Collateral Damage?

The Layering of Exclusion of Disadvantaged Students in England's Secondary Schools

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Preface

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the Faculty of Education Degree Committee.

Abstract

Collateral Damage? The Layering of Exclusion of Disadvantaged Students in England's Secondary Schools by Anton McLean

The disproportionately poorer outcomes of disadvantaged students compared to their more advantaged peers have long been of concern to those in and around the education system. Schools encounter students who bring with them their internalised socio-economic experiences which, in turn, contribute to practices of inclusion and exclusion in these spaces. The research questions in this thesis are focused on the nature and impact of exclusion from the experiences and perspectives of the senior leaders who frame exclusion in their schools and the students who experience exclusion.

This study moves forward from the dominant way that educationalists conceptualise exclusion as simply the placing of the excluded student physically away from the school either temporarily (fixed term exclusion/suspension) or permanently (expulsion). It is argued here that this is too narrow a framing of exclusion and contributes to the lack of social justice for disadvantaged students in the education system by failing to recognise the various layers of exclusion that these students encounter in the schools they attend.

Theoretically, the thesis draws upon spatial concepts to examine the layering of exclusion practices experienced by disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools. A critical realist approach is taken to understand the experiences and perspectives offered and the findings are presented across three chapters focusing on the operationalisation of space – mainstream, inclusive exclusion, and exclusive exclusion. It is argued that exclusion can be inclusive as well as exclusive because students can be excluded *within* the schools they attend and not just *from* them. Within this framework is built in a consideration of how datafication practices and Bourdieu's reproduction theory may be shaping these unequal outcomes.

Methodologically, semi-structured interviews were used to gain the experiences and perspectives of three senior leaders of mainstream schools based in varying areas of deprivation and the students and staff in two pupil referral units based in two of the most deprived areas in the country, one in the north and the other in the south.

The study concludes by reflecting on the five faces of oppression (Young, 1990) that the students have faced in the education system and the society it is a part of. It is argued that if we are to arrive at a more socially-just position for these students, we need to pay proper attention to their experiences and perspectives and as well as addressing socio-economic inequalities in wider society, also ensure that schools are spaces that are relevant to their goals and aspirations.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACEs   Adverse Childhood Experiences

ADHD   Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

AER   Average Exclusion Rate

A Level   Advanced Level

AP   Alternative Provision

BERA   British Educational Research Association

DfE   Department for Education

EHC(P)   Education, Health and Care (Plan)

FSM   Free School Meals

GCSE   General Certificate of Secondary Education

IDACI   Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index

LA   Local Authority

Ofsted   Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

PP   Pupil Premium

PRU   Pupil Referral Unit

SEN(D)   Special Educational Needs (and Disabilities)

SES   Socio Economic Status

TA   Teaching Assistant

UNCRC   United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UTLA   Upper Tier Local Authority

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1   The Problem

1.1.1   The Starting Point

If not for my own educational experiences, this thesis may never have been written. The starting point for this study, therefore, is my own background and perspectives. I write it as Head of School at a large, state-secondary school in London. On my journey to this position, I have navigated state-schools, firstly as a student and then, a teacher. At secondary school, I was an average student, yet I worked hard and eventually ended up attending several well-established universities – Leeds, Oxford, King's College London, and my current one Cambridge, where I have been completing this doctorate part-time over the last five years. It was my own efforts and the support and guidance of my mother which has seen me get to where I currently am.

I am, therefore, aware of the opportunities that successfully navigating one's way through the education system in this country can afford. The reason why I became a teacher is because this is what I want for every young person traversing the education system, particularly those from the most deprived backgrounds who already start the race of life at the back of the field. When I first approached the classroom, I thought grit and aspirations could help anybody overcome the obstacles in front of them. And then I actually started teaching. I became increasingly frustrated with the poorer outcomes for disadvantaged students both in the schools I worked in and nationally and, worse still, it appeared that many of these students who I taught lacked the qualities which I believed were so important for success. Meanwhile, in the wider society, those with the most seemed to get more. So, whilst I recognise that grit and aspirations are still very important, I have come to realise that it is far more complicated than that.

When I first set out on this study, I knew this was what I wanted to focus my attention on. Thus, I was going to initially approach this study from an outcome-centric perspective, focusing on academic grade differentials. However, over time, I came to realise that to continue with that focus would inevitably lead to what has been referred to as a 'level-abstracted' (Elder-Vass, 2010) view of the problem. I came to understand that the cure for the problem necessitated looking beyond the symptoms to focus on the causes – the generative mechanisms. It is clear to me that this is a matter of inclusion and, in the context of the education system, its corollary, exclusion.

1.1.2   The Context and Background

Despite the apparent good intentions of improving the position of disadvantaged students in England's education system, extraordinarily little progress has been made on this issue. Could it be that these particular children represent collateral damage in a system which just does not appear to be working for them? In England, "children start school with different levels of resources and quickly display strong patterning by family origin in their revealed attainment" (Gorard, 2010, p. 48); below, I consider the social justice implications of this. Addressing this has been a key priority across the divide of recent government administrations: Tony Blair (Labour, 1997 – 2007) (Blair, 2006); Gordon Brown (Labour, 2007 – 2010) (Brown, 2015); David Cameron (Coalition: Conservative and Liberal Democrat, 2010 – 2015; Conservative, 2015 – 2016) (Cameron, 2016); Theresa May (Conservative, 2016 – 2019) (May, 2018); Boris Johnson (Conservative, 2019 – present) (UK Government, 2020). Yet it would seem that this is a problem deeply woven into the fabric of the education system in England, and solving it has proven to be an intractable process (Halsey, Heath and Ridge, 1980; Brown, Reay and Vincent, 2013; Goldthorpe, 2016). The major piece of education policy to address this in recent times has been the Coalition Government's introduction of the pupil premium, a ring-fenced fund for schools which is dependent on how many disadvantaged students are on their rolls. The specified purpose of the funding is to "improve the academic outcomes of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities [and to] close the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers across the country" (DfE, 2014).

And yet, that disadvantaged students have found themselves excluded from both specific and more general aspects of the education system has long been established. The 1944 Education Act extended free and compulsory education to all children over the age of 11 – the secondary phase of their schooling. This, the government asserted at the time was "designed to suit different *children*, not different income groups" (Ministry of Education, 1947, p. 3 emphasis in original). Nevertheless, shortly afterwards, in the 1950s when selective (by academic ability) grammar schools were at their height, these schools saw far fewer working-class students attend them and even for those who did, they experienced poorer outcomes. The Gurney-Dixon *et al*. (1954) Report, in investigating these poorer outcomes for working-class boys in grammar schools noted, "it is beyond doubt true that a boy whose father is of professional or managerial standing is more likely to find his home circumstances favourable to the demands of grammar school work than one whose father is an unskilled or semi-skilled worker" (1954, p. 19). Similar conclusions were drawn in the Crowther *et al.* (1959) Report and the Plowden *et al.* (1967) Report which found that working-class backgrounds had a "severe discriminatory effect on children's educational prospects" (1967, p. 31).

This is somewhat of a circular discussion. It is also a damning indictment on England's education system, and the society it is a part of, that there are *still* significant problems with the schooling of disadvantaged children. Over the past few decades, attention has been placed on 'inclusion'. However, this thesis argues that this is a matter of both inclusion and exclusion. Taking one aspect of this – the characteristics of those children who make up the bulk of school exclusions has long been established; 19 years ago, it was noted:

> We know a great deal about the characteristics of children vulnerable to exclusion in England … Broadly they are more likely to be pupils who are marginalized and disadvantaged in other ways. Whilst four out of five exclusions are of boys, relatively poor socio-economic circumstances are the common factor in exclusion. African-Caribbean pupils are more likely to be excluded in comparison with other ethnic groups, as are children with special educational needs, particularly those with emotional and behavioural difficulties … 'Looked-after' children formerly referred to as 'in care' are more likely to be excluded than other children … [and] strong associations between exclusion from school and criminal and anti-social behaviour are well established (Hayden, 2003, p. 629).

And now, almost two decades on, the picture remains the same. The Timpson Review which the government commissioned to explore school exclusions noted:

> There are longstanding national trends, which show that particular groups of children are more likely to be excluded from school, both for a fixed period and permanently. This includes boys, children with SEN, those who have been supported by social care or come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and children from certain ethnic groups (Timpson, 2019, p. 31).

Arguments about whether we should be focusing on data about these kinds of characteristics will be considered below. For now, I will discuss what 'disadvantage' is typically taken to mean in the context of the education system in England. Here 'disadvantage' is used largely as a proxy for socio-economic deprivation. Today, these students are identified as those who receive free school meals (or who have done in any of their previous six years of schooling) and/or who have been in care. Students who qualify for free school meals generally live in households with an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 and have parents/carers who are in receipt of at least one of several benefits (DfE, 2021c); thus, they reside in some of the poorest households in the country. In January 2021, 1.74 million students were eligible for free school meals which was 20.8 percent of all students, an increase of nearly 300,000 students from the previous year due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 1.1). In state-funded secondary schools, there were 660,476 students who were eligible for free school meals on the day of the census, which was nearly 1/5 of students in those schools (see Table 1.1). Schools receive pupil premium funding for a student if they have been eligible for free school meals in any of the previous six academic years (DfE, 2014).

Table 1. 1: Students known to be eligible for free school meals 2015/16 to 2020/21

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
State-funded secondary schools						
Number of students	420,516	414,308	405,483	468,779	543,187	660,476
Percentage of students	13.2	12.9	12.4	14.1	15.9	18.9
Pupil referral units						
Number of students	6,201	6,393	6,685	6,855	7,168	6,784
Percentage of students	41.3	40.8	40.0	42.5	46.6	53.1
All students						
Number of students	1,142,043	1,128,403	1,106,633	1,270,941	1,440,788	1,737,598
Percentage of students	14.3	14.0	13.6	15.4	17.3	20.8

Source: (DfE, 2021c)

There have been concerns expressed about how accurately the free school meals metric, as a proxy for poverty, is able to capture the full level of socio-economic disadvantage faced by some children (Hobbs and Vignoles, 2010; Gorard, 2012; Taylor, 2018). Despite this, although other indicators may be more reliable in identifying socio-economically disadvantaged students, such as parental occupation levels and parental education, these data are not routinely collected and may be difficult to gather in practice (Ilie, Sutherland and Vignoles, 2017). Consequently, it has been argued that:

> Eligibility for FSM in England has several key advantages as an indicator of generic disadvantage for social policy research. It is officially and routinely collected annually for nearly every pupil, has a relatively simple legal binary definition, is strongly related to educational and other outcomes and has been collected since 1989, giving analysts enough data to consider long-term trends at national, regional, local and institutional level. Of course, it only divides the school population into two groups of those living in poverty and others. But if our concern as analysts is, as it often is, what happens to the poorest in society, then that is not necessarily a limitation (Gorard, 2012, p. 1015).

However, the more recent calculation for pupil premium – FSM Ever 6 – a metric which identifies children who have received free school meals at least once in any of the previous six years, has been argued to be a less accurate measure of deprivation (Gorard and Siddiqui, 2019). Nevertheless, in terms of the impact of disadvantage on these students' education, it seems obvious that they are likely to have fewer resources that help to contribute to the academic outcomes which are widely valued in society than their more advantaged peers. Furthermore, some research posits that they also "have worse cognitive, social-behavioural and health outcomes in part *because they are poorer*, and not just because poverty is correlated with other household and parental characteristics" (Cooper and Stewart, 2013, p. 5 emphasis in original see also: Rice, 2006).

It seems likely that there is a level of intersectionality between disadvantage, particularly socio-economic disadvantage, and other features and characteristics that make up students'

identities. Although publicly available data from the government do not provide this level of granularity, there is a recognition of the overrepresentation of some student groups with higher rates of exclusion:

> The exclusion rates for certain groups of pupils are consistently higher than average. This includes: pupils with SEN; pupils eligible for free school meals; looked after children; and pupils from certain ethnic groups. The ethnic groups with the highest rates of exclusion are: Gypsy/Roma; Travellers of Irish Heritage; and Caribbean pupils (DfE, 2017b, p. 11).

The guidance sets out that "the head teacher should consider what extra support might be needed to identify and address the needs of pupils from these groups in order to reduce their risk of exclusion" (ibid). It further states, because they are "particularly vulnerable to the impacts of exclusion … [t]he head teacher should, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding any pupil with an EHC plan or a looked after child" (ibid). Nevertheless, despite these concerns, the government during the decade which this guidance was issued and in operation, reduced total school spending per student in England by 8 percent in real terms between 2009/10 and 2019/20, including a 57 percent reduction in spending per student on services provided by local authorities (Britton, Farquharson and Sibieta, 2019 see also: Bolton, 2021). Furthermore, these cuts are likely to have heavily impacted the support for students with special educational needs (Hunter, 2019). Meanwhile, the poorest in society have suffered from wider economic choices taken by government (Oxfam, 2013; Portes and Reed, 2017; Tucker, 2017). It is little surprise then that the United Nations' most recent report on the progress that the UK is making with the UNCRC noted it was "seriously concerned at the effects that recent fiscal policies and allocation of resources have had in contributing to inequality in children's enjoyment of their rights, disproportionately affecting children in disadvantaged situations" (Unicef, 2016, p. 3). Essentially, schools have been required to do more with less and in ever more challenging contexts.

This study seeks to further examine why, despite all this concern about the position of disadvantaged students, they still appear to get a poor deal as they progress through England's education system. This thesis aims to address several lacunae in the literature on this matter by taking a dual-layered perspective. Firstly, at the level of the schools, and specifically the leaders of schools. Exclusion begins with inclusion. In other words, the way mainstream spaces are bordered and thus social ordered (Robertson, 2011) determines who is not welcome in these spaces. Additionally, what we know is shaped by what the data tells us, yet there is little consideration of the impact of these data on approaches taken by schools. This study seeks to concentrate not just on what the data say – the approach inherently taken by most research of this kind – but also the *practices* that they lead to. Secondly, it focuses on those who find themselves excluded, and those supporting these young people. The

literature at this level tends to have too narrow a sense of the nature and impact of exclusion – focusing as it does on formal, nationally reported exclusions. This study seeks to broaden the notion of 'exclusion' (Levitas *et al.*, 2007), with a consideration of how disadvantaged children can become both excluded from, and also *within*, the education system.

1.1.3   Why Does This Matter?

This matters because of the link between successfully navigating the education system and future socio-economic achievement. If this success is not experienced by certain groups, then this has social justice implications which I outline in the next section of this chapter. I start here, however, by considering what research tells us about the impact of good educational outcomes to future success. Firstly, in terms of school exclusion, a number of reports from the prison service, which I reference below, have found links between formal school exclusions and incarceration. Whilst it is not possible to draw a straight causal link between school exclusion and social exclusion, including imprisonment, there are some concerning correlations regarding the make-up of the prison population and its links with socio-economic deprivation (see Table 1.2). The prison population is "far more likely than the general population to have grown up in care, poverty or an otherwise disadvantaged family" (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002, p. 18). Furthermore, "[m]ost prisoners have had highly disrupted experiences of school, and, partly for that reason, leave with very few qualifications and low basic skills" (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002, p. 19).

Table 1. 2: Educational exclusion of prison population

Characteristic	General population	Prisoners
Regularly truanted from school	3%	30%
Excluded from school	2%	49% of males and 33% of females
Left school at 16 or younger	32%	89% of males and 84% of females
Attended a special school	1%	23% of males and 11% of females
Have no qualifications	15%	52% of males and 71% of females
Numeracy at or below Level 1 (the level expected of an 11-year-old)	23%	65%
Reading ability at or below Level 1	21-23%	48%
Writing ability at or below Level 1	No direct comparison	82%

Source: (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002)

Survey results from Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate of Prisons have reported 89 percent of children in youth offending institutions stated they had been excluded from school before they entered detention, 74 percent reporting previous truancy and 41 percent saying they were 14 or younger when they last attended school (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2017, p. 68).

Secondly, research also points to a substantial level of clustering of poor students in particular schools (Gorard, 2010). This is largely due to the segregated nature of housing in parts of England and, therefore, "[a]ny system of allocating school places, especially contested places in over-subscribed schools, which uses catchments, distance or ease of travel will tend to

reinforce patterns of pre-existing residential segregation" (Gorard, 2016, p. 133). Subsequent research then shows that children growing up in poor socio-economic conditions but who attain well early on are quickly overtaken by children growing up in richer socio-economic conditions but who initially attain less well and that gap only widens with time (Crawford, Macmillan and Vignoles, 2017).

Thirdly, other research points to gaps at very early ages in children's development:

> Such early gaps suggest that the factors that create and compound disadvantage begin to impact on a child's well-being and chances of educational success from a very early age, even before they start school. Furthermore, performance on standardised assessment at age 7 is predictive of performance at age 11 indicating it is during these earlier years that the foundations of underachievement become fixed (Goodman and Burton, 2012, p. 501).

And so, with these factors combined, "[a]lthough state-funded schools in England are 'choice' schools in the sense that any family is entitled to express a preference to attend any of them, in reality the popularity of some schools means that preference is not the same as choice" (Gorard, 2016, p. 131 see also: Gerwirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995; Reay and Lucey, 2004). This is, of course, in contrast to arguments that posit "[w]ithin neo-liberal theory, fairness as social mobility involves giving those from disadvantaged backgrounds an opportunity to compete with those from more privileged backgrounds in a market competition" (Brown, 2013, p. 680). This is all compounded by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) findings that the United Kingdom has amongst the worst social mobility in the developed world and that these kinds of inequalities are then likely to translate into further inequalities later in life (Causa and Chapuis, 2010).

This all matters because qualifications are important to one's future economic stability. Research indicates that "[t]here are sizeable lifetime productivity gains to achieving GCSEs, A levels and apprenticeships, compared to similar individuals qualified to the level below" (Hayward, Hunt and Lord, 2014, p. 28 see also: Greenwood, Jenkins and Vignoles, 2007). Research by Friedman and Laurison sets out the prevalence of this:

> At every level of education, those from professional and managerial backgrounds are still more likely to be found in top jobs than those from working-class backgrounds. Privileged-origin people without a degree are more than twice as likely to reach a top job than working-class people without a degree (2019, p. 38).

Most recently, the Social Mobility Commission (2021) has produced findings which indicate a worsening of the situation for the disadvantaged in the country. The Commission finds that the number of children in poverty in England has risen by around 500,000 since 2012 with 30 percent of all children living in poverty. There are also concerns that the COVID-19 pandemic

is likely to widen inequalities. The Government's Education Recovery Commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins, resigned over what he asserted was the government's "half-hearted approach [which] risks failing hundreds of thousands of pupils" (Stewart and Clews, 2021). Collins said he was particularly concerned about the most disadvantaged students and commented that "[t]he support announced by government so far does not come close to meeting the scale of the challenge and is why I have no option but to resign from my post" (ibid).

1.1.4   The Social Justice Implications

These now entrenched poorer outcomes for disadvantaged students pose some challenging questions about the nature of fairness in this country. I argue that the pervasiveness of this inequality constitutes a social justice scandal. *Social justice* is a term which is often bandied about, particularly in educational circles, because of the moral imperatives involved in receiving education as a human right and fundamental good in society. As discussed, above, education is considered so important to one's life chances that it is available free and is compulsory for all children in the country. Indeed, globally, it is considered a *right* of all children which is codified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) treaty which nearly every member state has ratified. Article 28 of the UNCRC declares that "States Parties recognize the right of the child to education" (OHCHR, 2013). It states that primary education must be compulsory and available free to all and secondary education should be encouraged and accessible to every child. The purpose of this particular right is "with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods" (OHCHR, 2013). The United Kingdom signed the Convention on 19 April 1990, ratified it on 16 December 1991 and it came into force on 15 January 1992 (DfE, 2010). The treaty has, therefore, been in force in this country for 30 years. The question then comes, if all children are entitled to an education as a human right and fundamental good in society should they not all benefit *equally* from it? And, if children do not all equally benefit from education which, as discussed above, they seem not to, what would a more socially just education system look like? It is to these matters that I now turn.

