commission, 2019). Football is noted as the only profession in which the privately educated are under-represented (Sutton Trust & Social Mobility Commission, 2019). Beadle (2018) argues that football is little more than a diversionary tactic to keep the working class busy in

directing their aggression towards one another rather than in putting their efforts into rising up against their oppressors. He also notes that schools who try to use footballers as role models are badly deluded on many levels, whilst unconsciously perpetuating the myth that the only way for the working class to escape their life of poverty is to become good at sport (Beadle, 2018). However, it provides a convenient excuse for not engaging with education if you are going to become a professional footballer, and while this illusion is maintained attention is taken away from learning allowing the attainment gap to widen still further (Beadle, 2018, 2020).

Bourdieu (1986) argued that white working-class children follow the habitus by identifying the space occupied by their parents as their own, and so excluding themselves from other possibilities. Social class, education, upbringing and past choices all form part of the habitus and determines to some extent the behaviour of an agent in the field. Therefore, a child from a middle class background is more likely to succeed within the British education system as their capital is in the right currency and their habitus is aligned to the expectations of the school. In their 2019 joint report the Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission found that there has been only a minimal reduction in the number of the elite who were privately educated in the period from 2014 to 2019, with 7% of the population being privately educated compared to 39% of the elite. The report asserts that the country's power structures are dominated by a very narrow section of society (Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission, 2019), supporting Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Although education is seen as a key to social mobility, when the education system fails the working class they take the only route open to them, that made by their parents. This is supported by Leighton (2018), who describes the route into manual work that his parents fully expected him to take in life, following on from his father. However, Reay argues that habitus does not need to be interpreted as predetermining a person's life course, rather that it influences a person's life trajectory (Reay, 2004).

The so-called glass ceiling and floor work effectively to prevent deprived children from securing the top jobs, despite academic potential to do so

(Friedman & Laurison, 2020). University admissions to Oxbridge however, show no sign of closing the gap between offers to privately educated pupils and those to state educated ones. Over one thousand six hundred state schools have not had any sixth formers at all accepted, whilst the number from Westminster School having gone to Oxbridge exceeds the entire number of FSM pupils from everywhere in Britain (Green & Kynaston, 2019, p. 11). Hewlett (2021) argues the drive to radically lower the number of children from private schools that are accessing Oxbridge cannot be seen through any other lens than a discriminatory one. He believes this initiative will damage the Oxford and Cambridge brand, running a real risk of diluting it and meaning extremely able children in the country who would otherwise have gone to the pillars of excellence in education being denied a place. Hewlett (2021) posits that genuine caution is required in going down the route of saying we no longer believe in a meritocracy. As head of St Dunstan's College, he is perhaps defending his own and his pupils' position, demonstrating Bourdieu's claims about the education system reproducing the culture of the dominant classes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Chair of The Sutton Trust, Lampl (2021) strongly contests this view, reasoning that children coming out of private school have got such strong essential skills they would go to Durham or Bristol if there were not sufficient places at Oxbridge, and this would not have any impact on their longer term life chances and opportunities. Attributes such as articulacy, confidence, working well together and connections are all things that reside within the habitus of the middle class rather than that of the working class. They are the things that privately educated children gain from their schooling which state school children do not. Friedman and Laurison (2020) concur, reporting that two thirds of middle-class students gaining a first-class degree from a Russell Group university are employed into an elite profession, compared to less than half of working-class students with the same degree. More striking still is their finding that those from a privileged background who achieve a lower second-class degree are much more likely to enter a top job than working-class students who hold a first. Even those who do gain employment into an elite profession earn on average 16% less than colleagues from a privileged background (Friedman & Laurison, 2020, p. 21).

Leighton (2018) argues that the key lies with the teacher, in their mindset and belief in their pupils, noting however that family expectations also play a powerful role. In order to 'fit in' Evans (2006) suggested that children learn what is expected of them to keep their teachers happy. This notion is supported by the experiences described by Reay (2017) and Plummer (2000), and in Kulz's findings at Dreamfields Academy (2017). Ingram (2009) stated that boys who achieve academically often become ambivalent to or resist their local identity, believing that they need to reject their working class identity in order to 'fit in' to achievement. This notion is not restricted to boys, as Plummer (2000) argues from her own experience. Liking the teacher and believing that they like and respect you is a concept that is not necessarily the norm for working class children (Ampaw-Farr, 2018). This is reflected by the experience of Leighton (2018, p. 388), who describes the transition between a school with teachers who were invested in the children's futures and were 'strict but always fair', to one with teachers who showed no like or respect for him, regardless of his efforts. He found the ethos of high expectation at his primary school replaced by a secondary school which existed solely to prepare the majority as 'factory fodder'. The teachers lacked 'unconditional positive regard' and their low expectations consistently made him feel as though he was 'the stupidest person in the room' (Leighton, 2018, p. 390). This, coupled with his family's low expectations, had a destructive impact on his education, extinguishing his self-belief and confidence, as well as any aspirations.

Bourdieu's theories illuminate the understanding that there are forces at work within schools which may sustain and replicate the awareness of children who are living in poverty of being like a fish out of water (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127), and this is likely to be also related to social class. Schools may not be able to compensate for society, but they should not be arenas of reproduction obstructing children's engagement with learning and pigeonholing groups arising from misapprehensions and unconscious bias.

2.20 Epigraphs.

Following Bourdieu (Speller, 2011), epigraphs are used throughout this thesis employing quotations from the song, 'Common People' (Cocker et al., 1995). Cocker (1995) draws on his own experiences to expound the argument put

forward in the song; ‘It seemed to be in the air, that kind of patronising social voyeurism... But if you walk round a council estate, there's plenty of savagery and not much nobility going on’, (Worthington, 2006). The song offers a critique of gentrification and middle-class people ascribing glamour to poverty; a condition which Cocker argues they do not, and cannot, understand. This phenomenon is referred to as ‘class tourism’ by Cocker (Worthington, 2006). The term relates to the phenomenon of ‘slum tourism’ from the middle-class 19th century trips made around the London area of Shoreditch to look at how poor people lived (Gluck, 2019), also referred to as ‘poverty porn’ in reference to what might be described as the modern day equivalent of documentaries such as ‘Skint’ and ‘Benefits Britain: Life on the Dole’ (Paul, 2013). These programmes seem only intent on compounding stereotypes, as people living in poverty are objectified and vilified for the amusement of others. The notion of class tourism also relates to cultural appropriation of fashion, which operates as a cultural system with trends functioning as class distinction and class emulation (Bourdieu, 1984). Orwell spent some time living in self-imposed poverty, glamourising the condition in his novel, ‘Down and Out in Paris and London’ (1933). Class tourism in fashion involves the misappropriation of styles or logos taken directly from lower socio-economic status groups, but represents a temporary choice that can be abandoned at any given moment by the middle-class consumer without consequence (Gluck, 2019). This has clear parallels with the ideas of Cocker (1995) as the real lived experiences of those in poverty need to be fully understood, and this is challenging to achieve. The true experience of poverty cannot be gained by those simply looking in like Orwell (1933), not least as there is no prospect of relief from any quarter (Gluck, 2019) which Common People (Cocker, 1995) encapsulates in its lyrics. As Leighton (2018, p. 389) argues, ‘Every interaction with everyone at every moment is a subtle development of habit-forming beliefs and behaviours.’ Therefore, when these interactions are with a teacher who holds stereotypical deficit beliefs about the working class and poverty, low expectations can rapidly become entrenched for the disadvantaged child.

2.21 In conclusion.

There is an attainment gap in educational outcomes linked to the socio-economic status of pupils, which may well worsen with the continuance of public sector cuts alongside the rise in the cost of living, affecting the disadvantaged most acutely. Children's language development is argued to be negatively affected by living in poverty and these effects go beyond grammar and vocabulary, appearing to have an impact on cognitive ability which has ramifications for general academic success (Hancock, 2018). The attainment gap which exists between the FSM eligible pupils and the non-eligible group shows no sign of closing, despite initiatives such as the PPG funding. The link between social class and educational outcomes is stronger in England than in most other countries (Bell, 2021; Lenon, 2018). This supports Bourdieu's argument that symbolic violence is being enacted on working-class children in school, as the system is constructed to reproduce class inequalities conferring advantage to the middle classes (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The curriculum and pedagogy favour the elaborated code understood by the middle class, a group to which many teachers belong or become subsumed by on entering the profession, thus reinforcing the status quo. Unconscious bias and stereotypical opinions mean that negative assumptions are made about working-class children that can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Leighton, 2018). Teachers and other adults in school need an awareness of their understandings of issues and effects of social justice, otherwise a stereotypical deficit view of families living in poverty can result. Harm can be done by prejudice and labelling which arise from deficit views of disadvantage, which may in turn lead to low expectations, assessments and outcomes (Gorski, 2012; Plummer, 2000; Thompson et al., 2016). For the trainee teachers this aspect of their professional development is crucial, and social justice needs to be an integral part of their preparation to enter the profession with opportunities being provided to come to understand the reasons for disadvantage and to consider how they might aim for equity (H. Jones, 2016). Kulz (2017) asserts the need for teacher training to confront issues of class bias, as poverty and the demonisation of the poor blights the very fabric of society. We live in a world where there are no throw-away children, we need to value them all and strive for equity (Goodwin & Darity, 2019, p. 74).

Using Bourdieu's notions of capitals, habitus and field as a lens for the study, alongside identity theory for the panel study group, enabled a focus on the trainees' perceptions of poverty as they became professional teachers. For the trend study groups this was a snapshot view, whilst for the panel study their opinions were sampled on three separate occasions over the course of their programme. There was no assumption to be made that they did hold stereotypical deficit views and this aspect of their identity may not have changed over the duration of their training, but the study aimed to discover whether in the participant groups there were trainees who provided evidence that this aspect of the course may require further attention. In the context of facilitating conversations about inequality during the ITE programmes, the protected characteristics may be discussed but issues related to social class are unlikely to arise. If there are gaps in trainees' understanding giving rise to deficit views such conversations may be needed to challenge their existing dispositions regarding social class. Therefore, without explicitly considering the educational impacts of poverty and low social mobility, opportunities to modify the individual habitus of trainees are missed. The use of Bourdieu's theory will provide an appropriate lens to help illuminate the research questions outlined at the end of Chapter 1 and shown below:

1. How do trainee teachers describe poverty amongst primary age school children in England?
2. What are trainees' perceptions about the impacts of poverty on children in schools?
3. What aspects of poverty do the trainees particularly emphasise, if any?
4. How do the trainees understand the impact of poverty on language acquisition?
5. Are there any perceptible shifts in opinions over the duration of the programme?

Because you think that poor is cool, Like a dog lying in a corner
They will bite you and never warn you, Look out, they'll tear your insides out
'Cause everybody hates a tourist, Especially one who thinks it's all such a laugh

- Cocker et al., *Common People*, 1995.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Conceptual Framework

This study is underpinned by four broad concepts, highlighted in the previous chapter along with the definitions for the terms in this context. These are poverty, social class, identity and initial teacher education (ITE). The conceptual framework arises from these key concepts which in turn forms the argument for the reason and rigor within this research (Maxwell, 2013; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). A conceptual framework has been described as the result of bringing together related concepts to explain and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Imenda, 2014). This understanding is achieved by creating a structure which provides focus and direction to the research (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). Figure 3.1 below shows the interactions between these concepts.

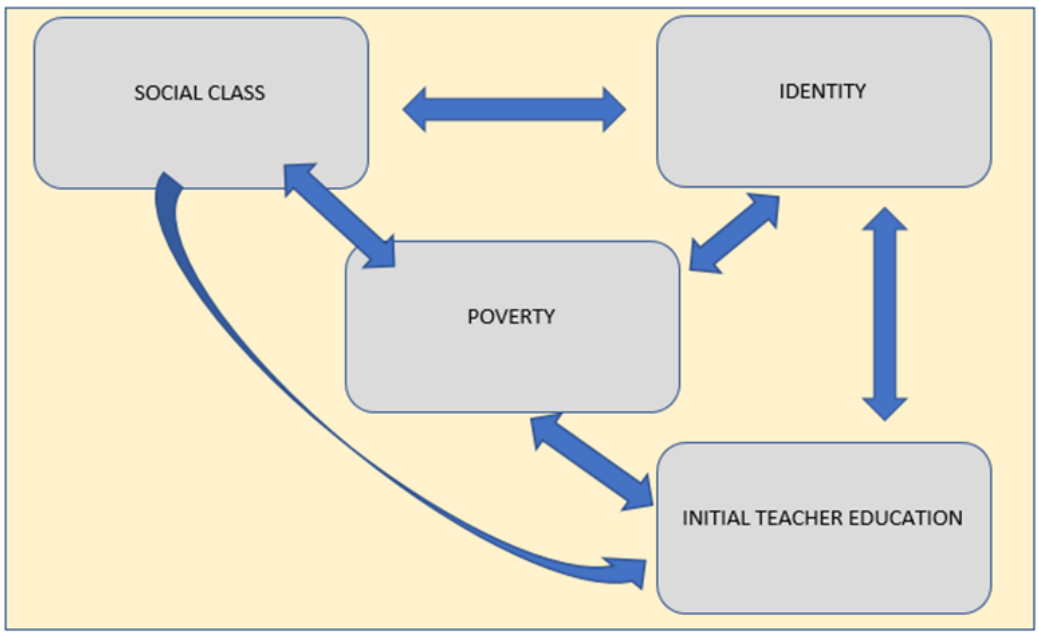


Figure 3.1 Relationships between the four concepts.

Poverty is central, as this study argues throughout that poverty and its impacts on educational outcomes is a key issue, not only for individuals, but for trainee

teachers, education and society as a whole. Working class and poverty group together (Halfon, 2021) and are often conflated in schools (Reay, 2017). Social class is related to the conference of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which Ofsted has identified as a barrier to good educational outcomes (Ofsted, 2019) and has set schools the task of addressing. Schools have been argued to replicate the class system, enacting symbolic violence on the working classes, (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990) with arguably unconscious reinforcement by the dominant agents (Fairclough, 2015). As ITE trainees often have limited experience and understanding of poverty (Thompson, 2017; Thompson et al., 2016), their assumptions about poverty and class can be based on stereotypical ideas which result in low expectations and hence outcomes for their pupils (Gorski, 2012). Identity is intrinsic to all the other concepts; whilst identity shapes individuals' experience and perception of the concepts, the reverse is also apparent as class, poverty and engaging with ITE have their own impacts on the identity of the individual (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007).

Schools can do more to address the attainment gap (NEU, 2021), but need a deep understanding of poverty and working-class families to utilise the funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) held there, rather than excluding children in poverty whether unconsciously or not (NEU, 2021). The transformation to becoming a teacher (Izadania, 2013) needs to include addressing deficit viewpoints because if attitudes are not adjusted (Gilbert, 2018; Gorski, 2012) the assumption will continue that the solution must be to enforce middle-class values upon the working class (Shain, 2016). Through shadow capital (Cipollone & Stich, 2017), educational inequality perpetuates into higher education, and beyond into working lives as income inequality (Friedman & Laurison, 2020, Lenon, 2018; OECD, 2019). Therefore, the relationships between the four concepts which underpin the study can be seen to be complex and interdependent, each exerting an impact on the others in various ways. This is reflected in the research questions, which, in seeking to uncover the ITE trainees' perceptions of poverty, brought about rich conversations exploring understandings of social class, as well as revealing personal beliefs and

opinions within the groups of participants which would otherwise have not been shared (H. Jones, 2016; White & Murray, 2016).

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Interpretivist paradigm.

By setting out to discover the trainees' perceptions of the impact of poverty on children in schools through the facilitation of their discussions, this study takes an interpretivist approach. Social constructivism is often combined with interpretivism (Creswell, 2009, p, 8), with the goal of this category of research being to focus on participants' opinions which can be constructed in discussion and interaction with others. The research was looking for meanings that the participants ascribed to poverty and their understandings of its consequences for the children they teach. An interpretivist approach allowed the research to be people centred, becoming immersed in the research environment and attempting to explore and interpret the views the participants shared about the world (Creswell, 2009; Morrison, 2002). The data collected from such research is qualitative, offering a rich and deep description of the research environment (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2013; Thomas, 2013). This then led to the interpretation of the focus group conversations, noting patterns, investigating any shifts in opinions, and determining aspects particularly emphasised or omitted. Rogers (2020) argues this extends beyond consideration of research methods in that evidence of things which change, shift or surprise the researcher in interpretivist studies shows evaluation as an ongoing process.

The study aimed for detail and understanding, rather than to make claims about generalisability (Burton & Bartlett, 2009; Cohen et al., 2007; Thomas, 2013; Watts, 2014), with the focus being to illuminate and shape both local experience and my own professional practice as a teacher educator. This approach leads to a more longitudinal perspective being adopted (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2013), although Barbour (2018) notes there is a lack of longitudinal research involving focus groups when this is of great benefit in charting changes, as well as processes of identity formation and the workings of social capital and habitus (Callaghan, 2005; Munday, 2006). The interpretivist

approach informed and shaped the research design, thus enabling a robust illumination of the research questions.

3.2.2 Longitudinal study.

This longitudinal study took place over a period spanning three academic years (Kumar, 2014; Thomas, 2013; Vignoles, 2017). In order to address research question five, it was necessary to carry out several meetings with the same group of participants over the year long period of attendance on the course, in order to see if their perceptions changed with teaching placement experience. The remaining four questions could be illuminated through a single focus group meeting carried out with sample groups drawn from each of the programmes. Due to the differing designs of the three programmes, these took place on discrete occasions when the cohorts were on campus for taught sessions. The participants also had to have been on a placement so that they had some experience of being in school and could reflect on what they had encountered in respect of the impact of poverty. These mostly pragmatic reasons resulted in the pattern of meetings for the trend study groups being arranged across two academic years as shown in following Table 3.1, with the panel study running through the third year (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Ruspini, 2002).

According to Ruspini (2002), a longitudinal study can be organised in a variety of ways. It can comprise of what Ruspini (2002, p. 3) terms as ‘repeated cross sectional studies’, which consider the participants’ situation at that specific point in time. These can be carried out either using sample groups of different participants on each occasion or with largely the same group of participants (Ruspini, 2002). Alternatively, the same sample group can be used repeatedly over an extended period of time (Thomas, 2013), which is termed as a ‘panel study’ by Ruspini (2002, p. 3). Using these definitions as given by Ruspini (2002), this research study began with a repeated cross sectional, or trend, study followed by a prospective, or panel, longitudinal study. Making up the longitudinal study as a whole, the three focus group meetings in the trend study took place between December 2017 and January 2019, drawing participants from the two successive cohorts of 2017/18 and 2018/19. The panel study

began in September 2019 and finished in April 2020, with the participants being drawn from the 2019/20 cohort.

The trend study would not show any shifts in an individual's opinion as this part involved different individuals, but these groups were intended to provide a descriptive picture focussing on perceptions as a factor rather than on the specific participants themselves (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Ruspini, 2002). These data could then be considered alongside and compared with those from the panel study. The panel study comprised of the same sample group, and the collection of information was ongoing from five individuals over the period of their one-year course (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Ruspini, 2002). This part of the study therefore could consider changes in the beliefs and opinions of this sample group, as well as comparing them with the 'snapshot' data from the other groups (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 213; Thomas, 2013). The use of the panel study was intended to address the research question considering the potential for any shifts in opinions and beliefs over the duration of the PGCE programme. The study in its entirety could be described as a cohort study (Thomas, 2013), as the trainees were a group of people with the common characteristic of being postgraduate Initial Teacher Education trainees attending the same university. Whilst selective sampling meant that the same members were not included every time (Borg & Gall, 1979) thus giving a wider range of viewpoints to the study, there is also the element of a panel study within it as the final three focus groups comprised of the same individuals being followed over a one year period (Ruspini, 2002).

It should be noted that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the academic year in which the panel study took place was disrupted. The trainees were unable to undertake their third and final placement during the summer term as the first lockdown commenced in March 2020 and all school placements in England were terminated at that point. The university campus was also closed and therefore the third focus group meeting in April took place virtually, rather than face to face. The trainees had followed the usual course up to that point however, so at the time of this third meeting they not had anything other than the normal experience of the programme that any cohort would have had. Holding the meeting online did not appear to impact the interactions between

the participants, possibly due to the fact this was their third such meeting so they were used to the format and knew each other well by this stage. The pattern of the different group meetings throughout the academic years and in relation to school placements is shown in Table 3.1 below.

	Autumn term Sept – Dec	Spring term Jan - March	Summer term April – June
Year 1 of study	Group A (Dec) After 1st school placement		Group B (April) During 1st school placement (part time)
Year 2 of study		Group C (Jan) After 1st school placement	
Year 3 of study	Group D (Sept) Before 1st school placement	Group D (Jan) After 1st school placement	Group D (April) After 2nd school placement

Table 3.1 – Schedule of focus group meetings.

The intention had been to convene a fourth focus group after their final placement before the course ended in June, but the participants declined a further meeting. They felt that as they had not gained any more school experience, they would be unable to contribute anything further to the study. However, by the stage of the course when what was to become the final focus group meeting took place, the trainees had undertaken two school placements in contrasting schools, and had also received the taught content of the PGCE programme and therefore could be deemed to have gone through the majority of the course.

Longitudinal data can reveal change at an individual level by intermittently collecting data through re-interviewing or observing attitudes or other factors over time (Ruspini, 2002). No attempt was made to establish causality over the longitudinal study, as any number of factors may have contributed to perceived shifts in opinions, but within the panel study the research sought to uncover whether opinions remained stable or shifted over the duration of the course for that particular group of trainees, irrespective of cause (Vignoles, 2017).

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Focus groups.

The use of focus groups arose from the aim of the research: a small scale study designed to uncover trainees' beliefs and opinions about a topic which may not otherwise be discussed spontaneously or at any length during the course. This method was selected over that of interviews, as it is a sensitive subject to raise and discuss in any depth. As noted by White and Murray (2016), asking trainees to discuss poverty and education may be awkward and challenging so the chances of drawing out deeply held opinions and beliefs on such a topic in the unfamiliar situation of a one to one interview would be quite low. In contrast, focus groups enable participants to talk about difficult subject matter with peers in a safe environment, in a way that would be tricky to achieve in an interview situation (Gibbs, 2017). Poverty is not a comfortable topic to discuss, surrounded as it is by an atmosphere of denial and moral condemnation (Mazzoli Smith & Todd, 2019, p. 360). However, the participants may have enjoyed the opportunity to engage in discussion and debate about a topic which they had not otherwise been able to talk about together and which they may have felt strongly about (Gibbs, 2017; White & Murray, 2016). To illuminate the research questions, empowering trainees by giving them a voice was critical, and engaging them in a collaborative discussion potentially enlivened by a group dynamic was the most appropriate approach to select (Bourne & Winstone, 2021; Toner, 2009; White & Murray, 2016). There is very little time on campus for trainees on the postgraduate courses, and as argued by Mears (2017) eliciting depth, reflection and deliberation through interviews requires several meetings to achieve the necessary rapport. The time restriction on the data collection activity meant that this was not a feasible option. The research questions were aimed at discovering the beliefs and opinions held by the trainees, which meant focus group meetings would be more likely to generate discussions where individuals were empowered to speak out and voice their opinions (Bourne & Winstone, 2021; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Wilkinson, 2011). Being asked questions by a course tutor would illicit more guarded responses, opposed to a conversation with peers where they would be more likely to feel they were expressing their point of view in a non-judgemental arena rather than trying to second guess what a tutor wanted to hear (Gibbs,

2017). However, there remains a politically correct response, which may still have impacted on participants' contributions. As noted by Kristiansen & Grønkjær (2018, p. 1), there is little research in the ways in which social norms and normativity are negotiated, constructed and legitimized during focus group discussions, making it difficult to speculate about the effect of this aspect of using focus groups. Taking this research approach did mean that significantly more trainees were able to be included in the project than if individual interviews had been conducted, due to the time constraints. A further consideration was that the arena of the group discussion facilitated the use of photo-elicitation, following White & Murray (2016), to stimulate the conversation, along with the diamond nine card sorting activity (Rockett & Percival, 2002; Wilkinson, 2011).

The usual method for gathering feedback and opinions from students in an HEI setting is to use online surveys. However, to yield the understanding required by this study, using surveys would have been inappropriate, because whilst this would have had the potential to gather data from a much larger number of trainees, surveys are not thought to represent the best method for gaining authentic perspectives (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015). Bourne and Winstone (2021) note that focus groups enable the surfacing of authentic student voice and increase the likelihood of honest responses which surveys may miss (Bourne & Winstone, 2021; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015).

A limitation of focus groups is that they are a contrived situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). However, talking together in groups is a pedagogy that is used throughout the course and trainees would be used to working in this manner during their training on campus. Another limitation of the focus groups may have been that the dynamics of the meetings could have affected individual's contributions, perhaps in ways which were not necessarily apparent from the researcher's point of view (Burton & Bartlett, 2009; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; H. Jones, 2016; Morgan, 2019; Peoples, 2021; Tümen Akyıldız, & Ahmed, 2021). However, the limitation produced by a domineering character is noted to self-correct when trainees themselves are guiding the discussion between their peers (Bourne & Winstone, 2021). It is also possible that the group situation may have lent feelings of support and empowerment to

the participants thus making them more likely to contribute, meaning the benefits when approaching a potentially difficult topic would outweigh any issues with dynamics (Farquhar & Das, 1999; Gibbs, 2017; Peoples, 2021; Tümen Akyıldız, & Ahmed, 2021).

This notion is supported by White & Murray, (2016, p. 500), who suggest that as social class is the strongest factor in poverty and educational disadvantage, the nature of the issues arising creates difficulties in the students' ability to discuss them as freely as might be hoped. Their research aimed to explore an alternative way of facilitating discussions which prompted the trainees to voice their views and speak more candidly than might have been achieved through the use of what White & Murray (2016, p. 500) call more 'conventional pedagogies'. Conversely, Gibbs (2017) argues that the use of a focus group alone can be sufficient to provide the necessary incentive for participants to speak freely. Farquhar & Das (1999, p. 47) support the view that focus groups facilitate, rather than inhibit, discussion, including that of more difficult topics. Confrontation may occur within group discussions which would not arise in individual interviews, and this sort of debate may lead to the redefining of personal understandings and beliefs with data emerging through individuals being confirmed or opposed by others' contributions (Morgan, 2019; Peoples, 2021; Tümen Akyıldız, & Ahmed, 2021).

Possible difficulties with focus group conversations have been raised, such as the problems with groups falling out, needing guidelines or ground rules which have to be policed or people leaving midway through the session (Gibbs, 2017; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). None of these issues arose at any point during any of the meetings, and this could perhaps be seen to be the result of the meetings taking place on campus and therefore the trainees continued to conduct themselves in a professional manner as expected. The focus groups mirrored the trainees' normal pedagogy, as they were used to working in small groups during seminars and workshops, so the meetings could have been seen as an extension of their course activity with the need to uphold their usual professional demeanour with their peers. Although the last group meeting took place virtually, the trainees had already met twice before, and were used to the format of the sessions.

3.3.2 Focus group discussion structure.

At various points in all of the focus group discussions participants built on and challenged others' contributions in a way which would not have happened in individual interviews. Wilkinson (1999) notes that interaction is not often analysed when data is gathered from focus groups, and typically looks more akin to individual interview data with the focus being on the content not the process of communication. There was evidence of low participation by some and dominance by others in some of the meetings, potentially arising from the group dynamic (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 377). This could have resulted in some members not being prepared to respond, regardless of whether they had an opinion about what was being said. It was clear at some points that the conversation was being taken off course purposefully, particularly by specific participants. Sometimes this may have been done to provide some relief from the serious nature of the topic by providing entertainment for the rest of the group, but on other occasions appeared to happen for no obvious reason. This mirrors everyday social interaction and interference from the researcher to refocus the discussion may have affected subsequent contributions if participants felt they were being guided, or directed, rather than taking the lead themselves (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Thomas, 2013).

The pilot study group agreed that if they had been posed structured questions about the sets of pictures then everyone's thinking may well have been led in a particular direction, and they had found it valuable to hear how other's ideas differed from their own as it had made them think critically about their own opinions. This follows findings from previous studies that trainees welcome the opportunity to discuss poverty and to be exposed to the ideas and views of others which may in turn challenge their own thinking (H. Jones, 2016; White & Murray, 2016).

3.3.3 Photo elicitation.

Photo elicitation is defined as the use of photographs to generate discussion (M. Thomas, 2009). The focus groups in this study were asked to look at sets of three photographs and come to a consensus on which one was the odd one out. The photographs depicted primary school age children in a variety of situations; for example, in school, in the community, at home. Each group was

shown the same PowerPoint comprising of seven sets of three photographs, which they were able to move through at their own pace. There was nothing distressing or inappropriate in any of the images chosen. The intention was that by using images as a 'projection technique' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 375), this would provide the opportunity for the trainees to comment on the photographs (M. Thomas, 2009; Thomas, 2013), and then as the discussion continued they would be able to build on and challenge each other's contributions. In so doing, participants would be exposed to the experiences and thoughts of the rest of the group (Bourne & Winstone, 2021; Tümen Akyıldız, & Ahmed, 2021). A discussion between a group of trainees who know each other well could be quite dynamic and spontaneous, with the potential to lead on to unexpected topics (Myers & Macnaghten, 1999). It would then be possible to consider whether views were being challenged through the course of the conversation between the participants. The study set out to explore the trainees' beliefs about the impacts of poverty and therefore sought to present the truth of what the participants believed (6 & Bellamy, 2012). Bourne and Winstone (2021) strongly support the use of activity-oriented focus groups as these facilitate discussion between participants and mitigate against the situation where each group member is responding to the researcher, like an interview in a group setting, rather than generating an authentic conversation between the group members without any reliance on the researcher. The activity provided a prompt and a concrete focus which enabled participants to reflect and contribute considered ideas, whilst also shifting focus from individuals to allow the wider discussion of ideas generated by the group (Bourne & Winstone, 2021). Constructivist theory also supports the use of activities to promote the collaborative aspect of focus group discussion (Bokhorst-Heng and Marshall; 2019).