The latest school census revealed there to be 8,911,853 children on school rolls in England. For the focus of this particular thesis, of this number, 3,493,507 children attend 3,458 state-funded secondary schools (DfE, 2021c). Behind these numbers are millions of individuals with varying backgrounds, experiences, concerns, needs and wants who have, in turn, followed previous generations in the same situations. What, then, can justice possibly look like when dealing with such a vast array of individuals? And, more specifically for this study, what does justice look like for the most disadvantaged amongst these individuals? The present education system (and, perhaps, even, wider society) appears to answer this question with broadly

utilitarian principles. The founder of the principle, Jeremy Bentham, in his seminal text, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals of Legislation* (originally published in 1789) asserted that *utility* is "that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness" (Bentham, 2000, p. 14) and, in turn, "to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered: if that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community: if a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual" (Bentham, 2000, p. 15). But for Bentham, the community was a "fictitious *body*" (ibid emphasis in original), and the focus should be on "the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it" (ibid). Bentham argued, therefore, that to understand the needs of the community, it was necessary to understand the needs of the individuals who made up the community. And regarding these needs: "[a] thing is said to promote the interest, or be *for* the interest, of an individual, when it tends to add to the sum total of his pleasures: or, what comes to the same thing, to diminish the sum total of his pains" (ibid emphasis in original).

So, to the extent that a community is made up of a number of individuals, Bentham argued what was right was a focus on the greatest happiness of the greatest number. And, in terms of this 'happiness', Bentham believed that it could be measured by its *intensity, duration, certainty or uncertainty, propinquity or remoteness, fecundity, purity* and its *extent* (Bentham, 2000, p. 31). More broadly, these kinds of principles are often used to make judgements about the position of students in school. Government exclusion guidance, for example, states:

> Good discipline in schools is essential to ensure that all pupils can benefit from the opportunities provided by education. The Government supports head teachers in using exclusion as a sanction where it is warranted. However, permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort, in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and *where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school* (DfE, 2017b, p. 6 emphasis added).

This is akin to John Stuart Mill's *harm principle* in his libertarian text, *On Liberty* (originally published in 1859)*.* Mill was a disciple of Bentham, and also promoted utilitarian approaches albeit with some differences (Ten, 1968). Mill asserted:

> That principle is, that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant (Mill, 2001, p. 13).

Mill argued that self-regarding actions, in other words actions that did not interfere with others, should, in turn, not be interfered with. The difficulty here, of course, is judging whether any

action is realistically self-regarding. Nevertheless, on the face of it, and in relation to education, some might argue that this represents a just approach: those who disrupt the learning of others should not be allowed to. If they need to be removed so that others are not disrupted, so be it. Remember, however, that the UNCRC affords *all* children the right to an education and therefore, even those children who are permanently excluded from mainstream schools must receive their entitlement to an education. As my research findings discuss, below, placing all permanently excluded students from a given borough into the same institution poses significant challenges. Justice demands a consideration not just on education as some amorphous block, but a proper and inclusive consideration of what education should consist of and how this should benefit *all* children. After all, following Article 28 of the UNCRC, which is simply about the provision of education, is Article 29 which asserts the *goals* of education: "the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (OHCHR, 2013).

This is why, in regard to the education system, utilitarian principles may constitute a denial of justice. After all, according to the above statistics, if disadvantaged students are not in *the greatest number*; what does this mean for the importance of their interests? Using utilitarian principles may mean their interests count for less. If the greatest number is a particular class, or a class of society that has the power to influence educational societal narratives, then this would appear inherently unjust. So, in terms of politics:

> The cabinet is currently much more likely to have attended a private school than parliament overall, with 39% of cabinet ministers having attended an independent school, compared to 29% of MPs. This in large part reflects the high proportion of Conservative MPs who attended private school (45%). Just under a fifth (17%) of the cabinet attended a grammar school, a similar figure to MPs overall. However, just 43% went to a comprehensive, lower than the 52% of MPs who did so (Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission, 2019, p. 21).

And, in terms of those who enact government policy:

> … there is a consistent picture of overrepresentation of those from elite educational backgrounds. Civil service permanent secretaries (59%), Foreign Office diplomats (52%), and Public Body Chairs (45%) have among the highest rates of independently educated in their ranks. Despite efforts to overhaul entry into the Civil Service, its highest levels remain highly exclusive, with 56% having graduated from Oxford or Cambridge, and 39% having attended both a private school and Oxbridge (Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission, 2019, p. 5)

Indeed, recently, a former permanent secretary of the Department for Education, Jonathan Slater, raised concerns that the academisation of schools (which accounts for 78 percent of secondary schools and 78 percent of secondary school students (DfE, 2021c)) has "concentrate[d] political power very much in the hands of a very small number of people in

Westminster" (Whittaker, 2022). Referring to the influence of the former longstanding Minister of Schools, Nick Gibb, Slater questioned "whether it makes sense to give one person quite so much power over what children learn in school" (ibid). Such a situation may lead to what Mill, himself, referred to as the 'tyranny of the majority' (Mill, 2001). Linked with this, *happiness* is not an objective principle, and justice may be being denied if education is decided upon, recognises, and caters to particular perspectives, and if wider inequalities which feed into disparate outcomes for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students, are not properly addressed.

Over a century and a half later than Bentham's project, the political philosopher, John Rawls, produced *A Theory of Justice* (originally published in 1971) which sought to overcome some of the problematic elements of the utilitarian approach. Rawls' social justice argument was concerned with the organisation of the *basic structure of society* which he described as "the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation" (Rawls, 1999, p. 6). These major institutions are the political constitution and principal economic and social arrangements. For the issues being discussed here this includes the education system. Rawls argued that justice is fundamental to the way these systems should be organised and consequently, "institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust" (Rawls, 1999, p. 3). In contrast to the utilitarian argument, Rawls was concerned with justice for *all*, rather than just for the greatest number:

> Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many (ibid).

In order to promote this argument, Rawls used a social contract thought-experiment reigniting the tradition applied in the Enlightenment era by earlier philosophers: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant. These social contract philosophies start with a state of nature which is a discussion of what society might be like from inception if important philosophical questions about fairness were considered at that stage. Contractarianism has traditionally been criticised for being divorced from reality, in that a state of nature is patently not possible because we are where we are. Nevertheless, Rawls used this method as a device to espouse values which he argued would be *reflective* of justice in society. Therefore, despite the impossibility of an actual state of nature, it may still be possible to see the principles in Rawls' theory enacted in practice. This, therefore, may be termed "hypothetical contractarianism" which is the view that "systems of property and government

are legitimated in terms of the consent they would receive from *rational* persons in a suitably characterized position of free choice" (Gauthier, 1979, p. 13 emphasis in original).

Rawls' social contract was an *original position* which would see "the principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association" (Rawls, 1999, p. 10). In order to ensure the fairness of this process, these principles would need to be established from behind a *veil of ignorance* whereby "no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does any one know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like" (Rawls, 1999, p. 11). This is crucial to a just position, Rawls argued, because it "ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances" (ibid). This is because everyone would be in the same situation, not knowing what their place in society would be and would, therefore, need to bargain fairly with each other in order for everyone to have a fair shot in life. In this position, then, Rawls argued that utilitarianism would likely be rejected as "it hardly seems likely that persons who view themselves as equals, entitled to press their claims upon one another, would agree to a principle which may require lesser life prospects for some simply for the sake of a greater sum of advantages enjoyed by others" (ibid).

Rawls contended that behind the veil of ignorance, as rational human beings we would want for ourselves *primary goods*, chief amongst these are "rights, liberties, and opportunities, income and wealth" (Rawls, 1999, p. 54). Under Rawls' theory, equality of opportunity is not necessarily just because of the luck that is involved in one's position at birth. Nevertheless, there was room for inequality in Rawls' theory but "the higher expectations of those better situated are just if and only if they work as part of a scheme which improves the expectations of the least advantaged members of society" (Rawls, 1999, p. 65). This is what Rawls termed *the difference principle*. Rawls, therefore, argued for a conception of justice as fairness based on two principles, in order of importance:

> First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others.

> Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all (Rawls, 1999, p. 53).

Rawls noted that these principles applied to the *basic structure of society* which as I have already observed above is about the distribution of fundamental rights and duties in society. The first principle is about political freedoms such as the right to vote and hold public office

and the right to free speech and assembly. Justice demands that these are equally applied across society. Although the two principles are interlinked, for the purpose of this thesis and its consideration of what a more socially-just position might look like for disadvantaged students who experience worse outcomes in the education system than their more advantaged peers, it is the second principle which may be of greater relevance. Here, Rawls argued that for social justice "[a]ll social values – liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect – are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone's advantage" (Rawls, 1999, p. 54). This means that the person suffering from their unequal status must prefer their prospects with the inequality to their prospects without it. Thus, Rawls observes, "[i]n pursuit of this principle greater resources might be spent on the education of the less rather than the more intelligent, at least over a certain time of life, say the earlier years of school" (Rawls, 1999, p. 86). And, for the purposes of education, it is unjust to only focus on economic efficiency and social welfare, as equally important – or indeed more important – is "the role of education in enabling a person to enjoy the culture of his society and to take part in its affairs, and in this way to provide for each individual a secure sense of his own worth" (Rawls, 1999, p. 87).

Nevertheless, whilst there may be much merit in Rawls' approach, in and of itself it may not be enough. In other words, justice may still be denied. The key is, perhaps, not to look at particular social injustices in isolation. It is conceivable that the pupil premium, which provides additional funds to schools based on the number of disadvantaged students on their rolls may be agreed to behind a veil of ignorance; because it is attempting to compensate for inequality by providing targeted additional funding to schools with disadvantaged students, based on the number of those students in a particular school. It should be noted, however, that this is only for *identified* disadvantaged students and it is not clear that the approach is able to *properly* address already deeply entrenched inequalities in society. It is little surprise, therefore, that it has not done much to remedy unequal outcomes in the education system despite being in place for a decade. Furthermore, what exactly is being *compensated* for? As Basil Bernstein, in his seminal paper titled *Education Cannot Compensate for Society* (1970) observed:

> The concept, "compensatory education," serves to direct attention away from the internal organisation and the educational context of the school, and focus our attention on the families and children. "Compensatory education" implies that something is lacking in the family, and so in the child. As a result, the children are unable to benefit from schools. It follows, then, that the school has to "compensate" for the something which is missing in the family, and the children are looked at as deficit systems. If only the parents were interested in the goodies we offer, if only they were like middle class parents, then we could do our job. Once the problem is seen even implicitly in this way, then it becomes appropriate to coin the terms "cultural deprivation," linguistic deprivation," and so on. And then these labels do their own sad work … All that informs

the child, that gives meaning and purpose to him outside of the school, ceases to be valid or accorded significance and opportunity for enhancement within the school (1970, p. 344).

As Bernstein indicates, education has particular purposes, provisions and products, and if these exclude certain groups of students, then justice may be being denied. Therefore, in a discussion about justice in education the following may also need to be considered:

> We need to examine the social assumptions underlying the organisation, distribution and evaluation of knowledge, for there is not one, and only one, answer. The power relationships created outside the school penetrate the organisation, distribution and evaluation of knowledge through the social context: The definition of "educability" is itself, at any one time, an attenuated consequence of these power relationships (Bernstein, 1970, p. 347).

A fuller consideration of justice requires a consideration not just on how education is imparted to children, but what is imparted, and for whose interests and purposes. This full picture, arguably, means:

> … assessments of a government's record in tackling educational inequalities cannot be confined to its flagship additional policies, but must also include mainstream educational policies and wider social policies affecting the distribution of income and, in particular, the circumstances of the poorest children whose attainment the targeted flagship policies are intended to raise (Lupton and Thomson, 2016, p. 17).

Thus, a further criticism of Rawls' approach is that it starts from the wrong place. As I noted above, a criticism of contractarianism is that it invites us to consider justice from a state of nature that is never able to exist. Therefore, arguments from this perspective criticise the starting position for being too ahistorical. In essence, the argument is that "[t]here is never a 'state of nature', but always human beings in social groups of greater or lesser complexity" (Mills, 2000, p. 441). In contrast to Rawls, who was a White academic philosopher, Charles W. Mills was a Black academic philosopher. Perhaps, their different contexts accounts for Mills' different perspective of justice within the contractarian tradition. Although Mills agreed that a contract can be useful as a heuristic device to drive discussions about justice, he argued that the contract needed to start from a more historically-recent place than the beginning of time so that "it is explicitly historical in outlook, seeking to locate the emergence of class society, or patriarchy, or white supremacy, in specific historical processes" (Mills, 2000, p. 446). This, he argued, would mean "[t]he division and transformation of the human population into certain kinds of entities (for example, 'males' and 'females', 'whites' and 'blacks') can now readily be accommodated within the contractarian framework, as can the inculcation of corresponding psychologies" (ibid). Consequently, Mills argued for a 'domination contract' which "makes exclusion conceptually central, which corresponds to the actual historical record. Instead of taking 'person' as gender- and race- neutral, it makes explicit that maleness

and whiteness were prerequisites for full personhood" (Mills, 2000, p. 453 see also: Hall, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2005). Mills argued that this would allow social exclusion – in his focus, racial exclusion – to be properly considered by mainstream political theorists, which he felt was "ostensibly absent, [because] the polity is represented as basically egalitarian, and structural subordination is nowhere to be found" (Mills, 2000, p. 454). The challenge with such a position, of course, is that social injustice as Mills himself recognised, has many axes of which racial injustice is but one. And so, to properly realise social justice requires in Mills' words "bringing together moral imperatives and group interests, so as to get rid of the combined "domination contract"" (Lim, 2020). Mills notes this may require embedding racial injustice into a larger project of class injustice which, of course, is the focus of the research in this thesis.

So far, I have argued that utilitarian approaches, currently a feature of the education system, and wider society, lead to a denial of social justice. I have also observed that Rawls' theory addresses deficiencies in utilitarianism but may not fully represent justice for disadvantaged students in the education system. In search of a model which may allow a fuller consideration (and, perhaps, better accountability) of what social justice may entail, Iris Marion Young's approach may be useful. Young's approach has been used in several educational social justice arguments on policy and practice (Gewirtz, 1998b, 2006; Robertson and Dale, 2013). Young used an exploration of injustice to promote a conceptualisation of justice. She further argued that "the concepts of domination and oppression, rather than the concept of distribution, should be the starting point for a conception of social justice" (Young, 1990, p. 16). Part of the usefulness of Young's approach does depend on what the 'distribution of goods' is understood, or argued, to mean to which Gewirtz provides a helpful amplification of:

> Whilst goods are more usually narrowly conceived as referring to material things, the definition of goods can and has been extended, as it was by Rawls, to include non-tangible things, for example particular forms of relationships. If relationships are goods, then the distinction disintegrates (Gewirtz, 1998b, p. 471).

As Young argued, however, this may be a problematic approach because "[w]hen metaphorically extended to nonmaterial social goods, the concept of distribution represents them as though they were static things, instead of a function of social relations and processes" (Young, 1990, p. 16). Consequently, this then "tends to obscure the institutional context within which those distributions take place, and which is often at least partly the cause of patterns of distribution of jobs or wealth processes" (Young, 1990, pp. 21–22). Thus, as Gewirtz observed "concepts like respect and dignity cannot be viewed unproblematically as goods to be distributed" (1998b, p. 472). This is because if we "treat relationships as merely goods to be distributed then we may neglect proper consideration of the nature of those relational goods

which are to be distributed" (ibid). Therefore, "[b]y isolating relational justice as a separate dimension we are forced to think in greater depth about the nature of the relationships which structure society" (1998b, pp. 471–472). To be clear, however, the argument here is not that distribution is an unimportant part of justice, it is rather that on its own it may not sufficiently represent justice. In this regard, Young argued:

> I wish rather to displace talk of justice that regards persons as primarily possessors and consumers of goods to a wider context that also includes action, decisions about action, and provision of the means to develop and exercise capacities. The concept of social justice includes all aspects of institutional rules and relations insofar as they are subject to potential collective decision (Young, 1990, p. 16).

Such an approach, therefore, allows aspects of justice to be considered in ways that purely distributive accounts do not. This has been termed *relational justice* which "is about the nature and ordering of social relations, the formal and informal rules which govern how members of society treat each other both on a macro level and at a micro interpersonal level" (Gewirtz, 1998b, p. 470). A discussion of relational justice, therefore, allows us to consider the means of justice, rather than just the (potential) ends. It is my argument that disadvantaged students are not experiencing the ends of justice, because there is not enough focus on the means needed to achieve these outcomes. For Young, three foci were of particular importance: firstly, *decision making structures and procedures* which "include not only questions of who by virtue of their positions have the effective freedom or authority to make what sorts of decisions, but also the rules and procedures according to which decisions are made processes" (Young, 1990, pp. 22–23). Secondly, the *division of labour* which includes "the range of tasks performed in a given position, the definition of the nature, meaning, and value of those tasks, and the relations of cooperation, conflict, and authority among positions" (Young, 1990, p. 23). Finally, *culture* which "includes the symbols, images, meanings, habitual comportments, stories, and so on through which people express their experience and communicate with one another" (ibid).

As observed, above, Young comes at justice from the sphere of injustice. The argument is that injustice is about oppression which,

> … consists in systematic institutional processes which prevent some people from learning and using satisfying and expansive skills in socially recognized settings, or institutionalized social processes which inhibit people's ability to play and communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen. While the social conditions of oppression often include material deprivation or maldistribution, they also involve issues beyond distribution … (Young, 1990, p. 38).

Considering justice in this way is useful, particularly in the context of the educational system because it allows us to debate whether the system is fair to all students. And this is not just in compensatory terms which, as set out above represents an injustice to disadvantaged students, but in terms of the processes within the systems that necessitate a language of compensation in the first place. Thus, social justice concerns the degree to which a society contains and supports the institutional conditions necessary for the realisation of key values which Young observes can be reduced to two very general ones: "(1) developing and exercising one's capacities and expressing one's experience … and (2) participating in determining one's action and the conditions of one's action" (Young, 1990, p. 37). And so, the central thesis of Young's work is the *five faces of oppression*. The first three faces are particularly socio-economic, whilst the last two are more culturally based:

Exploitation:

> … occurs through a steady process of the transfer of the results of the labor of one social group to benefit another. The injustice of class division does not consist only in the distributive fact that some people have great wealth while most people have little … [but also] [s]ocial rules about what work is, who does what for whom, how work is compensated, and the social process by which the results of work are appropriated operate to enact relations of power and inequality. These relations are produced and reproduced through a systematic process in which the energies of the have-nots are continuously expended to maintain and augment the power, status, and wealth of the haves (Young, 1990, pp. 49–50).

Marginalization:

> … is perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression. A whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination (Young, 1990, p. 53).

Powerlessness:

> … many people have some power in relation to others, even though they lack the power to decide policies or results. The powerless are those who lack authority or power even in this mediated sense, those over whom power is exercised without their exercising it; the powerless are situated so that they must take orders and rarely have the right to give them (Young, 1990, p. 56).

Cultural Imperialism:

> … involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm … As a consequence, the dominant cultural products of the society, that is, those most widely disseminated, express the experience, values, goals, and

achievements of these groups. Often without noticing they do so, the dominant groups project their own experience as representative of humanity as such (Young, 1990, p. 59).

Violence:

> What makes violence a face of oppression is less the particular acts themselves, though these are often utterly horrible, than the social context surrounding them, which makes them possible and even acceptable … Violence is systemic because it is directed at members of a group simply because they are members of that group (Young, 1990, pp. 61–62).

And these relations need to be understood as operating at the level of groups rather than individuals:

> A social group is a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life. Members of a group have a specific affinity with one another because of their similar experience or way of life, which prompts them to associate with one another more than with those not identified with the group, or in a different way. Groups are an expression of social relations; a group exists only in relation to at least one other group. Group identification arises, that is, in the encounter and interaction between social collectivities that experience some differences in their way of life and forms of association, even if they also regard themselves as belonging to the same society (Young, 1990, p. 43).

The importance of considering injustice at a group level is that individuals within a given group can experience any of these forms of injustice and often this injustice is not done with malice aforethought but "in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules" (Young, 1990, p. 41). This is of particular importance to the research in this thesis, because of the dominance of rules in schools. This approach is criticised by the philosopher Nancy Fraser who argues that Young's work does not do enough to highlight the centrality of recognition to justice (Fraser, 2004). It is Fraser's argument that people need to be "weaned from their attachment to current cultural constructions of their interests and identities" (Fraser, 1997, p. 31). She argues that allowing matters of recognition such as identity (see for example: Gillborn, 2015) to be considered alongside matters of redistribution (such as socio-economic status), complicates justice:

> There are good reasons to worry about such mutual interferences. Recognition claims often take the form of calling attention to, if not performatively creating, the putative specificity of some group and then of affirming its value. Thus, they tend to promote group differentiation. Redistribution claims, in contrast, often call for abolishing economic arrangements that underpin group specificity … Thus, they tend to promote group dedifferentiation. The upshot is that the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution often appear to have mutually contradictory aims. Whereas the first tends to promote group differentiation, the second tends

to undermine it. Thus, the two kinds of claim stand in tension with each other; they can interfere with, or even work against, each other (Fraser, 1997, p. 16).

Thus, Fraser argues "[w]hat is required, therefore, is a politics of recognition that aims at establishing status equality, not at validating group identity" (Dahl, Stoltz and Willig, 2004, p. 377). The danger, Fraser argues, is if there is no specific detachment of recognition from redistribution *displacement* takes place whereby "questions of recognition are serving less to supplement, complicate and enrich redistributive struggles than to marginalize, eclipse and displace them" (Fraser, 2000, p. 108). Fraser also argues it leads to *reification* as "[t]hey tend, rather to encourage separatism, intolerance and chauvinism, patriarchalism and authoritarianism" (ibid). Consequently, Fraser argues that "we need a way of rethinking the politics of recognition in a way that can help to solve, or at least mitigate, the problems of displacement and reification … [by] conceptualizing struggles for recognition so that they can be integrated with struggles for redistribution, rather than displacing and undermining them" (Fraser, 2000, p. 109). This, Fraser asserts, would help to avoid *misrecognition* – the reifying of group identity. Fraser says "this approach masks the power of dominant fractions and reinforces intragroup domination" (Fraser, 2000, p. 112).

However, it is not altogether clear whether Fraser's either-or approach represents justice (Young, 1997):

> If the problem here is one of *relative* weight or importance, this is not an *intrinsic* problem with identity politics itself. The problem of relative weight only arises if one puts more importance on recognition than redistribution. One could also ask, if one truly believes that both the redistribution and recognition struggles are warranted, as Fraser claims, why is it the case that the recognition struggles are problematic because they may divert energy and attention from redistribution struggles, but not vice versa? (Alcoff, 2007, p. 259 emphasis in original)

It is possible to, for example, acknowledge that class "is central to us all, even if we do not feel impeded by it or choose not to recognize it, or to avoid it through disidentifications and dissimulations" (Skeggs, 1997, p. 7), whilst at the same time note that "class, migration, and ethnicity are integrally connected concepts" (Archer and Yamashita, 2003, p. 122). And with this being the case, we can also argue that there needs to be more "nuanced and reflexive understandings of the relationship between identity and the positioning of specific groups within the English school system" (Gazeley *et al.*, 2015, p. 489).

1.2   Exclusion: Inclusive and Exclusive

Exclusion is generally conceptualised through a statutory framework constructed by the state. The Department for Education asserts that there are only two kinds of exclusion: fixed period (suspension) and permanent (expulsion) (DfE, 2011a). This study, however, views the position

of disadvantaged students in the education system through a spatial lens. In turn, I argue that this is a matter of inclusion and exclusion, and that exclusion is broader than the way it is presently conceptualised by the state.

Although it is often argued that keeping children in school helps to avoid exclusion and, indeed, doing so enables students to be marked present on school registers, in this study I put forward a broader conceptualisation of school exclusion. I argue that school exclusion can be both *inclusive* and *exclusive*. This is because the centre is not the school itself, but what is offered to, and accessed by, the mainstream population *within* the school. Consequently, exclusion is about distance from this centre. The further away from the centre, the more excluding the exclusion. This means that there are, potentially, a wide array of practices in schools that may be popularly regarded as inclusive but are actually exclusionary and it is this which is the key focus of this study.

1.3   Research Aims and Questions

My research aims are three-fold:

1. To broaden the conceptualisation of the nature of exclusion of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools.

2. To explore the various ways in which space itself is mobilised as a means of governing student inclusion and exclusion and that these tend to be disproportionately selective of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools.

3. To discuss ways in which the position of disadvantaged students in England's secondary education system may be improved.

To accomplish the aims of the research, I intend to consider the layering of excluding practices of schools and the exclusionary experiences of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools at two levels:

1. *Mainstream spaces: What are the experiences and perspectives of school leaders on the nature and impact of the inclusion and exclusion of disadvantaged students in the education system?* This is the excluder level. This level is important because the power to frame mainstream space also, necessarily, determines what constitutes being outside of this space – exclusion.

2. *Exclusion spaces: What are the experiences and perspectives of disadvantaged secondary school students (and those who support them) on the nature and impact of*

their inclusion and exclusion in the education system? This is the excluded level. This level is important because addressing the disproportionate rates of exclusion of disadvantaged students lies with understanding how and why they went through these processes in mainstream spaces.

1.4   Research Framework

This study uses a conceptual and methodological framework to help address the aims of the research and support with answers to the research questions (see Table 1.3 for a summary).

Table 1. 3: Research framework

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH	METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH
THE OPERATIONALISATION OF SPACE "(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 73).	**CRITICAL REALISM** Critical realism posits a *stratified* view of reality, arguing that our view of the world is arranged in layers (Bhaskar, 2008). The critical realist position argues that, in contrast to the closed systems of natural science, social science is a study of open systems.
DATAFICATION "The datafication of education comprises of the collection of data on all levels of educational systems (individual, classroom, school, region, state, international), potentially about all processes of teaching, learning and school management. This proliferation of data changes decision-making and opinion-forming processes of educational stakeholders…" (Jarke and Breiter, 2019, p. 1).	**RESEARCH** Comparative design (Bryman, 2016, pp. 64–65) exploring experiences and perspectives of three senior leaders in mainstream secondary schools situated in varying areas of deprivation; and staff and students in two pupil referral units – one in a deprived area in the south and the other in a deprived area in the north.
SOCIAL REPRODUCTION "It is necessary to take into account the ensemble of the social characteristics which define the initial situation of children from the different classes, in order to understand the different probabilities which the various educational destinies have for them…" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, pp. 88–89)	**METHODS** Qualitative interviews were used because this method is "necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them … [and] when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 108). **ANALYSIS** "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

1.5   Structure of Study

Chapter 1 has problematised the experience of disadvantaged students in England's secondary education system. I have provided a background outlining the intractability of addressing the poorer outcomes for these students. This, therefore, is a matter that has been on the political agenda of governments of both major political parties for a number of decades, but hardly any progress has been made on addressing these inequalities in the education system. This is, arguably, a social justice scandal because the lack of academic qualifications

correlates with further social exclusion later in life and the acquisition of these credentials correlates with a more secure socio-economic position throughout life.

Chapter 2 presents the first part of the conceptual framework: exclusion practice. I discuss the research that has been produced on the elements that make up the investigation of this thesis – namely, the exclusion of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools. I note the paucity of research that addresses all of these features. I then discuss three areas: firstly, the nature of exclusion which includes lawful approaches – fixed term exclusions (or suspensions) and permanent exclusions (expulsions) but also unlawful practices – such as 'off-rolling'; secondly, the impact of these exclusions is considered where the literature notes the harms towards those excluded; and thirdly, the literature on how exclusions may be prevented is reviewed with managed moves and alternative provision under discussion.

Chapter 3 presents the second part of the conceptual framework: exclusion space. I argue that exclusion is not simply the other end of a dichotomy with inclusion, but is rather much wider and deeper, and therefore, more layered than that. I argue that the centre is not the whole school, but what is offered to the mainstream population within the school. I also argue that exclusion can be both inclusive and exclusive, and this relates to the distance from the centre; the further away from the centre the student is, the more excluding the exclusion. I present the three conceptual tools that I use throughout the study: firstly, I discuss the social construction of space in relation to the education system; secondly, I then turn to practices of datafication in the education system and the impact that this has on the position of disadvantaged students; finally, I draw on Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction to help explain some of the patterned outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Chapter 4 sets out the methodological approach of the study. I explain why a critical realist approach is used to shape this research. Critical realism attempts to bridge the polarity between objectivism on the one hand and constructionism on the other, by recognising that an objective world does exist, but what happens in the world is necessarily also influenced by our social constructions and interpretations. I also outline the research design – the framework for the collection of data and set out the qualitative methods used in the study. In this section I contextualise the research participants and the spaces they operate in. The mainstream spaces: (i) Victoria Moore, the Headteacher of St John Kemble, a secondary school in a disadvantaged area in the south of England; (ii) Graham Evans, the Deputy Headteacher of Oakland Grove School, a secondary school in a disadvantaged area in the north of England; (iii) William Harris, the Headteacher of Crestview, a secondary school in a less disadvantaged area in the Midlands and (iv) the exclusion spaces (pupil referral units) where I interviewed staff and students: Pendenford PRU based in a disadvantaged area in the south of England,

and Alberton PRU based in a disadvantaged area in the north of England. Finally, in this chapter I explain my commitment to the ethical standards set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA).

Chapter 5 presents the first part of my research findings and analysis on the framing of space in the mainstream. Here, I present three themes: Firstly, *closing the gap*, the distance between the outcomes of disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged peers. I argue this can lead to a focus on the surface features encouraged by datafication processes, rather than the wider socio-economic factors that feed into the gap. Secondly, I review the way the schools use *rules* to shape the mainstream space. Acquiescence with the rules leads to rewards and defiance of the rules results in sanctions which involves exclusion from the mainstream space in some form or other. Thirdly, I look at the *perspective gap* which was a feeling by the students that they were being forced to learn content that was not entirely relevant to their lives.

Chapter 6 presents the second part of my research findings and my analysis of the operationalisation of inclusive exclusion space. This is the space where students, who are termed 'persistently disruptive' operate when they are not quite engaging in mainstream space, but they are not fully excluded from it either. Here, I present three themes: Firstly, *rupture*, which marks when students begin to be placed outside of mainstream space. Secondly, the *detachment* that takes place as the students become further embedded in inclusive exclusion space. Thirdly, I discuss the ways in which students become deemed *incompatible* with mainstream schooling; with the size of the secondary school and the stretching of resources for the number of needs raised as particular barriers to effective inclusion.

Chapter 7 presents the final part of my research findings and analysis on the nature of exclusive exclusion space. This is the space where students who have been permanently excluded from schools end up. Here, I present three themes: Firstly, *relevance* because this is a space that a number of the students feel presents them with activities and opportunities that are more relevant to their lives. Secondly, I discuss the *divergence* that takes place in these spaces as many of the students become further entrenched with mainstream-contrary perspectives and behaviours. And thirdly, I present the *aspirations* of the students who have goals to achieve successful careers and enjoy economic security.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis. I comment on the way that many of these students appear to be the collateral damage of a one-size-fits-all education system in England. I return to the social justice consideration I began with in the introduction and discuss what a fairer system for disadvantaged students might look like.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework I – Exclusion Practice

2.1   Chapter Introduction

Since the tightening up of exclusion practices in the Education Act (1993) which made indefinite exclusions illegal, a number of studies have researched the nature and impact of school exclusions. The crux of this study's argument is that the centre (and, therefore, true inclusion) is about the provision that is offered to the mainstream population within the school and not just *being* in the school. This, therefore, presents a wide conceptualisation of the nature of school exclusion including the possibility that exclusion can take place *within* a school (inclusive exclusion) and not just *from* a school (exclusive exclusion). Nevertheless, it is on this latter aspect that the general conceptualisations of school exclusion, discussed in this chapter, generally tend to derive. This is largely because school exclusion is predominantly conceptualised through a statutory framework constructed by the state. And, here, the Department for Education asserts that there are only two kinds of exclusion: fixed period (suspension) and permanent (expulsion) (DfE, 2011a).

In this chapter I discuss the directly relevant research that has been produced in the field of this study – the exclusion of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools. I note that there is relatively little research that covers all these features. I then go on to discuss wider research that has been produced on the nature of school exclusion – both the lawful strategies of fixed period and permanent exclusion, but also unlawful strategies such as 'off-rolling'. There is also a discussion, here, about the institutions to which permanently excluded students generally go to continue their education – pupil referral units. Next, the impact of these exclusions is considered – the literature largely recognises the harmful nature of exclusion on the individual who is excluded, but there is very little research on the impact on the school following the exclusion of that student. Finally, literature on recommendations for the reduction and/or prevention of exclusion is discussed. Here, there are broadly two main lawful strategies that are widely considered to bring about this outcome – (i) managed moves and (ii) the use of alternative provision. There is also a further consideration of what research suggests can prevent students from being excluded from school which broadly relies on a school effectiveness approach.

2.2   Directly Relevant Research

There are now a large number of studies that discuss the nature and impact of school exclusions, and how exclusion can be prevented; these are discussed in the following sections of this chapter. Yet, relatively few of these studies address all the elements that make up the

investigation focus of this thesis, namely, the exclusion of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools (directly relevant research). To establish this, I used the widely consulted academic database, Scopus (see Table 2.1).

Table 2. 1: Literature search (Scopus)

Search	Search terms	Total results	Results year range	Directly relevant results
1	"disadvantage" AND "school" AND "exclusion"	156	1985 – 2021	2
2	"working" AND "class" AND "school" AND "exclusion"	77	1983 – 2021	5 *1 of these already in the relevant results for Search 1*
3	"free" AND "school" AND "meals" AND "school" AND "exclusion"	14	2005 – 2021	0
4	"pupil" AND "premium" AND "school" AND "exclusion"	1	2011	0

To assess whether a document that appeared in the total results was directly relevant, I reviewed the titles and abstracts to decipher whether the research was related to schools and, if so, whether this was about schools in England. Further review sought to establish whether the school context was secondary and the focus of the research was disadvantaged (by socio-economic status) students. If further investigation was necessary, then more of the document was read. From these searches, six studies were identified that were directly relevant to the research in this thesis, which I now discuss in chronological order.

I begin with Whitty's (2001) article, *Education, social class and social exclusion*. Here, Whitty presents an argument against what he termed 'naïve possibilitarianism' which he defined as "notions of boosting working-class educational achievement by changing the rules of the game and thereby even changing the nature of society as well as education" (2001, p. 288). Whitty argued that the failure of working-class students was due to a deficit in their homes, materially and culturally. To address this, he argues that there should be a focus on the way middle-class students are educated as well as working-class students: "[w]e should therefore try to tackle the extent to which working-class children continue to be denied opportunities open to middle-class children on all fronts" (2001, p. 292). Whitty states that, "[w]hile we certainly need to challenge the class basis of definitions of educational success and failure, and re-evaluate current in-school processes of differentiation, we should also seek to maximize the possibilities for working-class children to succeed on current definitions" (ibid).

These 'opportunities' are not fully discussed, nor is the 'current definition' of success developed particularly. However, Whitty criticises the then New Labour Government arguing

that "it has almost entirely accepted and even reinforced conventional notions of what counts as education" (2001, p. 288). Although the article references "the trajectories of pupils receiving different forms of secondary education" (2001, p. 287) it is rather vague on an educational offer that would address the poorer outcomes for working-class children. The type of 'exclusion' as the title indicates was social exclusion and the article is, therefore, largely theoretical in nature. There is a noticeable absence of the views and perspectives of the recipients of education – the young people themselves – in the piece. This may be why Whitty fails to recognise that what he was arguing for, starting from a middle-class perspective, may well, in itself, be exclusionary.

In a rather different study, Reay and Lucey (2004) focus on exclusion through the lens of marketisation practices in education in their article *Stigmatised choices: social class, social exclusion and secondary school markets in the inner city*. In contrast to the kind of argument made by Whitty, which was that working-class children need to acquiesce to the system already in place, Reay and Lucey argue that the "processes of transition to secondary school reinforce wider social processes of social exclusion" (2004, p. 36) which, in turn, result in a polarized market with some schools 'demonized' and others 'idealized' along class lines. The study contained qualitative data – focus group and individual interviews – related to the experiences and perceptions of children moving to secondary schools in England. The first phase of the research took place in eight primary schools in two London boroughs between 1998 and 1999 involving 454 children in Year 6. The second phase involved a selected target group of 45 students who had transitioned to Year 7 of secondary school. The study found that the perceptions of teachers could also contribute to exclusionary practices towards working-class children as could the views and perspectives of the working-class children themselves. The research was not so much about exclusionary practices in schools *per se*, but rather the social exclusion created by perceptions around certain schools and the students who attend them as a result of selection. The study did not specifically define 'working-class' and although the findings are not generalisable due to the specific location and numbers of research participants involved, interesting insights were provided about the perspectives of middle- and working-class children (and those of others around them – parents and teachers) and how this often led to a form of social exclusion for the latter.

But what of the nature of exclusion within schools? Gazeley's (2010) study, *The role of school exclusion processes in the re-production of social and educational disadvantage* addresses this head on. Gazeley's research is concerned with the fragmented provision that was accessed by long-term excluded students, and the classed professional assumptions and expectations that underpinned that provision that led to those students being positioned outside of mainstream education. The research involved qualitative data carried out in a

predominantly White Local Authority area in England where the number of students receiving free school meals was slightly below the national average. The data consisted of 48 semi-structured interviews with 31 respondents, questionnaires and a small number of observations. The study focuses on the perspectives of staff working with the excluded children, rather than the perspectives of the children themselves. The findings are not generalisable due to the specific nature of the research site and the numbers of participants. Nevertheless, useful insights were provided about less formal exclusionary practices, particularly alternative provision which it was observed "was far less carefully scrutinised than the practices relating to recorded exclusion" (2010, p. 306).

Another article by Gazeley (2012) is *The impact of social class on parent-professional interaction in school exclusion processes: deficit or disadvantage?* In this paper the author argues that parental practices could not simply be transferred from one social group to another as this "underestimate[s] the way in which the educational support that parents are able to provide is shaped by the quality of their own educational experiences and the opportunities to which these give rise" (2012, p. 299). Gazeley pointed to comments made by a number of the professional respondents which suggested "they identified middle-class parents as more powerfully positioned within school exclusion processes as they were felt to be more knowledgeable, more of a threat and more able to exert influence" (2012, p. 305). This was combined with the observation that "many respondents considered that social class was a concept of little relevance [and, consequently] very few linked their discussion of their practice within these processes to systemic inequalities" (2012, pp. 308–309). Therefore, it was argued that there should be a "greater recognition of the impact of social class on parent-professional interaction in school exclusion processes because of the way in which it helps to perpetuate an intergenerational cycle of social and educational disadvantage" (2012, p. 297). Although not specifically stated, this research appeared to draw from the same site as the author's previous research (Gazeley, 2010); as a consequence, the methodological observations, above, remain the same. Again, however, it is useful to have a different focus on the impact of school exclusion (this time on the parents – four mothers – of excluded students), albeit not including the perspectives of the students who have been excluded.

I now turn to Gillies' and Robinson's (2012) study which focused on exclusionary practices within schools in their article *'Including' while excluding: race, class and behaviour units*. The research was an ethnographic study in three UK inner-city comprehensive schools located in disadvantaged catchment areas. It should be noted that it is not explicitly stated that the schools were in England, but this is implied by references to the (then) Department for Education and Skills which had responsibility for education in England as education is a devolved matter for other regions of the UK. The study was focused on behaviour support

units in the schools – a way to keep students who might ordinarily be externally excluded, in school, albeit not in the main population of the school. There were 73 student participants as well as number of teachers and senior leaders. The authors recognised the disadvantaged context of the students was demonstrated by almost all of them living in areas characterised by high levels of deprivation, often in overcrowded conditions, and suffering a number of traumatic events. Nevertheless, the main focus of the paper was about race, and particularly, approaches of school staff in dealing with black children which the authors were critical of. Again, due to the nature of the research the findings are not generalisable. However, useful insights were provided about a different form of exclusion – internal exclusion – in schools and the perspectives of those involved – both the excluded (the students), those members of staff tasked specifically with supporting them and those teachers who were involved in doing the excluding.

In a recent study, Wilson and Worsley (2021) address the issue of exclusion in the experiences of working-class parents in their article *Unequal childhoods: A case study application of Lareau's 'accomplishment of natural growth' in the British working-class and poor families.* The study was based in the north-west of England where levels of child poverty are above the national average and the participants were 77 parents and caregivers of secondary school children. The authors found that working-class parents (the research focused only on mothers) "experienced frustration, powerlessness and disconnection with secondary school, and many said that conflict between school and home practices was a factor that contributed [to that]" (2021, p. 780). The authors urge schools to develop parental engagement strategies that "stress the schools' values surrounding ensuring the happiness and well-being of children" (2021, p. 782). The study refers to the concepts developed by the sociologist Annette Lareau; that of 'concerted cultivation' (whereby, mostly middle-class parents develop their children through reasoning) and 'accomplishment of natural growth' (whereby, mostly working-class parents develop their children through directives). It is suggested that the latter approach leads to a sense of distance with the ways that schools operate which tend to favour the former. The authors recognise that their research is not representative of all working-class mothers but that the results may be illustrative of what is typical. The absence of the perspectives of children on a topic which is, essentially, directly about them is also, arguably, a deficit.