At the end of the focus group interviews in the pilot study, the participants were invited to comment on the use of the photographs. All responded that they would have found it very hard to speak about the subjects raised without the stimulus of the photographs (Bourne & Winstone, 2021; Gourlay, 2010). They thought that the photographs being placed in sets of three with the invitation to decide which might be the odd one out was an effective way of generating

discussion and gave them time to think about the topic. Their feedback supported the view that the use of the photographs may have enabled a less constrained exchange and expression of views than might have been produced by more 'conventional' methods, as found by White & Murray (2016, p. 500). Their responses indicated that the use of photographs was effective in providing support for the trainees in talking about the topic of poverty and their experiences related to this in their professional capacity (Gourlay, 2010). Harper (2002) states that when people are invited to discuss photographs they try to work something out together, which he suggests is 'an ideal model for research' (2002, p. 23). Along with this collaborative aspect, the use of pictures rather than words elicits a different response in the human brain as images utilise more of its capacity and evoke a different kind of information from participants, drawing on feelings, connections and memories that words alone cannot extract (Glaw et al., 2017; Harper, 2002). Glaw et al. (2017) concur with Harper (2002), also noting that visual methods add validity and depth to data, resulting in increased trustworthiness.

A factor which may inhibit the trainees' input into the discussion could be, as H. Jones (2016, p. 474) notes, the presence of a 'gatekeeper' to the trainees' accreditation of qualified teacher status. The use of images to elicit talk when the participants are children, and therefore subordinate to the researcher, is thought to help lessen the effect of the adult's presence and reduce bias in their responses (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 375). This is somewhat similar to the trainees' position in respect of the researcher in this case, further strengthening the rationale for using photo elicitation.

Visual images can carry numerous readings which rely upon the cultural, social and personal context of the viewer, enabling research participants to reflect differently upon their world, generating thoughtful discussion about things they take for granted and so producing a new awareness of their own social existence, supported by Banks, (2007); Harper, (2002); Spencer, (2011) and White & Murray, (2016). In investigating different ways to facilitate meaningful discussion about poverty and disadvantage, it is important to remain conscious of the trainees' potential lack of understanding of issues resulting from the nature of their own contexts and life experiences (White & Murray, 2016).

3.3.4 Diamond nine activity.

After the pilot study it was clear that something further was required to prompt discussion of specific aspects related to poverty and its impact on pupils in schools. The photo elicitation activity produced a great deal of discussion but offered limited control over the direction the participants took. Whilst this was useful in its own right, there were lines of enquiry which potentially remained untouched solely because the prompt had not been given. In order to ask questions indirectly without appearing threatening to the participants, cards with statements to sort were used (Kumar, 2014). By offering the participants a set of nine statements and requesting they be sorted into an agreed diamond nine formation provided the opportunity to elicit conversation about particular aspects of interest to this study (Niemi, Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2015). This was specifically aimed at research question four, as language acquisition had not been discussed by the trend study groups.

The time allocated to conducting the meetings meant that the opportunity to use the diamond nine activity did not arise until the panel study meetings, when it was used on each occasion. Diamond ranking is a well-known thinking skills method which can be used to prompt hypotheses and facilitate conversation. Its strength stems from the notion that when people collaboratively rank items, such as propositions, images or objects, they are obliged to discuss their choices, and in so doing verbalise their thoughts and ideas underpinning these, making their understanding open to inspection and comparison (Rockett & Percival, 2002). Giving the panel study group the opportunity to discuss the same set of cards at each meeting illuminated research question five, as shifts in perceptions and understanding over the duration of the programme were revealed by the debate the activity generated.

3.3.5 Questionnaires.

This study takes a qualitative approach, with a minor data set arising from the questionnaire responses including a small amount of numerical data (Grbich, 2013). The decision was taken to collect some data by questionnaire, including general information about the demographic of the participants, along with some questions focussed on the topic of the study, in order to gather some responses made privately rather than within the focus group arena. The questionnaire

was used to collect data which helped to describe the focus group participants (Tymms, 2017). Questions were posed about age, previous experience of work or volunteering, family background, attitudes to poverty, and experiences of poverty during placement (see Appendix B). The personal background information disclosed in the questionnaire could not have been gathered through analysis of the subsequent discussions. The questions were designed to illuminate research question numbers two, three and four, by asking about their perceptions of the impacts of poverty, including on language acquisition, and by ranking questions to gauge which aspects of poverty participants believe had most negative impact on children (see Appendices A and B). The anonymity offered by the use of a questionnaire could be viewed as increasing the likelihood of participants providing honest responses to sensitive questions (Kumar, 2014). For these reasons, following the findings from the pilot study group, the decision was made to use the questionnaire with all participants in this study. By providing the questionnaire in the same session as the focus group meeting, this collective administration (Kumar, 2014, p. 179) meant that the response rate was not affected by anyone refusing to participate.

Whilst useful for the reasons discussed above, a questionnaire alone was not sufficient to illuminate the research questions adequately. Discussions allow non-verbal clues to be picked up as well as unexpected lines of enquiry arising from comments made, which can then be followed up and expanded in a way which questionnaires cannot offer (Burton & Bartlett, 2009; Kumar, 2014). As the study was seeking to discover how the trainee teachers described poverty and what their beliefs about the impact of poverty were, discussion within a focus group gave the opportunity for trainees to build on and challenge each other's ideas and so reveal more than a questionnaire necessarily would regarding their assumptions, thoughts and opinions. Consideration was also needed to how participants might be engaged in meaningful conversation with each other about the topic of poverty (White & Murray, 2016).

3.4 Sampling.

For the pilot study a random sample of participants was drawn from the full-time Primary Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) cohort, in the autumn term of the 2017/18 academic year following their first school placement. The

request for volunteers was made following a taught session with the cohort, and a reminder slide placed in a following session. Six trainees volunteered to take part (Gorard, 2013; 6 & Bellamy, 2012). This was a convenience sample (Creswell, 2009), and as such may not be generalisable to the whole cohort. As noted by Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014) samples in qualitative studies are usually not wholly prespecified but evolve once the fieldwork begins. The first group of participants, from the full-time PGCE, had spent a period of seven weeks in a placement school at the time of their meeting. One of the group was a mature student changing career, whilst the rest had enrolled directly from their first degree courses.

The second focus group took place during the spring term of the 2017/18 academic year. These trainees were from the part-time PGCE programme. All were mature students who had previous employment experience and were parents of school-age children. At the time of the meeting, their school experience had consisted of two days per week over a period of eighteen weeks. This focus group included the whole part-time PGCE cohort of five trainees. This is referred to by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) as conceptually driven sequential sampling. Again, as with the full-time trainees, the request for volunteers was made following a taught session with the cohort, and all volunteered to take part.

A third sample for a single focus group discussion was made up of seven trainees from the School Direct programme 2018/19, who volunteered to take part in the same way as the previous two groups. The offer to take part was extended to this cohort in order to give the opportunity to be involved to trainees from all three of the postgraduate primary ITE routes run by the institution. The School Direct trainees had experienced a much longer period of time in their school at the time of the meeting in January as they had been in school since the beginning of the school year in September, with one day per week on campus. Therefore potentially they had become more fully inducted into the profession than the full-time or part-time trainees. As this programme places trainees within a so called ‘base school’ where they spend most of the academic year, they often develop a strong affiliation with that school, which the

other trainees do not, as they spend considerably less time in one particular school.

For the final stage of the study five participants volunteered from the full time PGCE programme, again as a convenience sample (Creswell, 2009) so that the participants would be available on campus to meet in the focus group at four set points throughout their PGCE programme in 2019/20. Due to the fact that the university draws trainees from a very wide area, it would have meant either limiting participation to those who live in the local area or risk a high level of non-attendance or attrition by involving trainees from the other programmes and then expecting them to travel in to the campus especially to meet. The full-time PGCE has taught days on campus spread across the year, so trainees on that programme were available to meet on days in September, January, April and June. The study was presented to the trainees and volunteers were sought in the same way as for the previous groups (Gorard, 2013; 6 & Bellamy, 2012).

3.5 Underrepresentation.

Gibbs (2017) observes that the type of volunteer attracted by the prospect of a discussion will by nature be an articulate and confident individual, meaning that the more reserved, vulnerable or marginalised will possibly be underrepresented. Self-selecting bias would have been at play, as those who chose to take part in the study could have had attitudes, attributes or motivations which were different to those who declined to be involved in the study (Kumar, 2014, p. 182). The trainees were told about the topic to be discussed before volunteering, which could have meant that individuals with personal experience of poverty may have chosen not to put themselves forward to discuss it, particularly in a group situation with others they know (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Farquhar & Das, 1999). This potentially resulted in the underrepresentation of the more disadvantaged in the cohort.

3.6 Ethical considerations.

The British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2018) and the university's ethics policy (2019) were used to inform and mitigate any potential ethical considerations for this research study. Approval from the university's Ethics Committee was gained at

various stages throughout the study. This was particularly important with regard to the nature of the topic, as discussing beliefs about poverty and its impacts on children may have been emotionally challenging for some participants. As noted in the Strathclyde study (Ellis et al., 2016), the researcher carrying out the interviews sent a message to the research team commenting on how upset the trainees were becoming when asked to discuss the impact of poverty on the children they had been working with. There could be any number of reasons why participants may struggle with this topic, and a sensitive awareness needed to be maintained throughout. Consideration was given to the possibility that participants may recall difficult or very personal memories from their family life or childhood. This was deliberated with reference to the British Educational Research Association educational research guidelines (2018), and it was decided that observance of these would offer appropriate guidance. However, if there was disclosure of anything beyond the remit of the researcher or the supervisory team, the university's Student Advice team was available for assistance.

Ethical considerations continued to be prioritised throughout the study, including seeking to minimise any issues related to the practitioner researcher role. It was made clear that the focus groups discussions were not deemed to be part of the course and any comments made would not be judged, or impact on any formal assessment of the trainees. The participants' confidentiality and anonymity was upheld throughout the study, and any comment or response which may have enabled an individual to be identified has been removed. All participants were assigned a pseudonym at the point of transcription. It was stressed that anonymity and confidentiality throughout would be guaranteed, including in the published work following the study, as I was aware the participants trusted me as the researcher. Confidentiality of information was also emphasised to all participants, with all agreeing that nothing contributed in the focus group discussion should be discussed beyond the session, which is in line with normal tutor group working agreements.

No issues with any breach of confidentiality were reported during the research period. All participants were fully aware of the purposes of the meetings, and agreed their transcriptions could be used for my research and that the findings

could be shared. All participants were given the opportunity to read the transcripts from their own focus group meetings and were invited to give feedback. This was felt to be particularly important in case any participant deemed 'over-disclosure' to have occurred (Sim & Waterfield, 2019, p 3010) and wished for their data to be withdrawn. It was recognised that there was a potential risk this may result in constructed retrospective changes which would not reflect the original data, however it was deemed more ethical and respectful to the participants to allow them the opportunity to review the transcripts (Page et al., 2000; Saldana, 1998). They were also asked to indicate any details which they felt required amendment if these might compromise their anonymity. However, nothing was suggested by any of the participants for addition or change following this process. All confirmed they consented for their transcripts to be included in the analysis for the final thesis.

Data protection issues were addressed with the participants and all data was stored on the secure One Drive area in accordance with the ethical clearances received from the university's Ethics Committee. All raw data gathered was stored in a secure environment, recordings were destroyed following transcription and handwritten transcriptions were shredded after word processing. Furthermore, participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study together with the potential risks and benefits of taking part. Following examination of the information sheet signed consent was gained from each of the participants in order for the research to proceed and the subsequent data to be included in the analysis. Participants' right to withdraw from the study was emphasised within the information sheet and the process regarding withdrawal was highlighted. Participants were then reminded throughout of their right to withdraw without prejudice from the study, and that this would automatically result in their data being deleted. This complied with both the British Educational Research Association (2018) ethical guidance document and the university's (2019) Ethics policy. Both of these documents were referred to throughout to ensure continued compliance.

3.7 Ethical reflexivity.

My personal history with regard to ethical reflexivity begins with being employed as a senior lecturer at the university, and therefore as 'gatekeeper' to the

trainees' award of qualified teacher status meant my position was one of insider researcher (Drake, 2010; Greene, 2014). An imbalance of power can thus be seen in this dual role of researcher and tutor for the PGCE programmes on which the participants were enrolled. Ensuring I was not the university based mentor for any of the participants on their school placements meant I was not involved in grading them on their teaching practice, and following the university's practice, their academic assignments were marked anonymously by a team of staff. This meant I was not directly involved in any assessment of their course, and therefore unable to be affected by their participation in the study, consciously or otherwise. The trainees were fully aware of this at the point of making the decision to volunteer for the study, and it was reiterated throughout.

Being located in the research setting as both a researcher and a teacher educator, positioned me as an insider researcher. This means reflexivity is of high importance so that the context of the study can be clearly understood, as this will serve to increase the credibility of the study and enable others to gauge the relevance to their own context (Berger, 2015; Dodgson, 2019). Reflexive practice has been proposed as an effective way to ensure quality and rigour in qualitative research (Dodgson, 2019), as the researcher must self-monitor the impact on the study of their own biases, views, and personal experiences (Berger, 2015; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Reflexivity should be used as a tool to examine the conflict between involvement and detachment of the researcher and participants as way of augmenting the rigor of the research and its ethics (Berger, 2015; Pillow, 2003). Being an insider implies a strong knowledge base along with a keen sense of responsibility to improve the practice being studied through the research (Munn-Giddings, 2017). The implication of this was for me to be aware of my insider knowledge with regard to the trainees and the institution, but also to consider the effect of my previous work with children living in poverty, in the way that has shaped my understandings of the impact this has on their educational outcomes. I recognise that I hold a particular view about the importance of supporting disadvantaged children, and believe in the need to challenge deficit ideologies with regard to poverty. These factors were significant in the decision making

regarding my research design, as choices were made in pursuit of becoming decentred and allowing the role of 'off stage facilitator' (Grbich, 2013, p. 114). I purposefully took up a more removed position (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013) by not interacting with the trainees during the focus group discussions. It was necessary to reduce the possible Hawthorne effect and so increase validity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Kumar, 2014), by facilitating the conversations without influencing the participants through comments, prompts, questions or even non-verbal cues. This linked well to the use of photographs to elicit conversation in the similar study conducted by White and Murray (2016), providing further support for using this photo elicitation approach (Mitchell, 2017).

A way in which positional reflexivity is often addressed is through the categories of gender, disability, class, ethnicity, age, education and race (Grbich, 2013). The assumption that such elements define who we are and dictate how we will view the world initially arose from forms of Marxism (Cousin, 2010). In this research the subject of social class was often raised and understandings of it were varied. It is one of the positional categories which can be both hidden and open to interpretation. These perspectives propose that an oppressed position provides a particular lens (Cousin, 2010), therefore in the context of this study it may be considered that the understanding of poverty demonstrated by those in a position of relative privilege will necessarily differ from those who are living in poverty, or have experience of it. However, social class is just one identity position, and as it is possible to become alert to our assumptions and those of others, it could be argued everyone can say they are the same, but at the same time different, to everyone else (Milner, 2007; Cousin, 2010).

3.8 Positionality.

As the researcher, I have been conscious of the importance of considering my own positionality in respect of the study. How the researcher views the world may give rise to assumptions and biases during all stages of the research, and it is important to maintain awareness of the potential for impact on the data collection and interpretation (Qin, 2016). A child being eligible for Free School Meals throughout secondary school may be assumed to afford some understanding of growing up in poverty. As Gorad (2013, p. 1015) asserts,

“FSM eligibility (…) divides the school population into two groups of those living in poverty and others”. However, this assumption is quite incorrect in respect of my own upbringing. My mother was widowed at a young age, and therefore left with only my father’s pension as a visible household income. Her age meant she was not entitled to any other widows’ benefits, which enabled her to claim FSM for me following my father’s death when I was 11 years old. What this fails to capture is that my maternal grandparents were both from wealthy families and when my mother was widowed, she was not reliant on her late husband’s pension, but was kept in the manner to which she had always been accustomed through her father’s patronage. My mother was privately educated and impressed upon me from a very young age that I must keep well away from the ‘common’ children at school. Reflecting back on my own school years, I appreciate that it is perhaps an atypical childhood of a FSM eligible child, however it does highlight the fact that this criteria is a crude measure which does not reflect social or cultural capital (Hobbs and Vignoles, 2010). It reduces disadvantage to a binary, with children deemed either in or out of the category based on household income (Gorad, 2013; Halfon et al., 2021) and not always accurately so.

Later on, when I began work as a teacher, the realities of life for a lot of my pupils were initially quite difficult to comprehend. My mother always asserted that such children ‘were not worth bothering with’, and she never showed any compassion or understanding for the challenges they faced, which on reflection motivated me still further to be a champion for any child that suffered disadvantage. I have some insight into aspects of being a long-term FSM child, and, whilst they are not necessarily the same as other children’s experiences, this serves to highlight how the FSM group cannot be viewed as one homogenous set, and that no assumptions should be made about their backgrounds and circumstances. My backstory may differ from that described by such as Reay (2017), Blandford (2017) and McGarvey (2018), but I have striven to ensure that I approached the research with an open mind, attempting to give an authentic voice to the participants (Bourne & Winstone, 2021; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015). I ensured that they were not influenced in their thinking, and interpreted their contributions whilst remaining transparent

and critically self-reflective about my own preconceptions, the relationship dynamics, and the processes by which data have been collected, analysed and presented (Polit & Beck, 2014). As noted by Galdas (2017, p. 2), the qualitative researcher is an integral part of both the process and final product, and separation from this is neither achievable nor necessary.

3.9 Adapting the method.

From carrying out the pilot study it became apparent that it was difficult from both logistical and ethical perspectives to administer the questionnaire and then ask the trainees questions based on their responses, ruling out the use of a sequential strategy (Creswell, 2009) which had initially been planned. Firstly, there is the ethical issue of anonymity. The questions posed are about sensitive issues, such as asking participants to identify the social class they believe they belong to, and also asking them to select aspects of poverty that impact on the pupils in their placement schools. In order to adhere to the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research document (BERA, 2017) and the university's Ethics Policy (2019), the trainees were assured anonymity – as far as possible when there groups of no more than seven – but this would have made it very difficult to pose specific questions based on the responses, and would have had to be done in a generalised fashion to the whole group. Whether this would elicit trustworthy responses in that arena would be open to question. Secondly, there is the issue of physical timings. The trainees are not on campus for many days across the duration of their course due to the amount of time they have to spend in schools on placement to meet the Department for Education requirements, and therefore sessions are tightly timetabled. Asking trainees to give up half an hour of their time to participate in a focus group had been successful, but to administer questionnaires beforehand and analyse them for potential lines of questioning would add an additional time aspect that would have demanded too much in terms of a time commitment from the trainees, impacting negatively on the chance of finding volunteers to take part. The resulting extra time required for the researcher to carry out analysis would also have been a limiting factor. It was considered whether the approach could be a nested case study, with the case in question being the group of students enrolled on postgraduate initial teacher education at the university. However,

this was limited by the opportunity for the immersion and multiple sources of evidence this requires, as the time constraints of the course prevented adequate repeated access to participants (Ashley, 2017; Robson, 2011; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013).

3.10 Adaptations following the pilot study.

The pilot study was originally planned to be used to trial the data collection tools, but it was so successful that it has been integrated into the main study and will be discussed in the subsequent findings and discussion chapter.

Feedback from participants in the pilot study enabled the questionnaire to be modified to allow for more options in the responses and slightly reworded in some of the questions to make the meaning clearer (see Appendices A and B). There are limitations in using a questionnaire to gather this data, but this information helped to provide a general overview and statistical summary of the participants' beliefs (Thompson et al., 2016). The number of slides bearing photographs provided for discussion was reduced following feedback that some slides were too similar and were not bringing anything new to the conversation, but also because the discussion generated was lengthier than had been anticipated, continuing for well over an hour when only half an hour had been intended.

Following the pilot study the reduction in presentation slides could be seen to require further attention, as for the next focus group the discussion again continued for much longer than had been scheduled and the 'diamond nine' activity had to be abandoned. However, restrictions on the available time needed to be balanced against ensuring the participants had ample opportunity to become fully involved in the discussion so that they could start to question their own assumptions and challenge each other's opinions, thus further illuminating the research questions. Additional time was scheduled for the remaining focus groups in order to allow for longer discussions if needed, and at this point it was decided to discard the 'diamond nine' activity due to the amount of time the meetings took.

It became evident from the transcription analysis of the first two focus groups that sometimes the conversation about the photographs wandered or became

vague and opportunities to discuss some aspects more deeply were lost. Whilst there was ever the absolute intention to allow the conversation to be spontaneous with the potential to move on to unexpected topics (Myers & Macnaghten, 1999), this had to be balanced with the optimum use of the time available. In order to provide additional focus to the discussion, it was decided that it would be of definite benefit to use the 'diamond nine' activity (Fox & Messiou, 2004) in order to provide the stimulus for another discussion (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). This benefit was judged to outweigh the additional time that would be required from participants for the meetings. This specific activity was chosen to encourage the trainees to work collaboratively, having to rank nine statements from the least agreed up to the most agreed, and the remainder being grouped between. The activity elicits rich discussion as the collaboration and negotiation exposes differing opinions within the group (Messiou & Hope, 2015). The direct relevance of the statements to the topic was intended to focus the conversation to produce debate, as the trainees must strive to persuade their peers of the validity of their opinions in order to complete the task.

3.11 Alternative research strategies.

There were other research strategies which could have been adopted for this study. These include phenomenography, grounded theory and ethnography. Phenomenography aims to describe the different ways a group of people understand a phenomenon (Marton, 1981) and the participants in this study do demonstrate diverse understandings of poverty, and of social class. This approach can be linked to Heidegger's pheno.menology, however, the intent is to not to depict things as they are but seek to describe the participants conceptions of the world (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). However, the intention of this study was to explore and describe the collective beliefs of the postgraduate ITE trainees rather than focussing on particular differences of understanding between specific individuals.

Grounded theory would have required preliminary field data collection without reference to previously recorded empirical and theoretical findings. The literature review would then have arisen from this preliminary data (Creswell, 1998).

Considering previous literature on the topic demonstrated little research had been undertaken specific to the research questions and hence this study took on an exploratory dimension from early on. To carry out an ethnographic study the researcher would need to be immersed in the field of study for a considerable period of time observing participant behaviours and even becoming part of the 'tribe' (Creswell, 1998). A range of data needs to be collected from different perspectives, using a variety of methods through intensive work with a few informants (Moustakas, 2011; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). This method was deemed inappropriate for this study as both time and access to participants were very limited, and therefore not conducive to an ethnographic approach. It could be argued however, that as the participants and researcher all belong to the same community within the university, there is an ethnographic element to the study. Also ethnography is a strategy for investigating culture, which resonates to some degree with this study. However, this could have been open to accusations of being a snapshot ethnography with no opportunity for the researcher to undertake participant observation or to become fully immersed in the culture of the participants, particularly as the researcher inhabits the role of gatekeeper, as previously discussed. With the trainees all being on placements in different locations and in diverse schools, it would not have been possible to gain a full understanding of the environment of each participant in the way ethnography requires.

For these reasons, the strategy employed followed a constructivist approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and sought to enable the groups of trainees to verbalise their understandings, and in so doing construct meaning through their engagement with each other and with their experiences during their school placements. Their understanding of poverty may have been developed by the conversations facilitating them in making meaningful connections between their prior experiences and knowledge, and the new knowledge and experiences gained from the ITE course as they became professional teachers (H. Jones, 2016; White & Murray, 2016). Moreover, the research questions were effectively illuminated by the chosen approach.

3.12 Analytical framework.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data generated through the focus group discussions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). The specific approach was the 'Big Q' approach described by Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015), because it takes an organic perspective to coding and theme development, which was adjusted and adapted as it evolved with the researcher's ongoing engagement with the data. Thematic analysis can take a range of forms. Amongst these is inductive thematic analysis, which is grounded in the data whilst being shaped by the researcher's assumptions. It aims to stay as close as possible to the meaning found within the data rather than be shaped by existing theories and concepts (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015, p. 224). Another form is latent thematic analysis. This form is concerned with the opinions, values and beliefs that lie beneath the surface of semantic meanings. These meanings are not those which participants are always aware of overtly communicating but rather become apparent from the position of the researcher, so requiring more interpretive work on their behalf (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield 2015, p. 226). In this way, the analytical framework used in this study is a blend of these two forms as described. Thematic analysis offers a range of advantages, including producing results which are generally accessible, being useful in highlighting similarities and differences across the data set and that it can generate unanticipated insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017).

By reading through the data numerous times, various aspects could be found that appeared repeatedly, threading throughout the course of the discussions. Reading the data closely is a vital stage in establishing the researcher's 'first-person perspective' (Watts, 2014, p. 6). A systematic approach is important, and consistency between the data from different groups needed to be maintained. The process began with a data-driven, descriptive level of coding, intended to understand the issues important to the participants and indexing what they discussed in a systematic manner. Following this, a second level of coding could be undertaken where interpretation began, in which understanding of how the participants talked of the themes as Heidegger argues, when something is understood as being something (Dreyfus, 1995). The descriptive

and interpretative codes then could be read together to identify particular qualities of the emerging themes (Watts, 2014). The themes were identified and labelled, with the coding to these themes allowing comparisons between participants and between focus groups to take place. Matrices were used to enable analysis of the data from individual focus groups to be combined and compared, described by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014, p. 103) as 'stacking comparable cases'.

A worked example demonstrates how this approach was undertaken. The transcription recording was listened to repeatedly in small sections, allowing the participants' conversation to be relayed accurately to a handwritten script. The recording was then listened to again, in small sections and finally as a whole, to recheck that the script precisely matched the audio version. Throughout this phase, I was able to reflect on particular aspects of the conversation to begin to formulate candidate themes which were of relevance to the research questions. Once these started to develop, coding of the data was the next step. This involved using highlighter pens to colour code related sections within each focus group conversation. For example, one of the first themes coded was 'supervision', which Group A spoke about on twenty five occasions in their meeting. Using rolls of wallpaper pinned to the wall, matrices were created to combine and compare the data. The highlighted excerpts of conversations were written on post-it notes to place on the wallpaper under the relevant theme headings. When the Group B data was transcribed, the subject of supervision was found to be addressed on thirteen occasions and so it became evident this would be a theme to retain. Once all of the focus groups had been completed and the transcriptions finished, further readings of all the data were made to extract any remaining contributions which related to the candidate themes, or were pertinent to the research questions, where additional themes might then be needed. At this stage the matrices were again reviewed to determine if any themes could be subsumed by others, and also whether the data coding was adequately captured. As noted by Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015 p. 238), it was important to establish that the individual codes captured key meanings and patterns in the data, providing an analysis that both addressed the research questions and reflected the content of the data.

Finally, again following Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015, p. 244), the decision was made to write up the findings and discussion together in a single chapter as so many micro-connections between the analysis and wider literature had become apparent. The final themes are presented as subheadings in the second section of Chapter 4, under which the findings from the focus group discussions for each identified theme are organised and discussed. The analytical process took place over an extended period of time, with the benefit of allowing for fresh reflection after distancing from the data at each stage to ensure that the thematic analysis was as robust as possible in all aspects.

In the next chapter, where quotations from the transcripts are presented, the entirety of the relevant conversation has been used where possible to provide context and provide rich detail to support the themes identified in the analysis (Creswell, 2013; Denscombe, 2014). This also allows the participants' authenticity to remain, again meaning their self-determination has been respected (Cohen at al., 2017) and that they have been as truly represented as possible, exemplifying my reflections required to be a reflexive researcher (Pillow, 2003; Seidman, 2019). However, the full context is not there for the reader, such as the intonation and stress carried in the speech, so some meaning is lost causing the credibility of the data to be reduced (Denscombe, 2014).

Along with the identification of themes within the data from the focus groups as a whole, individuals' contributions during the three meetings of the same group of participants in the longitudinal study were also tracked. This was to understand whether there were any discernible changes in attitude or opinions demonstrated by individual participants. A longitudinal study may collect data from the same study population but not necessarily from the same participants, and may be a series of repeated cross sectional studies (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Kumar, 2014; Ruspini, 2002). However, the focus was to consider possible changes seen though individuals verbalised understandings as they moved through the one year PGCE course programme, and therefore the contributions analysed for this purpose were from the same participants over their three meetings. Vignettes are used to present the essences of these individuals' contributions over the course of the year, enabling focused

descriptions of a few key actors to be illuminated (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). The two chosen were outliers in different ways, and showed very strongly held opinions which were of direct relevance to the research questions.

The questionnaire data were used to provide background information about the participants and gather numerical data about the sample (Creswell, 2009). Descriptive statistical techniques were used to provide basic summaries of the information in the dataset, and graphical methods produced visual representations of this (Allen, 2017). The numerical data were intended to support the study as they could reveal patterns relating to participants' background profiles or links between aspects of context and themes found in the qualitative data. Following the pilot study, the approach taken was the concurrent embedded strategy so that both sets of data were collected simultaneously (Creswell, 2009). Priority was given to the qualitative data, as the study sought to discover how the participants described poverty, and to uncover their beliefs about its impacts. The mixing of the data enabled integration of the information from the data sources in the discussion chapter, providing a broader perspective and enriching the description of the sample participants (Morse, 1991).