Taken together, this literature presents the disparate nature of exclusion within the education system. This exclusion can be in the value that is given to middle-class ways of receiving education (Whitty, 2001) or in the pejorative labels that are attached to schools which large proportions of working-class students attend (Reay and Lucey, 2004). This literature also indicates the complicated nature of being excluded from school (Gazeley, 2010, 2012; Wilson and Worsley, 2021) and also within school (Gillies and Robinson, 2012).

2.3   Nature of Exclusion

As I noted above, typical conceptualisations of exclusions are shaped by statutory guidance from the government. This is focused on formal exclusion – the physical barring of a student from a school either for a fixed period (suspension) or permanently (expulsion):

> A fixed period exclusion is where … [a] child is temporarily removed from school. They can only be removed for up to 45 school days in one school year, even if they've changed school. If a child has been excluded for a fixed period, schools should set and mark work for the first 5 school days. If the exclusion is longer than 5 school days, the school must arrange suitable full-time education from the sixth school day, eg at a pupil referral unit.

> Permanent exclusion means … [a] child is expelled … [The] local council must arrange full-time education from the sixth school day (DfE, 2011a).

The government links the ability to exclude misbehaving students with contributing to maintaining good discipline in schools and states that it "supports head teachers in using exclusion as a sanction where it is warranted" (DfE, 2017b, p. 6). The Department for Education sets out the conditions for how exclusions may be lawfully carried out. Only headteachers have the power to formally exclude students and this decision must be "lawful, reasonable and fair" (ibid):

> It is unlawful to exclude for a non-disciplinary reason. For example, it would be unlawful to exclude a pupil simply because they have additional needs or a disability that the school feels it is unable to meet, or for a reason such as: academic attainment/ability; the action of a pupil's parents; or the failure of a pupil to meet specific conditions before they are reinstated, such as to attend a reintegration meeting. However, a pupil who repeatedly disobeys their teachers' academic instructions could, be subject to exclusion (DfE, 2017b, pp. 9–10).

The guidance further sets out other unlawful circumstances for exclusion:

> 'Informal' or 'unofficial' exclusions, such as sending a pupil home 'to cool off', are unlawful, regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents or carers. Any exclusion of a pupil, even for short periods of time, must be formally recorded (DfE, 2017b, p. 10).

In relation to fixed period exclusions, the guidance states that the headteacher must notify the student's parents about the number of days of exclusion, and during the period of exclusion parents must ensure that their child is not present in a public place at any time during school hours. Parents who fail to comply with these requirements may be given a fixed penalty notice or face prosecution (DfE, 2017b, p. 6). The terms of temporary exclusions are also set out:

> The law does not allow for extending a fixed-period exclusion or 'converting' a fixed-period exclusion into a permanent exclusion. In exceptional cases, usually where further evidence has

come to light, a further fixed-period exclusion may be issued to begin immediately after the first period ends; or a permanent exclusion may be issued to begin immediately after the end of the fixed period (DfE, 2017b, p. 8).

If a headteacher decides to permanently exclude a child, this decision must only be taken "in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school" (DfE, 2017b, p. 10). The governing body must also, automatically, consider reinstatement of the student if the exclusion is permanent and must meet if a fixed period exclusion would bring the student's total number of excluded school days to more than 15 in a term or involves the student missing a public examination or national curriculum test (DfE, 2017b, p. 18). If a student is permanently excluded, their parent or carer is able to request that an independent review panel review the exclusion. The panel can either uphold the governors' decision on the exclusion or recommend (but not direct) that the governing board reconsiders reinstating the student.

Under the Education Act (1996), following the permanent exclusion of a student, the Local Authority in which the child lives has the statutory responsibility for providing his or her education. This is usually provided via pupil referral units (PRUs) which contain a disproportionate number of children in receipt of free school meals (Malcolm, 2018). Several studies have researched the nature of these institutions. Jalali and Morgan (2018) in a small-scale qualitative study of interviews with 5 secondary and 8 primary aged children found that the children had a sense of connectedness with the PRU due to its smaller, 'family like' environment (Jalali and Morgan, 2018 see also: Michael and Frederickson, 2013; Levinson and Thompson, 2016). Menendez Alvarez-Hevia (2018) conducted research in a PRU in the north-west of England which was populated by 13 students between 5 and 11 years of age who had been excluded due to extreme behaviour. The study observed the emotional toll that working with these students took on the educators who had to develop strategies to work at different emotional distances (ibid). Similarly, Farouk (2014), in a study of three teachers who transitioned from a mainstream setting to work in an inner London PRU where the majority of students had been excluded due to persistent behaviour difficulties, found that for all three teachers the move was a positive one and none wanted to return to mainstream education. They felt that working in that particular environment developed their personal and professional aspirations and experience.

Government exclusion guidance to schools states: "[s]chools have a statutory duty not to discriminate against pupils on the basis of protected characteristics, such as disability or race … [and] give particular consideration to the fair treatment of pupils from groups who are vulnerable to exclusion" (DfE, 2017b, p. 6). Exclusions must fall into one of several categories

(see Appendix A) and these data are then collected – via the school census, which all schools must complete in the summer, autumn, and spring – two terms in arrears to allow time for reconsideration by the governing body or independent review panel of the decision made by the headteacher. These data are then published publicly and consistently tell us that disadvantaged students find themselves disproportionately excluded. Data are not produced on the reasons that disadvantaged students are excluded but 'persistent disruptive behaviour' is regularly the most overall used reason for exclusion. Limited data also indicates that this is the case for disadvantaged students and that there is not much variation between this group and non-disadvantaged students (DfE, 2012, pp. 19–20).

It is important to note that schools only report on their formal exclusions which "means that national data on recorded exclusions provide only an incomplete account of patterns of pupil involvement in school exclusion processes" (Gazeley, 2010, p. 295). This has led to concerns that what we know about exclusions in schools is only the 'tip of the ice-berg' (Gazeley *et al.*, 2015). Such concerns have been raised in the literature on school exclusion, as there are an array of approaches that schools take towards exclusion and because exclusions are an indicator of school performance, this may affect what they may want to see recorded: "[s]chools are not only concerned about the legacy of having an official exclusion on the student's school record, but also about their own data profile. For the school, as well as the student, there is an incentive to find alternative strategies" (Power and Taylor, 2018, p. 6 see also: Munn, Lloyd and Cullen, 2000; Vulliamy and Webb, 2001; Thomson and Russell, 2009; Daniels and Cole, 2010). Parsons identifies what he describes as 'quasi-exclusions' which "result in a child not getting what one would regard as a proper education" (2018, p. 533):

> *Reduced timetables*, sometimes for medical reasons but reportedly used for some at risk of exclusions but it is recommended that it is for short term. Pupils may be in school for a few hours per day.

> *Extended study leave*, usually Year 11 (the GCSE examination year) when pupils are off the school site, ostensibly to prepare for exams; reports suggest its wider use.

> *Attendance code B—Approved off-site educational activity* is a frequently cited location for some challenging pupils. This can be work experience or a form of AP for part of their timetable, but it is difficult to differentiate those at risk of exclusion and pupils on courses shared with another school.

> *Children missing education (CME)*. This is a worrying child protection area extending from long-term truants with limited efforts to get them into school to children completely off the radar or have run away from home or care. It happens usually when a pupil is removed from the school, usually by the parent, and no replacement school is identified, evident when no new school requests the pupil's file (Parsons, 2018, p. 533 emphasis in original).

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More recently, alarm has also arisen about a process of what has been called 'off-rolling' which Ofsted, the school inspectorate body, defines as:

> … the practice of removing a learner from the provider's roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the provider rather than in the best interests of the learner. Off-rolling in these circumstances is a form of 'gaming' (Ofsted, 2019, p. 11).

Many of these students appear to then find themselves outside of the mainstream schooling process and are apparently 'home-educated'. Research has suggested that there were 55,309 of these 'unexplained exits' from secondary schools in 2017 and that disadvantaged students were amongst groups that were disproportionately affected (Hutchinson and Crenna-Jennings, 2019). Although off-rolling is widely condemned, "the unlawful and unreported nature of the practice … combined with a lack of formal research on the theme, renders the task of securing definitive and comprehensive data almost impossible. What is clear, however, is that the practice exists … [and] is potentially widespread" (McShane, 2020, p. 260).

Factors leading to this practice have been identified as the quasi-marketisation of the English educational sector (Done and Knowler, 2020a; McShane, 2020) and chronic underfunding of inclusion services (Done and Knowler, 2020b). In a bid to address this practice, the matter is now part of Ofsted's inspection framework (Ofsted, 2019). Another noticeable feature of this topic is how far secondary school exclusions outweigh those in primary schools. Few studies focus on what it is, particularly, about the nature of secondary schools which might mean this is the case. Although some research suggests that whereas primary schools can be familial and caring, secondary schools can be impersonal and inflexible, with some children suggesting that "it made them become aligned with an anti-establishment peer group culture in which it was 'cool' to be rude and confrontational towards others" (Farouk, 2017, p. 22 see also: Atkinson and Rowley, 2019).

Outside of traditional conceptions of exclusion, there are other aspects of the education system which may, arguably, be exclusionary in nature. Power and Taylor (2018) provide a useful overview of 'hidden' forms of exclusion. These include managed moves, lesson removals, and nurture groups. However, this also reveals the complications in the conceptualisations of 'exclusion' as some would argue that these are actually 'inclusive' because they do not involve fixed or permanent exclusion and it is for this reason that this study uses the terms 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' exclusion to recognise this challenge.

Power and Taylor (2018) also discuss 'internal exclusions' which can take many forms but often involve an isolation room of some kind. These spaces have been described by schools variously as: "[students being] in a particular room … it's boothed off, so they obviously know

they have work to do. Basically, they can't communicate" (2018, p. 7) and "a large classroom with reduced classroom tables and then reduced seating in there, so that children are spaced out" (ibid). Typically, students in these spaces remain there all day and are not allowed to mix with the mainstream student population. And although they are not in mainstream classrooms, they are allowed to be marked present on registers because they are technically *in* school.

There is a lack of research in this area and "[w]ith no comprehensive monitoring in place to determine whether children placed in internal isolation rooms are successfully integrated back into the classroom, the efficacy of this method of discipline is uncertain" (Sealy, Abrams and Cockburn, 2021, p. 3). Barker *et al*., (2010) identify the competing opinions on these spaces – whilst some students note they were able to focus better in the rooms: "Yeah [students do more work in seclusion] because there's not like people distracting you ... you're not talking to anyone. That [work] is the only thing to do ... so you're concentrating on your work more" (2010, p. 383) others describe it as like being in a prison (ibid). More recently, in small-scale qualitative research Sealy *et al*. found that most students who experienced internal exclusion found it a quite debilitating experience with one student reporting they felt "almost a dog in a cage" (2021, p. 11). Recently, the British Psychological Society has called for these spaces to be banned asserting that they breach the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

> The use of isolation booths locates 'the problem' within the child and fails to recognise the links between disability special education needs, poverty, inequality, lower wellbeing, poor mental health and children's behaviour in school. We need to see a cultural shift on how schools support vulnerable children, focusing on building supportive environments for our children within schools and colleges, encouraging creativity, teaching social-emotional skills and autonomy and a strong sense of school belonging to promote positive behaviour in children and young people (British Psychological Society, 2021).

This viewpoint has been criticised for failing to recognise the realities on the ground in schools. Tom Bennett, a behaviour advisor to the government, attacked the above view:

> They're not 'isolation booths', they're rooms, supervised by staff, where children are temporarily taken when their behaviour is unsustainable in a classroom. This includes violence, threats, intimidation, abuse, racism, etc. If you don't remove students when they do this, you're expecting children and staff to put up with it: intimidation, threat, violence, etc. My response is always, 'Would you expect your child to endure that kind of toxic hell?' Of course not. It's always someone else's kids. Because for people who advocate against removal processes, it's never something they have to deal with. It's a hypothetical. It's a thought exercise; a puzzle. Not a room they have to spend all day in. Again: 'Someone else's children can put up with this, not me or mine' (Roberts, 2021).

In relation to the matters under discussion here, it has been argued that a more contextual analysis is required:

> [There is a need] to recognize that some of the practices in schools in disadvantaged areas … [should be] necessarily different from those in other areas and that differentiated provision is needed, adapted to the specific needs in each school. This would mean adjusted curriculum, learning resources and pedagogic approaches, to enable effective teaching and learning to take place (Lupton, 2004, p. 35).

One of these contextual areas is the content and make-up of the curriculum and the debate over to what extent it is relevant to all students who must study it. It has been argued that "in pursuit of greater equality, [there is a need] to analyse precisely what is to be learnt, and thereby to define the curriculum in terms of very precise objectives and of the methods which can be shown empirically to attain those objectives" (Pring, 2018, p. 10). It is now several decades on since Philip Jackson (1990) argued that schools' curriculums were more than just a way to impart knowledge to young learners and that there were 'hidden curriculums' in schools "which each student (and teacher) must master if he is to make his way satisfactorily through the school. The demands created by these features of classroom life may be contrasted with the academic demands [of] the "official" curriculum" (1990, pp. 33–34). It was within this hidden curriculum that Jackson argued students were inculcated with normative values of certain acceptable academic content to be learned and ways of learning this. This hidden curriculum, it has been argued, "exerts on many pupils particularly but by no means exclusively from the working-class, a destruction of their dignity which is so massive and pervasive that few subsequently recover from it" (Hargreaves, 1982, p. 17).

Some studies raise concerns about whether disadvantaged students have access to the full nature of the curriculum which is currently prescribed (Maguire *et al.*, 2019). Other studies suggest that when it comes to Key Stage 4 option choices, "[h]aving an advantaged social background … is consistently linked to taking a more demanding and prestigious curriculum: taking academically demanding STEM subjects and EBacc-eligible subjects, and being less likely to take applied GCSEs" (Henderson *et al.*, 2018, p. 312 see also: Iannelli, 2013). However, other perspectives argue that it is the subjects within the curriculum itself which are the problem and may, in turn, be leading to exclusion. For example, in relation to ethnic minority representation it is argued "[t]he school curriculum in England contains little on the cultures from which enslaved peoples came, their histories and art, too easily assumed by their blackness and unclothedness to be other than the majority white Europeans. But children do not learn about that" (Parsons, 2020, p. 201).

A number of authors have also implicitly or explicitly identified the process of 'setting' and 'streaming' that takes place in secondary schools as exclusionary. Students are often categorised as 'more' or 'less' able, a decision which is usually arrived at through tests. Concerns around the impact of setting have been expressed since the early days of comprehensive education in England (Ball, 1981). Archer *et al*. (2018) argue that the practice is an act of symbolic violence. In a mixed methods piece of research which drew on survey data from 12,178 Year 7 (age 11/12) students and discussion groups and individual interviews with 33 students, their research found that privileged students (White, middle class) were most likely to be in top sets whereas working-class and Black students were more likely to be in bottom sets. Students in the top sets were happy with the system and students in the lower sets were most likely to express negative views. The authors go on to argue that "the concentration of working-class and Black students in low sets within schools in England is a powerful and pernicious tool within the social reproduction of unequal power relations" (Archer *et al*., 2018, p. 136 see also: Francis *et al*., 2017, 2020; Taylor *et al*., 2019; Tereshchenko *et al*., 2019).

2.4 Impact of Exclusion

A number of studies have sought to establish the effects of exclusion on young people. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, there is a widespread consensus that exclusion is harmful, with one argument being that even the act of exclusion contravenes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (which the UK is a signatory to) and, therefore represents a breach of children's rights (Parsons, 2005). Parsons further argues that "[e]xclusions are a punitive response to troubled young people, operating as part of discipline policies and seldom serving to change, support, and develop the dependent young" (2018, p. 534). This, he argues, is because "[e]xclusion as a method of upholding discipline is not generally seen as a way of improving behaviour, social skills, learning, or life chances of the young person excluded" (2018, p. 534). This is also the case for temporary – fixed period – exclusions which Parsons argues are "a peculiar device which interrupts the child's education, often an education that is not going too well, and acts to devalue the very idea of education" (2018, pp. 534–535). Parsons fails to consider the impact of the behaviour of students who have been excluded on others, although he does suggest that schools should have facilities for students who are not able to operate in the mainstream.

In a research project involving data from 48 semi-structured interviews with 31 respondents, questionnaires and a small number of observations, Gazeley (2010) found that exclusions led to complex and unstable patterns of attendance and an increased risk of going missing from education altogether. The study also observed that students were often more interested in

their lives outside of school, and frequent transitions between providers and the more fragmented patterns of school attendance negatively affect their engagement with school life. Briggs (2010) conducted ethnographic research with 20 excluded young people in a south London borough. He observed that many of these young people had developed disorganised routines, difficult relationships with their families and were spending more time on the streets with their peers, and many were unsure about how to proceed next.

In another ethnographical study in a large urban multicultural area in England, Carlile (2011) reflects on the challenges that excluded children can find in being given another chance at mainstream education. Jalali and Morgan (2018) in another small-scale study of 13 semi-structured interviews with 7-16 year olds found that secondary school students displayed a generalised displeasure towards mainstream education. In contrast, Nicholson and Putwain (2018), in a small-scale research project with 35 semi-structured interviews and observations with 14-16 year olds, identify positive elements of permanent exclusion. These findings were that students felt more respected by teachers in the new institution than in mainstream schools, there was greater student choice with their learning, greater curriculum flexibility and relevance, and less confrontation.

Further research has attempted to assess the longer-term and/or societal effects of school exclusions. Daniels *et al*. (2003) conducted a study tracking the careers of 193 young people for a two-year period who had been permanently excluded from school during Year 9, Year 10 or Year 11 (13 to 16 years of age) across 10 Local Education Authorities. The research found negative correlations with exclusion and qualifications achieved, employment, ambitions for the future and mental health support. When reviewing destinations data 23 to 24 months after the exclusion, of the 141 young people who remained in contact with the project, 24.1% were in further education; 12.1% in substantial employment; 10.6% in pupil referral units; 10.6% in mainstream schools but 27.7% were not involved with education, training, or employment. The study reported that half of the group reported the exclusion as damaging because of lost educational opportunities and stigmatisation affecting job prospects.

There has also been concern with links between school exclusion and criminality. Daniels *et al*. (2003) noted that by months 23 to 24 post-exclusion, 55% of the young people for whom data were available in their study had definitely, or were believed to have, offended since their exclusion compared to 38.5% of the sample reported as offenders prior to their exclusion. Further research points to correlations with incarceration and school exclusion (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2015, 2017). However, on these matters it is not possible to establish a causal link and Daniels *et al*. note: "[o]f high statistical significance was the finding that most of those who offended prior to the exclusion continued offending

after exclusion ('persisters')" (Daniels *et al.*, 2003, p. 117 see also: Pirrie *et al.*, 2011). In a later paper, Daniels and Cole (2010), presented interview data with the young people who had been excluded. Some indicated that they were happy to have been excluded: "Glad about it … Hated school, right from the start" (2010, p. 125). However, most expressed negative views about the experience. One research participant said, "I don't think anyone should get excluded because it ruins your life. All the teachers say you need education but they don't think about that when they exclude you" (ibid), whilst another observed "[i]t made a big impact on my life in general, but especially getting a job. I've missed out on things that friends have done, mainly GCSEs" (ibid).

A report for the think-tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research considers the socio-economic impact of exclusions. It concludes the effects are educational, psychological, and economic. The authors (Gill, Quilter-Pinner and Swift, 2017) use government statistics and research estimates to make the following claims: excluded students are likely to suffer long-term mental health problems; fail to achieve basic levels of literacy and numeracy, struggle to gain qualifications, are often long-term unemployed, and repeatedly involved in crime. The cost to the state is an estimated £370,000 per young person in additional education, benefits, healthcare and criminal justice costs across a lifetime. This is then estimated to cost £2.1 billion for every year's cohort of permanently excluded young people. The authors note that the "complex combination of personal disadvantages often faced by excluded pupils is likely to be compounded by the exclusion process" (Gill, Quilter-Pinner and Swift, 2017, p. 21).

Nevertheless, as Strand and Fletcher (2014) observe it is very difficult to ascertain whether school exclusion is the cause of negative outcomes or merely a symptom of underlying dynamics. I have already observed the utilitarian principles of the *greatest happiness of the greatest number* (Bentham, 2000) in the education system. This is particularly the case with school exclusion which involves removing students who have been deemed to contravene the behaviour policies of the schools they attend. This is usually because of the impact that these students have on others. I have discussed, above, the substantial body of research on the effects of exclusion on the young person being excluded. However, as Strand and Fletcher (2014) note, there is very little research on the effects of exclusion on the learning of other students in the class/school. They point to Ofsted inspections highlighting low level ongoing disruption as an important factor underlying low achievement in schools facing challenging circumstances. They also refer to a report from the Office of the Children's Commissioner (2012) which found that 80 percent of students surveyed reported having their learning disrupted by poor behaviour. It should, however, be noted that in the same survey, 90 percent believed that exclusions should never be a consequence of that behaviour.

2.5   Preventing Exclusion Using Creative Exclusionary Practices

As noted above, general conceptions of school exclusion revolve around formal recorded exclusion – fixed period and permanent. Increasingly there is discussion about methods that may be used to avoid these formal exclusion outcomes. It has already been noted that this study is broadening conceptualisations of exclusion to refer to the distance away from the mainstream and not just a space that is separate from the school. There are methods which schools use which, under this conceptualisation, may be considered exclusionary but, nevertheless, are widely deemed as ways of preventing exclusion and are legally permissible. 'Managed moves' are used by schools, usually in the same local area, to voluntarily transfer students at risk of being permanently excluded. There is no requirement for schools to collect data on managed moves in the same way there is for their numbers of fixed period and permanent exclusions, and there is very little official guidance on how this process should operate – the Department for Education simply states:

> A pupil can … transfer to another school as part of a 'managed move' where this occurs with the consent of the parties involved, including the parents and the admission authority of the school. However, the threat of exclusion must never be used to influence parents to remove their child from the school (DfE, 2017b, p. 12).

And, therefore, it is observed that "[s]ystems and practice vary enormously. In some case [sic.] the move is negotiated informally between head teachers, and often consists of a simple reciprocal exchange of disruptive pupils between schools. In others, there is a more formal and closely monitored process" (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2012, p. 25). In their systematic literature review of the managed move process, Messeter and Soni note the "paucity of research on the topic" (2018, p. 169). The authors go on to observe that whilst "[i]t is believed managed moves can provide a positive option, offering a fresh start … the process may be open to exploitation as they are not monitored by the DfE and there is no standardised or regular system in place to record how often they are used or what process is followed" (2018, p. 171). Bagley and Hallam (2015), in a small-scale study involving interviews with 11 school staff and 5 local authority staff, identified four key challenges with the managed move process. Firstly, inter-school tensions could arise if a lack of trust emerged from the recipient school about the motives of the donor school. It was mentioned that a number of comments were made by staff regarding a lack of honesty by donor schools: "[t]here was significant suspicion amongst most school staff regarding the extent to which other schools presented an accurate, up-to-date and honest picture of a young person for whom a managed move was proposed" (Bagley and Hallam, 2015, p. 439). Other challenges in the process revolved around negative narratives surrounding the young people, objectifying language around the process – for instance, viewing it as 'dumping' or 'passing the parcel' and not accurately

identifying the needs of the student before the managed move commenced. These studies (see also: Vincent *et al.*, 2007) are relatively positive about the process as offering students a 'fresh start' and the opportunity to avoid being permanently excluded.

'Alternative provision' is also posited as a lawful method to avoid school exclusion. The Department for Education defines this as:

> … education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour (DfE, 2013).

It further outlines that 'good' alternative provision is "that which appropriately meets the needs of pupils … and enables them to achieve good educational attainment on par with their mainstream peers" (DfE, 2013). It says that the institutions should be "registered where appropriate, and delivered by high quality staff with suitable training, experience and safeguarding checks … [with] clearly defined objectives relating to personal and academic attainment" (DfE, 2013). If a school has referred a student to alternative provision, then the student must remain on a dual-roll with that school and the alternative provision institution. The guidance (DfE, 2013) considers a pupil referral unit (PRU) as part of this provision. However, these are, generally, units to which children who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools attend.

Disadvantaged students are overrepresented in alternative provision institutions – "[m]ore than 40% of children in PRUs, AP academies and AP free schools are eligible for free school meals (FSM), compared to 14% in mainstream state-funded schools" (Mills and Thomson, 2018, p. 16). Some research identifies positive features of alternative provision such as the relationships between staff and students (Malcolm, 2020), smaller class sizes, opportunities for a fresh start and more personalised support (Mills and Thomson, 2018) and positive communication with parents (Page, 2021). Nevertheless, concern is raised in the literature about the nature of the provision. In a report titled, *Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions*, the House of Commons Education Select Committee noted:

> The quality of alternative provision is far too variable, with some outstanding provision in places and in others far too poor. The teachers, who play the crucial role in the education of pupils, can similarly be of high quality, while in other cases they are not. Even the best teachers may be lacking in suitable training and development, which impacts on the support that children receive. There seems to be high quality AP despite the system, not because of it (2018a, p. 4).

These are long-term concerns regarding the nature of alternative provision. Thomson and Russell raised concerns over a decade ago about the unregulated nature of the alternative provision market, arguing that "knowing 'who gets what' is fundamental to ensuring that an entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum is equally available to all young people regardless of their wealth, gender, race or prior school experience and/or behaviour" (2009, p. 424). Concerns have been raised about the make-up of the curriculum offered by alternative providers:

> Almost without exception, it was Languages (seen as too difficult and alienating) and Social Sciences (seen as not valued by employers or by the young people) that were removed. Art, and occasionally Drama, remained. This was justified on the grounds that young people would not be able to achieve in more formal curriculum areas (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2016, p. 631).

These methods involve students being placed away from the school. Some research considers their use a form of 'gaming' the system because it is argued they "benefit schools because they remove what is often seen as a 'difficult' student; keep official exclusion numbers down (and these are inspected by the government); and prevent the local authority from finding them" (Carlile, 2012, p. 179). Nevertheless, they are widely considered to prevent exclusion because they do not involve formally recording a fixed period or permanent exclusion on a student's record. Parsons argues that this broadens the school as a space and site by:

> … setting up units and centres within the school for those who are deemed to struggle in the mainstream classroom; "building the bridges" so that managed moves can be organised to another school or location for education; and "alternative provision" to which children might be referred for a mix of educational experience better suited to their attributes (2018, p. 537).

Of these options, it appears managed moves may be the closest to inclusion – mainstream education. However, research indicates that managed moves do not particularly improve educational outcomes. As data are not collected for managed moves, it is not possible to state with any certainty how many there are and, in turn, to what extent they are successful. Thomson (2019) attempts, however, to infer the success of managed moves compared to permanent exclusions. Using the National Pupil Database, just over 5,000 students (primary and secondary) are identified who appear to have had successful managed moves in the 2015/16 academic year – where students stayed at the school they moved to. In almost 2,300 cases, they were managed moved into alternative provision. Of the approximately 5,000 inferred managed moves, Thomson identifies 1,310 in Year 9 and 1,260 in Year 10. Thomson then compares the Key Stage 4 outcomes of these students in 2017 and 2018 to Year 9 and Year 10 students who were permanently excluded in 2015/16. Thomson observes that for both

the managed move students and the permanently excluded students, disadvantage is a feature of both groups. The educational outcomes for both groups of students are relatively poor: 17 percent of the inferred managed move students achieved a grade 9 to 4 a 'standard pass' roughly equivalent to what used to be A* to C in GCSE English and mathematics and 6 percent of permanently excluded students achieved the same. Outside of these academic outcomes, there may be wider benefits to these students, perhaps of spreading students with apparently more challenging behaviour more thinly rather than concentrating them together.

Other research considers how exclusion may be prevented by keeping students in the same school they already attend. These purported solutions tend to follow the School Effectiveness Research approach. The argument is that it is possible to determine what 'effective' schools do and use these findings to make more schools 'effective':

> It seeks to investigate all the factors within schools in particular, and the educational system in general, that might affect the learning outcomes of students in both their academic and social development, which means it encompasses a wide range of factors such as teaching methods, the organization – formally and informally – of schools, the curriculum, the role of leadership, and the effects of educational "learning environments" in general, whether schools, districts, or nations (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014, p. 197).

It is, then, the schools which are seen as the problem, for example: "by removing students from school when the students misbehave, schools decline the opportunity to work with students to improve their behaviours" (Deakin and Kupchik, 2018, p. 516). A number of studies provide a list of factors which it is claimed can help to reduce the prevalence of exclusions in schools: the full commitment of school management, involving the whole school, including parents and placing responsibility on pupils for managing their own behaviour (Hallam and Castle, 2001); comprehensive and appropriately resourced pastoral care policies and practices (Tucker, 2013); effective communication between all stakeholders and a personalised pastoral support plan (Messeter and Soni, 2018); a gradual reintegration, opportunities for time out, an inclusive school ethos and a keyworker (Atkinson and Rowley, 2019). And so now, perhaps, the prevailing fallacy is the belief that "[i]f we can only make teachers good enough, equip them with sufficient skills and competencies then the wider social context of schooling is seen as unimportant" (Reay, 2006, p. 291).

So whilst it would be ridiculous to argue that schools are not able to make a difference, with many succeeding in particularly challenging circumstances, a key obstacle that School Effectiveness Research cannot seem to overcome is that "identifying the characteristics of successful schools is one thing. The transferability of these characteristics as a solution for their less successful neighbours is quite another" (Burstow, 2013, p. 71). Martin Thrupp

(2001b) argues that the poles of the debate are *problem-solving* approaches on the one hand and *critical* approaches on the other hand. Problem-solving approaches are described as,

> … school-based pedagogical or management solutions to school problems such as poor organization, lack of student discipline or low student achievement. Put simply, good/bad schools are thought to develop mostly from the actions of good/bad teachers and headteachers (Thrupp, 2001b, p. 51).

In contrast, critical approaches,

> … [understand] the problems faced by schools are often seen as deeply rooted in their social context. As a result those holding critical perspectives tend to be much less convinced than problem-solving colleagues that 'bad' teachers and schools are the problem (Thrupp, 2001b, p. 52).

Thrupp argues that School Effectiveness Research "exaggerates the extent to which schools can overcome the impact of the social context of schooling" (2001b, p. 55 see also: Thrupp, 2001a, 2003). He points to the examples used by politicians and the media of schools in lower socio-economic positions being 'turned around', which under "closer inspection usually finds the reality is not as impressive as the story. Test scores turn out to be improved but still low. Impoverished suburbs turn out to be gentrifying in a way that has brought a quite different school intake" (2001b, p. 58). The argument, therefore, is that understanding a school's specific context is key. Here, Lupton argues:

> … policies to improve schools need to be contextualized to take account of the different circumstances in which they are operating. Transparently, trying to encourage heads and teachers to work towards generic 'good practice' is not ensuring that the quality of schooling is consistently as good in disadvantaged areas as in others (2004, p. 34).

The implication of this is that "[a] quality education may conceivably be achieved in different ways in different settings" (Lupton, 2004, p. 32). This is because "even amongst ostensibly similar SES schools there are other contextual differences which may cumulatively make a difference to school processes and student achievement" (Thrupp and Lupton, 2006, p. 309 see also: Maguire *et al.*, 2019).

2.6   Chapter Conclusion

Taken together, what do these studies reveal about exclusion practice? Firstly, that a great deal of the discourse is directed by conceptions shaped by the state. The government largely sets the parameters of what the education system considers 'exclusion', and this is relatively narrow – fixed period/term (suspension) and permanent (expulsion). These concepts are simply about the student being barred from the school either, temporarily, or forever. This

approach allows nearly all the accountability to be placed on schools with regard to including students who do not fit into mainstream secondary school structures. This can mean that the government is able to cut funding to schools facing dealing with increasing needs of their students, whilst at the same time blame them for not adequately including these students if they end up being excluded. Such an approach "relies heavily on an academic-focused school system to rescue low income students and provide them with access to improved life chances, rather than one which invests in the foundations of secure childhoods, putting students in a better position to learn and to make choices" (Lupton and Thomson, 2016, p. 13).

Secondly, such a conceptualisation hides a great deal. So, although we know a lot about the nature of formal exclusions because these data are collected as part of national annual school censuses and then publicly reported on, we know very little about other practices which may also be exclusionary. Although some practices, such as 'off-rolling' are clearly widely condemned as unacceptable and are a focus of Ofsted inspections of schools, this is not the case with other practices which place the student away from the school. Predominately, these methods are 'managed moves' and 'alternative provision'. These are endorsed by the government and are generally considered as ways to avoid exclusion. However, with the use of 'alternative provision', questions have been raised regarding their quality and efficacy. Outside of these practices, there appear to be a whole host of exclusionary practices that take place in schools – internal exclusion rooms, reduced timetables, extended study leave, detentions and even the curriculum – which, because they take place in the school, are generally not considered in discussions on exclusion. This tends to provide very surface level analyses of exclusion which do not get to the heart of the matter. This appears to be compounded by the dominance of the School Effectiveness approach which strips away context and argues that you can simply take the features and approaches of one 'successful' school and implant them into an 'unsuccessful' school. In order to properly address these circular discussions, I argue a fresh approach and perspective is required that looks at the operationalisation of space in schools and it is to this that this thesis now turns.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework II – Exclusion Space

3.1   Chapter Introduction

So far I have considered the 'what' of this study, namely disadvantaged students so-called because of the relatively poorer financial situation of their households. I have also discussed in the previous chapter what the literature says about why this group of students finds itself disproportionately excluded from schools in England. I now turn to the 'where' of the study, as exclusion is necessarily spatial in nature. In contrast to the simple exclusion/inclusion dichotomy which is so often employed to facilitate analysis on these matters, this study posits that the space where exclusion takes place is actually much wider and more complex and layered than it is generally conceptualised and presented. And thus, practices which are often presented as *inclusive* may, essentially, still be *exclusive* in nature. It all depends on where the centre is and who and what occupies it. It is, of course, often 'the school' itself which is placed at the centre in these discussions. It is argued here, however, that such an approach lacks clarity on what the school is all about – any school is the sum of all its many parts. At the centre, then, should be what is offered to the mainstream student population *within* the school. The key artefact of this in any school is, of course, the curriculum and the timetable which is used to facilitate its delivery. However, in a school setting the 'mainstream' is probably much wider and deeper than this and will include an expectation of a certain attendance rate to school, assemblies, breaktimes, lunchtimes, clubs and extra-curricular activities, trips and much more related to a school's given context. Arguably this is *true* inclusion and anything that demurs from this offer must surely, by definition, be 'exclusionary'. Sometimes these exclusionary practices may be more 'inclusive' and sometimes they may be more 'exclusive' but they are exclusionary all the same.

In seeking to analyse the nature of the layering of exclusion of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools, I argue that a spatial lens is particularly useful. This perspective is "not about creating 'new' problems as such, but rather it is about providing explanatory frameworks that, perhaps, disrupt understandings in, and posit new possibilities for, 'mainstream' education policy studies" (Gulson and Symes, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, the chapter begins with a consideration of several conceptual and theoretical tools that might enable an in-depth analysis of the ways in which disadvantaged students find themselves excluded. Following this, and still with a spatial lens, the chapter turns to consider the role that data play in schools. It is argued that an analysis of datafication practices allows a fuller understanding of the ways in which schools, in this modern era, operate and, therefore, for the purposes of this study, its role in representing disadvantaged students. It is, of course, data which are the

genesis of policy decisions and, on the whole, we know what we know because the data tell us so. Therefore, our perspectives are largely framed by data. Finally, as this study is focused on the experiences of disadvantaged students in the education system, and these students may be said to be 'disadvantaged' because of their socio-economic circumstances, their social class matters too and is necessarily an integral focus of this study. In this regard, the seminal work of Pierre Bourdieu will be used to consider the specific class-based issues that emanate from this investigation.

3.2 Space

Exclusion is all about space. Who is 'in' and who is 'out'? But what counts as 'in' and what counts as 'out'? There are over 3,000 secondary schools in England and within their walls many of the educational experiences and life chances of millions of disadvantaged students have been, and are still being, shaped. Typical conceptualisations of 'exclusion' rest, simply, on a student finding himself or herself barred from within the walls of the school – often for a temporary defined period, but sometimes permanently. And whilst it is important that we know this and we know who these students are, focusing *solely* on this, arguably, provides a too narrow and, maybe even, dangerously obscured view of the position of disadvantaged students in the education system. This is because, as I have argued above, sometimes what counts as 'in' may *actually* be 'out' and if this is the case social injustice in the education system may be more pervasive than anticipated at face value. Therefore, this section now turns to various ideas and concepts that spatial theorists have put forward which may be relevant to the issues under investigation in this study.

A number of authors have identified the opportunities of utilising a spatial lens for developing more in-depth considerations of educational policy and practice. Therefore, it has been asserted that "drawing on theories of space contributes in significant and important ways to subtle and more sophisticated understandings of the competing rationalities underlying educational policy change, social inequality, and cultural practices" (Gulson and Symes, 2007, p. 2). It is important to think about these spaces because they are the site of various social practices and, therefore, a "[r]ecognition that there are multiple experiences, trajectories, and narratives of space and place produces more open/less closed theory and practice" (Thomson, 2007, p. 113). As the noted spatial theorist, Doreen Massey observed: "[w]ithout space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space" (Massey, 2005, p. 9). Arguably, in discussions about exclusion this is particularly important because the act of exclusion is all about who operates in specific educational spaces. Thus, "the value of spatial and geographical perspectives for those who work (and research) with children and young people, [is] in theorising and shedding light upon the dynamics of power, control and resistance that

shape children's lives" (Brown, 2017, p. 399 see also: Gulson and Symes, 2007; Thomson, 2007; Robertson, 2010). As I argued, above, when considering matters of exclusion, a key consideration is: where is the centre and who and/or what occupies it? For it is only by establishing the answer to this question that one is able to consider if exclusion is taking place, the nature of any exclusion and how it may be reduced or avoided. This is important because the centre in most schools will be a microcosm of society itself. For a young person, being able to operate, develop and, even, thrive in that space is more likely to lead to a more contented life beyond the school where there is much less support than within the school.

The noted French philosopher, Henri Lefebvre, who has been described as being "more influential than any other scholar in opening up and exploring the limitless dimensions of our social spatiality" (Soja, 1996, p. 6) began a spatial turn. He provided early arguments to transform our thinking about 'space' from the strictly Euclidian meanings it had traditionally held to considering *social space* and how it is constructed. In *The Production of Space* (originally published in French in 1974, but translated into English in 1991 which made it more accessible to a wider audience) Lefebvre argued that "*(Social) space is a social product …* the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power" (1991, p. 26 emphasis in original). This social space is complex and defined by Lefebvre thus:

> (Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object. At the same time there is nothing imagined, unreal or 'ideal' about it as compared, for example, with science, representations, ideas or dreams. Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others (1991, p. 73).

And in terms of how this space is produced, despite being a Marxist philosopher, Lefebvre argued that social production went beyond just the economic. He argued against only conceptualising social production in terms of just labour production as this "leaves the concept of production in an indeterminate state … with the result that works in the broad sense are no longer part of the picture" (1991, p. 68). Therefore, Lefebvre argued that:

> Mediations, and mediators, have to be taken into consideration … Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information … Social labour transforms them, rearranging their positions within spatio-temporal configurations without necessarily affecting their materiality, their natural state … (1991, p. 77).

In order to effect this social space, Lefebvre posited three concepts of spatial practice (the *triad*) which Soja (1996) would later help to explain as the 'trialectics of spatiality':

1. 'Spatial practice' *(perceived space)*. This is where Lefebvre said social space is directly observable:

> The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38).

Soja called this 'Firstspace' – "the process of producing the material form of social spatiality, is thus … both medium and outcome of human activity, behavior, and experience … This materialized, socially produced, empirical space is … directly sensible and open, within limits, to accurate measurement and description. It is the traditional focus of attention in all the spatial disciplines" (Soja, 1996, p. 66).

2. 'Representations of space' *(conceived space)*. This is a more ideological and symbolic space:

> … conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived … This is the dominant space in any society (or mode of production). Conceptions of space tend … towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38–39).

Soja called this 'Secondspace' – "tied to the relations of production and, especially, to the order or design that they impose. Such order is constituted via control over knowledge, signs, and codes: over the means of deciphering spatial practice and hence over the production of spatial knowledge" (Soja, 1996, p. 67).

3. 'Representational spaces' *(lived space)*. This is where the perceived and conceived come together:

> … space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users', but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe. This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representational spaces may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39 emphasis in original).

Soja called this 'Thirdspace' where he claimed that "*[e]verything comes together"* (1996, p. 56 emphasis in original): "[c]ombining the real and the imagined, things and thought on

equal terms, or at least not privileging one over the other *a priori*" (1996, p. 68 emphasis in original).

Lefebvre's project has been criticised for objectifying space and, in the process, subverting our gaze from what matters: "he draws our attention away from the misery, from the lived experience of humanity, and towards an intellectual and arid conceptualization of an idea, of space" (Unwin, 2000, p. 22). This is, of course, a danger if one does not sufficiently focus on the specific social relations of space under investigation. Indeed, Lefebvre cautioned against using the triad as an abstract 'model': "[i]f it cannot grasp the concrete (as distinct from the 'immediate'), then its import is severely limited, amounting to no more than that of one ideological mediation among others" (1991, p. 40).