3.13 Transcription.

All of the focus group discussions were transcribed by me personally, rather than delegated to an outside service. I have a first degree in Linguistics and as part of that hold a Merit in the International Phonetics Association examination for the Certificate of Proficiency in the Phonetics of English, meaning I am competent in phonetic transcription of the spoken word. Also, being both the researcher and the transcriber reduces compromising influences in respect of transcript quality (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). Transcription is a time consuming task which requires listening to the same sections of recording repeatedly to ensure precise capture of the oral communication made. However, undertaking this task resulted in greater familiarity with the data, which was further enhanced by handwriting the initial transcriptions before word processing. In this way the transcription process itself served to robustly support thematic analysis of the data (Watts, 2014). Transcription may be naturalised, with all of the details of the discourse included, such as hesitations, involuntary sounds, gestures and

body movements, or it may be denaturalised which is cleansed of these aspects and deals only with the dialogue itself (Davidson, 2009). In this study there is a blend of the two, as the complete removal of aspects such as hesitation and laughter would be to lose aspects which were directly relevant to the analysis. Both approaches have drawbacks, but many researchers use a combination of both (Oliver et al., 2005).

Yeah and the chip stains and grease, Will come out in the bath
You will never understand, How it feels to live your life
With no meaning or control, And with nowhere left to go

- Cocker et al., *Common People*, 1995.

Chapter 4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Part 1 – Questionnaires.

This chapter considers the data collected from the four groups of participants that took part in this study. As explained in the previous chapter and shown in Table 4.1 below, the first three focus group meetings took place as a trend study (Ruspini, 2002, p. 28). They were single snapshots, each comprising of different participants, whilst the rest of the meetings were a panel study (Ruspini, 2002), involving the same group of five participants meeting three times across the duration of their programme.

	Autumn term Sept - Dec	Spring term Jan – March	Summer term April – June
Year 1	Full Time - Group A (Dec)		Part Time - Group B (April)
Year 2		School Direct - Group C (Jan)	
Year 3	Full Time - Group D (Sept – meeting 1)	Group D (Jan – meeting 2)	Group D (April – meeting 3)

Table 4.1 - The four participant groups, showing when focus group meetings took place.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first part compares the profiles of the different groups through the questionnaire responses, including both numerical and qualitative data. In the second part the qualitative data from the focus group conversations are explored. The conceptual framework of poverty, social class, identity and initial teacher education was used to index the various themes that arose from the data. Any similarities or conflicts seen between the data from the focus group conversations and the data from the questionnaires are also considered.

4.1.2 Questionnaire data.

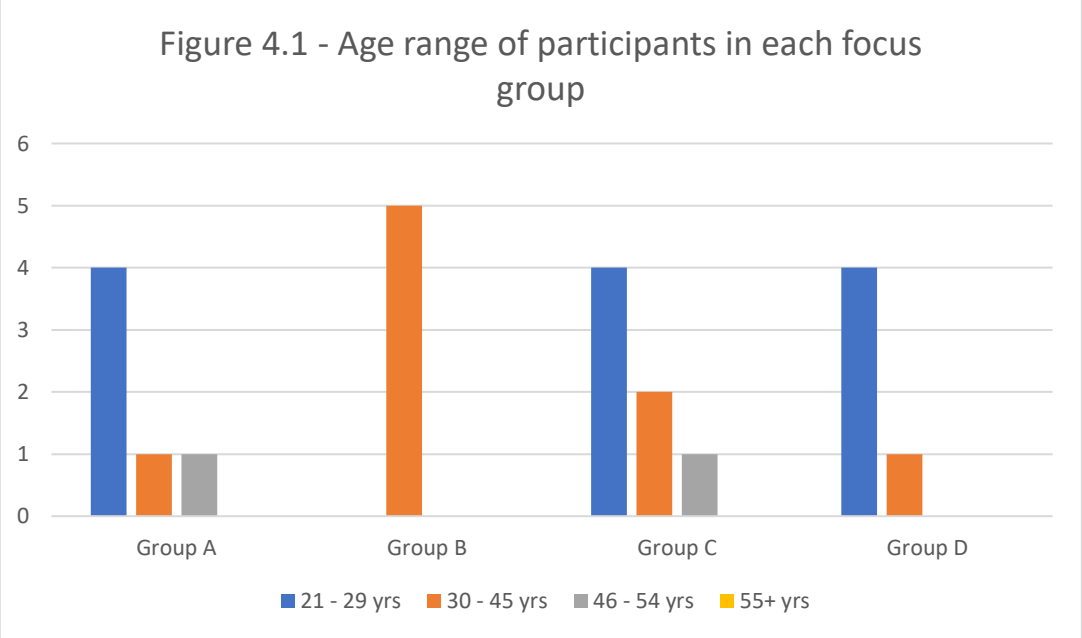


Figure 4.1 above shows that there were just two participants over the age of 45 years included in the study, one in Group and A and one in Group C. Group B had the least variance in ages, with all the participants being in the 30 – 45 years age bracket. These data reflect the make up of the courses overall as the part time course seems less likely to attract younger trainees; indeed it is marketed towards slightly older candidates who have additional commitments which preclude them from attending a full-time programme. In the other three groups, 22% of the participants were aged 30 – 45 years. Twelve trainees were 29 years or younger, making up 52% of the total participants.

Comparing the age distribution of the groups to the numbers in their cohorts overall shows strong similarities, notwithstanding that the groups have much smaller numbers making percentage comparisons statistically unreliable.

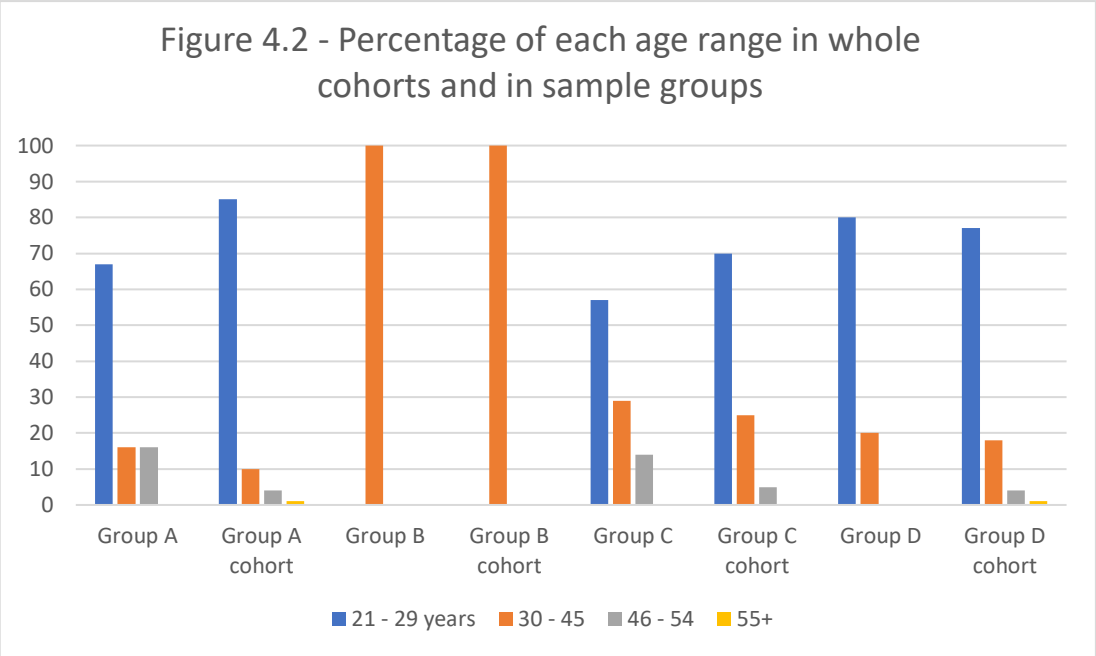
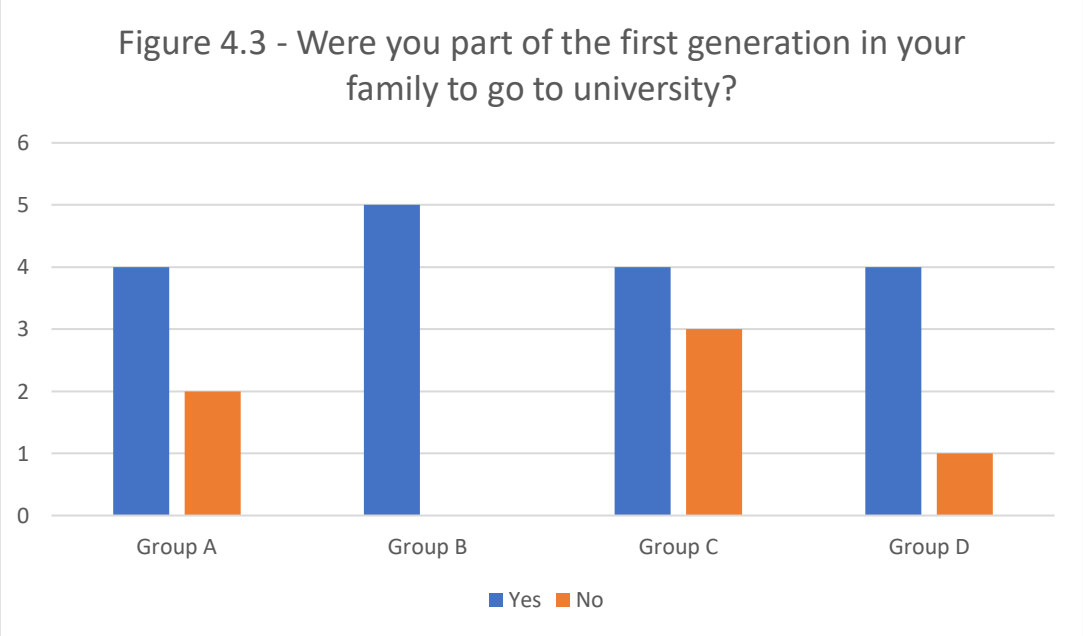
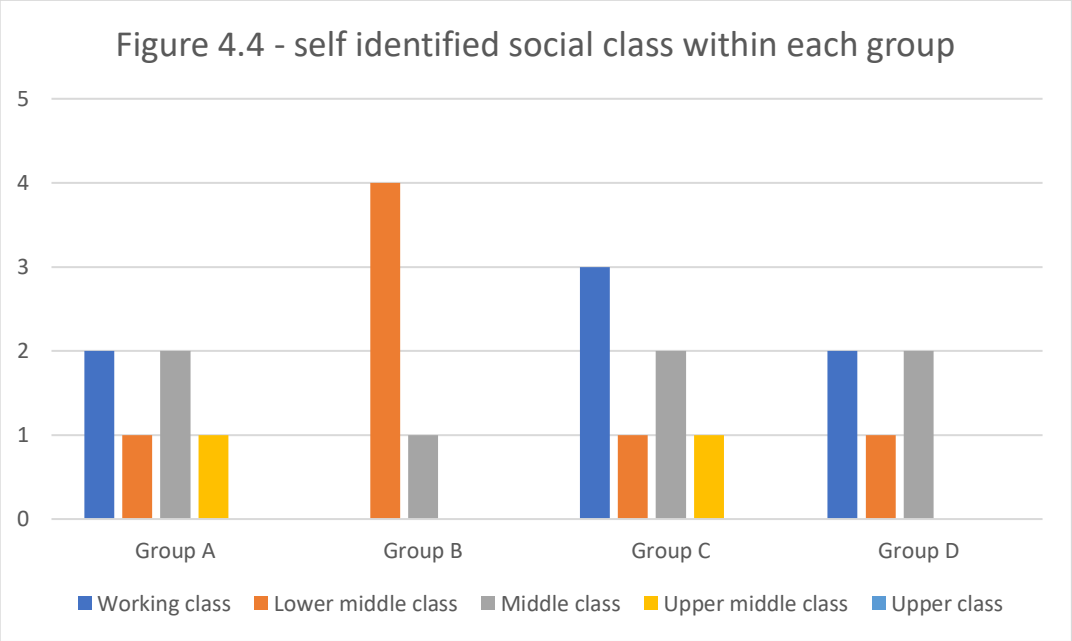


Figure 4.2 above demonstrates that for each focus group, the age distribution of the group was broadly similar to the whole cohort from which they were drawn.



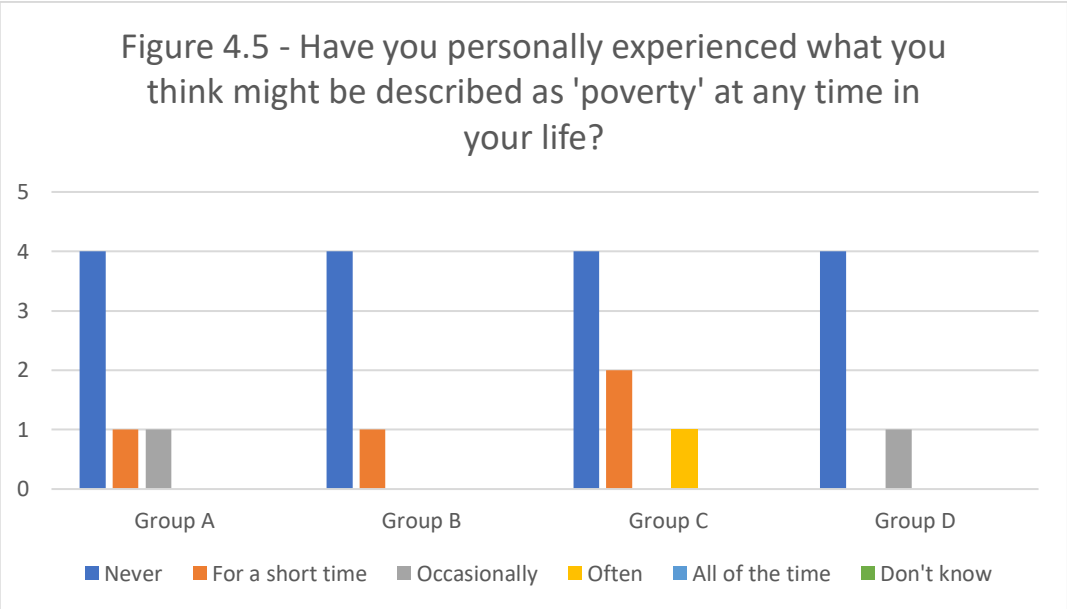
The data in Figure 4.3 show that the balance of participants tended towards those who were the first in their families to attend university. Group B were all in this category of first generation student whilst the other groups were mixed, with two, three and one respectively not being the first, as compared with four in each group who were. To be a first generation student is taken as a proxy of

class, with an assumption that this indicates a working class background (Stephens et al., 2014; Wainwright & Watts, 2021). According to Blandford (2017), being the first person in the family to go to university is also often taken as an indication of social mobility, arguing however that simply going to university is not sufficient to effect this change. If being a first generation student is taken as indicating historical working class status (Friedman & Laurison, 2020), then this reflects some mismatch with the participants' own self-identification of class, as shown in Figure 4.4 below.



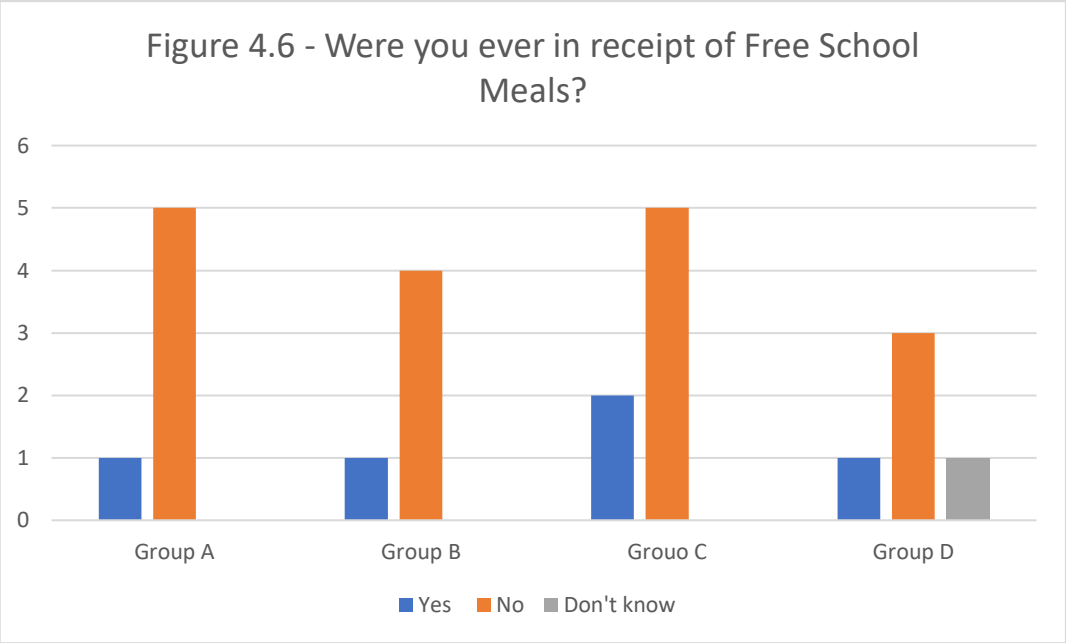
The results show that the majority of the participants identified themselves as belonging to the more privileged socio-economic groups, selecting a middle-class category from the range of options provided. Of the total participants, 30% (n=7) self-identified as working class, with only Group B being made up of solely middle class. Of the 70% (n=16) selecting the middle class categories, 40% (n=9) chose either 'middle class' or 'upper middle class' whilst 30% (n=7) chose 'lower middle class'. None of the participants selected 'upper class'. This can be set against the data in Figure 4.3, which shows that Group B were all the first to go to university in their families, whilst all identifying as middle class. Group D has one member who was the first to attend university, and has two participants identifying as working class, whilst Group A has four members being first attenders and two working class. Each group has members who are

the first to go to university whilst at the same time identifying as middle class, which conflicts with Friedman and Laurison (2020) who posit that being a first generation university student is a marker of working class status. This could either suggest that the participants' perception of class differs from that of Friedman and Laurison (2020), or that their possession of an undergraduate degree has led them to identify as middle class. Bourdieu (1984) acknowledges that volume and composition of capital may alter over time, and whilst their possession indicates a probable trajectory, this is subject to change. Friedman and Laurison (2020, p. xvi) note that they use the class based categories from the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification which draws on occupation for its basis. In this way it could be argued that the trainees are perhaps anticipating their chosen career as teachers to have uplifted their status.

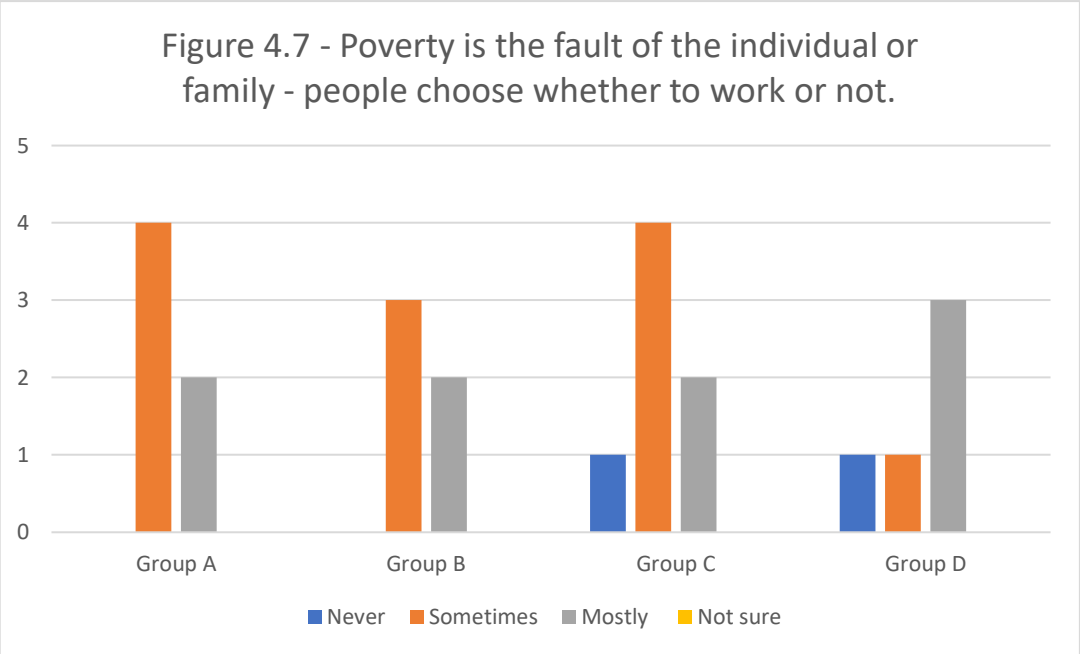


The majority of participants in each group stated in the questionnaire that they had never experienced poverty at any stage of their lives to this point, as can be seen in Figure 4.5 above. However, the voice of those who do feel this has impacted on them at some stage is heard in the groups, as each includes someone who indicated either for a 'short time' or 'occasionally'. Group C is the only group that has a participant who indicated that this has been more of an ongoing issue for them, in selecting 'often'. For the purposes of the

questionnaire this categorising of the participants has to be taken at face value, as it was completed anonymously which is known to encourage greater honesty of responses (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 158) so there is no reason to assume that the participants have not tried to select responses as close to their truth as possible. It has to be considered however, what the participants' understanding of the statement is relative to any definitions of poverty that are generally used, and whether their claims to have, or equally not to have, experienced poverty align with what might be normally assumed to qualify for this. The focus group discussions may better illuminate their perceptions of what experiencing poverty might entail, and perhaps indicate whether the proportions seen in the questionnaire responses do appear to be reflective of the trainees' lived experiences. Undertaking their research at a Scottish university, Robson et al. (2021) argue that the 40% of respondents who self-identify as having a low income explains their findings that the trainees are able to recognise the realities and impacts of poverty. In contrast, researching at Oxford University, Thompson et al. note that of their cohort of 157 participants, 82% could reasonably be assumed to come from backgrounds where poverty was not an issue (2016, p. 221). These differences could indicate the impact of the context of the research study, with Oxford being an elite institution and therefore attracting more affluent students to its courses (Friedman & Laurison, 2020). The institution in which this research took place is a low tariff university, which Lenon (2018) argues will attract students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Since the number of participants claiming to have experienced poverty are relatively low, it may be that the teaching profession is still mainly attracting middle-class students (Goodwin & Darity, 2019) regardless of the prestige of the institution conferring access to it.



Of all the participants, 22% (n=5) believe they were in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) during their time in statutory education, whilst 74% (n=17) were not, and 4% (n=1) indicated that they did not know, as shown in Figure 4.6 above. This correlates with the 70% (n=16) who declared that they had never personally experienced poverty in their own lives at any time. Those who were in receipt of FSM would most likely arise from the group of seven participants who indicated that they had experienced poverty at some point, with the two selecting that they that did not have FSM potentially falling into this category after they left statutory education. These data can be compared to the findings of Robson et al. (2021) who reported that around 40% of the PGCE cohort in their study who self-identified as having experienced low income at some stage of their lives. Of their 142 participants, 21% indicated they had experienced low income during their statutory school age years (Robson et al., 2021, p. 108), which despite the higher numbers, compares very closely to the 22% of participants who were eligible for FSM in this study.



There was some evidence of stereotypical responses regarding apportioning blame and contemplating where the fault lies for those in poverty, suggesting beliefs couched in a deficit model (Gorski, 2012; Leighton, 2018; Thompson et al., 2016). As shown in Figure 4.7 above, just two participants thought that the individual or family is never to blame for their circumstances, with nine selecting the option 'Yes, in most cases this is true' and 12 choosing 'Sometimes'. This reflects the media and political discourse that apportion blame to the individual, rather than society (Knight et al., 2018; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013). Kidd (2018) points out the differences between situational and generational poverty, arguing that the chain of poverty passed from generation to generation is extremely difficult to break and that lumping children together as one homogenous group fails to recognise the individual circumstances of every child. The deficit viewpoint revealed by the selection of a response which agrees that sometimes or mostly the family is choosing their circumstances demonstrates both a lack of understanding and of empathy.

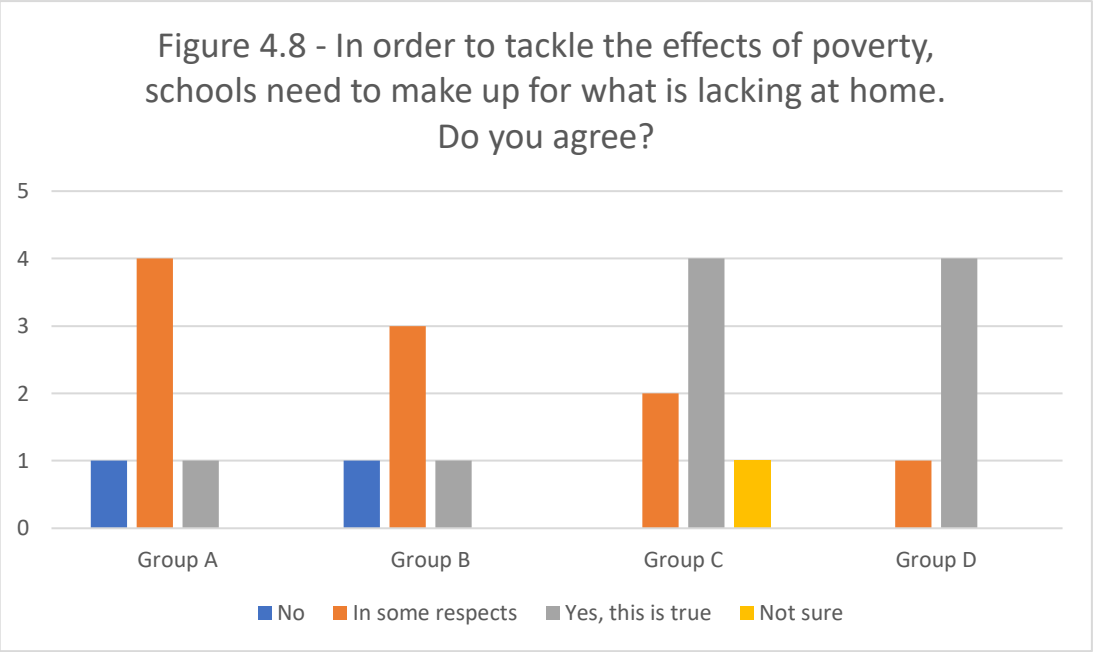
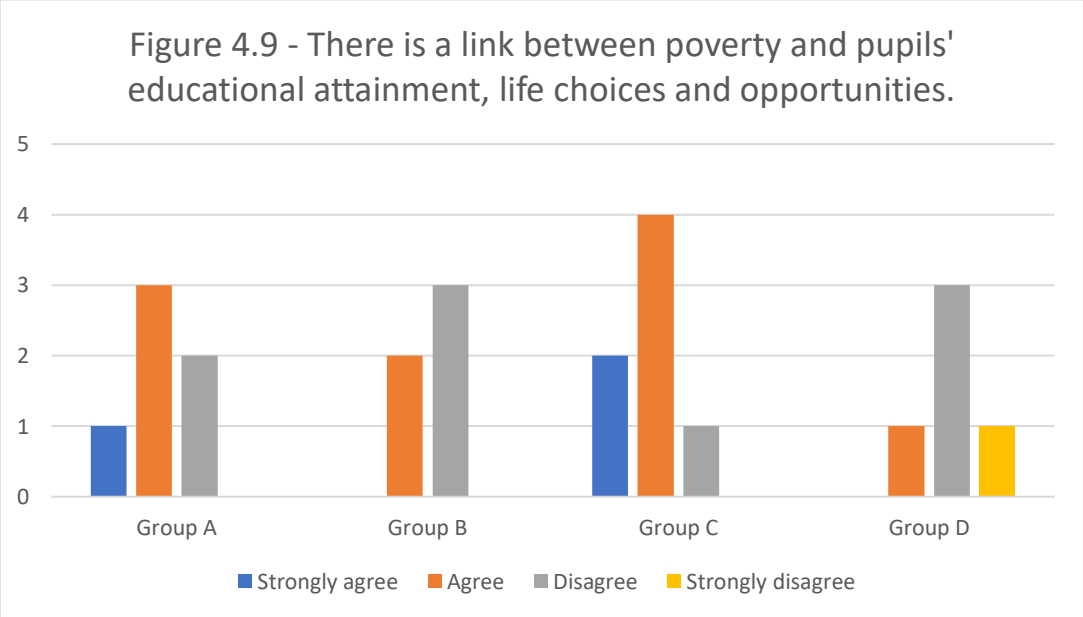
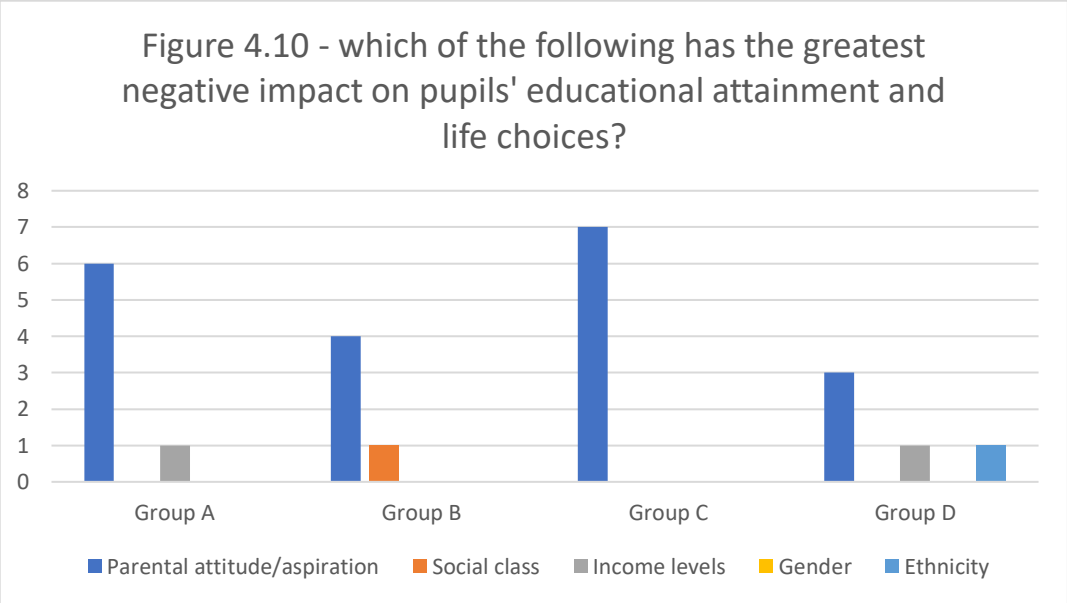


Figure 4.8 shows the majority of the trainees were of the opinion that the school has a significant role to play in making up for 'what is lacking at home', with just two participants disagreeing with this and one being unsure. Craske (2018) suggests that the introduction of Pupil Premium Grant funding was a clear attempt to shift the responsibility to schools for the reduced life chances and educational attainment of children living in poverty, whilst in 1970 Bernstein claimed schools could not compensate for society and Shain (2016) agrees this is still the case.