In this regard, Thomson helps with an analysis of how 'school exclusion' may fit into the triad of spatiality. With *perceived space*, Thomson argues this can be best represented as a time-space grid – "[e]ach box represents a discrete time-space filled with a designated activity, each activity neatly bounded, and each bounded entity connected vertically, horizontally, and sequentially in a variety of predictable ways" (2007, p. 114). As Thomson observes, students who do not fit into these spaces are not hard to spot:

> They … make themselves obvious within the confines of the formal curriculum. They call out in class. They arrive at lessons late. They act out when challenged by teachers. They scrap in the schoolyard. They walk out of the deputy head's office rather than wait to receive their reprimand. They are urged to take subjects that interest them, that involve work 'with their hands'. They are highly visible in the school in both their presence, and in their absence. Staff (and some of their peers) know when they are not in class and breathe a sigh of relief (2007, p. 115).

And in *conceived space*, schools create "a moral landscape through the generalized othering of young people … through specific language games … [which] is about the unambiguously 'bad' who either change, or are separated out from their conforming peers so that they do not pollute learning time-space" (2007, p. 117). And in relation to *lived space*, "[s]tudents who challenge the social order in schools rapidly get a 'reputation'. While this might be enjoyable at the time, it also leads to their being obvious targets for disciplinary activity" (2007, p. 115).

A further critique of a focus on spatiality is that it privileges the spatial over the temporal: "in giving dominance to space, Lefebvre has dangerously reduced the significance of time" (Unwin, 2000, p. 21). Lefebvre does touch on the relationship between space and time in places in *The Production of Space*, indeed I noted above that he argued that space is the "outcome of past actions" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 73). However, it is probably the work of another

noted spatial theorist, Doreen Massey, which perhaps gives a clearer and more explicit explanation about the importance of the relationship between the two:

> … time and space must be thought together: … this is not some mere rhetorical flourish … it influences how we think of both terms … thinking of time and space together does not mean they are identical (for instance in some undifferentiated four dimensionality), rather it means that the imagination of one will have repercussions (not always followed through) for the imagination of the other and that space and time are implicated in each other … it opens up some problems which have heretofore seemed (logically, intractably) insoluble; and … has reverberations for thinking about politics and the spatial (2005, p. 18).

Massey also further conceptualises power within spatial relations – the concept she used to express this was 'power-geometry' because "not only is space utterly imbued with and a product of relations of power, but power itself has a geography" (2009, p. 18). Massey's contributions have been important in allowing a more nuanced perspective of the way that spaces have often been discussed and analysed. In asking us to consider in what sense 'regional problems' are actually 'regional', Massey launched an attack on the generally purported perspective that deprived areas were responsible for their own problems:

> … how often are the problems of peripheral regions laid at the door of 'a lack of native entrepreneurship', a 'deficiency of atmosphere of growth'? But these are effects, not causes … By this means regional problems are conceptualised, not as problems *experienced by* regions, but as problems for which, somehow, those regions are to blame. Moreover, this subtle substitution of geographical distribution alone for its combination with the changing requirements of production has a political effect. As with all purely 'distributional struggles', it is divisive: it sets one region against another, the inner cities against the peripheral regions, when the real problem lies at the aggregate level, in an overall deficiency of jobs, for instance, or an overall problem of deskilling (1979, p. 241 emphasis in original).

Similarly, and more recently, Hughes and Lupton argue that "rather than assuming economic growth will have trickle down benefits, attempts to deliver more inclusive growth will require consideration of the benefits of growth among different people and places" (2021, p. 142). Furthermore, time contributes to embedding these kinds of inequalities: "[t]he combination of successive layers will produce effects which themselves vary over space, contributing to a new form and geographical distribution of inequality in the conditions of production, as a basis for the next round of investment" (Massey, 1978, p. 116). It could be argued that this is the strength of analysing the space in which events take place and where people operate – to move beyond surface-level analysis and consider more in-depth reasons for why these events are happening and why people act as they do. Such an analysis in relation to the exclusion of disadvantaged students requires us to consider not only the actions of the students

themselves which lead to exclusion *(the effects)* but also why these actions are taken and who perceives these actions as exclusionary *(the causes).*

A focus on matters of exclusion necessitates a focus on where the border lies. This is because if there is exclusion, there must be inclusion and if there is inclusion then there must be a line. What is beyond this line must, in turn, constitute *exclusion.* Balibar (2002) considers these matters in relation to the borders of Europe, observing that the definition of the modes of inclusion and exclusion are at stake. Balibar asserts that identifying the centre is important because it allows us to identify where power is concentrated. However, in relation to Europe, it is argued that the old Westphalian system of sovereignty is no longer sufficient in explaining what is happening in the continent and that, in fact, the outer limit of territories "are dispersed a little everywhere, wherever the movement of information, people, and things is happening" (2002, p. 71). Balibar highlights the ambiguity of what is inside and outside of the border with an analysis of intervention during the Bosnian genocide. The border, Balibar argues, is fuzzy – although Europe, via NATO, felt compelled to intervene to avoid the crimes against humanity that were taking place, at the same time "Europe could not accept genocidal population deportation *on its own soil*, not only for moral reasons but above all to preserve its political future" (2002, p. 73 emphasis in original). Therefore, "on one hand, the Balkans are a part of Europe, and on the other, they are not" (ibid).

In contrast, Lafazini looks at bordering practices not at the state level but at the level of interactions between individuals. These borders, observes Lafazini, "are renegotiated between the ones who belong and the ones who do not, when belonging is not conceived as a *sense* but as a socially constructed position that manufactures bodies, acts, and feelings" (Lafazani, 2021, p. 1144 emphasis in original). Lafazini's context is the hostility towards migrants in Greece following the financial crisis towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Whilst these interactions at the individual level are "less visible, less tangible, non-regulated border practices … [these practices] can nonetheless be really persistent and borders that can be really hard to cross" (Lafazani, 2021, p. 1157). These kinds of perspectives help us to recognise how complicated ideas of exclusion and inclusion are when going beyond a surface level analysis.

This conceptualisation also works in the field of education. Robertson (2011) argues that in order to properly develop conceptual clarity, problem-naming and intervention-framing, we need to focus on the relationship between bordering and ordering – "bordering is not just territorial but also involves the production of categories and identities, and, as a result, new forms of inclusion and exclusion" (2011, p. 282). Whilst Balibar argues that the geo-politics in

Europe has increasingly resulted in blurred borders, Robertson argues that it is important to identify where the lines are and how strong they are:

> It is the strength (or weakness) of the *insulation* – or the border, and practices associated with maintaining the border – that creates a space in which a category can become specific. If a category wishes to increase its specificity or closure, it has to appropriate the means to produce the necessary insulation, which is the prior condition to its appropriating specificity … (Robertson, 2011, p. 285 emphasis in original).

Robertson argues that these boundaries are as they are because of "neoliberalism's focus on the individual and choices" (2011, p. 286) which in turn leads to differential access to resources. Reay makes similar observations, noting "the heavily politicised space of educational choice which leads to working-class students having to go to the inner-city comprehensive schools that the White middle classes increasingly reject" (2007, p. 1191).

This then leads us to another important concept when considering matters of exclusion – visibility. On this point, usually when considering matters of inclusion and exclusion in schools we focus on the obvious – who is and who is not allowed to be physically in the school – either temporarily (fixed term) or permanently. As has been argued above, this probably fails to sufficiently place in focus what is at the centre – which is not the school itself, but what is offered to the mainstream population within the school. Here, utilising a spatial lens helps to develop more nuanced and carefully thought through ideas about the position of those disadvantaged students who find themselves disproportionately excluded in schools. As Thomson notes, "[t]he literatures on school exclusion are replete with examples of students … who feel highly visible but also at the same time as if they actually are *not* 'seen and heard'" (2007, p. 116 emphasis in original). Similarly, Ralph and Levinson describe the 'unacceptable learner', the judgement on whom is formed by their relationship with the school – "[p]upils are situated within a hierarchy in school and are subject to the normalising judgement of the institution" (2019, p. 1191). The apparent paradox of being both highly visible but also invisible is important in considering where the students who do not 'fit in' are placed in the layers and layering of exclusion in the education system and therefore, how far away they are from the centre – which is, arguably, where true 'inclusion' lies in a school.

3.3   Datafication

Increasingly, in the modern education system data play an important part in how these spaces are constructed and, subsequently, the actions that take place within these spaces. Arguably the data on a school are its identity. A critical perspective on the role of data in education is crucial because there are more data in the education system than there have ever been. These data paint a picture of performance regarding sometimes, hundreds, thousands or even

millions and billions of individuals. The data tell us what has happened, when it happened and how long it has happened for. Depending on their content and the way they are presented, the data can direct our attention to what is 'good' and what is 'bad' or even be used to predict what might happen in the future. The data can elicit a range of reactions – from surprise to despair, celebration to consternation. Indeed, it may fairly be argued that "contemporary education cannot be understood fully without paying proper attention to the accumulation and flow of data" (Selwyn, 2015, p. 67).

For schools data really matters. For secondary schools this includes progress scores and statistics on attendance, behaviour, student and staff mobility and further destinations. It is probably fair to say that schools live and die by these data. If the data tell a positive story, then the schools are lauded as 'outstanding', are oversubscribed, and celebrated locally and, sometimes, nationally. In contrast, if the data tells a negative story these schools are deemed 'inadequate', placed in special measures and are closed or forced to be amalgamated into a multi-academy trust. Locally and nationally these schools are demonised. In relation to disadvantaged students, data are used to highlight their poorer academic progress compared to their peers (see Figure 3.1), their higher rates of absence (see Figure 3.2) and linked with worse attendance rates – higher rates of exclusion (see Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4). Consequently, the need to 'close the gaps' is an often-used phrase within the education system to address these divergent outcomes. We have been talking about these 'gaps' for very many decades and, yet the narrative continues to be that it is deficiencies in the way that education is delivered which causes them to appear, rather than a more joined up approach between wider social and educational policy. This is because '[d]ata can be used to point to, and make visible, particular objects/subjects in the landscape … Quantities of data, and processes of quantification, tend to flatten reality and nuance in an effort to make things comparable' (Robertson, 2022, p. 205).

Fourcade (2016) identifies three basic orientations of how these data are often used to make judgements:

1. Nominal judgements *(oriented to essence)*:

    They define what things (or people) are. We may refer to them as judgments of "type," purporting to describe some intrinsic character and relation: "that kind of." … The ontology of nominal judgments is qualitative. Practically it consists in conceptual acts of categorical design (i.e., deciding on the criteria of resemblance) and interpretative acts of categorical fitting (i.e., assessing where the object, or the individual, belongs). Resemblance legitimates the "lumping together" of individuals or things, but what resemblance means, how it should be established, and where it comes from is always the outcome of a contested social process… (Fourcade, 2016, p. 176).
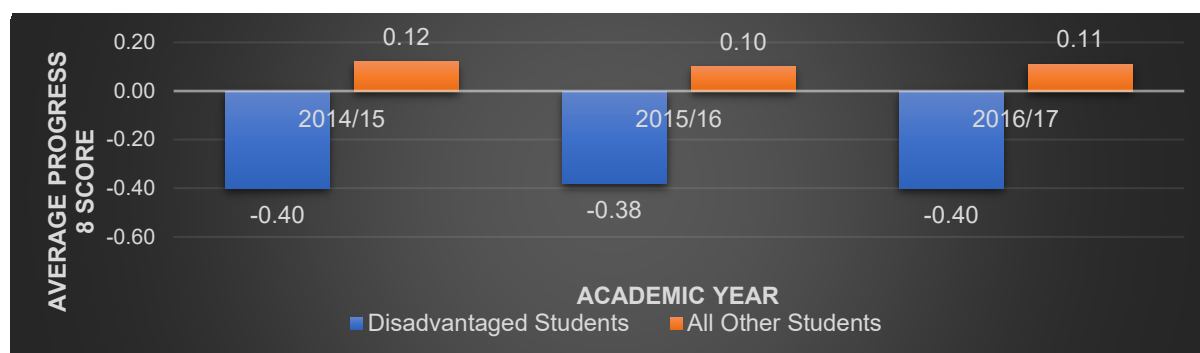
Figure 3. 1: Progress 8 achievement of state secondary school students

Source: (DfE, 2018b)
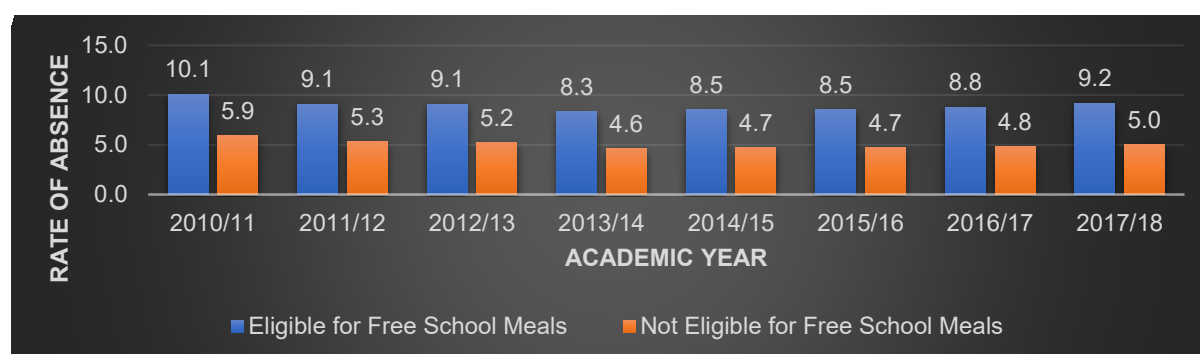
Figure 3. 2: Rates of absence of state secondary school students

Source: (DfE, 2019c)
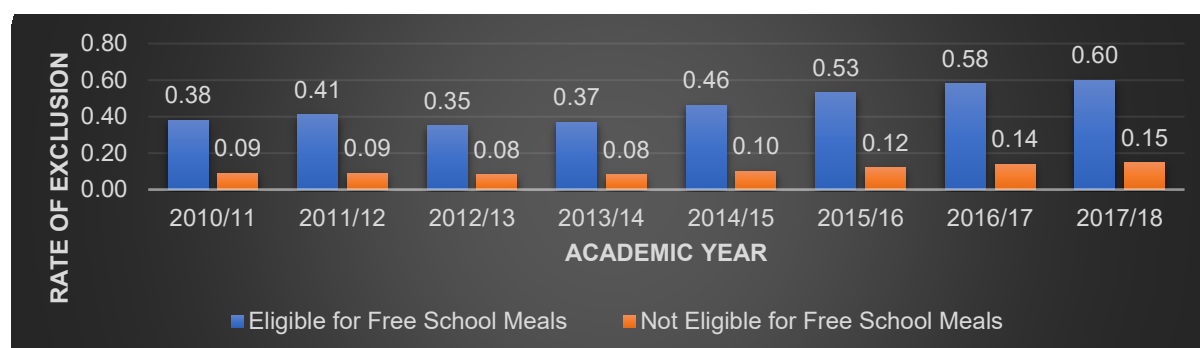
Figure 3. 3: Rates of permanent exclusions of state secondary school students
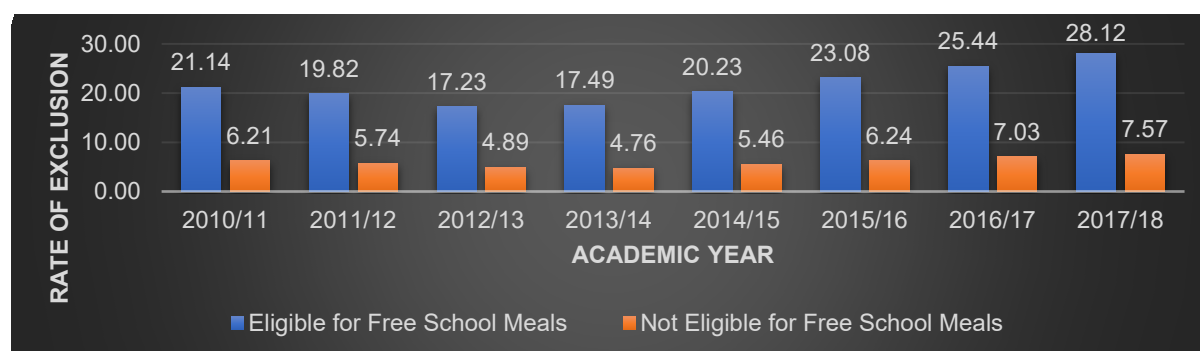
Source: (DfE, 2019b)

Figure 3. 4: Rates of fixed term exclusions of state secondary school students

Source: (DfE, 2019b)

2. Cardinal judgements *(oriented to quantities)*:

> In cardinal judgments, numerical values become meaningful in their own right. Cardinal judgments allow for comparisons but solely in terms of an underlying *number* of elements: The difference is measurable, and its significance can be assessed … Cardinal judgments are often associated with practices of collecting and accumulating … [with collection] [h]ere what is measured is the *degree* of diversity, understood as a number. An *accumulation*, by contrast is about counts only – the quantitative dimension (Fourcade, 2016, p. 177 emphasis in original).

3. Ordinal judgements *(oriented to relative positions):*

> In contrast with the horizontal maps evoked by nominal judgments, ordinal ones typically operate according to a vertical polarity of relative positions on an "up versus down" scale … Unlike mere nominal difference, ordinal relations imply different valuations, a distinction of (at a minimum) two levels, highest and lowest, above and below … ordinal judgments are interested in relative ranks, no matter the size of the difference (Fourcade, 2016, p. 178).

In the context of this study, therefore, the classification of some students as being 'disadvantaged' may be considered the nominal judgement, their outcomes the cardinal judgement and the fact that these outcomes, on average, rank lower (or are worse) than their peers may be considered the ordinal judgement. Therefore, it is ordinal judgements around attainment/progress, attendance and exclusions which frame the national debate about the position of these students. The data show us that disadvantaged students achieve a substantially lower proportion of 'good' GCSE grades than their peers and that this gap in attainment has remained constant over very many years (DfE, 2017c, 2018b). Since 2016, the main headline accountability measure for schools has been 'Progress 8' a value-added measure which compares outcomes for students with similar prior attainment at Key Stage 2 (the end of primary schooling). Even under this measure, the performance of disadvantaged students is substantially lower than their peers.

At face value this all seems quite straightforward – the data tell us that there is a problem with the performance of disadvantaged students in the English education system. And consequently, "modern ordinal judgements often tend toward numerical commensuration (and thus cardinality), which removes the sting of opinion and turns the production of rankings into a seemingly dispassionate exercise of quantification" (Fourcade, 2016, p. 178). However, a more critical take on these modern ordinal judgements reveals a more complicated picture. The *way* data are used is also important as the datafication of the education system appears to drive policy:

> The datafication of education comprises of the collection of data on all levels of educational systems (individual, classroom, school, region, state, international), potentially about all processes of teaching, learning and school management. This proliferation of data changes decision-making and opinion-forming processes of educational stakeholders such as education

policy, school supervision, school authorities, teachers, students and parents. For example, data are used to improve school development, to hold schools and teachers accountable, to control access to schooling or to compare student achievement across countries (Jarke and Breiter, 2019, p. 1).

Up until the early 1990s, education policy was largely uncoordinated and decentralised (Lawn, 2013; Moss, 2017). It was a number of neo-liberal reforms by governments towards the end of the 20th Century which set the datafication train in motion. The Education Reform Act (1988) established a prescriptive National Curriculum which mandated what students should be taught. To ensure that 'standards' were being upheld, this resulted in an increased focus on assessment (and therefore, data) in the curriculum including the introduction of GCSE exams for 16-year-olds. Additionally, the Act also allows parents to specify a preference for which school they want their child to attend – embodying the marketisation and choice which are central tenets of neo-liberalism. This approach tends to lead to competition between schools as they seek to be as high up the school league tables as possible (see Figure 3.5). This, in turn, arguably, contributes to a less inclusive environment for students who may be deemed to put a school's reputation at risk (Booth, Ainscow and Dyson, 1998). Consequently, it has been argued, this may be leading schools into a tactic of 'constructive exclusion', whereby exclusion is used "to enhance a school's league table position by removing from its roll children who are persistently late, absent or who might perform poorly in exams and not continue into further education" (Gewirtz, 1998a, p. 158 see also: Ball, 2003; Cole *et al.*, 2019).