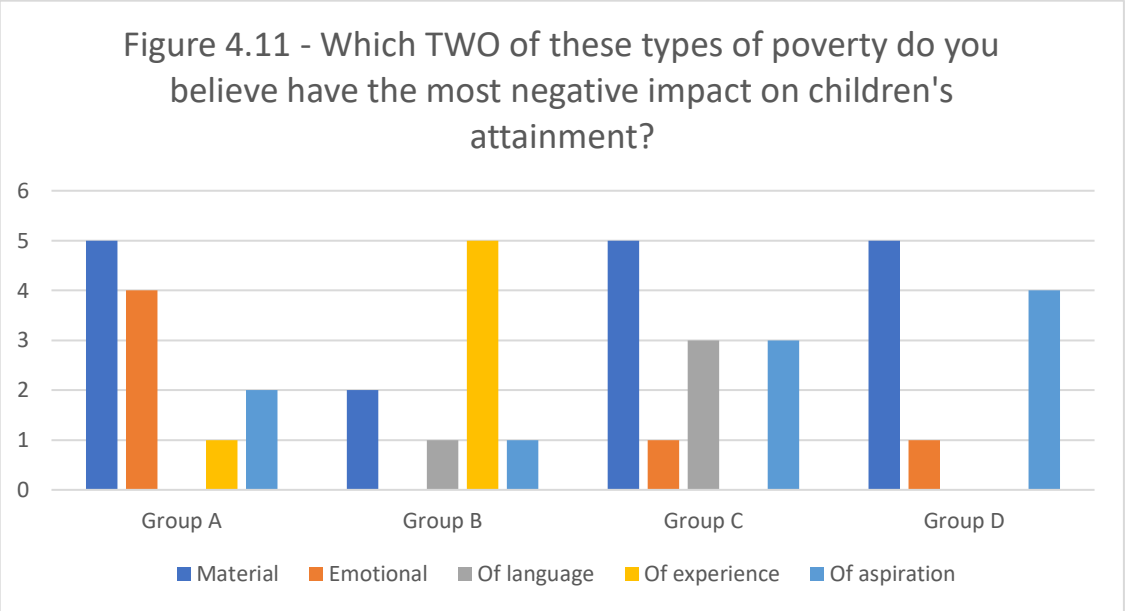


When considering their opinions about pupils' educational outcomes, life choices and opportunities, Figure 4.9 shows 43% (n=10) of trainees disagreed or strongly disagreed that there is any link between these and poverty. Strikingly, only 13% (n=3) strongly agreed that poverty impacts on these factors. This contrasts with Robson et al. (2021) who found trainees had a good understanding of the links between poverty and attainment. However, Thompson (2017) points out that the different government structure in Scotland, where Robson et al. (2021) conducted their research, means that there has been a solution-focused approach with a strong emphasis on reducing inequalities in educational attainment, so this may have informed their participants' understanding.



When asked about pupils' attainment and life choices, 83% (n=19) of participants selected 'Parents/carers aspiration/attitude towards education' as having the greatest negative impact on these, shown in Figure 4.10 above. One trainee chose 'Social class', two chose 'Income levels' and one chose 'Ethnicity'. Attributing poor academic attainment to low parental aspiration is highlighted by Thompson (2017) as being a common myth, whilst Kidd (2018) points out that those in generational poverty have no experience of something better to draw upon, with little awareness of the possibilities for their children, and even when parents do have aspirations, they are unable to support their

children to achieve them. It could be argued they do not have the capital required to action these ambitions (Bourdieu, 1986).



Using the categories identified by the Ad Astra project group of schools, (Puttick et al., 2020), the trainees were asked to select the two categories of poverty that they believed had the most negative impact on pupils' attainment in school. Figure 4.11 indicates Group B unanimously selected 'Poverty of experience', which is reflected in the focus group conversation, as seen later in this chapter. The high numbers of those choosing 'Material poverty' also emerges in the focus groups as being a key factor for the trainees in signifying pupils are living in poverty. 'Poverty of aspiration' also features strongly, with 10 selections. Out of groups A, B and D, only one trainee made the selection of 'Poverty of language', whilst in the School Direct group (C) three of the seven trainees chose this option. Kidd (2018) points out that those who claim low expectations or aspirations are the cause of low attainment are those who have no experience of poverty themselves. She explains that the hunger, debt and lack of a safe home environment are relentless for children living in poverty, and that this is completely misunderstood by those proposing aspiration as a key cause.

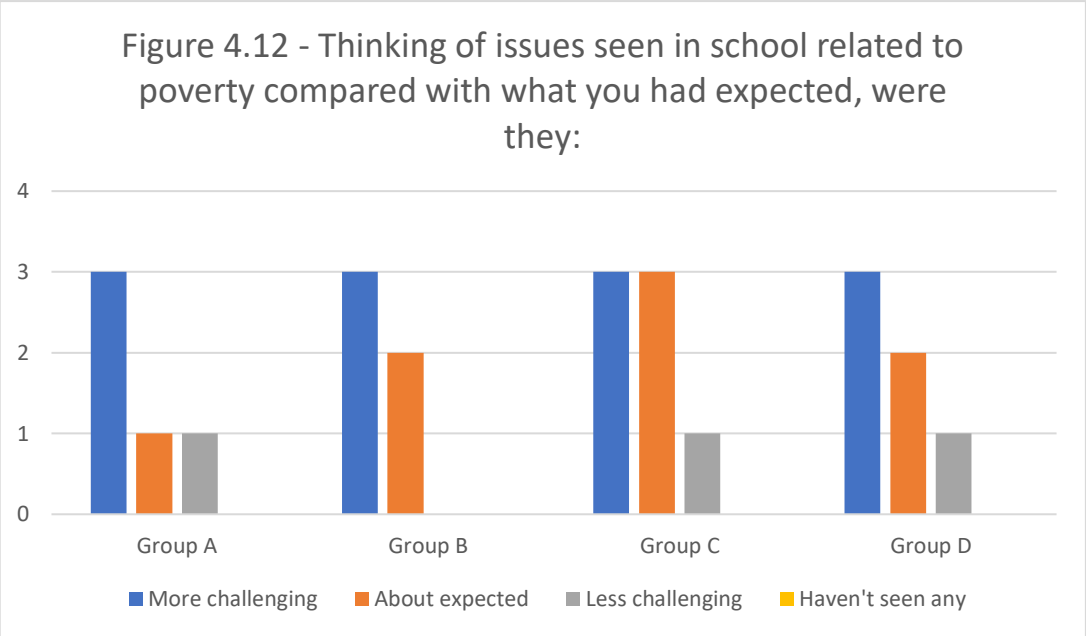


Figure 4.12 shows all of the trainees thought that they had seen something in school relating to issues of poverty, and twelve of the participants felt that these issues were more challenging than they had expected to encounter. This links to the discussions later in the chapter about how some trainees found what they had seen during their placements quite disturbing.

Table 4.2 – Results from Qu. 13 in the questionnaires (see Appendices A & B) Order the options in the table 1 – 6, with 1 being the most important cause of poverty in England, and 6 being the least important.

Group A (n=6)

Rank	Unemployment/ low income	Family history	Political landscape	Self-inflicted	Lack of education/ qualifications	Health issues
1	3	0	0	3	0	0
2	2	0	0	3	1	0
3	1	0	0	0	4	1
4	0	3	0	0	1	2
5	0	3	0	0	0	3
6	0	0	6	0	0	0

Group B (n=5)

Rank	Unemployment/ low income	Family history	Political landscape	Self-inflicted	Lack of education/ qualifications	Health issues
1	3	0	0	2	0	0
2	2	0	0	2	1	0
3	0	1	0	1	3	0
4	0	3	0	0	1	1
5	0	1	4	0	0	0
6	0	0	1	0	0	4

Group C (n=7)

Rank	Unemployment/ low income	Family history	Political landscape	Self-inflicted	Lack of education/ qualifications	Health issues
1	3	0	0	3	1	0
2	3	0	0	2	2	0
3	1	0	0	1	4	1
4	0	4	1	0	0	2
5	0	3	1	0	0	3
6	0	0	5	1	0	1

Group D (n=5)

Rank	Unemployment/ low income	Family history	Political landscape	Self-inflicted	Lack of education/ qualifications	Health issues
1	1	0	0	4	0	0
2	2	0	0	0	3	0
3	1	1	0	1	2	0
4	1	2	1	0	0	1
5	0	2	2	0	0	1
6	0	0	2	0	0	3

Table 4.2 above shows the breakdown of the responses to Question 13 (Appendices A and B) by individual group, which indicates that there is parity across the four groups for most of the options. The only notable exception being that Group C generally place 'Lack of education' as a more important cause than the other groups. This relates to the discussion this group has

about qualifications and education, which is considered later in the chapter at 4.2.1. The questionnaires were completed independently, and Table 4.2 indicates that there are similar responses within and across the groups, suggesting the perceptions held are relatively alike.

Table 4.3 - All groups (n=23)

Rank	Unemployment/ low income	Family history	Political landscape	Self-inflicted	Lack of education/ qualifications	Health issues
1	43%	0%	0%	52%	4%	0%
2	39%	0%	0%	30%	30%	0%
3	13%	9%	0%	13%	57%	9%
4	4%	52%	9%	0%	9%	26%
5	0%	39%	30%	0%	0%	30%
6	0%	0%	61%	4%	0%	35%

Table 4.3 above shows that of all the participants, 52% (n=12) believe that the main cause of poverty in England is self-inflicted. This included drug and alcohol misuse, gambling and / or financial debts. 43% (n=10) selected this as their second or third most important cause, meaning only 4% (n=1) participant did not rank this in their top three choices. Of the remainder 43% (n=10) selected either unemployment or low income as the main cause, and 39% (n=9) chose this as the second most important cause. Lack of qualifications or poor educational outcomes was mostly rated as the second or third most important factor. Family history, relating to family background and intergenerational factors, was mostly ranked as the fourth or fifth most important factor, with health issues placed slightly lower. This aspect is therefore appears not to be understood by the trainees as critical to breaking the cycle of poverty (Blandford, 2017; Kidd, 2018). The political landscape was seen as the least important factor by most with nobody ranking this above fourth place, and 61% (n=14) placing it as the least important factor of the options provided. The option to suggest additional factors was not taken up by any of the participants, possibly as they could not think of anything else to suggest or were happy to be led by the questionnaire options provided (Kumar, 2014; Tymms, 2017).

4.2 Part 2 – Focus group meetings.

The second section of Chapter 4 considers the data gathered from the six focus group meetings across the course of three academic years, through fourteen aspects, before examining the panel study, the diamond nine activity, language acquisition, and finishing on the two vignettes. The subheadings used within this section are the themes which arose from the data analysis, as previously explained in Chapter 3, section 3.12.

4.2.1 Understanding of poverty.

All of the groups discuss poverty overtly and disclose varying ideas about what it means to them. As previously discussed, defining poverty is problematic and contested (Lansley & Mack, 2015; Goulden & D'Arcy, 2014; Veit-Wilson, 2013; Ravallion, 1992), however, most of the groups seem mainly to view it in quite simplistic terms, equating it with a lack of sufficient household income. This supports the findings of other similar studies with ITE trainees (H. Jones, 2016; Thompson et al., 2016; White & Murray, 2016), but contrasts with the findings of Robson et al. (2021), who contend that their trainees show a more nuanced understanding of poverty, for example by considering political views and the relationship to empowerment. However, the part-time trainees in Group B appear more aware of the challenges presented by the term, discussing the difficulty both of defining it and identifying those affected:

> Alice: What are we classing as poverty?
> Daisy: It's hard to know.
> Eleanor: I think it's hard to say which children are, which children aren't. I think there's some children who we think are in poverty that aren't, and vice versa.

The group come back to this question later in their discussion, as they reconsider their understandings of the term. White and Murray (2016) note that their trainees were uncertain about the definition, and Goodwin and Darity (2019) find that there is often a disparity between teachers' personal experiences and their awareness of families' lives in poverty, so there is a lack of underpinning knowledge enabling them to discuss it confidently:

> Barbara: But I don't know if poverty is just about financial wealth, is it?

Charlotte: This is what we were saying at the beginning, how do we define poverty.
Alice: It really is a grey area because I think you can have money and still have poverty (…) And the other way round.
Charlotte: To me, it's going without things because you can't afford them. I don't know. I didn't think of it as maybe like emotional neglect and parents not being there, but I think it's all related.
Alice: Like wealthy parents even, might neglect their kids as well?
Charlotte: Possibly. But that would be for different reasons.

All of the groups considered how it might be challenging to identify pupils who are affected by poverty, although they believe that in school this will be signified by those children being eligible for Pupil Premium Grant funding. In having these discussions some of the assumptions they hold about the families who live in poverty become apparent, whilst also demonstrating their confusion around defining the term and how they might recognise those affected. This relates to the research questions considering how trainees describe poverty and their perceptions about the impact of poverty on pupils in primary schools. They link single parent families with poverty, and although Charlotte suggests that having an income might not preclude families from poverty, the others dismiss this as unlikely and are more open to the suggestion that the perceived average family unit may be in poverty. This implies that they are perhaps unaware of the pre-pandemic statistics which showed rates of working poverty had already hit a new high of 17% in working households, whilst both single and large families were affected, with families of three or more children reaching a record high of 42% (McNeil et al., 2021). This is illustrated with the extract below from Group B as they continued to attempt to delineate their collective understanding:

Daisy: You've got single parents and then you've got families.
Barbara: Is poverty a single parent?
Daisy: But are we led to think it's single parents that are in poverty, but it's also (.) y' know (.) 2.4 kids families that are in poverty as well?
Charlotte: Maybe so, in theory with an income coming in you can still be in poverty.
Daisy: Or not.
Eleanor: Yeah, I agree, it's the single parents.

Whilst talking about their understanding of poverty, Group C consider how it might not be a permanent condition, which is not seen in the other groups'

discussions. Robson et al. (2021) note that their trainees acknowledged a change in personal circumstances could be an influencing factor, which Brenda posits in the following example, but the others appear unconvinced by this, as Edd suggests that her scenario may not be 'poverty', as if somehow it could not happen to people like them, and Charles surmises that it is a 'lifestyle'. This conflicts with Robson et al.'s (2021) findings, as the majority of the group appear to dismiss Brenda's view, and show no recognition of this chain of events as a possibility:

> Brenda: But I think there's a lot of talk now (…) a lot of people going into poverty. So at the moment I'm quite comfortable living, if anything happened like my husband lost his job tomorrow, we'd probably sink into poverty (…) in a few months we'd be in poverty.
> Edd: There are just so many social factors though. Would what you're talking about really be poverty, as such?
> Charles: Yes, I think of it more as something that is lifestyle (…) well, as a way of living? Isn't it more a generational thing?
> Brenda: There's different opinions about what actually poverty is, what counts as poverty as well. I mean some say children in the third world, they're (.) they don't even get a free education so knowledge of poverty, isn't it.
> Gerald: It's hard to analyse without throwing stereotypes in.

Charles touches on the concept of poverty as generational, as discussed by Kidd (2018), but it is difficult to discern from this brief mention whether he has the underlying understanding of the distinction that Kidd (2018) makes between generational and situational poverty, or if he is merely reflecting on the idea of poverty as a lifestyle choice. This group continue to consider poverty later in their meeting, when the issue of choice arises again and, like the other groups, they show a belief that there is some element of opting for a particular lifestyle involved. The topic of drug misuse is also drawn in, relating to the questionnaire responses suggesting that poverty is self-inflicted, which six of the seven in this group selected in the top three most important causes of poverty:

> Gerald: I don't think poverty is a choice, as such. No one would choose to live in poverty.
> Edd: No?
> Brenda: Do you think?
> Gerald: I think that you *can* make life choices that lead you to poverty.
> Brenda: Yes, agreed.

> Gerald: But even an ex-heroin addict that's got themselves into poverty because of heroin addiction probably wouldn't say 'oh yeah, it was great, I'm glad I did it!'
> Brenda: It's in their culture, isn't it. These things are all related.
> Fergal: Yes, it's just playing out what they expect from life. Making choices that bring that about? It's definitely a certain group of people.

Group D shows uncertainty around understanding what poverty might actually be in their discussion about the photograph of a family sitting in a sofa in the street outside their house. Again, their problems with understanding the term are raised, as Henri's comment implies that he has no concept of disadvantage, which is reflected in the questionnaire data as the majority of the participants stated they had no personal experience. Only one of Group D selected an alternative option, which was 'occasionally'. This profile is comparable with the participants in the study by White and Murray (2016, p. 510), who note that many saw issues of poverty as unknown and awkward, looking at them through 'the lenses of their own often middle class and norm-referenced perspectives'. This can be seen in the following example, with Annie trying to challenge their assumptions, but Barry stands firm and Henri is quite open in his disbelief and confusion:

> Barry: This is what I think of as real poverty though. You know? If you asked me to define poverty, I'd say it's this.
> Annie: But what, exactly? A mother with her arms round a child? A guy leading his toddler inside the house? How are you defining poverty? The guy on the couch has a laptop even. Is that poverty?
> Barry: Could be. Easily. They always have money for that sort of stuff, don't they?
> Henri: Yes, thinking about it, you're probably right. I don't know though…(.) I'm just thinking about this (…)
> Barry: Jeez, well keep us in suspense why don't you?
> Henri: (laughs) So cruel. No, like, well, I was thinking, I haven't the first idea how you would define poverty, unless we just say it's having no money. And then if you're saying that (…) well, he's got a laptop so it can't be poverty, but then look at them? Sitting on a couch in the street? Is that for real?

This conversation in Group D continues as they strive to arrive at an understanding of the term. In doing so, some express opinions which continue to display a lack of experience and further assumptions about families living in poverty. Annie seems to have a more accurate view of what poverty might mean in reality (Dix, 2018; Kidd, 2018), whilst the others range from general

uncertainty in Henri to Barry's very stereotypical opinions regarding holidays, cars and luxury items. Annie self-identified as working class, and from her contributions it also becomes apparent that she is the one in this group who declared being in receipt of Free School Meals as a child in the questionnaire. This could be seen to suggest that she is perhaps more likely to have had direct experience of poverty than the others in this group. This exchange particularly highlights the research question about how the participants describe poverty:

> Evelyn: You were defining poverty? (…) I think it's just anyone that hasn't enough money to live on, life is a struggle, to make ends meet, I mean.
> Duncan: Yes, I'd agree. I think there's a reason for the minimum wage, and that's to allow a particular standard of living. Keeps you from going below the breadline.
> Henri: The what?
> Duncan: Not having enough to buy basics, I suppose that means.
> Henri: And what are the basics?
> Barry: An iPhone, a laptop, Sky, ten kids, y' know…
> Henri: No, behave. Would it be like, (.) not going on holiday every year and maybe having no car (…) one car?
> Duncan: I think holidays are in most people's reach though, I mean, you only have to drive through Skegness (…) all those caravans (.) it's hardly the Algarve, is it?
> Barry/Evelyn: (laugh)
> Annie: And these are the basics in whose world?
> Henri: Well, I don't know? What does anyone else think then?
> Annie: Well I'd say the people who are choosing between heating and food are probably the one struggling for your 'basics'. Can't feed their kids *and* themselves?
> Barry: Oh no, come on, this is Britain and the 21st century!
> Evelyn: Yeah, we're not talking third world here, are we?
> Barry: Benefit Britain! You're over egging your pudding there, Annie. If you could afford one! (laughs)

This relates to Beadle's (2020) assertion that for him growing as a child in a working class family, there were two types of food – enough and not enough, and to Kidd's (2018) description of the relentless worry about debt, hunger and safe housing. This concept would possibly only be relatable for Annie out of this group. The trainees' conversations show evidence many of them believe the causes of poverty lie with the individual, which is further supported by their questionnaire responses. They are putting the onus on the individual children and their families for their failure to succeed, relating this to a shortcoming in their personal characteristics. Ridge (2002) argues that parents will go without

food or new clothes in order to support their children, which is a point Annie raises on two occasions when the others are speculating about financial priorities. Firstly, as the others talk about holidays and cars, she points out that being unable to afford the basic essentials might mean a choice between paying for heating or food. She contradicts Barry again when the group are discussing poverty being an option as people choose not to work. Annie points out that they would not choose to go without food, but Barry asserts that any shortage of money is due to parents buying cigarettes and alcohol. This is in conflict with Ridge's (2002) findings and is an example of Barry's deficit viewpoint. The questionnaire data support the findings from the focus group discussions, as only two of the twenty three participants indicated individuals and families are not to blame for their being in poverty. There are examples in all the focus group meetings of these views being shared, which helps to illuminate the research questions exploring how the trainees describe poverty and what they believe the impact on children may be. Their attitude reflects that described by Shildrick and MacDonald (2013, p. 286), who note that blaming those in poverty due to their irresponsible consumption and the failure to manage is the dominant narrative, to such a point that even those in poverty themselves may subscribe to it.

Group A discuss seeing poverty portrayed in the media, and how this can be termed as 'poverty porn'. This relates to the concerns of Paul (2013), who questions the objectives of documentaries such as 'Skint', and Cocker's condemning of 'class tourism' as 'patronising social voyeurism' (Worthington, 2006). The trainees consider why this might be shown and why people consider it to be entertainment. It is conveyed that the group believe the programmes they see on television portray a realistic view of the conditions people may live in:

> Francis: But we all watch the news and see programmes about it, so people do know what's going on to some extent.
> John: Do we watch it because we're interested or because it's poverty porn? To see how the other half live? (…) Well not half (.) but the other amount of people, how those people live. It's the same at the other end of the spectrum, watching Rich House, Poor House.
> Arnold: It's to make you feel better about yourself.

John: Yeah, it's about how we view it, but it is interesting how it shows their lives.
Arnold: That's why we watch the poor people.
Francis: The working class, documentaries that show you (…) it's their lives, isn't it?

This aspect is reflected in some of the conversations which arose in the meetings and links with the finding from the questionnaires, showing that only two of the participants indicated they thought poverty was never the fault of the individual, whilst the rest believe poverty is self-inflicted always or at least some of the time. Drug and alcohol misuse is mentioned, as is gambling, and these are conflated with families living in poverty, reflecting the findings by White and Murray (2016) whose participants tended to do the same. Group D discuss this on several occasions, for example in their first meeting they consider how parents make choices over their spending, which is further discussed later in this chapter:

Henri: They choose to drink and smoke so their kids go hungry though (…)
Duncan: Yes, I suppose (…)
Evelyn: They might have mental health issues.
Henri: Not accessing help, then? (…) I can understand the buying drink and that, 'cos they might be addicted, but then you can't be addicted to dogs, can you? Or designer clothes?
Duncan: Ha! (laughs) I'm not sure about that!

4.2.2 Priorities.

Group C developed their discussion of poverty as signified by appearances as they explore this aspect further, suggesting that the participants believe some parents are prioritising money for their own purchases above essentials for their children. This seems like a very stereotypical point of view, although Blandford (2017, p. 34) supports this notion of working-class life, relating how her own father took most of the money the family earned through menial and intense labour to buy himself alcohol. This seems to be the view that the trainees have either gained or had reinforced by experiences in school:

Brenda: The base school I'm in most of the families are pretty much living on benefits and things, but some still come well dressed and everything, y' know (.) depends on the parents (.) some come with holes in their shoes yet their parents are smoking 20 cigarettes a day.
Gerald: Yeah

Brenda: So that's the poverty, it's not about the poverty, it's about how people (…)
Fergal: Make choices, yeah.

This conversation continues as one participant alludes to their own situation, leading the others to compare him to their beliefs about families in receipt of Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) funding. They refer to 'that sort', relating to Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1990b, p. 77), meaning people tend to conform to the expected behaviours of those they perceive to be like them. The others agree as Andrea explains why Edd does not belong to that group, thus revealing stereotypical opinions about PPG eligible families:

Edd: My children get Pupil Premium because of my situation but you wouldn't look at me and y'know (.) and go dire state of poverty, you know it's (.)
Andrea: Exactly. Obviously I don't know your financial circumstances but you're obviously the sort of person that would put your children's needs first so you'd buy them a pair of shoes rather than (…) rather than cigarettes or drink or whatever, whereas there's parents who don't. They get the same amount of money as you (.) probably (.) but how you prioritise that money is different.
Edd: Yes, absolutely.
Barbara: Yes, there's a lot in my school on Pupil Premium, a lot of that sort, on benefits, that […] buy everything designer.
Edith: Yeah, they're 4, they don't need designer clothing, they need books and they haven't got a single book in their house but they'd rather buy designer clothes.
Andrea: It's about attitudes, isn't it?
Edd: It's about priorities.
Charles: And that sort (…) well, they don't (…) You're clearly not like that.
Brenda: Mmm.

This judgement of priorities attributed to particular social groups is seen across all of the five focus groups. It mirrors the findings of White and Murray (2016) and H. Jones (2016), whose participants voiced similar opinions. This type of debate about parents prioritising their spending appears in Group A when they consider what they had seen happening in school during their first placement:

John: I've had priority issues regarding money, there's one child in my class who keeps on saying 'oh my Mum's taking driving lessons' and this and that, saving money for the car, but he's coming in with shoes with massive holes in and I've had to tape them up twice. […] So it was that element of priority for money and where do you put the money in.
Arnold: They always have money for their luxuries, don't they?

Kate: Yeah.

The consideration that perhaps this was actually an investment in the family's future and a determined attempt to become independently mobile, with all the opportunities that may afford for better employment prospects, is completely overlooked by the group. Again, this opinion is expressed by Group D participants as they discuss parents' spending choices in their first meeting:

> Henri: So it's not poverty, then is it? 'Cos they've got big houses and they always have phones and that. (…) I've seen parents at the school gates with children on free dinners and they're stood on their phones and with dogs as well.
> Annie: Dogs?
> Henri: Yeah. If their kids need free dinners how can they afford to feed dogs? And pay for phones?
> Evelyn: And trainers.
> Duncan: Wrong priorities, isn't it?

This topic is discussed several times by Group D over the course of their three meetings, with a clear opinion expressed which suggests stereotypical attitudes towards the families in question. This relates directly to findings from H. Jones (2016) whose trainee argued it was 'unjustifiable', that people on benefits spent 'her and her parents' hard-earned tax-payers' money' on dog food. As H. Jones (2016, p. 475) points out, these comments echo those which O. Jones (2016) refers to as demonisation of the poor. While Mazzoli Smith and Todd (2019) found that audits carried out for the 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' initiative in schools exposed multiple examples of hard up parents buying designer wear, this was for their children rather than for themselves. In contrast, the participants in this study often spoke of parents' extravagant purchases but see the opportunity cost of this as rendering them unable to meet the basic needs of their children. This continues throughout the trend study conversations, as this example taken from the final meeting shows:

> Evelyn: There were kids coming to school with holes in their shoes, no PE kit, all sorts.
> Barry: So much for the benefits. I bet all the mothers had good phones though!
> Evelyn: Yeah, and designer clothes. It was so bad, I'm telling you.
> Barry: Well I did tell you my Nike Airs tale, didn't I? You were warned. That's chavs for you.

Along with prioritising spending, the discussion moves to state welfare benefits in several of the groups. This usually shows stereotypical ideas about what parents are using this money for, and why they are in receipt of any benefits. Rather than considering the circumstances that may lead to such payments, participants tend to make assumptions about life choices. This relates to the NEU (2021) guidance for tackling poverty in schools, which notes that it may be possible teachers encounter children or parents who believe that people in poverty should work harder or longer hours. There is no acknowledgement that school staff may subscribe to this belief, yet it is clear that the trainees think this is the case, and that poverty is a result of people choosing not to work. In Group D's second meeting the association is made between lack of care from parents and issues with alcohol and drugs meaning money is diverted from the children's basic needs:

> Henri: Yeah, but, so why do they come into school all dirty with no clean clothes and shoes that don't fit then? If the parents did care they wouldn't.
> Annie: Maybe it's money though – like, no money not no care.
> Evelyn: But then what's Child Benefit for? If that wasn't spent on drink and (.) and drugs then they'd have money for the kids. It's a choice, don't you think?
> Barry: Definitely.

4.2.3 Expectations.

Several participants discussed the issue that some of their pupils had home lives which were not what they had expected. For some, this was expressed as a new understanding that had come about due to their experiences during school placements, as Evelyn from Group D on their second meeting says:

> Duncan: …Now you know what their life is like, you've, well, you've recalibrated your judgement?
> Evelyn: Yeah, yes I think that's maybe it. I didn't have that to compare it to before. And now I do (…) I wish I didn't.
> Annie: What d'you mean?
> Evelyn: It's really upsetting, the way some of them live, what they've been through. I mean, poverty, you see it on the TV (.) news and that, programmes about people, but it's not like being there, like right in yer face. (.) You don't think that's really how they live. (…) Some at my school were just so, well, they don't seem to have *been* anywhere, just maybe in a caravan or something? (.)
> Duncan: Poor kids. It's such a positive experience, seeing other cultures, and they (.) well, they're just not getting that, are they?
> Evelyn: It's upsetting to think about it.