Figure 3. 5: Secondary school league table

This market-mediated approach, together with an increased focus on assessment, has created an environment whereby students' performance in exams has become even more crucial, not just for the students themselves, but also for the reputation of the schools they attend. This is because 'underperforming', or worse still, 'failing' schools are liable to negative inspection outcomes from the school inspectorate body, Ofsted, and consequently poor perceptions of them within their communities. Today it is probably fair to say that educational achievement = outcomes in high-stakes tests and public examinations. In England, this process starts for children at age 7 when at Key Stage 1 they take tests (teacher assessments) in reading, grammar, punctuation, spelling and mathematics. Then, at the end of Key Stage 2, age 11, they take national tests in the same subjects. The results of these Key Stage 2 tests are then used to measure the progress students have made by the end of their time in compulsory schooling, age 16, at Key Stage 4 when they take their GCSEs, which will be the first qualifications for most students.

Increasingly governments have also been eager to compare the performance of students here with others internationally such as through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) triennial Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) rankings. This has led to "the 'economization' of education policy and what might be seen as the simultaneous 'educationizing' of economic policy" (Sellar and Lingard, 2014, p. 921). It is argued that "comparison as a lever for advancing political liberalism has been bound into the DNA of the OECD since the inception of the organization" (Sorensen and Robertson, 2020, p. 23) and consequently, "ordinalization serves the moral function of affirming the liberal democratic ideal of bypassing or unmaking established social lumps of nominality that tend to be associated with practices of exclusion, prejudice, and differential treatment" (Sorensen and Robertson, 2020, p. 25). Thus, the large-scale data-sets provided by the OECD appear to be a key facilitator in shaping education policy – "Surveys such as PISA are not only used to justify decisions … they appear to suggest – perhaps even determine – policy direction" (Gorur, 2011, p. 77). Governments in England regularly refer to PISA data, usually to demand better outcomes from the domestic education system to 'catch-up' with competitors. However concerns have been raised about the notion that PISA tests produce 'universal discourses of truth' which strip away the notion of context and culture from outcomes (Serder and Ideland, 2016). Indeed, it should be noted how little attention is paid to socio-economic context in government responses to OECD findings (see for example: House of Commons, 2008, p. 17; Gove, 2013; Coughlan, 2019; Turner, 2019). Sorensen and Robertson provide a possible way forward:

> If international large-scale comparative research is to make any contribution to ameliorate conditions for students and teachers, participating governments would thus have to move

beyond the current state of affairs in which data and results from such studies tend to be selectively used for legitimizing domestic education agendas and sparking short-term aspirations to climb higher in the rankings … Finally, such efforts would need to recognize that the contemporary framing of the quality of teaching and teachers as the defining issue in education is predicated on the blinkered, and potentially distracting, argument that these factors are deemed more politically amenable than the more decisive external factors of social background and student abilities … (2020, p. 42).

Nevertheless, the availability of all these data and the ability to draw inferences from them is widely valued throughout the education system (Kirkup *et al.*, 2005; Ofsted, 2008; Campbell and Levin, 2009; Kelly and Downey, 2010; Demie, 2013). This is resulting in an industry of 'evidence-based' approaches which purport to offer answers about how to turn around the fortunes of disadvantaged students. In England, in 2011, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) was established, with the aid of a £135 million government grant and with the stated intention of "breaking the link between family income and educational achievement" (EEF, 2020a). Notably, the entire onus is placed on schools to break this link, with the EEF's 'Teaching and Learning Toolkit' (EEF, 2020b) which assesses the extent to which particular interventions help or hinder student progress. This is all, arguably, part of the datafication of education which, at once, provides the 'carrot' – allowing issues to be exposed and explored, but also the 'stick' framing the debate around any apparent poor performance – with schools expected to singlehandedly remedy societal inequities.

Therefore, there is a danger of oversimplifying 'evidence-based' approaches, implying that particular forms of evidence can provide clear and unambiguous knowledge about 'what works' – "[t]he issue here is that something never 'works' in the abstract sense but always in relation to a particular purpose or set of purposes" (Biesta, 2015, p. 80). It has been argued that this leads to 'learnification' whereby learning is referred to in abstract and general terms rendering educational policy discourse "neutral or empty with regard to content, direction and purpose" (Biesta, 2013, p. 6). Further, it is argued that such a focus fails to reward non-cognitive outcomes; reducing educational achievement to the results of particular high-stakes tests and exams can mean "if an item cannot be tested or measured (such as being a caring member of the classroom), then it does not really count for much at all" (Maguire and Dillon, 2011, p. 34). Essentially, these critics argue that "[a] well-educated person is much more than a person who is able to function successfully in the marketplace" (Siegel, 2004, p. 229).

Nevertheless, this approach must be balanced with a level of pragmatism. Good intentions are one thing but "critics of assessment and review arrangements … underplay the importance of credentials in pupils' life chances in a competitive labour market" (Gleeson and Husbands, 2003, p. 57). Perhaps, then, the most significant criticism of the current state of the datafication

of education is more about the approach that it tends to lead to, rather than the actual information that is provided. The current approach seems to insufficiently focus on addressing the impact of wider socio-economic issues on students' educational experiences with the emphasis being placed on schools to make-up for these shortcomings, yet as has been observed above, education cannot compensate for society (Bernstein, 1970). The pupil premium (DfE, 2014) is a case-in-point – whilst the appearance is given that poorer outcomes for disadvantaged students are being addressed by providing schools with additional funding, a recognition of the wider socio-economic factors and a joined up approach to addressing them is largely absent (Lupton and Thomson, 2016; Shain, 2016; Craske, 2018; Copeland, 2019).

Critics have termed this 'governing by numbers' (Grek, 2009). This approach means "the dependence created by central regulation, especially through data use, [which] has established patterns of interaction between the centre, the locality and the schools that invoke the rhetoric of self-evaluation but retain key elements of managerial accountability or 'answerability'" (Ozga, 2009, p. 152). This has the effect of making the learners "visible and calculable, but power is rendered invisible, and the learner sees only the tasks and the tests which they must undertake and their 'result', position, ranking, category. They are made intelligible and manageable in these terms" (Ball, 2015, p. 299). It is important to consider who requests, collects, frames and presents these data – the state. This power allows a particular narrative to be formed. Robertson comments on the power of indicators whose "number-based information reduces the complexity of something … so as to make visible those features … that need to be attended to" (Robertson, 2019). Robertson terms this 'setting aside settings' (2022), whereby "the ranker has now been obscured from view, whilst those ranked at the top are amplified in size and loudness … [and] become a visual compass for others lower down wanting to increase their standing" (Robertson, 2019).

This, arguably, leads to a 'culture of performativity' in schools – "[n]ot the abandonment by the State of its controls but the establishment of a new form of control … In this way, the state also provides a new general mode of less visible regulation, a much more 'hands-off', self-regulating regulation" (Ball, 2003, p. 217). This leads to the pressure to perform from teachers and students, but less so from government (Ball *et al.*, 2012; Hardy, 2015; Holloway and Brass, 2018). And thus, "[t]he paradox for liberal states is that they cannot seek to achieve the promise of formal equality of opportunity without making categories and differences part of their vocabulary and institutional action" (Fourcade, 2016, p. 180). This can sometimes lead to politicians making apparently absurd assertions, such as when the former Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, implied that all schools could be above average when giving evidence to the House of Commons' Education Select Committee:

> Q98: Chair: … if "good" requires pupil performance to exceed the national average, and if all schools must be good, how is this mathematically possible?
>
> Michael Gove: By getting better all the time.
>
> Q99: Chair: So it is possible, is it?
>
> Michael Gove: It is possible to get better all the time.
>
> Q100: Chair: Were you better at literacy than numeracy, Secretary of State?
>
> Michael Gove: I cannot remember.
>
> (House of Commons, 2012).

Arguably, more context needs to be added to the analysis as "behaviour is not independent from social structure: Bits of data will continue to encode existing forms of social advantage and disadvantage" (Fourcade, 2016, p. 190). So, for instance, when reviewing the exclusion data of disadvantaged students, it could be recognised that:

> School exclusion processes are not only a system for dealing with the problems created for schools by individuals who have complex needs that are linked to difficult personal circumstances and to social disadvantage. They constitute a highly differentiated educational pathway and are a reflection of the symbiotic relationship that exists between social and educational disadvantage (Gazeley, 2010, p. 306).

In order to properly address this issue which has been so intractable for such a long time, what is necessary is "an understanding and consideration of how factors contained within the family, relationships, the school, and the wider environment can affect reintegration and thus an acknowledgement of the roles and responsibilities that each system has in supporting pupils during this process" (Atkinson and Rowley, 2019, p. 13). However, this type of approach is largely lacking in government policy. Socio-economic context is mostly absent from government guidance on behaviour and discipline in schools except for a reference that punishment "must not breach any other legislation (for example in respect of disability, special educational needs, race and other qualities and human rights)" (DfE, 2016, p. 7). Although there is more about socio-economic factors in exclusion guidance, the advice is rather vague: "Schools should give particular consideration to the fair treatment of pupils from groups who are vulnerable to exclusion" (DfE, 2017b, p. 6). The onus is placed on schools to address the underlying reasons for any behavioural issues, with seemingly no responsibility for government to consider the wider impact of (or lack of) state policy:

> Disruptive behaviour can be an indication of unmet needs. Where a school has concerns about a pupil's behaviour, it should try to identify whether there are any causal factors and intervene early in order to reduce the need for a subsequent exclusion. In this situation, schools should

consider whether a multi-agency assessment that goes beyond the pupil's educational needs is required (DfE, 2017b, p. 6).

Although the above quote refers to 'multi-agency assessments', as I noted above (Chapter 1) many of these services have seen their funding cut. Thus, this appears to be further evidence of the arms-length governance approach to tackling this issue – with schools expected to rectify socio-economic issues even with fewer resources and more challenging circumstances to deal with (Young Minds, 2018; Adams, 2019; Jeffreys, 2019; Crenna-Jennings and Hutchinson, 2020). In March 2018, the government commissioned a report (Timpson, 2019) in response to concerns about exclusion practices in schools. Notably, recognition of the socio-economic conditions which feed into school exclusion is largely absent from the report and the government's response places all the responsibility on the schools themselves for addressing the matter (DfE, 2019d).

3.4   Social Reproduction

The position of disadvantaged children in the education system has been of concern to sociologists for several decades. That these concerns have been so long-standing have caused many to question why these particular children find themselves in marginal spaces of what schools offer their students. In seeking to discover why relatively few working class students successfully completed their grammar school education, Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden in their classic study, *Education and the Working Class*, observed that the schools "remain closed to society at large, in subtle but very firm ways which have as much to do with class as with ability" (1966, p. 243). In his 1967 study, *Social Relations in a Secondary School*, David Hargreaves observed the impact of streaming by ability in schools, noting that "high stream boys tend to come from homes which were more oriented to middle class values that were the homes of low stream boys" (1967, p. 168). Around the same time, the Plowden Committee was tasked by the Education Minister, Sir Edward Boyle, to investigate the transition from primary to secondary schooling. The subsequent Plowden *et al* (1967) Report noted that working-class backgrounds had a "severe discriminatory effect on children's educational prospects" (1967, p. 31). The authors observed that parents with higher socio-economic positions were more involved with their children's education and supplied more resources for them to support their studies. The Report declared that "[t]he educational disadvantage of being born the child of an unskilled worker is both financial and psychological" (1967, p. 67).

In the following decade, additional research emerged which further outlined the challenges that working class children found in acquiescing to the education system. In the 1970s, studies sought to gauge the experience of working-class boys in the newly implemented

comprehensive schooling system. In his ethnography of twelve non-academic working-class boys, Paul Willis charted how these 'lads' sought to carve out a 'counter-school culture' – where "[o]pposition to the school is principally manifested in the struggle to win symbolic and physical space from the institution and its rules and to defeat its main perceived purpose: to make you 'work'" (1977, p. 26). Willis was keen to allow the boys to present their viewpoints about their attempts to resist the system and, also, separate themselves from the 'ear'oles' who conformed to it. This was done in often very explicit terms, one of the 'lads' observed:

> I don't think school does fucking anything to you … It never has had much effect on anybody I don't think [after] you've learnt the basics. I mean school, it's fucking four hours a day. But it ain't the teachers who mould you, it's the fucking kids you meet. You'm only with the teachers 30 per cent of the time in school, the other fucking two-thirds are just talking, fucking pickin' an argument, messing about (Willis, 1977, p. 26).

Similarly, Stephen Ball spent three years conducting an ethnographic study of the experiences of working-class students in the English comprehensive schooling system. These schools, it was believed, "would bring about changes in the social class inequalities in education that had been created by the middle-class domination of the grammar school" (Ball, 1981, p. 31). Despite this aspiration, Ball observed:

> … it is apparent that while going some way towards solving the gross social problems and social inequalities which were characteristic of the bipartite system, the streamed comprehensive school does produce an unstable, polarized social structure amongst its pupils, which in turn gives rise to considerable teaching and control problems for teachers (1981, p. 283).

But, Ball argued, even the use of mixed-ability systems (as his case-study school moved to) "must not be naïvely taken as an indication of the end of selection and differential socialization through schooling" (1981, p. 284):

> While school values are still essentially concerned with competition and the primacy of academic success, the mixed-ability system continues to feed its pupils more or less 'efficiently' into examination courses of different status and different negotiable value further up in the school. In the mixed-ability context it is apparent that it is the teacher who is the prime agent of selection. His relationship with the pupils in the classroom is fundamentally concerned with the separation and ranking of them according to perceived academic ability, and the allocation of status. This contributes to their development of self-image and a sense of worth – which may be inevitable in a competitive system (ibid).

In trying to theorise the reasons for these patterned outcomes, a consideration of the role of structure and agency is often employed. In the annals of sociological research and theory, this debate has proven to be one of the most intractable. The crux of the debate ultimately

concerns one's views of the importance of humans as actors in determining their own lives. One version of the structuralist perspective is drawn from the classical Marxist tradition which observes the oppression of the workers (the proletariat) by the owners (the bourgeoise): "not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overlooker and above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself" (Marx and Engels, 1967, p. 80). Consequently, theorists such as Louis Althusser believed that in effect individuals have very limited autonomous power in determining the direction their lives take: "the true 'subjects' (in the sense of constitutive subjects of the process) are … not [the] occupants or functionaries … [or] 'concrete individuals', 'real men' but *the definition and distribution of these places and functions*" (Althusser and Balibar, 1970, p. 180 emphasis in original). The structuralist position is taken to its extreme, perhaps, with the view of Emile Durkheim, who argued that even the act of suicide was a social act: "the victim's acts which at first seem to express only his personal temperament are really the supplement and prolongation of a social condition which they express externally" (Durkheim, 1952, p. 299).

In contrast, agentialists, including those who promote a rational choice theory argue that human beings are rational individuals with sufficient capacity to make choices and, if necessary, alter courses. It has, therefore, been argued that "actors establish relations purposefully and continue them when they continue to provide benefits" (Coleman, 1988, p. S105). More recently, sociological approaches often try to move beyond this duality, such as Anthony Giddens' 'theory of structuration'. Nevertheless, even here it is argued that:

> … however subordinate an actor may be in a social relationship, the very fact of involvement in that relationship gives him or her a certain amount of power over the other. Those in subordinate positions in social systems are frequently adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of those social systems (Giddens, 1979, p. 70).

The seminal work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has gone some way to helping to overcome the structure versus agency debate (Reay, 1995, 2004) because it recognises that practice is 'structured' in that it is influenced by one's socio-economic circumstances, but it is also 'structuring' because it continues to shape that practice (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). Therefore, "[s]tudents are not only users but also products of the educational system" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979, p. 13) because:

> Not only do the most privileged students derive from their background of origin habits, skills and attitudes which serve them directly in their scholastic tasks, but they also inherit from it knowledge and know-how, tastes, and a "good taste" whose scholastic profitability is no less certain for being indirect (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979, p. 17).

Bourdieu focused on how the more advantaged in society were able to consistently reproduce and benefit from social structures which allowed them to maintain their privileged positions from one generation to the next. In relation to inequalities in the education system, a topic which particularly engaged Bourdieu, he argued that "[i]t is necessary to take into account the ensemble of the social characteristics which define the initial situation of children from the different classes, in order to understand the different probabilities which the various educational destinies have for them" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, pp. 88–89). It is this focus which underpins much of Bourdieu's writing and is particularly useful in this study because, as has been observed, the poorer outcomes for disadvantaged students relative to their peers are longstanding and consistent.

This approach argues that the schooling system reproduces social injustices because it fails to properly value working class perspectives. Reay argues that a socially-just education system would "value and respect working class as well as middle and upper class ways of knowing where the vocational has esteem alongside the academic rather than being perceived to be an inferior form of knowledge" (Reay, 2012, p. 594). It is argued that schools can contribute to engendering a feeling of inadequacy within students in very subtle ways – "it is the inexplicit indirect effect of the way schools work that stands out in the long perspective on masculinity formation. A stark case is the way streaming and 'failure' push working-class boys towards alienation" (Connell, 1989, p. 300). Indeed, research indicates that top-set students are more likely to be White and middle-class, whilst bottom set students are more likely to be working-class and Black, with those in top sets likely to support the concept and those in lower sets likely to be more negative about it (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Archer *et al.*, 2018).

Bourdieu's work has provided a number of widely used (for example: Reay, 1995, 2006; Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller, 2013; Bathmaker, 2015) theoretical conceptual tools – predominantly *habitus*, *capital* and *field* which, it is argued, interact to result in one's practice. Bourdieu formulised this as [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101) and used this theory to extensively explore matters of social inequality. This conceptualisation has allowed sociologists to "engage in uncovering and exposing the unacknowledged normality of the middle classes … and its corollary, the equally unacknowledged pathologisation and diminishing of the working classes" (Reay, 2006, p. 289). Indeed, similar to the observations made by Massey (above) about poorer areas being blamed for their own problems, it appears that this working-class pathologisation "is the means by which structural problems are transformed into an individualized form of cultural inadequacy in which a position of self is offered to the working-class … [which] becomes not just an individual's problem, but a threat to all respectability, a danger to others and a burden on the nation" (Skeggs, 2004, p. 80).

The fact that these patterned outcomes are so enduring was at the centre of Bourdieu's enquiry. As he put it: "I can say that all my thinking started from this point: how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 65). Those in certain socio-economic classes do not necessarily consciously go about intending to produce the practice they do yet, broadly, these same class-based outcomes regularly repeat themselves anyway. Bourdieu suggested that our actions take place in certain *fields*; this piece of research, for example, is focused on the field of secondary school education. Bourdieu contrasted social fields with, for example, the kind of practical field in which a sports game may take place; whereas the sports field may see players engage with certain explicit and specific rules, social fields do not – "one does not embark on the game by a conscious act, one is born into the game, with the game; and the relation of investment, *illusio*, investment, is made more total and unconditional by the fact that it is unaware of what it is" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 67 emphasis in original). What is more, argued Bourdieu, some people are better at playing the game than others and often subconsciously so – "unawareness of the unthought presuppositions that the game produces and endlessly reproduces, thereby reproducing the conditions of its own perpetuation" (ibid).

The different results in the field for different people is a manifestation of *habitus*:

> The habitus is necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions; it is a general, transposable disposition which carries out a systematic, universal application – beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt – of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions. That is why an agent's whole set of practices (or those of a whole set of agents produced by similar conditions) are both systematic, inasmuch as they are the product of the application of identical (or interchangeable) schemes, and systematically distinct from the practices constituting another life-style (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170).

Another key aspect of Bourdieu's theoretical framework is the notion of *capital*. Bourdieu argued that it was the accumulation of capital that worked together with a person's habitus within a field (or fields) that resulted in their practice. Bourdieu broadened the typical association of the term – as the accumulation of money or wealth – to one which recognised that capital can also be accrued in cultural and social ways to allow certain classes of people to get ahead in society:

> Capital, which, in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible. And the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represent the immanent

> structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practice (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 15).

Bourdieu described four forms of capital – economic, cultural, social and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1984, 2004). It was asserted that economic capital – wealth – was at the root of the other types of capital (Bourdieu, 2004). Bourdieu states that cultural capital can exist in three forms – the *embodied* state (long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body); the *objectified* state (cultural goods e.g., books) and the *institutionalized* state (academic qualifications).

Bourdieu also highlighted linguistic capacity as a particular function which more advantaged students use in order to get ahead:

> The influence of linguistic capital, particularly manifest in the first years of schooling when the understanding and use of language are the major points of leverage for teachers' assessments, never ceases to be felt: style is always taken into account, implicitly or explicitly, at every level of the educational system and, to a varying extent, in all university careers, even scientific ones. Moreover, language is not simply an instrument of communication: it also provides, together with a richer or poorer vocabulary, a more or less complex system of categories, so that the capacity to decipher and manipulate complex structures, whether logical or aesthetic, depends partly on the complexity of the language transmitted by the family (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p. 73).