They tended to express the perceived differences in pupils' circumstances to their own home lives and upbringing as being problematic or negative, and two of the groups seemed unaware of the value judgement this meant they were placing on the pupils' families. The third group is considered later in this chapter. For example, an annual holiday, most likely abroad, seems to be the assumption in this particular exchange. The fact that Duncan conveys a feeling that these children require sympathy for their caravan holidays, and that this is not contested by the others, completely overlooks that these holidays may well have been joyful occasions for the families involved. The possibility there are likely to be children who have not been on any kind of holiday at all appears not to occur to any of the group. Equally, staying in the UK seems to equate to not having a holiday, and to not having "*been* anywhere". This subjective opinion demonstrates middle-class normative cultural behaviours which the trainees appear to take for granted (Ladson-Billings, 2006), and highlights the assertion that working-class pupils are construed by what they lack (Reay, 2001; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013; Thompson et al., 2016). Their conversation relates directly to the NEU (2021, p. 19) guidance on tackling poverty in school, which notes how important it is for teachers not to make assumptions, for example by asking questions about pupils' holidays and thus highlighting financial inequalities between children.

Group B had a very similar conversation revealing that they had been exposed to experiences which were new to them, and which they found disturbing. Daisy explicitly refers to her placement school as 'a culture shock'. The topic arose from a discussion about Daisy encountering travellers in school whose parents would remove them from education as soon as they could read and write, which led to children pretending to be illiterate in order to continue attending school. As with Evelyn in Group D, Charlotte and Daisy both describe this as 'upsetting':

> Daisy: …so there are girls now in my class that are pretending not to be able to read and write (…) and there's just so much with all that I just, and every day still now I go and there's something new where I didn't (.) It was such a culture shock. It sounds such a stupid thing to say, I didn't realise that people live like that.
> Barbara: But you don't – why would you?

Charlotte: No, it's upsetting sometimes.
Daisy: It is. It's really upsetting.

Brenda in Group C raises the point that not having personal experience of schools or of poverty meant that she made assumptions about the issues that she was going to face. She speaks quite haltingly about this, seeming uncertain of how to express her thoughts (Gorski, 2012; White & Murray, 2016) although she does state that she is aware of making the mistake of jumping to conclusions about what the implications of a disadvantaged school context might mean:

> Brenda: That's what I said about stereotyping automatically. I was told when I went to my base school we've got a lot of children from disadvantaged, you know (.) and you know, you automatically get that picture in your head (…) not knowing what it was going to mean, with nothing to base it on what does it mean? (.) and some of them do fit the stereotype, some don't (.) a few don't. And it's not necessarily anything you'd expect either.

Group C discuss their expectations regarding parenting in families who are living in poverty. This is in response to one of the sets of photographs which shows adults with children in each picture. Whilst they seem to be saying that they recognise living in poverty does not necessarily indicate neglectful parenting their conversation does appear to show that they are uncertain about this, as they only concede there is a possibility that the two are not always interlinked:

> Charles: A sweeping statement, but they all look like they're from some sort of estate (.) or on some sort of estate.
> Brenda: Again you're making assumptions about people who live on council estates and things like that (…) they're people who live quite different lives (…) they don't, are not always the greatest parents.
> Charles: The other thing maybe, erm, (.) I don't know if poverty's a separate issue from good parenting (…) 'cos you might p'rhaps have good parents who are also in poverty?
> Brenda: That's what I mean, yeah definitely, it's not always automatic that 'cos the child's in poverty the parents don't care about them, they neglect them (.) It might not always be the case?
> Gerald: Yes, not feeding them, they're not (…) it's not always true, we know that's not always true.
> Brenda: No, not always, yeah.

4.2.4 Lack of experiences (impact of poverty outside the classroom/homelife). Children's lack of experience is considered by each group, with some explaining how their school placement has demonstrated this to them as an issue for some children which they did not expect. Dix (2018) observes that being able to explore and seek out new experiences is an expensive pastime, and therefore opportunities are very limited for working-class children. He links this in turn with a lack of ambition arising from restricted exposure to different environments and people, asserting that cultural capital cannot be built other than through lived experiences. Shain (2016) notes that the Pupil Premium Grant funding is often directed to providing middle-class experiences for children, thus implying that the middle class children will already be accessing the wide variety of experiences, which Dix (2018) sees as so critical to sparking ambition and aspiration. Therefore, the trainees in Group B reveal that their expectations align with those of the middle class, as this illustrative example shows:

> Charlotte: There was a school trip with our school to the Wildlife Park and every child could go because of Pupil Premium money, and it was something when we started talking about it (.) some could never gone with their family and I found that quite amazing.
> Alice: Yeah, you can't believe it can you? Never been (…)
> Charlotte: No, so they're given that experience (…) some were, at the park, were just so overwhelmed and it was obvious they'd not been to anything like that.
> Daisy: Exactly the same, we went to The Deep, just across the Humber Bridge and Hull, and it blew my mind on the way there that some of the Year 6 kids had never crossed the Humber Bridge. You know, you live right next to it, and you've never been across.
> Eleanor: Crazy isn't it? I'd never have believed it.
> Daisy: When my kids saw it, like when you get round that bit of the motorway and you can see the bridge […] they all thought it was the Golden Gate Bridge cos they'd seen a picture and they were like, "It's the Golden Gate Bridge!" and I'm like, no, it's the Humber Bridge. […] They were in awe.
> Barbara: God, that's so sad.

Group A discuss the activities children take part in outside school, and demonstrate negative assumptions about how children living in poverty will choose to spend their free time. This conversation arises from photographs which simply show children walking along a street:

Arnold: They're too young walking about like that, hands in pockets looking like they're up to no good, and the guy on the right looks like a right wrong 'un.
Kate: He looks like a real toughie, with his hands in his pockets.
Arnold: They're about to go in here (.) they're about to go in this gate and nick something (.) got nothing better to do with their time.
Nigel: Yeah they've got it well sussed, he's going to go through a cat flap.
Kate: I think, the way they're behaving, I think that's learnt, as in they've seen it from their parents
Nigel: Acting older than they are.
Arnold: My children wouldn't walk down the street (.)
Kate: Like that (.) looking hard
Arnold: Hands in their pockets. They're just left to run wild and this is how they fill their time (.) Not educational, is it?
Nigel: No, nobody's taking them anywhere that's going to be helping in their schoolwork.
John: There's no care, is there?

They project their own expectations onto the pupils and judge them by this, thinking about what they would allow their own children to do and how they would be expected to act. Their assumptions about the activities of the children in the photographs are very negative, as they talk about criminal intent and learning antisocial behaviours from their parents. This supports the findings of Ellis et al., (2016), Gazeley & Dunne (2007), H. Jones (2016), Thompson et al. (2016) and White & Murray (2016), that found trainees tended to hold negative stereotypical attitudes towards families in poverty.

4.2.5 Appearance, clothing and cleanliness.

For the trainees, poverty and social class are reflected in external appearances, in particular clothing, shoes and cleanliness. This is seen across all of the groups as trainees express opinions that appearances are a signifier of pupils living in poverty, as with the illustrative example below of Charles talking about pupils who are seen to be wearing the same clothes for more than one day. This to some extent supports the research by Robson et al. (2021, p. 113), who note that their trainees relate poverty to appearance and hygiene standards, but contrary to this they also acknowledge pupils may not, 'come in dirty faced and barefoot'. When talking about how they might be able to know if a child is in financial need, a participant in Group C directly relates the issue of clothing to indicating poverty, which meets with agreement from the group:

Charles: A big signifier of kids in poverty is if they're (.) sort of turn up in the same clothes all the time.
Edith: Yeah.
Andrea: Yeah, that's true.
(Others nodding)

Judgements are rapidly made about the children in the photographs based on these aspects, with this often being the first thing commented upon when the slides were moved on to a new set of photographs. For example, in Group D's first meeting the trainees begin to talk about different types of school, and assign the children based on their appearance:

Henri: That bottom one, well, like, it's maybe non uniform day, but they look like state school kids to me (…) they're pretty scruffy, aren't they?
Evelyn: (laughs) Yeah, not like the top lot!
Duncan: Don't you think the top right ones could be private school as well?
Henri: No, they don't look like posh kids to me. That girl's hair is scruffy and that one in the middle, it looks like her socks might be, like, not very clean?
[…]
Duncan: I think the top left group are maybe from a disadvantaged area.
Henri: Yeah (…) They're in uniform but they don't look smart, do they? (.) It's a bit of a mess.

Clothing as a signifier of class is a theme picked up by Group B, who discuss the issue of designer clothing or wearing a particular brand:

Daisy: …but in the nineties I had a Kappa jacket. I wouldn't say that I (…)
Charlotte: What, for real?
Daisy: I know (.) I did. Yeah.
(others laugh)
Daisy: But in my high school all the girls had Alessi jackets and Kappa jackets, but I don't think (…)
Charlotte: Were you poor?
Daisy: Yep, dead poor. Didn't wear (…) Am I a chav?
(all laugh)
Daisy: But of that Vicky Pollard thing had come out when I was a t high school, and my friends and I thought we were top dog for, like, because it was like (.) well they're expensive for a start!
Others: Yeah
Daisy: So you're not poor if you managed to buy one, that might be knock off from the market, who knows, but like it was (…) makes me feel chavvy for saying it, it was like a sign of wealth – she's got a new sports jacket. (…). We probably (.) must've looked awful.

This idea is considered by Kulz (2017, p. 100) who relates a similar discussion with a student, labelling others as 'chavs' and relating this to clothing choices. Bourdieu (1984) notes that what Kulz (2017) would go on to hear described as 'skanky fashion choices' links to the pretensions of the middle class, and that the idea of what is described as 'taste' (Bourdieu, 1984) relates to the choices made in opposition to those of other classes. The academy where Kulz (2017) centres their research has a dress code which extends to staff as well as pupils, in a 'parody of the corporate world' (p. 71), conflating outward appearances with moral values equated to the white middle class norms expected and demanded in all stakeholders. The notion of taste is explicitly referenced by John regarding working class people, distancing himself from that group and demonstrating Bourdieu's (1984) argument about the symbolic system where distinctions of taste become the basis for social judgement. The following exchange relates to the research question looking to discover how trainees describe poverty and what aspects they particularly emphasise. Whilst Arnold labels the working class with a derogatory term (O. Jones, 2016), John reveals highly stereotypical assumptions as he not only critiques their clothing but also makes the condemnatory claim that they are somehow also in need of washing:

> Arnold: They're often just chavs.
> John: Well they're dressed to the fashion of their culture, which is not to my taste, and they're not necessarily clean as such.

There are twenty three instances of Group A commenting about external appearances during their focus group meeting. They project their own standards and expectations onto the children and make comments about the fit, cleanliness and appropriateness of their clothing. In their discussion about any experiences they had had with issues of poverty during their first school placement all participants contributed, and showed a general lack of understanding for the circumstances of the pupils:

> John: There's a lad within my class who comes in every day in the same, not to be rude to him, dirty clothes, as he was in last (.) the day before. And sometimes even the ones he was in last week, like when was that child's clothes washed, have his (.) is it a money issue or is it a care issue and things like that?
> Francis: It's neglect though isn't it, not having clean clothes every day.
> Louise: It's that sort of parents, yeah. Shirt sleeves halfway up their arms, no PE kit.

Arnold: It's them that turn up without a coat regardless.
Nigel: I've seen where a new pupil came into school where she couldn't get a uniform or anything like that […] Mum had to go into a homeless shelter with her daughter and when she came into school, it was not her fault, but she had old shoes (.) Mum couldn't even afford to get her a uniform and she couldn't join in with the other pupils a lot.
Francis: God, that's so bad. There's no excuse for it though, is there?
Nigel: No, no there's not.
Louise: No.
Arnold: No, that's what benefits are there for.
John: Exactly.

These judgements being made due to clothing reflect the findings of Main and Bradshaw (2012), whose research with their Child Deprivation Scale attempted to understand the relationship between children's own wellbeing and child poverty. The most frequently selected items on their list of essentials were mobile phones and clothes that fit. This could be interpreted as the children being avaricious and materialistic, however, it was argued that the reasons behind these choices were for social and symbolic reasons. The notions of being judged to 'fit in' and being able to participate with peers were emphasised by the children as vital, particularly as this meant they would not be singled out and potentially subjected to bullying (Main, 2013). The study argued that living in poverty puts this idea of conforming at great risk, as children would be unlikely to have new, well-fitting clothes. The fact that the trainees repeatedly point out that the children have ill-fitting clothes demonstrates that they are making the very judgements the children in the study feared. It also questions whether they will make these judgements of their pupils in school and if having done so, this will lead to negative opinions being formed. Their opinion of working-class children being unclean is refuted by Beadle (2020 p. 201), who asserts that cleanliness is an obsession for this class, with children often looking like adverts for washing powder. This view is clearly not shared by the trainees, who stereotypically expect to identify those living in poverty by the inevitable dirt.

4.2.6 Supervision.

Supervision and the presence of an adult emerges as important to the trainees, and children being out of the home without an adult is viewed as an indication of lack of care and poor parenting. This is raised and discussed by all of the

groups with a general consensus over there being a link; that children seen out of the home on their own is attributed to a failing on the part of the parents. The trainees' views could possibly be illuminated by the work of Lareau (2011), who suggested that the middle-class parenting style is to micromanage their children's time, whilst working-class children have a great deal more independence and spend time creating their own entertainment. This would suggest that the trainees are relating to their own middle-class upbringing, and therefore are unfamiliar with the concept of children being left to their own devices, which they are then judging as indicative of a lack of care.

Group A raise the issue of unsupervised children on twenty five occasions during their meeting. Examples include the following extract:

> John: […] not necessarily (.) showing their parents and that whoever cares for them, not necessarily showing that care for them, cos they're on their own […] in the streets it seems, on their own (…)
> Arnold: […] they have some supervision, it may be an adult or an older child, they're at least being supervised, whereas the children in the bottom picture don't have any supervision and they're too young to be walking around (.)
> […]
> Kate: I think there's a lack of care and attention on the parents' part because I know for a fact my Mum would never let me stand on a car like that.
> Louise: They look like they're having a great time though, they're really happy.
> Kate: Yeah, but there's no supervision, anything could happen. Where are the parents?

Group B talk about supervision on thirteen occasions, also equating this with safety as well as indicating a lack of care and concern from the parents. They reflect on a perceived lack of supervision in the light of their parenting of their own children in this extract:

> Daisy: […] playing in the street used to be a good thing […] whereas now it almost seems to be a (.) they're too poor to be inside playing so they're outside playing.
> […]
> Charlotte: And they're all playing out and they're Year 3, 4 I wouldn't (.) I wouldn't even think about letting mine.
> Daisy: No I wouldn't let my children out, yeah.
> Barbara: I find it quite shocking really (.) the parents just letting them out. Cos there's no adult, I think there's no adult there in that one.

> Alice: It makes you think about poverty? If children are playing in the street, you think they're poor and they're just not looked after.
> Daisy: Yeah, they're just not being looked after very well.

Aspects regarding supervision are raised on eleven occasions in Group C, but they seem less concerned about this factor, which is more mentioned in passing as an observation about the photographs, rather than being fore fronted as a key indicator of neglect in the way that the other groups have made it. They do, however, talk about lack of supervision in terms of parental engagement with education and relate this to what they have experienced in school more than the other groups. This may be seen to highlight the greater amount of time this group have spent on placement in a single school. The following extract illustrates this:

> Andrea: […] there's an adult engaging there (.) well the school that I've been in did a neighbourhood study a couple of years ago and found that there's extreme levels of poverty there […] if you look at statistics for certain areas, a lot of the time where you see disadvantage, drug problems they do get, y'know, less supervision of the children […] when it comes to poverty it's hard to generalise anything because there's so many factors.
> Fergal: They're the ones you don't see in school, they don't know where their kids are and they don't care as long as they're not giving them grief.
> Edd: The ones you need to see at parents' evenings are never there, yeah. They just don't engage with the school.
> Andrea: Or their children.

There are twelve instances of Group D talking about supervision across the year, with the longest conversations being at the third meeting. As with the other groups, they link lack of supervision to poor parenting and to families living in poverty, again relating to the findings of Lareau (2011) and working-class parenting style. Some could be argued to be projecting their middle-class expectations onto the children in the photographs and making negative judgements about the families as a result, whilst Annie's defence of the children is perhaps demonstrating that this is more relatable to her understanding of parenting. In this conversation they also consider their own upbringing and begin to relate supervision to discipline issues in school:

> Duncan: Oh heck! We're going (…) really rough area now (…) And look at those two! Is this about kids running riot? Going out on their own and causing trouble?

Henri: The bottom left's the odd one out, because there's that girl, watching them. Some sort of supervision anyway. The others are feral. Those on the car! Unbelievable.
Annie: They look happy.
Barry: Yeah, but just look at it! I mean, the boards, (…) the houses, (…) that's just mad. Where are the parents? You can't let kids carry on like that. Well, you know what sort of parents they've got (...) On benefits and down the pub. Poor little beggars.
Annie: They're having a blast! Look at their faces!
Duncan: It's a safeguarding issue, though, surely? You can't condone that. I would never let children of mine behave like that, and (…) I'm sure none of us would. I would hope that none of my pupils go home and carry on like that (…) are allowed to (…)
Evelyn: My mother would kill me if she thought I'd been on a car like that! (…) You know though, I can think of kids in my class that might (…) you know, seeing the parents and that (…) They're (…) well, you know (…)
Barry: Mmm. What I said. No wonder they behave in school like they do.

Rather than passing judgement about the children in an impassive way, there is now evidence of more empathy from some of the participants. Duncan and Evelyn are reflecting on the photographs in terms of 'my pupils' and 'my class', whilst Barry also expresses feelings of compassion about the children not seen in the earlier meetings. This demonstration of feeling part of a community and a sense of belonging is seen in the study by White and Murray (2016), who also find this use of language apparent in their trainees following placement experiences.

4.2.7 School funding.

There are different levels of understanding about school funding demonstrated by the groups, but there is some awareness of the Pupil Premium Grant funding. This is discussed by all of the groups to some degree, and they consider the impact of the way they have seen their schools spending this money. Group A speculate how parents need to be included in any efforts to raise aspirations, as children do not have sufficient agency alone. This relates to Blandford (2018) who reports being beaten by her father when she graduated, and Leighton (2021) who explains the difficulty of escaping confirmation bias when low expectations are encountered everywhere, and parental expectations are low but relentlessly expressed. The group discuss some of the activities they have seen being provided with this grant:

John: It's trying to raise aspirations by showing Pupil Premium kids universities, isn't it?
Francis: It'll be a different world.
Arnold: Parents won't want them going, they'll want them out at work (.) or bringing in their benefits anyway.
Nigel: Yes, that's the thing isn't it (.) parents actively stopping them from bettering themselves.
John: They won't want to go anyway (.) go away from their (.) their friends and things like that. You can't force them to go against their parents' ideas just by taking them on a trip.
Arnold: It's like the sports activities. Is that going to make things better? Doing a sport you don't like?
Francis: My school took the Pupil Premiums horse riding though, so that's nice for them.
Arnold: Is it? How's a Pupil Premium child expected to carry on paying for horse riding? What if they love it? How is that fair?
Francis: Oh yeah (.) good point actually.

Group B also consider sports and other resources provided in schools through the Pupil Premium funding and speculate about the impact they think this may have on the pupils in the longer term (Craske, 2018). Their conversation indicates that, as in the above exchange, they are thinking quite deeply about the implications for pupils of the spending choices made by schools beyond undertaking the activities provided, linking these with social class and the kind of activities they would expect middle class children to engage in (Shain, 2016). They struggle to understand how the use of funding that they have experienced during placements will have the intended impacts, including on raising academic attainment:

Alice: They are all quite expensive things to do, so you think (…)
Charlotte: Yeah but schools in deprived areas get so much cash now that those kids are doing these things aren't they. (…) The academy chain have given ours all brand new tracksuits with the school name embroidered on it. I was blown away.
Alice: That's where schools spend their money. (.) The pupil premium they get.
Daisy: But all the kids will still be (…) How will that change things? They could all still be in poverty.
Alice: Yeah but with this charity they're (…)
Daisy: Cos you would look at these pictures and think they're middle class families, wouldn't you?
Charlotte: Yes, why does that help them?
Alice: Exactly. How is it sustainable, if they absolutely love it, how are they then going to continue?
Barbara: This is what you could've had!
Daisy: That's interesting.

Barbara: Why is that good use of money?
Daisy: You're setting them up to fail almost, aren't you? You're just (…)
Eleanor: It's not solving the real issues is it? Not getting to the actual root of their problems. I can't see how any of this will mean they're more likely to get decent GCSEs.
(Others nodding)

4.2.8 Choices.

During the conversations the subject arose of choice and parents or carers being able to make life choices. In most of the groups there seemed to be some lack of awareness that families living in poverty may not be able to make the kind of choices that the trainees assumed they could. This links to Kidd (2018), who notes how generational poverty renders families trapped into a life of relentless, grinding worry about debt, with little or no hope of life choices which lead to anything better. Blandford (2017) agrees with this view, also calling for equality in being able to make choices, linking this to what social mobility should rightly offer the working class. However, as well as thinking that families would be in a position to make choices about their housing, it became clear that some of the trainees held the deficit opinion that parents would consciously make the decision whether to work or not. Group C expressed this belief in their conversation:

Andrea: Some people choose not to work, but there's lots of (…)
Brenda: People work and are in poverty.
Andrea: Well, yeah
Charles: Working people are having to use food banks (.) That's poverty.
Brenda: Some are choosing not to work. They have that choice.
Andrea: There's lots of things that can inform their decision though, to work or not.
Charles: Then again, I really struggle with all those programmes, Benefit Street, and things like that, I'm not sure if people really want to live like that?
Brenda: But they do (.) they do, and that's the problem.
Fergal: Yeah, there's always work so they're making that choice.

The opinion that people make a conscious decision not to work is aired several times across the groups. This choice is linked to poverty and to benefits, along with driving the decision to disengage with education, and deficit viewpoints become apparent. In the illustrative example below, as also seen in some Group C participants, Barry from Group D expressed a very strong opinion about people making the choice not to work and hence to live in poverty:

Barry: But poverty is an option (…) people choose benefits as their income (.) but you only have so much money and if you choose to spend it all on drinking and fags then don't be surprised when you can't eat.
Annie: I don't think people do choose not to eat.
Henri: They choose to drink and smoke so their kids go hungry though (…)
Duncan: Yes, I suppose (…)
Barry: Well you can say what you like (.) but the fact of the matter is there's work out there if you want it, but it's a sight easier to sit on your backside drinking and smoking and letting the taxpayer pick up your bills. (…) Why d'you think there's daytime TV? Total trash for the povos to sit gawping at all day sitting on their backsides. It's a choice, a lifestyle choice. And you can't say otherwise.
Evelyn: No. No wonder the kids don't try.
Barry: Exactly.

This conversation leads on the further consideration of the choices that they believe people are making, further exposing their deficit views in opposition to those expounded by, for example, Blandford (2017), Kidd (2018) and (Reay, 2017). Even Duncan, who initially seemed most reluctant to agree with Barry, appears to begin to be further persuaded by his argument:

Duncan: Yes, I tend to agree with Barry, we're living in a welfare state (.) you don't see people dying in the streets, do you?
Annie: You see them living on them though.
Barry: Yeah, by choice though! They're the one with mental health problems, can't take their tablets so they push off and live under a bridge somewhere because they don't (…) their choice anyway. Or they've got a bad home life and they want out.
Evelyn: Yeah (…) yeah. So we're saying that poverty is just a lower level of income, like, probably not what you'd want (…) so life's harder because you're always saving up for anything that you want. Like, yeah? …
Henri: But even if you live in poverty, like you say we're a welfare state, so everyone gets to go to school. And we have the National Curriculum, don't we, so everyone does the same exams, gets the same education?
Barry: Which is why I think not working is a choice, because everyone gets offered the chance, and it's their choice if they take it or not.
Evelyn: It does seem like a reasonable argument.
Duncan: Yes, it does.

4.2.9 Parental aspiration.

As seen previously in this chapter, when asked about the greatest negative impact on pupils' attainment and life choices, 83% (n = 19) of participants selected 'Parents/carers aspirations/attitude towards education'. This is also raised in the focus group conversations. Group C talk about the motivation that

children may derive from their situation regardless of parental influence, but decide that is an unlikely scenario:

> Brenda: I don't think it inspires children if they see those sorts of houses all around them, (.) then what are they, sort of (…) expecting from life (.)
> Edd: Definitely looks like Authority housing, doesn't it.
> Gerald: Yes.
> Edd: Depends on the parents though.
> Gerald: They say with neglect you've got to put it against the culture and things like that so (…)
> Edd: There might be a culture of learning in their house (.) or it might be the complete opposite, it might be that they're (.) they're (…) you know (.) subject to so much neglect that it's motivating them to get out of that situation
> Fergal: Could be, yeah could be. But would it really work like that?
> Gerald: No, families on benefits, it's what they see, it's what they aspire to.
> Edd: I suppose you're right there.
> Brenda: Yeah. Sadly.

This group return to the topic of parental aspiration later in their conversation. Their discussion shows that they believe parents of children in disadvantaged areas living in poverty do not support their children in school and do not encourage them with school work or model appropriate behaviours. This is a view supported by Hancock (2018) who suggests these aspects are barriers for white working-class pupils, leading to poor behaviour both in and out of school. Gerald makes a comment about self-esteem which relates to Hancock's (2018) conclusion regarding the negative impact the lack of this has on learning. The group begin to consider the literacy levels of the parents and how they have encountered this as another barrier to support:

> Brenda: If kids grow up in poverty that's probably all they're going to aspire to (…) they could build this mindset that that's all I'm going to get (…) sort of.
> Gerald: Related to how much self esteem you give your children when they're growing up.
> Edd: You can see it in the schools in the tough catchment areas (.) and then there are the very very well educated parents who are, you know, backing up all that learning at home, and then on the flip side (.) I've seen so much of it (.) there are huge problems with literacy
> Andrea: Yeah, even the parents'.
> Edd: So those are the children that aren't going to get supported with reading and that, that sort of thing, you know, there's just such a gulf, I think.
> Gerald: Fighting a losing battle with that sort of kid, aren't we?

However, Group C also discuss another aspect of parental aspiration which is not picked up by any of the other groups. Edith puts forward the suggestion that in fact working-class parents may have aspirations (Kidd, 2018), but because of what they aspire to this does not support their children toward academic achievement, and as the conversation develops the group begin to consider that it may even impede some pupils' progress and eventual outcomes:

> Gerald: There's definitely an issue with parents' aspirations for their kids, though (.) not having any, I mean.
> Edith: But then (.) well, actually I do wonder if that's really true? I think it might be that their parents actually do have big aspirations for them (.) but maybe in the wrong way?
> Edd: Oh right? How do you mean?
> Edith: Well, some of the parents support them to the hilt with football (.) that's what made me think of this, seeing that photograph. They do everything they can to help them, because they think they can be proper footballers.
> Fergal: Yeah, that's right. Some of our parents take their kids all over the place for that. Some pay a lot of money for training as well.
> Edith: Exactly! Exactly that! But it might actually be really (.) well, like a pipe dream? How many kids really end up in the premier league?
> Andrea: Some do!
> Edith: But not many. Not virtually half the kids you teach. You ask them what they want to do when they grow up, and they're all like 'oh a footballer'. But they can't all be and then they waste time and money that could be better channelled into helping them with their school work, but they waste all of it on chasing a dream.
> Fergal: That's a good point actually. Every spare minute spent playing football (.) not that I'm saying it isn't a good hobby, and good exercise, but if it's to the detriment of their academic work?
> Edith: That's just it. Just what I mean. Fair enough in moderation, but it gives them false hope as well, false aspiration, for something they can't ever really have. And then they turn round and they've got no GCSEs and they can't get into college to do anything, and just end up another spectator in the stands.
> Charles: That's a really good point.
> Fergal: No, you're right, I never thought of it like that Edith.
> Edith: So the aspiration's there, but not for the right thing.

This idea of working towards the wrong goals is discussed later in the chapter under the Social Class section, relating to Beadle (2020) who agrees with this point of view in regard to the working class and sport in school. Blandford (2017, p. 52) however concurs that parents and carers may indeed have low aspirations, suggesting that children may be 'dogged' by their parents' low

expectations of them, which supports the opinions of several of the participants in the study. This is also supported by Leighton (2018), who argues that the combination of the teachers' consistently negative comments and low expectations, and his family's assumption that he would follow in the same footsteps as his father, worked to rob him of any motivation to engage with his schooling.

The amalgam of deficit ideologies and misconceptions around the economic and social realities of poverty signify a lack of understanding about how others live, resulting in the view that social groups to which people do not belong are viewed as homogenous (Gorski, 2012, pp. 302 – 3). This then leads to stereotyping of these groups or communities, including the assumption that parents have low aspirations for their children and do not value education (Rank, Yoon & Hirschl, 2003). Furthermore, this thinking may lead to the belief that the children have poor educational outcomes because they do not make any effort in school, or lack the necessary intellectual capability (Ullucci & Howard, 2015). This is noted by Gorski (2012) who argues that these beliefs result in teachers who think of the issue of poverty in terms of pupils being unable to reach the required standards and their families being unable or unwilling to support them, rather than the barriers that prevent their achievement. This attitude can be seen explicitly in the panel study trainees' comments (Group D, meeting 2), as illustrated when they discuss IQ and whether some pupils are simply not capable of attaining National Curriculum expectations. It also relates to the discussion in Group A about the family with one "clever" child. Their deficit thinking could lead to them having low expectations of their pupils, as they believe that pupils who are identified as living in poverty may simply be incapable of achieving what they are being asked to do (Leighton, 2020). In Group A, Arnold suggests this child has simply "peaked early" and the implication is that he will not continue to achieve highly, which John readily agrees with. This supports the argument that harm can be done by teachers labelling pupils and having low expectations arising from deficit views of disadvantage, as the trainees' expectations of this child appear to be low despite his current attainment (Gorski, 2012; Leighton, 2020; Ullucci & Howard, 2015; Walton, 2018).

Group D complete the card sorting activity during their first meeting, and are discussing whether social class has an impact on educational outcomes. Their debate centres around how they believe this to be the case, and their reasoning for this is due to their belief that working-class families lack aspiration, which in turn impacts negatively on the children's level of effort in school, supporting the view of Leighton (2018):

> Henri: (…) well no, but, what I mean is (…) well (…) children from working class families will have the same jobs (…) in the end though (…) won't they? So they don't need to (…) to try so hard (…) I don't know (…) Ignore me (…)
> Barry: They have no aspirations, you mean.
> Henri: Well they don't, but to be a, like a mechanic, or something (…) well you don't really need to go to school for that, do you?
> Annie: Really?
> Duncan: Ah, so working class children don't try in school anyway, I see what you mean.
> Barry: Most of them won't even want a job though (.) if their parents don't work, then they won't even know it's a thing that normal people do. (…) Why would they bother when their parents don't?
> Henri: That's what I mean (.) they'll have the same jobs as their parents, and so (.) well, maybe yes, no job at all (.) or a manual one anyway.

Group D talk frequently about a lack of parental aspiration, here linking it to poverty and social class:

> Annie: So why don't working class achieve better in school then (…) if they do (…)
> Henri: Because their parents let them skive off, and don't make them do any homework.
> Barry: It's no aspirations, like I said before (…) yeah (…)
> Henri: Yeah (…)
> Barry: Because working class families don't value school (…) education, they don't push them to do the homework, or even go to school, or try when they're there. So they fall behind.
> Evelyn: I agree. It's got to happen for some reason. Everybody must start at more or less the same point.

The trainees talk in terms of children being 'behind', making hierarchical judgements about the pupils' attainment. This links to gifted and talented children being identified by their ability for oral communication. Children who arrive at school able to learn quickly, with a wide vocabulary and a well-developed sense of social conventions are showing attributes related to oral

ability which are often ascribed to intelligence. In this exchange the trainees are considering whether the children that appear to be 'behind' are just comparatively so due to home support which has coached their more affluent peers in these qualities (Rask & Paliokosta, 2012; Hart & Risley, 1995), but are attributing blame to the parents for allowing this to happen. This suggests the trainees will contribute to the school system in exerting symbolic violence on working-class pupils by reproducing class inequalities through the structures and practices that are unquestioningly accepted, seen in the context of their own experiences and perspectives on schooling (Bourdieu, 1990). Ampaw-Farr (2018) argues that the very fact pupils are in school demonstrates how much value working class children place on education, surmounting all manner of barriers which would be inconceivable for middle class pupils. She notes that working class children are able to perceive the values and beliefs held by their teachers regardless of what they might say, and as such it is vital that a sincere level of investment underpins their practice (Ampaw-Farr, 2018).

4.2.10 Education.

As indicated in the questionnaire data earlier in the chapter, Group C discuss their views on the importance of education and how they believe this is not shared or understood by those living in poverty. This links to their opinions about a lack of parental aspiration in these families, and the negative impact of this on the children:

> Charles: The problem is that they drop out of education, it doesn't matter to them, so then they've not got the qualifications they need to do anything anyway.
> Eleanor: Yeah, you can't do anything without 5 A – Cs now. What can you do?
> Barbara: Well their parents don't care. They've done ok without any, so why would they be bothered?
> Charles: Yes, I'm afraid you're probably right there.
> Gerald: Whilst you can live well on benefits that'll not change though, will it.
> Edd: It's my belief education is the key. If you could get everyone to see how much power education gives you, then we'd not have (.) there'd not be all this poverty.
> Barbara: Yeah (.) yeah I agree. It's the way out for them.

The trainees show their perceptions of parental aspirations are misjudged, as they comment negatively on the aspirations of disadvantaged pupils and their

families. Edd, Charles and Barbara appear to believe the fundamental issue behind poverty to be the lack of value placed on education, something which is contradicted by some sources which also recognise that this is a viewpoint held by some teachers and educational professionals (Cummings et al., 2012; Goodman, 1971; O. Jones, 2016; Leighton, 2018; Reay, 2017).

Group D discuss the issue of National Curriculum standards in their second meeting, and whether it is the case that all pupils will be able to reach age related expectations. They explore the idea which Barry proposes, that IQ is the connection between FSM pupils and low educational attainment:

> Barry: Which is what I said (…) can we really be sure that all children are actually capable of doing what we've been told they have to do? When we look at groups, are we actually seeing a group of a certain IQ but it's labelled FSM because they are the same children? The same gene pool?
> Evelyn: Yeah. So you're saying the children that would've grown up and gone to work down the mine (.) or on farms in the fields and would never've had to read or write, they're the children that belong to families with that background, and the reason they're from that background is because they're actually incapable of being literate? (…) But now because of society, they have to go to school and are suddenly called out on the fact they can't learn to do those things?
> Henri: That makes sense actually. Interesting.
> Duncan: Yes, perhaps this one size fits all approach is fundamentally flawed.
> Barry: And then we're in the situation that the FSM kids will never catch up because they literally can't, but as teachers we get the stick for it.

Blandford (2017) supports the view Barry expresses in the final comment above, noting that retention is a current issue in education, blaming this on the high level of accountability which school leaders exert on the teaching staff, creating a culture of fear and judgement, leaving teachers exhausted, demotivated and isolated, with no sense of job satisfaction. The pressure exerted on schools to demonstrate the impact of Pupil Premium Grant funding, as explored by Craske (2018), is seen in Barry's comment as he is clearly aware of this heightened accountability for pupil progress and, as reported by Craske (2018), how challenging this is for schools. Yang et al., (2007) noted that underlying threat can result in the response of stigmatisation, supported by

Mazzoli Smith and Todd (2019), who found this to be unwittingly widespread in relation to the treatment of children in poverty by their schools.

Group A also connects poverty and a lack of intellectual capacity, when they talk about experiences on their first placement:

> John: We had a family who are perfectly pleasant, but they're noticeably (.) well they're not that well educated, and they're poor and they've got quite a few kids in school that (.) they're not that intelligent, but the boy in my class is so so clever. And there's no seeming reason for him to be so much (…) so more capable than every other member of his family. I wonder how it will progress.
> Nigel: Well, he won't get help at home will he?
> John: No, he'll not be actually able to build on it.
> Arnold: He won't have any motivation to though, will he? He's probably just peaked early anyway.
> John: Yeah, yeah that might be what it is.

There are assumptions exposed here about the capacity of families to support their children's education at home and that any indication of academic ability might be an anomaly, which is also exacerbated by the lack of aspiration already discussed. This exchange supports the argument from Ullucci & Howard (2015, p. 175), who dub it the 'Educability myth', that children living in poverty are assumed to be not very clever, alongside the common misconception that their families will offer no encouragement to engage with learning and lack aspiration. Whilst there is literature to support the argument that lower SES families do not necessarily have lower aspirations for their children (Cummings et al., 2012; Goodman, 1971; O. Jones, 2016; Reay, 2017), there is also literature which finds that, in these families, support for children lags behind that found in middle-class homes.

Studies by Jackson and Marsden (1966) supported by more recent research by Hart and Risley (2003), Nash and Harker (2006) and Lauder, Kounali, Robinson and Goldstein (2010), all espouse the view that for families in poverty, literacy and language development is a not a central part of the home culture as it is in more affluent families. This is further supported by Bourdieu arguing that the middle class habitus confers an academic capital through their primary socialisation that is more aligned with the expectations of the school environment (Bourdieu, 1988). Consequently, schools are inherently biased

towards more advantaged pupils (Reay, 2017). Working class parents are less likely to have been brought up themselves in this manner, making it difficult for them to know how to support their children (Naidoo, 2004). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) suggest that the language and curriculum of the school is consistent with the elaborated code used by middle class families, resulting in a clear advantage for these children over those only used to the restricted code typical of working class households (Hanon, 2002). The child John describes in the extract above requires support in school to ensure he continues to flourish, rather than being written off as an anomaly who cannot be expected to maintain his current attainment because of assumptions being made about him due to his family background.

4.2.11 Social class.

All of the groups began to explore the concept of social class on at least one occasion during their meetings. The discussion was often in relation to the self-identification of their own class when they debated the differentiation between the different social classes and how they might be categorised. This relates to H. Jones' (2016, p. 141) observation that many people will self-identify as working class on the grounds that they work, including stockbrokers with 'telephone number salaries'. Meanwhile Savage (2015) explores the complexity of the class structure in the UK, and proposes a socio-economic strata consisting of seven different levels, crucially defining these in terms beyond the economic alone. This problematic categorising is seen in Group B's conversation, as they begin to consider their own understandings:

> Charlotte: I think I'm lower middle.
> Alice: I was thinking I'm lower middle, possibly middle.
> Charlotte: I think the older definitions of class are different because when you were middle class a long time ago you were really posh, but now middle class is (…)
> Alice: Two cars?
> Daisy: Yeah. I would say I was born into a working class family, but I'm not working class now. (…) I don't think?
> Charlotte: But are we working class, 'cos we work?
> Daisy: Well yeah, but (…)
> Charlotte: And middle class are people that don't? And upper class are royalty.
> Daisy: I think of middle class as being more career.
> Alice/Barbara: Yes!

Alice: White collar workers, I think.
Charlotte: I think of middle class like Pippa Middleton, before she got married.
Daisy: She's upper class!
Alice: Yes.
Charlotte: No, now. She wouldn't have had to work, she was from a wealthy family. She's got that voice. That's middle class to me. You know what I'm trying to say? In terms of the old definitions anyway. Everyone else that worked was working class. (…) But now working class are people that don't even work, that are on benefits.
Daisy: Difficult!
Charlotte: So the definitions aren't right. But I'm middle class.
Daisy: I'm thinking middle.

As with Group B, Group C also struggle with the categorisation of class. Their discussion about how different social classes might be identified also leads to the consideration of movement between these categories. This reflects Walton's findings (2018) that denote how his family point out he has become middle class since moving into the teaching profession and subsequently taking on the role of headteacher. Social mobility is considered when Fergal reflects on his own social class and the teaching profession:

Fergal: I consider my upbringing to be working class, but then people have told me (.) people have said that because I've got a degree that's middle class, makes you middle class (.) you enter (…)
Gerald: It's hard work because you're obviously born into your class (.) the difficulties of moving class are there (.) obviously a teacher is a profession which you would classify as middle class (.) cos it's like you can get blue collar workers that earn fifty thousand a year and let's face it, none of us are going to be earning any time soon.
Edd: But teachers are middle class. Being a teacher doesn't make you middle class, you already will be if you're a teacher. Fifty kay or not.
Edith: Then you've got working poor (.)
Edd: That's a whole different category by itself, it's just, I don't know.
Charles: It's falling out of fashion. You can't really label people.
Fergal: People label each other all the time though, even if they don't talk about it.
Gerald: Yeah, that's true. You do it without thinking.
Charles: Well yes, you do just instinctively know where people have come from.

Social mobility is discussed by Group D participants in all three of their meetings. Duncan mentions cultural capital, and, although Annie asks a question about this, the others do not respond, so their understanding of this term is unclear. However, Annie's question in itself shows her awareness of

capital as something which can be passed on, but also as something which she feels she does not possess (Bourdieu, 1986). The deficit view of the working class as being something to escape from is still seen here in their final meeting, which relates to Blandford (2017) who argues that social mobility should not be seen rescuing people from one sector of society and placing them in another. Contemporary neoliberal discourse works on the assumption that all mobility is upwards, and that meritocracy exists to facilitate the aspiration to escape (Littler, 2018). Annie alone tries to challenge this idea:

> Evelyn: And so surely, as teachers, we need to give our pupils the ability? The skills? Whatever (…) to become middle class? To escape what they've grown up as?
> Annie: Escape?
> Duncan: That's the cultural capital Ofsted want to see us giving them. Yes, yes, you're maybe right.
> Annie: What if we haven't got it to give it?
> Henri: Yes, school needs to give them the way out.

Despite appearing to challenge the discourse of working class deficit, in Group D's second meeting, Annie asks whether qualifying as a teacher might mean she then becomes middle class, again relating to the experience of Walton (2018, p. 358), who finds his family's remarks about his rise, 'irksome'. The rest of the group laugh at her because this topic has been broached several times over the three meetings, and the others are clearly amused that Annie has raised it again. She poses the question of where she will fit in if she is now a member of the middle class, granted by her joining the teaching profession. This supports Plummer (2000) and Reay (2017), who discuss the issues arising from social mobility meaning a move away from family identity, and the sense of dislocation in not belonging to social groups of their present or their past. Skeggs (1997) feels like an imposter among academic colleagues and yet at the same time believes she has somehow let her family down by not fulfilling the traditional female role. Annie, however, does not express an anxiety about her family's attitude towards her perceived shift in identity, but more a confusion that they treat her in the same way as they always did as if they are unaware of how she is changing, and this means she is starting to feel as though she does not belong in either the middle-class setting of school or the working-class setting of home:

Annie: So, then, anyway, you're saying that, (…) what I want to know is (…) am I middle class now?
(All groan and laugh)
Annie: No, NO! I mean it? Am I? I have QTS? I've done the course? Well, some of it. Most of it. Am I?
Barry: Well, do you **feel** middle class?
Henri: Yeah, A, do you **feel** it? (laughs)
Annie: Yeah, I do actually. (…) Well, I do at school – you know? When I'm dressed in my jacket and that, and I'm in class, talking to the kids, talking to other teachers in the staff room about the kids (…) yeah I do. But (…)
Duncan: But?
Annie: But then I go home, and I'm in my scruffy stuff, screaming at my daughter, shouting at my Mum, Nan shouting at me (…) I feel like nothing's changed at all.
Evelyn: Can you be both?
Annie: I dunno. I don't want to be (.) I want to move up. You know, thinking about, I feel like I don't belong at home like I used to. You know? I feel like I'm not part of that life. (…)
Barry: Blimey. Deep. Back to the psychoanalysis again!
Annie: Yeah, I know. But that's what I feel. And then sometimes, I feel like (…)
Henri: Oh god, don't tell me, you feel like you don't belong in school either?
Annie: Yes. Yes! Do you feel the same then?
Henri: No. I just knew you were going to say that.

The group also make comments about Annie attending an institution she refers to as Grimsby University, querying it as a credible institution and exposing Annie's lack of awareness that there is a hierarchy, with some universities being elite (Friedman & Laurison, 2020; Green & Kynaston, 2019; Lenon, 2018). Annie becomes quite distressed, questioning why she had not previously known about this. This supports Cipollone and Stich (2017), who propose the notion of 'shadow capital', suggesting it as the type of capital bestowed by attendance at less prestigious universities. They argue there is a difference to the capital gained from attendance at the elite institutions, and this is not recognised by the working class students who do not have the cultural capital to negotiate the higher education system which more the privileged possess. Evelyn perceives the issue lies with social class, and correctly guesses that Annie would not have applied to Oxbridge regardless of her exam results (Lenon, 2018). Her response demonstrates that she felt she would not have 'fitted in', supporting Reay (2017 p. 151) who describes the experience of

working class students at Russell Group universities as being 'outsiders on the inside':

> Barry: He means Oxford and Cambridge. They *are* the most prestigious. If you get a degree from one of them you can walk in to any job.
> Annie: I didn't think there was any difference. I don't think I agree with that.
> Duncan: Well I don't think there's any agree or disagree – that is just fact.
> Annie: I just don't get this. So, you're telling me someone might look at my CV and not employ me because of where I got my degree from?
> Duncan: Erm… well… yes, I suppose that might happen.
> Annie: Why did I not know this before?
> […]
> Evelyn: I reckon this is the class thing again. Ok, (A) would you have gone to Oxford if you'd got three A star A levels?
> Annie: Me? No, I couldn't go there with all those toffs! Could you imagine?
> Evelyn: See!

Group A talk about seeing poverty in the media and this leads to a discussion of how it is portrayed by some comedians, who themselves are not working class and therefore are unlikely to have had experience of it. They do not make the connection that this could be argued to mirror their own situation in that they too have shared their own lack of experience of living in poverty and yet they are attempting to understand the disadvantaged pupils they teach in order to meet their needs. John's comments relate to the work of Gluck (2019), in identifying particular clothing as indicative of class, again linking this with issues of hygiene. Arnold particularly marks out Oxbridge educated people as being 'removed from real life':

> John: Their comedy is satire (.) satirising the state of the country's living (.) Like, Vicky Pollard, her attitude to learning is not correct and could be as she's from a poverty stricken background.
> Kate: A lot of them are based on stereotypes.
> Arnold: They're often just chavs.
> John: Well they're dressed to the fashion of their culture, which is not to my taste, and they're not necessarily clean as such. But it's an aspect of poverty porn, isn't it?
> Arnold: I don't think any of them are Oxbridge educated (.) they're so far removed from real life.
> John: Matt Lucas grew up in a very rich house in Watford.
> Arnold: Yeah, but him and David Walliams only went to Bristol, it would be worse if it was Stephen Fry doing it, somebody so far removed from ever seeing it, whereas these people might at least have encountered it.

John: That surely would depend on whether we class it as them making money out of poverty or trying to show us it. Because they could be doing documentaries and satires for the same reason?
Nigel: It's the way of the world though, isn't it? The upper class making their money out of the working class.

Here Arnold in particular makes a link between the university attended by these celebrities and how that might have an impact on their experience and understanding of poverty. There is an understanding shown of a connection between higher education, social class and academic capital, and how a higher social class facilitates access to elite institutions, alluded to by Arnold's reference to Stephen Fry's studies at Cambridge, rather than Bristol (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Reay, 2017; Smart et al., 2009; Cipollone & Stich, 2017).

Group C talk about one of the photograph sets which shows children engaged in various after school activities. They link this to their understanding of how the Pupil Premium Grant is being spent in schools, and the type of activities it is used for. This in turn leads to a discussion about social class, as the group agree that the aim of the funding is to enable social mobility, noting that the children need to 'move up' out of the working class:

Francis: I would say football is the odd one out 'cos music and horse riding are expensive activities. More like the kind of thing that Pupil Premium pays for.
Charles: Yes, that's what struck me, there's money there.
Brenda: Yeah, you can tell they're (…) they've (.) well they're different sort of kids aren't they.
Andrea: We're all associating the amount of money being spent on the activity (.) it's the class of kids, isn't it (…) like social class, I mean.
Charles: There's a lot of research into what schools are spending Pupil Premium on, I don't know what you all think about this (.) but music lessons and horse riding are way up there (.) they're all doing it (.) It's (.) it's perceived middle class activities.
Gerald: Well the idea being that (.) social mobility is the thing (.) the way out for these kids (.) so getting them into middle class activities is the first step (.) for them.
Brenda: Which is all right if it's what they want to do.
Charles: They want to move up, not be working class though, don't they?
Andrea: It's what Pupil Premium is set up to do.
Edith: Mmm, that's true.
(Others nodding)

Sport in schools is also discussed, and related to social class. Their conversation about football and parental aspiration demonstrates that some of

the trainees have reflected quite deeply about what they have encountered in the classroom during their placements. They have considered the longer term implications of children's aspirations to be professional players, and not only the potential futility of this but also how the pursuit of this aspiration may ultimately only serve to impede their educational outcomes and life chances. Beadle (2020) talks at length about this issue and arrives at the same conclusion drawn by the trainees' conversation. Working-class boys' "obsession" (Beadle, 2020, p. 216) with football legitimises their disengagement in the classroom, defeating the schools' efforts to furnish them with educational achievements that may afford them access to wider opportunities in later life.

Sport is also considered when Annie in Group D expresses her shock over the children at her private school placement attending a shooting club. The choice of sport and its connection with class is explored by Bourdieu (1984) as a form of cultural and social capital. He asserts that certain sports, such as sailing, boxing and rugby, are strongly associated with specific classes, and this is evidenced as Annie's working-class background had not prepared her to encounter primary school age children participating in the sport of shooting. Private schools are used by the upper classes to protect and maintain high status positions in sport as well as other areas of the economy perhaps more usually identified, such as politics, law and finance (Reay, 2017). Reay (2017, p. 45) demonstrates this by considering the percentage of participants in the Great Britian team at the Rio Olympic games, citing the number of athletes drawn from private schools being four times that of the proportion attending such schools out of the general population. Green and Kynaston (2019, p. 6) pick up this point, noting that since 2000 over a third of sporting internationals and Olympic medallists have been privately educated. The trainees are aware of this on some levels, shown in their expressed opinions that some extracurricular activities are more appropriate than others for pupils living in poverty. This could be seen as producing barriers to participation for these children, although Beadle (2020) argues that any sports, whether more exclusive or not, should have no place in schools at all.

All of the groups discuss the financial costs of different sports provided in schools, and three of the groups discuss what they perceive as the unfairness of using Pupil Premium funding to introduce children to more costly sports, as those living in poverty will be unable to pursue these independently of this funding. This opinion conflicts with Blandford (2017), who argues that it is vitally important for extracurricular activities to be inclusive, as they promote social bonds and reduce the risk of exclusion for some children. The trainees did not acknowledge any links between participating in this type of activity and the improved academic or life outcomes of which Blandford (2017) speaks.

This group also talk about imposter syndrome, as the participants consider how they might be suffering from this due to the curtailing of their training. They also reflect on the attributes they think will make securing a teaching position easier, and these are related to identity rather than aptitude.

> Evelyn: It's imposter syndrome! Isn't it? I bet we all felt that at some point? You must be lying if you didn't? And obviously, it's worse for our cohort anyway (…)
> Duncan: I'm not sure it's that. You might feel out of your depth maybe, or not prepared, but not not meant to be there.
> Barry: That's because you're the perfect storm Duncan, white, middle class, and male! Bingo!
> Duncan: That's hardly fair!
> Barry: Why not? It's the truth. We all know it.
> Annie: You don't need all of those to be a good teacher though. (.) But it must make getting a job a lot easier.
> Evelyn: Yeah, everyone knows that men just walk straight into primary jobs. Whatever results they get.
> Annie: And that really is what's unfair.

As previously mentioned, in the trend study the full-time and School Direct groups (A and C respectively) often seemed unaware of the judgements they made regarding the pupils' circumstances. In this respect, the Group B more frequently reflected on their own conversation, as they began to question what they said about the photographs. This is illustrated below when the group discuss a set of photographs which depicted children playing in the street:

> Charlotte: But I don't live there, I wouldn't live there, but what I'm saying is, if I did I wouldn't think that (.) probably wouldn't, I'd be really offended by the things we're saying, maybe, that's what I'm trying to say.
> Daisy: Yeah (.) I didn't really think of that. […]

> Eleanor: And our conversations (.) would it (.) saying, “Ooh look at that!”, it might be really offensive, wouldn’t it?

This topic is returned to later in the conversation when they talk about the condition of the housing in the photographs:

> Charlotte: I just think the way we’re talking is really judgemental.
> Daisy: I know, it’s terrible, isn’t it?
> Eleanor: Maybe not appropriate (…)
> Charlotte: Cos I’ve lived in houses that don’t look dissimilar to that when I’ve lived in Leeds there’s rows and rows of houses that look like that, it’s not necessarily a poor area, that’s what it looks like.
> Daisy: Have they rubbish out the front? Have they been dirty?
> Barbara: Was there a sofa?
> Charlotte: There was a sofa in the next street!
> (All laugh)
> Eleanor: It makes you think though. About our thinking, I mean.

Their consideration of how the people might feel who live in the houses that they criticise seems to come mainly from Charlotte, whilst Daisy and Eleanor are the two that follow her lead and concede this may not be appropriate. They both also point out that they now think about things which they had not previously considered. Alice and Barbara do not contribute here, other than Barbara’s comment about the sofa, which seems intended to highlight that the place where Charlotte lived was in fact not the same sort of area as in the photographs. This relates to the NEU (2021) guidance which advocates teachers having a good understanding of the school community and context so that they are able to view the world from their pupils’ perspective and appreciate their socio-cultural identities. Carrying stereotypical opinions of housing types would appear to be a barrier to the depth of understanding required.

Group B discuss a family pictured sitting on a sofa in the street, and from this they begin to recognise how they are projecting stereotypical assumptions about social class onto the photographs. Other groups have a similar conversation about the same photograph, but do not critique their own thinking to the same extent as this group:

> Daisy: When the weather’s nice my Nan’s friends, they all take their deckchairs out front and sit and talk and drink tea (.) and I pull up and think (sighs) what are you all doing? **So** working class.

(All laugh)
Alice: We live behind closed doors, we put up this pretence we're all, well I don't know (.) the middle class part of me (.) we're just keeping up with the Joneses.
Daisy: Not much pretence there, is there? (gestures to photograph)
Charlotte: No, but who's the more real? And who's to say what's right?
Daisy: Well, yeah, we're judging them by our own standards, aren't we? And what right do we have for that?

Group A also discuss making judgements at one point in their discussion, and consider how this might be happening:

Arnold: We are very quick to judge these children, I mean there's no reason (.) they look like they're working hard and they're doing their work (.) it's just the environment they're in.
John: The standards (.) I suppose there's a contrast in the standards of the house to what I expect […] but there's low standards there.
Arnold: Yeah, it's all around our own expectations and our standards, isn't it?
Francis: That's how we're thinking about it, isn't it?
John: And I think that's fair enough.

4.2.13 Derogatory language.

All of the focus groups have instances of the use of derogatory language and many of the participants express opinions which demonstrate deficit attitudes towards the impact of poverty on pupils (Kulz, 2017, p. 88). This could be said to support the notion that the use of activity based focus groups allows for authentic participant voice and increases the likelihood of honest responses, as the use of this language suggests the trainees are not speaking guardedly about the topic (Bourne & Winstone, 2021; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015). Groups A, B and D all use the term 'chav', and Group B discuss this particular word on several occasions and at some length. Their words and manner suggest that they are uncomfortable with it, but they go ahead and continue to use the term, here linking it with social class:

Daisy: Yeah but are (.) don't all chavs (.) this sounds such, I can't believe I'm saying these words.
(All laugh)
Charlotte: Say chav in inverted commas?
Daisy: These chav people that we've spoken about (…)
(All still laughing)
Daisy: I can't say it! Like, erm, when I think about it, I think of people wearing a lot of sports gear, a lot of gold earrings, and that's expensive stuff, so that's not necessarily poverty is it?

Alice: So is it the opposite of class?
Evelyn: It *is* class though (.) Chavs are working class (.) Have to be.

Group B seem conscious of remaining professional in their use of language, despite still employing terms which they recognise to be in conflict with this. In contrast, in Group D, Barry freely and regularly uses derogatory language. Annie is the only one who explicitly challenges him over this, but it is clear that Duncan too is very uncomfortable with some of the things being said:

Barry: That's what they say though, isn't it (…) I mean, I didn't see that myself, we never rang any parents, but they do say that parents back their kids to the hilt, and fight the school. Give them hassle. It's (…) it's a working class thing isn't it? Chavs? What they do?
Annie: Chavs? Again? I (.) I really wish you wouldn't say that!
Barry: My Dad always says that. Council house alcoholic and violent, it means.
Evelyn: Does it? I thought it was council house adult vermin!
Duncan: Oh dear (…)
Barry: Same difference really.

Their use of language which would be deemed as demonstrating class contempt (O. Jones, 2016) is seen in the extracts above. Some participants use the term 'chav' without hesitation, suggesting it is perhaps part of their normal lexicon. Whilst Group B explore the use and meaning of this type of vocabulary and appear to find it awkward and embarrassing, they continue to use the phrase and consider its link to social class. O. Jones (2016, p. 8) sees the term 'chav' as now encompassing 'any negative traits associated with working-class people – violence, laziness, teenage pregnancies, racism, drunkenness' and being 'a term of pure class contempt' when 'used by a middle-class person'. In this kind of discourse, prejudices around the working class, their 'respectability', work ethics (or lack of them) and the causes of any resulting socio-economic marginalisation continue to create derogatory, judgemental and homogeneous stereotypes of many of those living in poverty as 'the poor' (White & Murray, 2016).

The trainees find poverty challenging to talk about, as found by both H. Jones (2016) and White and Murray (2016) in their research with ITE students. There is a distinct hesitancy in some of their contributions, and in places they express their difficulty in finding the terms in which to couch their ideas. They openly

say they are unable to find the ‘right words’ for what they are trying to say or show embarrassment in their word choices. However, it is evident that in the trend study the initial fifteen minutes of each focus group meeting demonstrates these more stilted and guarded contributions, after which it appears the trainees become absorbed in the task of commenting on the photographs and any attempt to maintain ‘correctness’ in what they say dissipates. This supports the claims of Bourne and Winstone (2021) and Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (2015) that activity based focus groups facilitate a free discussion. The instances of derogatory language occur in the later parts of the meetings, in line with this observation. Using photographs to facilitate the discussion appears to have enabled the presence of the researcher to perhaps be forgotten, thus allowing the trainees to speak freely, exploring thoughts and ideas they would not have otherwise verbalised (White & Murray, 2016). Had the data been gathered through interviews, it is very hard to envisage much of what was said in the focus groups being shared under direct questioning from myself as an insider researcher (Drake, 2010; Greene, 2014). The relaxation of the trainees as the meeting went on and the development of the conversation into a more informal one was clear in each group. The panel study was slightly different in that Barry exhibited little awareness or concern for ‘correctness’ from the outset, for example making the following comment just a few minutes in to the first meeting:

Barry: Oi, oi! Here we go, chav valley!

Aside from Barry, as the rest of the group became more familiar with the procedure and each other, they appeared confident to talk freely together from the outset of the second and third meetings, without the more reserved initial quarter of an hour evident in the first one. As the meetings progressed, they began to challenge the use of derogatory language as seen in the exchange quoted above, although as with all of the groups, this type of judgemental vocabulary (O. Jones, 2016) was often apparent and unremarked upon.

4.2.14 Initial Teacher Education.

Initial Teacher Education was not raised for discussion by all of the groups, with Group A and B making no reference to their training at any point during their meetings. Group C did consider how their perceived lack of role models at

home for families living in poverty made their task as a teacher more challenging, and how this related to their training:

> Gerald: I think that's one of the things you struggle most with a teacher, and definitely as a trainee or something, is that the Standards that we're working on, that we're supposed to constantly model like high quality English and things like that, but if you're seeing a child six hours a day and they go somewhere, and they're not having high quality English modelled to them all the time, then they're not going to use it.
> Andrea: Yeah, it makes it more of a struggle for us then, showing we're reaching our standards.
> Edd: That's why the summer break's so hard work isn't it because they're coming back after, you know (…) and we don't really get taught how to deal with that.
> Charles: It's reading as well, you know, I think is really important. Some kids in Early Years don't even know how a book works. You have to explain.
> Edd: I've seen quite a few that don't have any books at home.
> Edith: Yes, and where do you start with that? You can see they've only been on a tablet.
> Brenda: You can see they've been in poverty, and you're like, well how do I know where to start with you?
> Fergal: Then you talk to people in a good catchment, and they're obviously going to have the parents doing most of the job for them! So much easier for them to meet the standards.
> Charles: Not half.

Group D also were concerned about demonstrating they met the Teacher Standards (DfE, 2013) and in common with Group C, equated a greater challenge with schools that had more FSM pupils. They were aware of needing to pass the course to achieve QTS, but felt that there was a potential lack of parity between experiences which was not necessarily fair to all. This relates to White and Murray's (2016) observations that due to ITE being so heavily school led with 120 days of the ten month PGCE course being stipulated to be undertaken in placement schools, the variability of experience amongst individuals can be marked. They note that in some schools trainees will work in environments of effective provision for children living in poverty, whilst in others they will encounter only silence on poverty and social class issues (White & Murray, 2016, p. 511). Smart et al. (2009) find that placing participants on the Teach First programme in challenging schools only serves to reinforce middle-class values and working class othering, therefore reproducing class inequality as posited by Bourdieu (1986).

It is apparent from the trainees' conversation that they associate low FSM eligibility with 'nicer' schools and an easier passage to gaining their qualification, as noted by Reay (2017, p. 139) who points out this distinction being made between 'nice' middle class children and 'horrendous' working class ones, referred to with the highly judgemental term of 'feral' in this discussion:

> Evelyn: I'm just worried about all the feral kids running about the streets everywhere. We have to meet the Teachers' Standards don't we, so having that sort of class puts me at a massive disadvantage.
> Barry: I like a challenge, me.
> Henri: Yeah but not if it means you fail the placement.
> Evelyn: I wish I was in a nicer school. You only get one right of resit, and even then you might not get a better school the next time.
> Duncan: My schools have been lovely though.
> Barry: Bully for you! What about the people (.) You should be able to teach anywhere, to be fair.
> Evelyn: Yes, ok, but normally if you're being assessed everyone gets the same exam paper, don't they? This all depends on where you get put, and someone who's really weak might get easy schools and sail through, when they would've failed in harder ones.
> Barry: I don't think there's an answer to that. You can't have homogenous schools and (.) and then there's the mentors as well. It might be them that's the problem.
> Henri: Hmm. It's all difficult, isn't it? But you can't blame it all on the kids and the catchment, I don't think anyway.

In their second meeting, Group D also went on to discuss how many different roles a teacher has to fulfil, and how they have to be ready to deal with situations that arise with their pupils due to difficult home lives. As noted by Goodwin and Darity (2019), they begin to acknowledge that this comes from experience and a training course cannot prepare them for every eventuality that they may face:

> Henri: I don't think you can be trained for this. When you think of all the lectures we have, nothing can train you for it.
> Barry: That's why we have all that time in school. You have to live it. School experience. The clue's in the name.
> Henri: Yes, but (…)
> Evelyn: (…) But I worry about the damage we'll do whilst we're learning.
> Annie: That's a bit dramatic. If you were training to be a surgeon I'd get that. But you're not. *We're* not.

> Barry: Yeah, someone isn't going to get maimed for life just because you didn't know they live with druggie parents. Besides, you only have to look at them to pick out the ones that's going to be trouble.
> (silence)
> Evelyn: Well, we'll do the best we can I s'pose. My heart's in the right place.

They returned to this topic in their final meeting when they demonstrated a greater level of understanding, as they discussed just how challenging some of the situations they had encountered during placement had been. It can be argued that, 'people rely upon their dispositional understandings gained through lived experience, operating, under typical circumstances…that is, without recourse to conscious reflection', (Weininger, 2005, p. 131). Following this it may be supposed if a trainee had not previously known anyone of a different social class whose values are different from their own, they may revert to their dispositional understanding and behaviour as dictated by their own habitus. In so doing the way they cope with a new situation, such as Annie's private school, may mean a gap is created between the pupils and the trainee. Annie, however, appears to have dealt well with her experience and achieved positive outcomes, despite her initial horror of being placed somewhere so alien to her own experience. It may be of note that she did not at any point express a fear that she would not be able to behave in an appropriate manner. Her concerns related to how she felt the staff and pupils would perceive her. In the event, she reported being welcomed warmly from the very start, which was the polar opposite of her expectations that everyone would 'hate' her on sight.

A potential difficulty could arise with Bourdieusian interpretations of how trainees form their identities over the duration of the course. The view that identities develop through learning the doxa of a certain social group could suggest a restricted capacity to increase social and cultural capitals to those of the field we occupy, whether personally or professionally. Jenkins (1982) critiques Bourdieu, arguing that there is no allowance for these changes between states. However, Bourdieu (1990b) does assert that there are differences within every individual in the social group, as they are shaped by not only their family background and community, but also by the life experiences they encounter, as noted by Reay (2004). This seems to be borne

out in the conversations, as the trainees acknowledge that some of the situations they have encountered have impacted upon them powerfully, so it seems reasonable to suggest that their identities have shifted to some degree through what they have experienced, as they allude to in this example:

> Duncan: Do you think Uni prepared you for that?
> Annie: For the real world? It's not their job to. That what placement is for. To live it. Are you saying it *is* their responsibility? How would they even do it?
> Duncan: No. They can hardly tell you every circumstance of every child that you might possibly teach. You just have to get in there and live like them to see that.
> Barry: Live like them? Here we go, (sings) 'I wanna live like common people, I wanna do whatever common people do!' Whatever that is.
> Annie: Yeah, even if they did tell you, it's not like getting out there (…) it means nothing until you see if for yourself. They told me I'd be fine in private school and I didn't believe it (…) couldn't imagine it (.) not until I'd lived it.
> Barry: Actually yeah, that is a really good point.
> Duncan: But I definitely wouldn't want to live like some of those poor children at my school. I couldn't have imagined it.
> Evelyn: Agreed.

The group show a growing understanding of the need for personal experience to support their understanding of the impacts of poverty and disclose their lack of personal experience, or otherwise. They consider how they might be able to understand the pupils living in poverty if they have not experienced it themselves and Barry sings from Pulp's Common People (1995), which encapsulates their conversation rather well. Duncan's idea that teaching in school equates in any way to personally suffering poverty seems misplaced, although he is perhaps not conveying his meaning particularly clearly in saying 'live like them', but he shows that his awareness at least has improved through his school placement experience. Blandford (2017, p. 47) warns that middle-class professionals cannot gain a true understanding of the lives of disadvantaged pupils by observing from the outside. By the end of their PGCE programme, there seems to be an understanding arising from experiences on placement that they did not know what their pupils' lives were really like, and as such they may not be able to cater for their needs as well as they might (Gilbert, 2018; Thompson et al., 2016; White & Murray, 2016). This relates to

the research question which sought to consider if any perceptible shifts in opinions could be seen over the duration of the programme.

4.2.15 Panel study: relating to changes in participants' perceptions seen across the three meetings.

In the first meeting the assumption that everyone would hold the same beliefs and be similar to each other was aired during the card sorting exercise. Annie showed that she understood this may not be the case, but the others seemed much less aware of this possibility:

> Annie: I don't think we'll agree on this (…) our backgrounds aren't the same.
> Henri: What difference does that make though? We're training to teach (.) we can't be that different.
> Duncan: We might be doing it from different motivations (.) but otherwise similar?
> Evelyn: I should think so.

By the third meeting a change in this could be seen as the participants discussed one of the photograph sets, expressing their understanding that others could hold different beliefs to their own. They also stated that they had found the discussions useful, which correlates with findings from previous studies in this area (Jones, 2016; White & Murray, 2016). Duncan posed a link between people's beliefs and their family background:

> Duncan: I think we've all got different opinions about this, maybe?
> Evelyn: Or different reasons for thinking what we do?
> Duncan: I suppose if your upbringing is different, then you'll have different ideas about things.
> Henri: It's been interesting though, to talk about all this? Because I didn't think about it before. I (.) I just s'pose I assumed everyone would be of a similar view. (…) Well, not everyone in the world, obviously, but all of us, on this course, (.) probably.
> Annie: I think so. That we think different, I mean.

However, in the third meeting the participants still expressed the negative opinions about families living in poverty seen in the first and second meetings. They did show some awareness of the digital divide (CPAG, 2021), but in a discussion about the laptops for schools initiative (DfE, 2020a) during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, they referred to drug misuse and theft, both to fund the use of the equipment and of the equipment itself, again

demonstrating stereotypical deficit viewpoints relevant to the research question relating to trainees' perceptions of poverty:

> Barry: There was all that about the government buying laptops for kids. I don't know what's happening about that. I'm not sure how many of them can not have stuff like that though. I don't know if it's not a publicity stunt. I mean, c'mon, how many of them don't have the latest iPhone? (laughs)
> Evelyn: And some of the children at my school came from families of six or more. Could you imagine that – them suddenly having 8 laptops rock up? Who's going to pay the electric bill?
> Barry: They'll only need 7 because one kid will have to sit next to the meter shoving 50ps in!
> (All laugh)
> Henri: They won't need to because their big brother will've sold them all straight out the back door for drugs as soon as they come in through the front!
> Barry: Yeah (.) yeah you're right. Mad.

Compared to the earlier meetings, in the final meeting there was evidence of the group showing more empathy in their discussions as they began to think about issues in relation to the pupils they had been teaching in school, again relating to the research question seeking to find any shifts in opinion:

> Henri: But if the police are going out to council estates to deal with that sort of thing, it's our kids from our classes up in the bedrooms, scared and watching their parents carrying on in the street.
> Evelyn: Blimey, that's a bit grim.
> Duncan: You are right though.
> Barry: And then we have to teach them to write poetry. When they're worrying that their Dad's at home drunk and kicking their mother's head in.
> Henri: That's bad. Really awful. (…) A lot of the children at my school came from an estate. They wore all sorts of dodgy uniform – you know, like, well, worn down shoes, trousers too short, same shirt with dinner down it from yesterday, all that (…) even though it was meant to be smart with a blazer and that (…)
> Evelyn: If the mother is having all that trouble though, they won't be thinking about whether the children have clean clothes, will they?
> Barry: No, that's true.

By the third focus group meeting the participants in the panel study began to reflect on their course, and the group discussions they had had. In this example, Duncan appeared annoyed by the accusation he felt was being levelled at him, and showed that he was aware of the impact of the course on his developing understandings and experience. This reflects the findings of

Smart et al. (2009), who report Teach First participants expressing anger and distress at the inequality they experienced in schools, possibly due to embarrassment from their position of privilege. Duncan spoke to defend his position in regard to children with difficult home lives, however as with most of the participants, the tendency to refer to this "sort of children" as one homogenous group of 'others' still persisted:

> Henri: Ah but, but, won't it be harder for Duncan because he's *so* middle class, so he won't empathise with the sort of children we're talking about though, will he? What we said before, about barriers to learning? If you can't even conceive what they might be, you can't empathise. Can you?
> Duncan: Hang on, so you're saying I can't understand my own pupils? I think I do. I think I know they might come from crap homes, excuse my language, but they still want to learn. They still turn up every day. I don't write those sort of children off, if that's what you mean?
> Henri: Sorry – no I didn't mean that, of course I didn't. I was just playing devil's advocate. You know?
> Duncan: Yes, sorry, no I do know what you mean. It's been an eye opener, of course it has. But I can do my best by them, can't I?

There is an understanding shown that over the course they had perhaps changed as individuals, although they did not explicitly describe what this may involve specifically, beyond acquiring a 'teacher voice'.

> Barry: Do you think all our families will have seen us change? DO you think we're different - even if we don't think we are?
> Henri: What, like that lyric – erm, you know, hang on (laughs) here we go – (sings) It's hard to handle this fortune and fame, everybody's so different but I haven't changed?
> (All laugh.)
> Barry: Joe Walsh!
> Duncan: What song is that?
> Annie: I don't think there's much fame and fortune in teaching!
> Barry: Wrong job mate!
> Henri: Yeah, but it's maybe right – we think we're still the person that arrived last year, but really we're fully fledged, proper teachers now.
> Evelyn: Well I've definitely got a teacher voice now, my mum tells me off for using it at home!

During the focus group discussions exchanges were made which illuminated the research questions about how trainee teachers describe poverty amongst primary age school children in England, and what their perceptions are about the impacts of poverty on children in their classrooms. Some aspects of poverty were particularly emphasised by the trainees, such as external

appearances, supervision and aspiration. There were some perceptible shifts in opinions over the duration of the programme revealed through the panel study, as the group started to express their understanding of the differences in beliefs that may be held, as well as beginning to demonstrate more empathy with children living in poverty in those that showed a lack of this initially. From the focus group discussions, it appears that the trainees showed a lack of understanding that poverty may have an impact on language acquisition, which the research study also sought to explore. In order to try to elicit more conversation around these specific areas, the Diamond Nine activity was introduced for the panel study group.

4.3 The Diamond Nine Activity.

At each of their three meetings, the participants in the trend study were given a set of the same nine statements to be sorted into a diamond nine formation (Fox & Messiouu, 2004). This was done in order to elicit conversation about particular aspects of interest to the study (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Niemi et al., 2015) and thus further illuminate the research questions. The activity also encouraged the trainees to work collaboratively, with their discussion and negotiation exposing differing opinions within the group (Messiou & Hope, 2015). Some of the content of the conversations related to the themes previously discussed, so this has been included in earlier sections rather than being presented separately. However, the actual end results of their completion of the task holds interest also, as it shows a change in their thinking over the duration of the programme, which answers the research question about perceptible shifts in opinions.

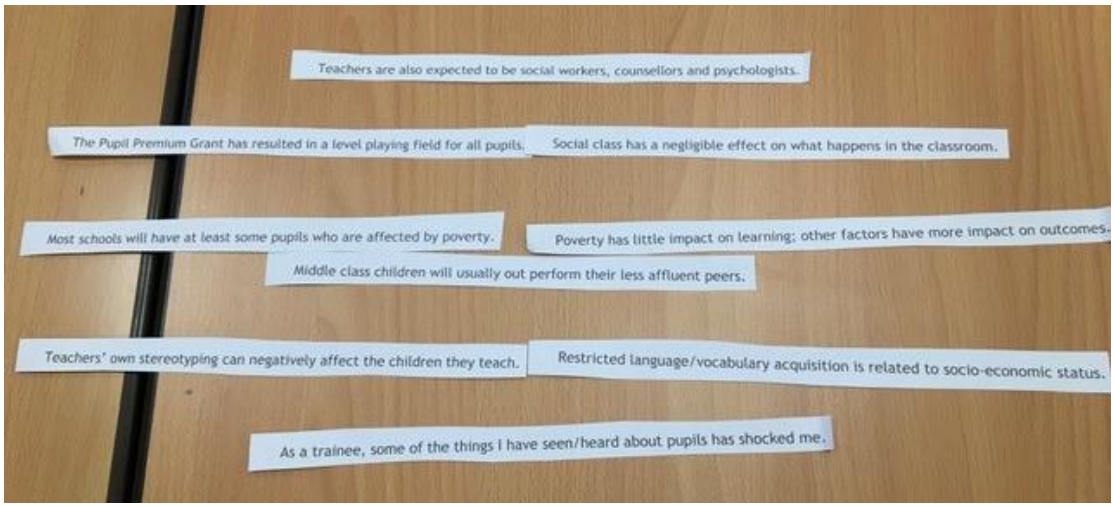


Figure 4.13 – Diamond 9 statement ranking at Focus Group meeting 1 in September 2019

In Figure 4.13 above it can be seen that the trainees decided that the PPG funding produces a level playing field for all pupils. They agreed with this statement to a greater extent than they believed that, 'poverty has little impact on learning', or that 'restricted language acquisition is related to socio-economic status'. They placed the statement about having been shocked by what they have experienced in school at the bottom, which is to be expected as at this point they had yet to go into school on their first placement. The conversation reflected the questionnaire findings that many of the trainees viewed poverty as a choice:

> Barry: But people have kids just to get bigger houses and more benefits, don't they. They (…) erm (…) they (…)
> Annie: I don't agree with that.
> Barry: I think you'll find they do though.

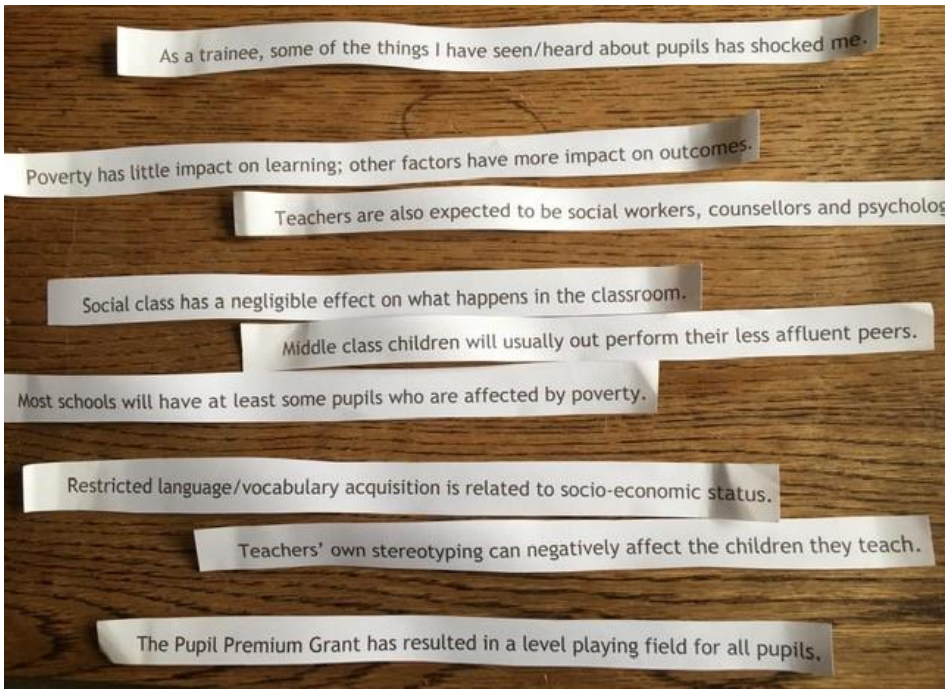


Figure 4.14 - Diamond 9 statement ranking at Focus Group meeting 2 in January 2020

It is noticeable that having been out on their first school placement, the statement about being shocked then appeared at the very top of the list, as shown above in Figure 4.14. The PPG funding statement dropped to be the one the trainees agreed with least, which may have shown an increased appreciation of the experience of disadvantaged children in school, but the conversation around this choice suggests they still lacked understanding about the impact of this initiative:

> Duncan: So you're putting the pupil premium one in the middle? What about that lecture?
> Henri: I think that was quite positive. They said that schools have to show it's having a positive impact, so it must be levelling the playfield, mustn't it?

Their continued lack of understanding is further revealed by their placing of the statement 'poverty has little impact on learning' in second place, closely followed by 'social class has a negligible effect'. This could have been because they were not conflating PPG eligible pupils with any particular social class, but might also again suggest a lack of understanding about this issue. Their conversation gives a different interpretation:

> Duncan: Poverty has little impact on learning. Well (…)

Barry: On learning? Maybe not learning as such (…) but on some children?
Annie: This is linked to the social class one, and the middle class children one. If you agree with one you agree with them all.

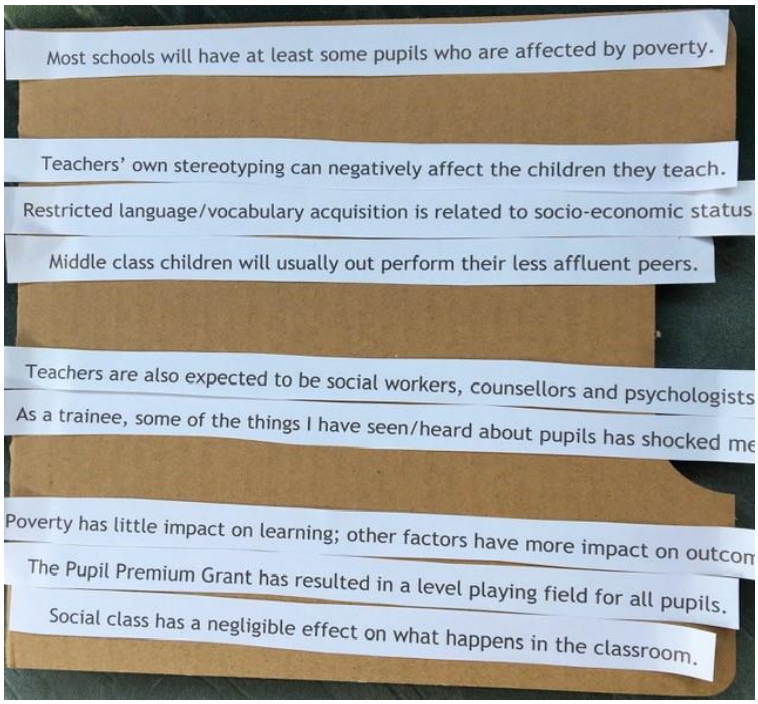


Figure 4.15 - Diamond 9 statement ranking at Focus Group meeting 3 in April 2020

Figure 4.15 above shows the changes in the group's choices as compared to Figures 4.13 and 4.14. The group continued to reflect as they discussed the activity for the third time, acknowledging that their understandings and opinions had changed, and also that they may not all hold the same views. This supports H. Jones' (2016) findings that trainees appreciate the opportunity to discuss issues of social justice, and that in having open conversations they are able to better understand others may hold different views to their own. In the extract below, it is noticeable that Annie questioned Evelyn's reference to punting on the River Cam. There are several examples of this kind of confusion Annie demonstrated throughout the meetings. This relates to Beadle (2020) and also supports Hirsch (2008), who noted the impact of a lack of cultural literacy for the working-class group, marking them out and leaving them powerless as they are unable to meaningfully engage in conversation that assumes a middle-class level of knowledge. Duncan and Barry's responses

could be viewed as kindly but patronising, as they realised Annie did not know what Evelyn was talking about:

> Henri: Yes, and then the rest go in the middle because we agree, but they're less important (…) I don't think that's the word probably, but you know what I mean (…)
> Duncan: Yes, we can put the other three in the middle because they're true, but the ones about attainment and poverty are big issues. Bigger issues?
> Barry: I don't think we had it like this before. What's happened? Have we actually (gasps) learnt something? (laughs)
> (all laugh)
> Duncan: Yes, I think we must have done! Having said that, what we have learnt is quite depressing really. I mean, it doesn't paint a very good picture of society, does it?
> Henri: That's more that we maybe weren't aware of it all before, and now (…) well in schools you get to see the nitty gritty of life, don't you?
> Evelyn: Oh yes!
> Barry: Society's filthy underbelly?
> Annie: What?
> Henri: Well, all the people that live a different kind of life to what we have.
> Annie: Yes, definitely – I never knew that 7 year olds could go to a shooting club before!
> Evelyn: You've really had an opposite experience to me though, haven't you? With my 51% pupil premium school and the council estate kids running feral. And you in your straw boater punting down the Cam!
> Annie: The what?
> Duncan: I don't think they have punting at Grimsby University.
> Annie: Don't start dissing Grimsby again – I've done ok! I've passed! Happy days!
> Barry: We're all equal, just some are more equal than others.
> Duncan: So it would seem!

The conversation around the completion of the Diamond Nine activity for the last time might suggest that the trainees' thinking had progressed and changed, and that they were much more aware of poverty and the impact for children, but for some their use of derogatory language to describe these pupils persisted:

> Duncan: Right so, "Most schools will have at least some pupils who are affected by poverty." I think we can say that's a given, can't we?
> Henri: Yes, yes, I think we can. I think there are.
> Evelyn: I think you really notice it on non uniform days, don't you? Seeing what they wear? The chavvy ones really stand out. Or they just still come in uniform, and it's obvious they don't have much else to wear.
> Barry: Or they don't want the others to take the rip for it.
> Henri: Yeah. (…) And on school trips? My school had to put money towards the ones that couldn't pay, but then some of the others that the

> school knew could pay decided to stop as well, so they ended up doing no trips for ages.
> Barry: Really? That's bad. My school paid for the pupil premium kids. I don't know if the other kids knew. There were quite a few that didn't go on the residential though, but my mentor said the governors thought it was too much – you know (…) cost the school too much and not show enough impact, paying nearly £200 for a trip, so there were quite a few left in school. I don't agree with that.

The placement of the statements appertaining to teacher stereotyping impacting negatively on pupils and also language acquisition being affected by socio-economic status changed in this meeting also, as shown in Figure 4.15 above. These were previously dismissed almost to the bottom of the ranking in the first (Figure 4.13) and second (Figure 4.14) meetings, which suggests a shift in understanding about both of these issues towards the end of the course. However, the lack of discussion about this makes it difficult to perceive whether it is more that their opinions about the other statements needing to be placed lower have therefore left these higher by default, rather than through any carefully reasoned and informed decision. Barry's comment in the previous extract indicated they were aware of their own learning, but it is not clear whether any change in attitudes would be on a deep and permanent level, or to what extent they operated from less of a deficit viewpoint than seen in September at the beginning of the course. This may be impacted by the ethos and culture of the school they joined for their NQT year, as Mazzoli Smith and Todd (2019, p. 361) point out that, 'patterns of stigmatization were so similar across schools, and in evidence even when schools prided themselves on their support for their most disadvantaged pupils'. This may mean that any progress made during the PGCE programme could be undermined by the culture they experience in their formative teaching years.

In this extract Barry shows some empathy with disadvantaged children which was not evident in previous meetings. As Barry and Evelyn continued their discussion this was further developed:

> Duncan: Ok, so what about, "Poverty has little impact on learning; other factors have more impact on outcomes"?
> Evelyn: That's at the bottom. SO wrong! Like what you just said about the residential – that must have a high impact on kids, like self-esteem

> and confidence (…) And those ones that missed it (…) it would have a negative impact, so the gap would get even bigger. That's shocking.
> Barry: Yeah (…) I never thought of it like that (…) but you are right. They learn a lot of stuff that all kids need (…) resilience and that.

Also it is apparent that Barry was aware his thinking was developed and challenged by the focus group discussion, as seen with the trainees in both H. Jones' (2016) and White and Murray's (2016) research. Duncan commented on the previous times when the group had undertaken the activity and how differently they had completed it:

> Duncan: Goodness knows how we did this before. I hope nobody ever reads this. How embarrassing!

Completing the Diamond 9 activity helped the participants to address the research question relating to aspects of poverty that they particularly emphasised and their understanding of the impact of poverty on language acquisition, as the statements were chosen to elicit discussion about these specific aspects of the study. This highlighted their ongoing lack of understanding in relation to language acquisition as each time they were dismissive about this statement during the activity, with little discussion arising around it, as can be seen in Henri's comment in the extract above that, 'the rest go in the middle'. The research question exploring any perceptible shifts in opinion, which became evident over the duration of the programme, was also furthered by the repetition of this activity, as it facilitated the participants in reviewing their own thinking.

4.4 Language acquisition.

The omission of language acquisition throughout all of the focus group discussions was notable. As discussed in Chapter 3, poverty and social class are linked to language development, and the linguistic skills of children on entry to school exhibits a positive correlation with future academic attainment (Hindman et al., 2012; Rowland, 2014; Tough, 1982). However, studies have also shown that the progress children make with grammatical skills is strongly related to the amount of complex sentences the teacher uses regardless of their linguistic prior attainment (Huttenlocher et al., 2002). This indicates how vital it is that teachers are aware of the impact of SES on pupils' language

development and know how they can mitigate against this so that they are able to support learning and help children to develop positive academic habits (Mercer & Littleton, 2007).

This study presupposed that the trainees would have an understanding of the language acquisition barrier and their teacher role in this respect, and that they would demonstrate this through the conversations about poverty. The introduction of the Diamond Nine activity for the panel study group was intended to drive this discussion to help to illuminate research question 4 when it did not arise in the previous meetings with the trend study groups. Despite the inclusion of the statement, 'Restricted language/vocabulary acquisition is related to socio-economic status', as discussed previously, conversation about linguistic skills was not generated by the group, who brushed over and dismissed it each time. This is supported by the results from the questionnaire, which followed the categories identified by the Ad Astra project group of schools, (Puttick et al., 2020). 'Poverty of language' was overlooked by most with only a single trainee from groups A, B and D combined selecting it, whilst in the School Direct group three of the seven trainees chose this option, as shown in Figure 4.11 (p. 116). Despite showing potentially more awareness of this issue in their questionnaires, the topic did not arise in the focus group meeting for the School Direct participants to be able to gain confirmation of exactly what their understanding was.

4.5 Vignettes

4.5.1 Annie.

Annie's experience is the reverse of the focus of the study, however considering it closely is illuminating as it provides insight into the impact of school placements on disrupting stereotypical opinions. Annie self-identified as working class and was the one in the group who showed most empathy for, and understanding of the impact of poverty on children in school. On learning that her second placement was in a private school she displayed very fixed opinions about what to expect and how she would be treated, and was deeply upset

claiming that this meant she would fail the course. Her reaction, as Gorski (2012) argues, had no basis for her distress beyond her stereotyped expectations of the staff and pupils. After the placement her view of the staff and pupils at the school as one homogenous group of people who would be hostile towards her solely on the basis of her social class was completely disrupted and her new understanding gained through working with the individuals at the school replaced her stereotypical expectations (Gorski, 2012).

4.5.2 Barry.

Barry is noticeable for his very strongly expressed deficit viewpoint from the outset. He, of all the trainees in the study, shows no reticence in verbalising contentious and highly discriminatory opinions. Signs of change began to appear by the last meeting, but there is nothing to suggest this change was stimulated by his discussions with the others in the group, and if anything he seemed on occasion to be persuading others in the group round to his point of view. The change was therefore more likely to have come about due to his placement experiences and interacting with the children as individuals. He started to empathise with their situation once he could see it through their lens, rather than just falling back on his stereotyped views (Gorksi, 2012; Robson et al., 2021). The experiences of Barry and Annie support Gorman (2005), who suggests that we are much more likely to notice things which confirm a stereotype we subscribe to than if it is something that opposes our view.

4.6 Summary.

This chapter illustrated the data collected from the four groups of participants and the themes that emerged, which were gathered under the pillars of the conceptual framework to demonstrate the discussions that took place in the focus group meetings. Similarities and differences between the groups were highlighted, together with the links made between the questionnaire data and those from the focus group conversations. The findings show that stereotypical deficit viewpoints were expressed by participants, yet the focus group situation in which the data were collected may have meant that they were restrained in

their contributions by striving for the socially desirable thing to say. It seems reasonable to surmise, therefore, that their underlying beliefs and opinions were not as inclusive as might be desirable. The next chapter offers the conclusions drawn from this research study and considers the implications arising for future practice and further research. It also presents suggestions for any adaptations and changes required for the PGCE and ITE programmes.

Never live like common people, Never do what common people do
Never fail like common people, You'll never watch your life slide out of view
You'll never live like common people, You'll never do whatever common people do

- Cocker et al., *Common People*, 1995.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Recommendations.

Considering implications for future practice, to give opportunities during time on campus for reflection and discussion may not be sufficient for trainee teachers to understand the impacts of poverty, as deep seated beliefs are thought to be resistant to change. If placement experiences are found to be more effective in disrupting deficit views, then it is important to acknowledge that not all trainees can experience placements in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage. An approach which is designed to reach as many trainees as possible is required, so facilitating discussion about poverty and social justice will be needed, coupled with more proactive workshops and activities. Nyugen (2016, p. 297) proposed that an ITE programme which does not support trainees in coming to understand the 'moral elements of their teaching' could result in a weakened education for their future pupils, further highlighting the need to facilitate conversations and provide opportunities to explore their opinions and beliefs. White & Murray (2016, p. 512) argue that all teacher educators need to know and understand their trainees' views, so discussions and other activities will facilitate this. It cannot be assumed that trainees have experience or understanding of the impacts of poverty, and whilst some may not hold deficit viewpoints, as seen in this study, others might, and gaining an appropriate understanding to facilitate breaking down any misconceptions and stereotypes will be a future objective for the training programmes. Activities should be carried out over the duration of the course, enabling trainees to draw on all of their school placement experiences, rather than happening before any have been undertaken, or after just one, as is currently the case. School placement experiences will be shared and used as discussion points, with a strong focus on the individual child to facilitate the building of empathy, and also empowering trainees so they do not feel overwhelmed and outfaced by the scale of the issues they may face in the classroom (Blandford, 2017). Sharing good

practice by actively exploring strategies employed in the most successful schools will contribute to this.

A factor for further consideration is the beliefs and level of understanding held by the teacher educators at the university, as well as the mentors working with trainees during placements in schools. Goodwin and Darity (2019, p. 73) point out that teacher educators require support to develop their, 'understanding, research and practices further around social justice education', if they are to be positioned strongly enough to deliver a robust preparation for trainees. Whilst they acknowledge that there is conversation about social justice teacher preparation, this requires a more collaborative, cohesive approach to enable effective sharing of research and good practice. Therefore, it could be argued there are issues of continuing professional development needs for teacher educators to enable them to effectively deliver the social justice aspects of the courses. Preferably, social justice should be threaded consistently throughout the entire programme, being considered as a fundamental component in all lectures and seminars regardless of topic, rather than bolted on as a discrete session. As H. Jones (2016, p. 479) observes, a single day of teaching about socio-economic disadvantage is extremely limited, and more time will need to be given over to the topic. Trainees may find such activities and conversations difficult, but, particularly with the continued increase in numbers of children living in poverty, it is essential that everything possible is done to ensure that their perceptions of such children are fair and just. The needs of the children must be at the forefront of the PGCE training programme, and if facilitating challenging conversations can assist in meeting these needs then this has to be recommended as an integral part of the course.

5.2 Limitations of the study

There were some limitations to the study. Participants were only drawn from those enrolled on the postgraduate ITE programmes at the university, and small numbers took part in the focus group discussions and questionnaires. However, the study sought to aim for detail and understanding, not statistical representativeness, or to make any claims about generalisability (Burton & Bartlett, 2009; Thomas, 2013; Watts, 2014). As this study is an EdD, the focus

was intended to illuminate and shape both local experience and my own practice. By employing multiple-case sampling (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) the validity, stability and trustworthiness of the findings were more robust. Furthermore, a piece of interpretative research has value and completeness in itself and does not need verification from any further research. It has integrity as a singular enquiry and there is no need for corroboration (Thomas, 2013; Watts, 2014).

A further limitation has been discussed in relation to Barnes' (2008) and H. Jones' (2016) studies with regard to the difficulties around the role of practitioner researcher. This was reduced by the participation of trainees who I did not mentor on school placements, so that they were less likely to view me as directly impacting on their outcomes. The use of anonymous marking meant that the impact with regard to the two academic modules they studied on the programmes was minimised. By providing the focus groups with photographs and being careful to leave them to drive the conversations themselves and not to question or prompt them for responses, I lessened the potential for introducing 'experimenter effects' (Thomas, 2013, p. 141).

Using focus groups, rather than individual interviews, enabled more trainees to be involved in the project, but this had to be balanced against the fact that group dynamics may have affected contributions, and, as the researcher, one would not be aware of this (Burton & Bartlett, 2009; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; H. Jones, 2016). However, the researcher can only access the experience of the participants through their own account of it (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000) and the focus group could be argued to promote and enable more meaningful contributions (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Gibbs, 2017).

5.3 Research questions and data summary.

The research questions have been illuminated by the analysis of data drawn from 23 participants in the form of questionnaires and focus group meetings. All of the participants volunteered to take part in the research and at the time of the study were enrolled on one of the PGCE programmes based at a university located in the East Midlands region. Along with questionnaires completed by all participants, data were collected by showing the focus groups three

photographs and asking them to discuss these to decide which, in their view, was the odd one out. This use of visual methods instead of interviewing the trainees was selected so as not to restrain the discussion and not to influence or intervene. If the trainees had been directly questioned in groups or individually by a researcher sitting with a notebook, they may well have not felt able to speak so freely and openly (Bourne & Winstone, 2021; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015).

The panel study group completed a Diamond Nine card sorting activity at the end of each focus group meeting to help illuminate any changes in opinions and also to attempt to encourage conversation about specific topics. The study sought to explore the trainees' understandings of poverty in the context of rising numbers of disadvantaged children in schools (JRF, 2022). The insights gained may assist in the preparation of ITE trainees to ensure they are able to become effective practitioners, meeting the needs of all the children they teach regardless of social group or economic circumstance. The following section of the chapter addresses the research questions directly and offers a summary of the data.

5.3.1 RQ 1: How do trainee teachers describe poverty amongst primary age school children in England?

Poverty is most often viewed by trainees in terms of income and lack of material possessions. They are not unusual in this opinion, as Robson et al. (2021) found that their participants also cited economic factors as a main cause of poverty. As suggested by Mazzoli Smith and Todd (2019), the emotional and psychosocial aspects of poverty are often unseen, with financial difficulties being foregrounded to the point that the lived experience of poverty is distorted and thus misunderstood. There is a general opinion seen in this study that poverty relates to a lack of sufficient income, which is attributed as much to poor spending priorities as a literal shortfall in cash. Trainees subscribe to the view that poverty can be a choice made by parents, and that priorities for spending are 'wrong', being focussed on putting their own needs ahead of their children's, with these needs mainly described as consisting of drink, drugs, mobile phones and designer clothes (H. Jones, 2016; Thompson et al, 2016).

The trainees equate poverty with a lack of cleanliness and a lack of care on the parents' part. They believe that children are not being cared for if they are not under the constant direct supervision of their parents and view any apparent lack of close supervision as being a strong indicator of poverty. Lareau (2011) argues that middle class parenting looks very different to the working class style, which may account for negative comments made by the trainees who will be judging through the lens of their own predominantly more middle class experience. Gorski (2012) observed that people have strong tendencies to attach more negative qualities to a group they do not belong to, drawing on stereotypes to furnish them with information about alien groups. This is apparent for many of the ITE trainees who express negative opinions about families living in poverty. They talk about poverty as something that happens to other people – not people 'like us' - describing it as a lifestyle that people have chosen, or a generational condition that others find themselves in (Blandford, 2017; Kidd, 2018).

The trainees do find the topic difficult to discuss (Jones, 2016; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013; White & Murray, 2016). This is seen in the hesitancy of their contributions, when often they will verbalise their awkwardness at trying to find the 'right words', or express embarrassment at their choice of words. It is noticeable that the first fifteen minutes of the focus group meetings consisted of more stilted and guarded contributions, whilst beyond this there appeared to be a relaxation and thoughts of maintaining 'correctness' seem to dissolve. The use of the photographs to facilitate the discussion enabled the presence of the researcher to perhaps be forgotten and allowed the trainees to explore thoughts and ideas they would likely not have otherwise verbalised (White & Murray, 2016).

Poverty is a multi-dimensional concept and can be viewed as tightly coupled with issues of equality. It seems that an absolute subsistence measure and the arbitrary cut off point resulting from the use of free school meal eligibility disregards the rights of everyone to participate in society as equals and particularly ignores the psychological impact of being excluded. A culture of

consumerism is especially harmful to those who are excluded from participation as increasingly an individual's worth is associated with their consumption behaviours, as seen with the trainees' judgements about parents and their possessions. The more all aspects of life are commodified, the more those unable to afford to participate are excluded, and this applies equally to life within schools (Mazzoli Smooth & Todd, 2019). The impact of this inability to participate and 'fit in' is not just psychological, as seen when children are struggling in school because of their limited access to the required cultural assets such as books and leisure experiences, which some schools and teachers may take for granted. The clearest measure of this being the attainment gap which persists throughout all phases of schooling (DfE, 2019). Children are not necessarily impoverished of culture completely, but those with the power in education value some assets more highly than others and thus gatekeep access to opportunities (Watson, 2018). In this way, Bourdieu's symbolic violence can be argued to be in action, replicating existing societal structures by restricting the available life chances to those who are living in poverty, creating a cycle from which they are unable to escape (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

The trainees often expressed opinions which apportion blame to the parents for the situation in which they find themselves (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013), but focussing on children without the attitude and the will to support the parents means children can still experience obstacles resulting from their parents' situation, even if they themselves are being well supported by their schools. It is often claimed that education is the main route out of poverty, but schools are not sufficiently resourced to overcome the effects of it (Shain, 2016), and indeed these are not always tangible obstacles which can be easily identified and surmounted. To achieve equality in school within a very unequal society is a challenging goal (NEU, 2021). Consequently, the cycle is maintained yet the myth of meritocracy remains (Friedman & Laurison, 2020; Littler, 2018). The OECD (2018) contests that the 'social elevator' is broken, highlighting a slowing of social mobility and instead showing an increasing trend towards the risk of moving down the social ladder. They note that education, often touted as the 'silver bullet' for addressing social inequality, is increasingly a mechanism for

privileged to maintain their social status, as Bourdieu (1986, 1990) long asserted. The children of those who have attended university are still more likely, in turn, to attend university than children whose parents did not, and this is strongly linked to lifetime earnings (Friedman & Laurison, 2020; OECD, 2018; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

5.3.2 RQ2: What are trainees' perceptions about the impacts of poverty on children in schools?

The trainees believed that families living in poverty lack any aspiration for their children, and that this attitude will be replicated in the children themselves. This lack of awareness and therefore consideration for pupils, leads to systemic issues of school exposing families' financial status, when a coping strategy for children in poverty is 'impression management', including non-disclosure of poverty (Mazzoli Smith & Todd, 2019). In turn this exacerbates the difficulty of identifying which children are in need, making the trainees' understanding of how the children are living even more problematic to address.

For some trainees frustration and anxiety appears to arise when the realisation grows of how critical schooling is for children in poverty, but this is coupled with uncertainty of how to sensitively address their specific needs (Robson et al, 2021). It can be seen from Leighton (2018) that lack of aspiration is present in some working class families, and Blandford (2017) also supports this argument. Therefore, the trainees discussions about working class families' lack aspiration could be argued to be accurate, however it is the fact that they apply this to the whole of the group of FSM eligible children that is the real difficulty. They are not expressing an informed judgement based in specific understandings of particular families, but rather are lumping children together as one homogenous group and failing to recognise the individual circumstances of every child (Kidd, 2018). For every tale of families not valuing education or supporting their children to succeed as best they can, there is another which offers the opposite viewpoint, as Creasey (2018) explains in relation to his own experience of a working class upbringing. As noted by Kidd (2018), those who claim that lack of aspiration is the cause of low attainment are those who have no experience of poverty themselves.

5.3.3 RQ3: Which aspects of poverty do the trainees particularly emphasise?
Supervision is a particular concern for the participants, with many instances of it being discussed across all the focus groups. All of the sample groups attribute children being out of the home on their own to a failing on the part of the parents. Some link it with parental engagement in their children's education and reflect on their experiences in school relating to children's lack of supervision, seeing drug problems and disadvantage specifically as the contributing factors. They equate a lack of constant oversight with safety, interpreting it as indicative of poor parenting. Working class parenting style is viewed as signifying an absence of care and involvement on the part of the parents (Lareau, 2011).

In all of the sample groups, the opinion is evident that poverty and social class is reflected in external appearances, in particular of clothing, shoes and cleanliness. The trainees express the belief that appearances are a significant indication that pupils are living in poverty. They project their own standards and expectations onto the children depicted in the photographs, making judgemental comments about the fit, cleanliness and appropriateness of their clothing. Main (2013) argues that living in poverty removes the ability to conform and therefore puts children at great risk of bullying, as they are unlikely to have new, well-fitting clothes. The trainees repeatedly pointed out that clothing is inappropriate or does not fit, showing that they are making the judgements of which children are afraid.

Lack of aspiration is another aspect which trainees emphasised repeatedly over the course of all the focus group meetings. This supports the questionnaire responses where 19 of the 23 trainees select lack of parental aspiration in families living in poverty as having the greatest negative impact on the children's attainment. Blaming low parental aspiration for the poor academic attainment of low income pupils is a common misconception (Thompson, 2017). Kidd (2018) argues that when working class parents do have aspirations, they cannot support their children in achieving them as they do not have the necessary capital to action these ambitions (Bourdieu, 1986). Poverty of

aspiration is an area of contention in the literature, with contradicting evidence to be found (Ampaw-Farr, 2018; Blandford, 2017; Creasey, 2018; Kidd, 2018; Thompson, 2017). This highlights the point made by Bourdieu (1990), that habitus is a continuum with choices being made within the constraints of every day experience, where habitus and field intersect. Thus, individuals are by nature individual, and this is the crucial factor that needs to be recognised. Stereotyping generates homogenous groupings, with little understanding of the individuals within that group and negative judgements being foregrounded. In order to become effective teachers the trainees must appreciate that every child is different, and to prevent them and their families being disenfranchised they must not be lumped together but recognised as individuals (Creasey, 2018). Disrupting stereotypical deficit viewpoints is essential in enabling this.

Along with lack of supervision, poor hygiene and clothing, the trainees consistently relate poverty to social class. They believe that whilst they themselves understand the importance of education this is not the case for working class families living in poverty, who lack aspiration as a result. Defining social class is found to be problematic, but despite this the trainees demonstrate that they believe working class children are less intelligent and are less invested in education, which results in the existence of the attainment gap. The working class is discussed at length by the participants and the view is expressed of this as being something which needs to be escaped from, including on occasion by those who self-identify as belonging to this class (Blandford, 2017; Reay, 2017). Stereotypical misconceptions appear throughout which show assumptions based on class along with poverty, blaming the children or their families for the educational disadvantages which the participants identify (Thompson et al., 2016).

5.3.4 RQ4: How do the trainees understand the impact of poverty on language acquisition?

The anticipated awareness and understanding of the link between language acquisition and children living in poverty is not apparent throughout any of the focus group meetings, yet this is a well-known impediment to achieving positive educational outcomes for this group, supported by the findings of other

research (Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2003). It is not a barrier to learning or an impact on attainment that is acknowledged or discussed by the trainees. Even when attempts are made to facilitate a conversation to arise through the inclusion of particular photographs or statements in the Diamond Nine activity, the topic is quickly dismissed as not being an issue. In the questionnaire responses, only four trainees selected of 'Poverty of language' (Puttick et al., 2017) as having the greatest negative impact on children's educational attainment, with three of these being from the School Direct programme. However, this issue was not raised during their focus group meeting to be able to expand on their reasons for selecting that particular response, suggesting that perhaps they did not believe it to be relevant or important. In order to gain further corroboration that this may be an area of concern which the training programme is not highlighting for trainees, it would be necessary to carry out further research across the programmes. This may be in the form of a survey or questionnaire for all trainees, with targeted questions directly addressing the barrier of language acquisition for children in poverty.

5.3.5 RQ5: Are there any perceptible shifts in opinions over the duration of the programme?

Trainees in the sample showed an awareness in later conversations that any attempt to put themselves into the position of the children is problematic when they have little experience on which to draw. They acknowledged that they cannot teach what they do not know, and similarly cannot pretend to understand a life situation which is alien to them (Blandford, 2017). However, they did express the desire to be able to support all children to the best of their ability and articulated this quite powerfully.

The findings would seem to indicate that whilst the trainees do appreciate the opportunity to discuss this challenging topic, the question of whether conversation alone can shift deep seated personal beliefs remains. There seems to be more to suggest that change is effected by the experience garnered on placements when trainees can forge relationships with children who are living in poverty, and this then engenders empathy arising from becoming increasingly able to view the situation from the child's point of view.

This relates to the argument that direct experience is necessary for trainees to learn about the lives of others (Thompson, 2017). Contesting this view, there is evidence that events trainees have experienced, particularly during their early placements, have not necessarily resulted in any deeper level of understanding on their behalf. Trainees show a lack of understanding, for example in referring to a parent who they described as 'applying for homelessness' and in expressing bafflement that a child from a disadvantaged family should have high attainment, attributing it to an anomaly which they decided would probably resolve as the child got older. This could be argued to support the opinion that pre-existing beliefs within the habitus are very difficult to change and many trainee teachers will continue hold the stereotypical conviction that the cause of underachievement lies with the child or the family, rather than within society (Lupton & Thrupp, 2013; Thompson et al., 2016).

One of the participants demonstrated that opinions and beliefs about social class can be disrupted through the experience gained on school placements undertaken during the programme. However, this happened by accident rather than design and cannot be achieved for all trainees holding deficit viewpoints as the placement system cannot operate at such a granular level. Another of the panel study participants who routinely verbalised contentious and highly discriminatory opinions did begin to show some signs of a shift by the time of the final meeting, however it cannot be surmised that this was stimulated by the group discussions. This change could have been due to his placement experiences, meaning that he is beginning to empathise with the children's situations through their lens, replacing his stereotyped views (Gorksi, 2012; Robson et al, 2021).

5.4 Summing up.

In the final analysis, this study contributes original knowledge regarding the trainees undertaking the PGCE programmes at this university, as it uncovers their deficit perceptions of the nature and impacts of poverty on children in primary schools in England. This small scale study (Thomas, 2013) has allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the data, although implications need to be cautiously drawn. Generalisability could be achieved through larger scale

studies or other contexts, although the findings do correlate with those from other similar studies undertaken with PGCE trainees in other institutions. Stereotypical opinions and negative judgments were found to be expressed, which may have become modified but not eliminated, across the duration of the programme. The trainees may have demonstrated an awareness of their lack of understanding, but they did not express a need to address this in the way they might be expected to if the gap in their knowledge was related to one of the protected characteristics (Equality Act, 2010). Further research is required to establish if the trainees in this study are representative of the cohorts received onto the PGCE programmes annually. It would be helpful to understand the levels of knowledge (Goodwin & Darity, 2019) and experience held by the cohorts on a larger scale than this study considered. If it was found to be the case that deficit viewpoints were widely held in the way indicated by the findings of this study, then more research would be needed to ascertain how best to disrupt these. It would also contribute to further understanding to work with teacher educators in other institutions, both in the East Midlands region and beyond on a wider study. However, even if just a small number of trainees were implicated, this would still require attention as every child deserves a teacher who is their champion (Pierson, 2013), and who will do all they can to ensure all of their pupils achieve as highly as possible (Creasey, 2018). Blandford (2017, p. 58) argues aspiration is not a child's plans for the distant future but the 'here and now', and this should be at the forefront of all efforts to engage pupils with school.

As previously mentioned, following Bourdieu's example, (Speller, 2011), epigraphs are used throughout this thesis, which are drawn from the song 'Common People' (Cocker et al., 1995). This song is one amongst several sung by a participant during the focus group meetings, and conveys the belief that a person who has no lived experience of poverty can never fully understand the lives of those that have. Much literature considers the habitus of the pupils in school and how this impacts their attainment, outcomes and behaviours (Blandford, 2017; Evans, 2006; Kulz, 2017; Shain, 2016), but less research seems to explore the teachers' habitus and the effect this exerts. Since many of the trainees in the study demonstrate stereotypical deficit

viewpoints, it seems quite a perceptive choice of song as the implications of this are that facilitating a deep and non-judgemental understanding of the issues children living in poverty face is not a simple matter. Trainees cannot somehow gain an understanding as if by osmosis, but the first step in meeting this challenge will be in enabling them to verbalise and share their own beliefs and opinions. It may be debateable just how much understanding is required to avoid attitudes such as those related by Leighton (2018), but he argues strongly that high expectations are fundamental, with the skill of 'unconditional positive regard' being essential for all teachers to secure.

As the study has striven to give the trainees a voice so that their understanding of this challenging topic may be heard, it seems appropriate include them in the closing words, by choosing an extract from a group who expressed the value they found from having been given the opportunity to take part in the focus group discussion:

> Daisy: It's just so interesting to talk about all of this (.) I mean, we wouldn't really do this, normally, would we? So it's (.) I find it really interesting. Makes you realise how different we all are, really, and it's got me thinking about those poor children, and well, you're in such a position of responsibility, aren't you as a teacher? So they rely on you and if you don't really get where they're coming from, well it's maybe their only chance, their only safe place, and so we've got to step up to the plate and do the right thing by them, haven't we?
> Alice: Yeah, I agree, thinking about how it makes you feel, and for a lot of people this is part of their reality, obviously just a part of it, but (.) well, I do agree with you that it's part of the role and we should probably've been thinking about this sooner (.) before that first placement for you (Daisy).
> Daisy: Oh yes!
> Charlotte: Not something you'd normally probably stop and think about though, is it? But (.) being poor and what it means (.)
> Barbara: I'm so glad I did this though, it's been so interesting to hear what you lot all think, and what you've (.) yeah, what you've all said. Makes you think. It's really the only chance for some children, isn't it? School (.) and what the teacher can do to help them.
> Daisy: Definitely, yeah definitely, one hundred percent. I still can't believe I said those some of those words though!
> (All laugh).
> Eleanor: Yeah, thanks everyone, yeah, it's been really interesting.

The above extract highlights how this study met the objectives, set out in Chapter 1 pages 17-18, in facilitating the participants to discuss this potentially challenging topic, and have difficult conversations for which they would not otherwise have had the opportunity. In doing so, some shifts in thinking and understanding took place. University is a transformational experience in itself (Van Tam, 2022), along with the transition effected by induction into the teaching profession. Being equipped to explore contextual and social knowledge, both in the role of student and teacher (Goodwin & Darity, 2019), is key to this. The findings of this study will facilitate discussion about the social justice aspect of postgraduate programmes and other teacher education courses. Changes made to courses which proactively engage trainees in discussion and reflection to promote the development of an inclusive mindset (Goodwin & Darity, 2019), would place social justice at the heart by enabling difficult conversations to take place.

Appendix A
Questionnaire Version 1

Poverty Research Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions as accurately as you can. **Your responses are anonymous.**
These questions are not intended to test your knowledge or understanding in any way, but rather to gauge your opinion.

1. How old are you? Please circle as appropriate:

   21 – 24 25 - 35 36 – 50 51+

2. Have you worked in paid employment or as a volunteer at any point since leaving school?

   Yes No

3. Were you part of the first generation in your family to go to university?

   Yes No

4. If you were asked to identify yourself as belonging to a particular class, which would you choose?

   Working class Lower middle class Middle class
   Upper middle class Upper class

5. Have you personally experienced what you think might be described as 'poverty' in your own life at any stage?

   Never For a short time Occasionally Often All of the time

6. Were you ever in receipt of Free School Meals?

   Yes No

7. "Poverty is the fault of the individual or family – people choose whether to work or not."
   Do you think this is correct?

   No, never Possibly sometimes Yes, in most cases this is true

8. "In order to tackle the effects of poverty, schools need to make up for what is lacking at home." Do you think this is correct?

   No Possibly, in some respects Yes, this is true I am not sure

9. There is a link between poverty and pupils' educational attainment, life choices and opportunities.

   Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

10. Which of the following do you think has the greatest **negative** impact on pupils' educational attainment and life opportunities? (Please circle just ONE option.)

Parents'/Carers' attitudes to education Social class Income levels
Gender Ethnicity

11. These are different aspects of poverty which may affect children's attainment. Please order them 1 – 5, with 1 having the LEAST negative impact, and 5 having the MOST negative impact.

material poverty (Lack of food, uniform/clothing)	**emotional poverty** (Lack of praise, time spent with parents)	**poverty of language** (Not reading stories, being talked 'at')	**poverty of experience** (Limited days out, no knowledge of local area)	**poverty of aspiration** (No working role models, peer pressure)

12. Thinking about any issues you came across in your school placement that were related to poverty – were they:

More challenging than I expected About what I had expected
Less challenging

13. Order the options in the table 1 – 6, with 1 being the most important cause of poverty in England, and 6 being the least important.

Unemployment/ low income	Family history (family background, intergenerational factors)	Political landscape (government policies, party in power)	Self-inflicted (alcohol misuse, drug misuse, debts, gambling)	Lack of education/ Lack of qualifications	Health issues

14. If you feel anything has been missed from the options, please state below.

……

15. Was your placement school located in an area where you had expected there to be children and families affected by poverty?

Yes No Don't know

THANK YOU! 😊

Appendix B
Questionnaire Version 2

Poverty Research Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions as accurately as you can. **Your responses are anonymous.**
These questions are not intended to test your knowledge or understanding in any way, but rather to gauge your opinion.

1. How old are you? Please circle as appropriate:

   21 – 24 25 - 35 36 – 50 51+

2. Have you worked in paid employment or as a volunteer at any point since leaving school?

   Yes No

3. Were you part of the first generation in your family to go to university?

   Yes No

4. If you were asked to identify yourself as belonging to a particular class, which would you choose?

   Working class Lower middle class Middle class
   Upper middle class Upper class

5. Have you personally experienced what you think might be described as 'poverty' in your own life at any stage?

   Never For a short time Occasionally Often
   All of the time Don't know

6. Were you ever in receipt of Free School Meals?

   Yes No Don't know

7. "Poverty is the fault of the individual or family – people choose whether to work or not."
   Do you think this is correct?

No, never Possibly sometimes Yes, in most cases this is true I am not sure

8. "In order to tackle the effects of poverty, schools need to make up for what is lacking at home." Do you think this is correct?

   No Possibly, in some respects Yes, this is true I am not sure

9. There is a link between poverty and pupils' educational attainment, life choices and opportunities.

   Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

10. Which of the following do you think has the greatest **negative** impact on pupils' educational attainment and life opportunities? (Please circle just ONE option.)

Parents'/Carers' attitudes to education Social class Income levels
Gender Ethnicity

11. These are different aspects of poverty which may affect children's attainment. Please order them 1 – 5, with 1 having the LEAST negative impact, and 5 having the MOST negative impact. Write the appropriate number in the box below each.

material poverty (Lack of food, uniform/clothing)	**emotional poverty** (Lack of praise, time spent with parents)	**poverty of language** (Not reading stories, being talked 'at')	**poverty of experience** (Limited days out, no knowledge of local area)	**poverty of aspiration** (No working role models, peer pressure)

12. Thinking about any issues you came across in your school placement that were related to poverty – were they:

More challenging than I expected About what I had expected
Less challenging I didn't see any

13. Order the options in the table 1 – 6, with 1 being the most important cause of poverty in England, and 6 being the least important of the options given.

Unemployment/ low income	Family history (family background, intergenerational factors)	Political landscape (government policies, party in power)	Self-inflicted (alcohol misuse, drug misuse, debts, gambling)	Lack of education/ Lack of qualifications	Health issues

14. If you feel anything has been missed from the options, please state below.

……

15. Was your placement school located in an area where you had expected there to be children and families affected by poverty?

Yes No Not sure Hadn't thought about it

THANK YOU! 😊

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