Similarly, Bernstein (2003) discussed the use of different language codes in education: the restricted code with simple words and phrases which is context-dependent and the elaborate code with more developed and complex words and phrases with universalistic orders of meanings. It is, of course, the elaborate code, which is used by teachers, in books and even on the exam papers which test students' knowledge and skills. Therefore, the lack of social cultural capital means that many disadvantaged students, for example, are blocked from access to the type of education valued in society as measured by qualifications.

Despite the useful concepts Bourdieu provides to address these matters, there are criticisms of his approach that must be addressed. Critics argue that "[Bourdieu's] social universe ultimately remains one in which things happen to people, rather than a world in which they can intervene in their individual and collective destinies" (Jenkins, 1992, p. 57). Thus opponents of reproduction theory argue that in his attempts to overcome the structure versus agency debate, Bourdieu errs too far on the side of structure (Nash, 1990). These are criticisms which even supporters of Bourdieu's concepts recognise; Reay, for example, concedes that there may be some justification in the argument that "Bourdieu overplays the unconscious impulses and aspects of habitus, neglecting mundane everyday reflexivity" (2004, p. 537). This is also a criticism that Bourdieusian advocate, Will Atkinson (2010),

accepts may have some merit. Supporters of Bourdieusian theory, nevertheless, overcome these criticisms by arguing that habitus should be considered as a continuum – "[a]t one end, habitus can be replicated through encountering a field that reproduces its dispositions. At the other end of the continuum, habitus can be transformed through a process that either raises or lowers an individual's expectations" (Reay, 2004, p. 435). Thus, "habitus is a mediating construct, not a determinate one" (Harker, 1984, p. 121). Atkinson further discusses how elements of phenomenology may help with our use of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts: "if we are to successfully think with Bourdieu then we are indeed required to overcome gaps and problems in his theory and think beyond and against him by integrating the insights from phenomenology he himself neglected" (2010, p. 16). Thus, Atkinson argues that aspects of the work of Austrian phenomenological philosopher, Alfred Schütz, can further support our use of Bourdieusian theory. Atkinson asserts that Schutz's notion of *lifeworld* – the sphere of experiences of an individual – can help to overcome criticisms that habitus does not sufficiently allow individuation. Thus Atkinson argues, "the lifeworld is conceived from here on as the individual agent's milieu and conduit of everyday experience that, being particular to her, builds uniquely into her biography and habitus" (2010, p. 9).

3.5 Chapter Conclusion

In the previous chapter I argued that a focus on exclusion practice alone would be insufficient in allowing a proper investigation of exclusion in England's secondary schools. In this chapter I have considered how space is operationalised and how this may enable a richer understanding and contribution to address the aims and questions of my research. I have used a spatial conceptual framework to discuss the layering of exclusion that many disadvantaged students face in England's secondary schools. What then is this framework all about? Firstly, the work of key spatial theorists – Lefebvre, Soja and Massey – have been presented. These authors have developed important spatial language that supports an in-depth consideration of the nature of how society works. Lefebvre's contributions allow for a more sociological consideration of space – arguing that space is a social product and that this takes place in a triad of perceived space, conceived space and lived space. Soja later built on Lefebvre's work terming the triad the 'trialectics of spatiality' and argued that everything took place in lived space – or Thirdspace. Massey introduced the concept 'power-geometry' to assert that spaces are all about the operation of power relations. Massey's contribution was also important in emphasising the importance of analysing space and time together; doing so allows us to look beyond surface level explanations of why things are as they are.

Secondly, I have added into this framework a consideration of datafication practices in the education system. I argue that these practices are crucial power dynamics involved in shaping

educational spaces and, in turn, how we view the position of disadvantaged students and why they then find themselves excluded. Fourcade provides a useful conceptualisation of the way data are often used – to make nominal judgements, cardinal judgements, and ordinal judgements. Although we often unquestionably receive data, we do not always consider the story the presentation of these data is trying to portray. Thus, data are often used to berate schools for not doing enough to address the plight of disadvantaged students all the while concealing the lack of effective policy and impact from the collector and disseminator of these data – the state.

Finally, I have discussed the seminal work of Pierre Bourdieu and his contributions to social reproduction theory. This is because this is important to help us to understand the temporal and spatial dynamics shaping poorer educational outcomes of disadvantaged students which are longstanding and part of the structuring practices of the education system. Bourdieu introduced key terms – habitus, capital and field – to help us consider why this may be the case. Bourdieu argued that societal practices were deposited in individuals (habitus) and in trying to navigate life, some are better at using their habitus to 'play the game' than others. This links with the work in the other sections of this chapter to help with an analysis of the layering of exclusion of disadvantaged students.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1   Chapter Introduction

From the conceptual frameworks, I identified two key implications and priorities for the research which I conducted in this study. Firstly, about the nature of exclusion space. First, I reconceptualised 'exclusion' into inclusive and exclusive spaces. Along with this, two further areas seem important in the operationalisation of educational spaces; the datafication approaches driven by the state, which are observed and responded to by schools, and the nature of social reproduction which specifically hinders disadvantaged children in the education system. Second, linked with this focus on exclusion spaces are some key areas for further investigation following the review of exclusion practice literature. These are the role of school leaders in framing the nature of the exclusion spaces in their institutions and, comparing and contrasting the experiences and perspectives of these school leaders who shape the exclusion practices with the excluded students who directly experience them.

This methodology chapter starts with a reminder of the aims of this study and the research questions that I ask in pursuit of these aims. The research questions are designed to interrogate practice at two levels: those who exclude, and those who are excluded. I argue that a focus on these levels helps to provide a balanced approach to the matters under investigation in this study. Next, the research approach is presented. This study adopts a critical realist position recognising that an objective world does exist out there independent of us, but how we come to understand the social world is necessarily influenced by our social constructions and interpretations. Using critical realism as a philosophical approach will enable me to consider the underlying generative mechanisms that it could be argued have contributed to the exclusion of disadvantaged students.

Following this, I go on to explain how I designed the research. This was done using data about formal school exclusions and child deprivation. This revealed 'cold-spots', sites of high formal exclusion rates and high child deprivation and 'hot-spots', areas of low formal exclusion rates and low child deprivation. I used this information to target senior leaders to interview and pupil referral units to conduct research in. My focus was on comparing areas and approaches. I then describe the research spaces – the three mainstream spaces based in areas of varying deprivation, in the north, midlands and south, where I interviewed three senior leaders; and the exclusion spaces, both in cold-spot areas, where I interviewed students and staff at two pupil referral units, one in the north of England and one in the south of England.

I then explain the methods I used to conduct the research which were qualitative in nature – interviews and focus groups. I justify the use of these methods in relation to the research questions of the study as the best way of eliciting rich description and reflection on the questions that I was posing. Following this, I explain the approach taken to analyse the research. The thematic approach allowed an analysis of patterns, or themes, to be considered and reported on. I explain how I used the six phases of thematic data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to evaluate the research. Next, I consider matters of credibility and robustness of the research, particularly as the research conducted is qualitative and, therefore, not statistically generalisable. I explain the ways in which I have worked to enhance the credibility of the research and to make the findings useful outside of the confines in which I conducted the research. Finally, I explain the ethical approach taken to the collection, analysis and reporting of the research in the study. Underpinning my ethical approach is a commitment to the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018).

4.2   Research Aims and Questions

At this stage, it is useful to reiterate the aims of the research:

1. To broaden the conceptualisation of the nature of exclusion of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools.
2. To explore the various ways in which space itself is mobilised as a means of governing student inclusion and exclusion and that these tend to be disproportionately selective of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools.
3. To discuss ways in which the position of disadvantaged students in England's secondary education system may be improved.

Table 4. 1: Research questions

OVERALL RESEARCH ENQUIRY: *Collateral Damage? The Layering of Exclusion of Disadvantaged Students in England's Secondary Schools*	
RESEARCH QUESTION 1 (RQ1): <u>Experiences and perspectives of those excluding:</u> *In mainstream spaces, what are the experiences and perspectives of school leaders on the nature and impact of the inclusion and exclusion of disadvantaged students in the education system?*	**RESEARCH QUESTION 2 (RQ2):** <u>Experiences and perspectives of those excluded:</u> *In exclusion spaces, what are the experiences and perspectives of disadvantaged students (and those who support them) on the nature and impact of their inclusion and exclusion in the education system?*

In order to accomplish these aims, I researched the layering of exclusion of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools at two levels (see Table 4.1). Firstly, I aimed to understand the experiences and perspectives of those who frame mainstream spaces. The power to frame mainstream space necessarily determines what is considered to be outside of this space – exclusion – and in this sense is constitutive of the excluded/exclusion. Thus,

practices of exclusion start with inclusion. This is the excluder level. Secondly, I also sought to gather the perspectives and experiences of those who find themselves operating outside of mainstream spaces. In other words, these are the individual students – as persons – behind the recorded exclusion statistics. This is the excluded level.

Although it is often asserted that keeping students with mainstream-contrary behaviours in school helps to avoid their exclusion, this study departs from these simply black/white assumptions and instead puts forward a broader conceptualisation of school exclusion. Here, I argue that school exclusion can be both *inclusive* and *exclusive*. Though this sounds paradoxical, I contend that the centre – or full inclusion – is not simply the school itself, but what is offered to, and accessed by, the mainstream population *within* the school. Consequently, exclusion is about distance from this centre. This means that there are, potentially, a wide array of practices in schools that may be popularly regarded as 'inclusive', but which are, when scrutinised closely, actually exclusionary. My research is deeply interested in these processes and how they are both put into practice, and experienced.

4.3   Research Approach

In pursuit of the answers to the research questions, I use a critical realist approach (Sayer, 1992; Bhaskar, 2008). Before the justifications for this are set out, I first discuss the importance of a consideration of ontology and epistemology as these positions direct the approaches taken in research.

Ontological arguments "invite us to consider the nature of social phenomena – are they relatively inert and beyond our influence or are they very much a product of social interaction?" (Bryman, 2016, p. 4). And, in turn, an epistemological stance is a researcher's way of finding out about the nature of social phenomena. In other words, ontology is what we believe about the world and epistemology is how we find this out. A researcher's position on these two approaches is important because "[m]ethods are not simply neutral tools: they are linked with the ways in which social scientists perceive the connection between different viewpoints about the nature of social reality and how it should be examined" (Bryman, 2016, p. 17). In this regard, there often stand at two poles as competing ways of thinking about what happens in the world – objectivism which "asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors" (Bryman, 2016, p. 29) and constructionism which "asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors" (ibid).

In pursuit of the objectivist ontological position, positivist epistemology argues that the world is made up of facts that can be studied. This includes human actions because meaning is

objectified within people which, crucially, for social science means a rejection of anything not directly observable. This position rejects the metaphysical assertions of philosophy about how we arrive at knowledge which, its proponents claim, makes findings more surefooted and reliable. As Auguste Comte, often regarded as the founder of positivism, declared:

> … the first characteristic of the Positive Philosophy is that it regards all phenomena as subjected to invariable natural Laws. Our business is, - seeing how vain is any research into what are called Causes, whether first or final, - to pursue an accurate discovery of these Laws, with a view to reducing them to the smallest possible number. By speculating upon causes, we could solve no difficulty about origin and purpose. Our real business is to analyse accurately the circumstances of phenomena, and to connect them by the natural relations of succession and resemblance (2000, p. 31).

Positivists, then, believe that using the methods of natural science produces findings which are to be trusted and if something is not directly observable then it is not, in fact, 'science', but rather opinion or supposition. Thus, it is not for the researcher to interpret meaning from his or her study, but to discover what was already there and to simply report it. Bryman observes that it has five main principles:

1. Only phenomena and hence knowledge confirmed by the senses can genuinely be warranted as knowledge (the principle of *phenomenalism*).
2. The purpose of the theory is to generate hypotheses that can be tested and that will thereby allow explanations of laws to be assessed (the principle of *deductivism*).
3. Knowledge is arrived at through the gathering of facts that provide the basis for laws (the principle of *inductivism*).
4. Science must (and presumably can) be conducted in a way that is value free (that is, *objective*).
5. There is a clear distinction between scientific statements and normative statements and a belief that the former are the true domain of the scientist. The last principle is implied by the first because the truth or otherwise of normative statements cannot be confirmed by the senses (2016, p. 24 emphasis in original).

In contrast, interpretivist epistemological approaches are used to pursue the constructionist ontological position. This perspective argues that the world has meaning because we, humans, give it meaning. This meaning has not always existed as positivists assert, rather it has been socially constructed. Therefore, constructionism "invites the researcher to consider the ways in which social reality is an ongoing accomplishment of social actors rather than something external to them and that totally constrains them" (Bryman, 2016, p. 30). This also goes for the categories that we use to understand the world because it is argued that there are significant differences between the natural and social world and, therefore, the techniques

for studying natural science cannot easily be transferred to study social science. As the prominent sociologist, Anthony Giddens argued:

> The difference between the social and natural world is that the latter does not constitute itself as 'meaningful': the meanings it has are produced by human beings in the course of their practical life, and as a consequence of their endeavours to understand or explain it for themselves. Social life – of which these endeavours are a part – on the other hand, is *produced* by its component actors precisely in terms of their active constitution and reconstitution of frames of meaning whereby they organize their experience (1993, pp. 85–86 emphasis in original).

Giddens argued that social science research involves a 'double hermeneutic' which is created when first, an actor interprets reality and then the social scientist interprets the interpretation of the actor (ibid). This presents another key distinction from the objectivism of the positivists – the object cannot be studied in isolation from the subject who is doing the studying because of the nature of their human experiences and how this in turn influences their perception of the world.

The difficulty of committing solely to one or other of these ontologies is that in isolation they allow for only limited accounts of social phenomena. This is a choice between 'naïve objectivism' and 'radical relativism' (Sayer, 1992). On the one hand, the positivist 'naïve objectivism' allows for a limited account because it favours the description of events rather than an exploration of them. Focusing narrowly on what is directly observable may mean that important insights about how different factors interplay or interlink with each other and then lead to a particular outcome are lost. Furthermore, claims that even in social science, with its vast array of influences – inputs and outputs – can be wholly objective are also to be challenged. Thomas Kuhn (1996) argued that even natural sciences go through what he called 'paradigm shifts', whereby certain viewpoints which dominate at particular times and consequently affect how the researcher carries out his or her observations also change. On the other hand, constructionism also seems to offer limited opportunities due to its refutation of the possibility of the notion of 'social science' at all and thus the possibility of providing a more in-depth analysis of phenomena. This has been termed the 'inward collapse of relativism':

> If no general truths can exist, then the relativist statements cannot make such claims either. The researchers who adopt this position, what do they think they are doing when they carry out their research? If we were to take this kind of relativism seriously, the consequence would be that we would have to regard all scientific argumentation as completely meaningless (Danermark *et al.*, 2002, p. 17).

Consequently, this may mean that debate, critique, and perhaps even understanding are stifled because, essentially, reality is what anyone says it is! And so, "[w]hat positivism's sociological opponents often end up opposing is thus not just a faulty account of what it means for sociology to be scientific, but rather all scientific aspirations for sociology" (Porpora, 2015, p. 10).

Critical realism seems to offer a way forward. This philosophically-based methodological position attempts to bridge the polarity between positivism and constructionism by recognising that a world exists out there independent of our knowledge of it, but what happens in the world is necessarily influenced by our social constructions and interpretations. The critical realist position argues that, in contrast to the closed systems of natural science, social science is a study of open systems. In the natural sciences, conditions may be able to be artificially created and event regularities (or laws) may be able to be observed, this is, of course, more difficult in social science where we encounter irregularities in the flux of events and state of affairs (Fleetwood, 2017). So "whereas positivists take the view that the scientist's conceptualization of reality actually directly reflects that reality, realists argue that the scientist's conceptualization is simply a way of knowing that reality" (Bryman, 2016, p. 25). Further, "critical realists unlike positivists are content to include in their explanations theoretical terms that are not directly amenable to observation" (ibid). And an appreciation of the specificities of context is crucial to critical realist explanations because it sheds light on the conditions that promote or impede the operation of the critical mechanism (ibid).

In order to understand the world, critical realism posits a *stratified* view of reality, arguing that our view of the world is arranged in layers (Bhaskar, 2008). These layers are *empirical, actual* and *real*:

> The empirical domain consists of what we experience, directly or indirectly. It is separated from the actual domain where events happen whether we experience them or not. What happens in the world is not the same as that which is observed. But this domain is in its turn separated from the real domain. In this domain there is also that which can produce events in the world, that which metaphorically can be called mechanisms (Danermark *et al.*, 2002, p. 20).

The *empirical domain* is all about experience and contains data and facts, though it is always theory laden. This might be termed the 'what is' layer. This is the domain where we see that disadvantaged students have poorer outcomes (see Chapters 2 and 3). These kinds of findings may be interesting in and of themselves, but critical realism encourages a deeper level of analysis. This involves avoiding an 'epistemic fallacy' (Bhaskar, 2008), that is reducing our understanding about what is, to only what we know of it. If we only look at the result rather than what might be contributing to causing the result (mechanisms) then we are likely to

achieve only a 'level-abstracted' view of events – "a view that considers the effects of the whole entity in isolation from the existence or effects of its parts" (Elder-Vass, 2010, p. 49).

The domain of the *actual* encourages us to not only place what we observe in specific – or actual – settings but to take context seriously. In doing so, we may ascertain the contributory powers in those contexts led to those outcomes. This might be termed the 'what happens' layer. In an open system, "[w]hat happens in the world is not the same as that which is observed" (Danermark *et al.*, 2002, p. 20). This could, of course, mean that sometimes the object of the research is unaware of these contributory powers even though they are apparently causing him or her to do something. So, at the empirical level we are presented with the raw data that tells us *prima facie* that disadvantaged students have poorer outcomes than those who are more socio-economically advantaged, however beyond this observation could be a number of events taking place. The importance of critical realism here is to encourage the researcher to be open to the possibilities especially when, arguably, what happens in the world is the result of multiple causes (Bhaskar, 2008).

The final layer is, perhaps, the deepest and most complicated – the *real domain*. It is in this layer that the production of the actual domain takes place, which subsequently leads to what is experienced in the empirical domain. This might be termed the 'what enables' layer. Here the mechanisms that enable the events in the actual domain to take place are what are to be explained, and in unpredictable open systems "a multiplicity of mechanisms is operating, conjointly bringing about a series of events, which would not have been brought about by any proper subset of those mechanisms" (Collier, 1994, pp. 43–44). These mechanisms are not laws in the sense of being pre-determined or predictable, but tendencies in that under certain circumstances they *tend* to produce a particular outcome. Although they always exist – realised or unrealised – to effect an outcome, mechanisms require triggering by an action which "indicates that it does not always operate – and that, if it is ever triggered, or when it is, the present conditions or circumstances determine whether it will operate" (Danermark *et al.*, 2002, p. 55).

Taken together we can understand critical realism as a set of philosophical presuppositions about the way social worlds are produced and which involve an examination of the structuring mechanism in context giving rise to particular outcomes. I employed critical realism for this thesis because of the aims and the nature of the research that I used in pursuit of those aims. I argue throughout this study that in school exclusion literature there is too much focus on surface-level features of exclusions. This is largely the result of the datafication of education which allows the state to make visible and amplify particular features of the problem and, therefore, drive certain narratives. The resulting level-abstracted view of this issue means

important aspects of exclusion practice are under-researched. Critical realism helps to address this because it conceptualises causation in a different way as it "does not think of mechanisms exclusively or even primarily as events. Rather, it thinks of mechanisms primarily as things with their causal powers or as the structured relations that comprise them" (Porpora, 2015, p. 57) thus,

> On the realist view, causality concerns not a relationship between discrete events ('Cause and Effect'), but the '*causal powers*' or '*liabilities*' of objects or relations, or more generally their ways-of-acting or '*mechanisms*'. People have the causal powers of being able to work ('labour power'), speak, reason, walk, reproduce, etc., and a host of causal liabilities, such as susceptibility to group pressure, extremes of temperature, etc. Often the causal powers inhere not simply in single objects or individuals but in the social relations and structures which they form (Sayer, 1992, p. 104 emphasis in original).

Using a critical realist framework allows for a more in-depth focus on the mechanisms at work in processes and relations giving rise to educational exclusion and how these produce forms of inclusion and exclusion that are consequential for disadvantaged students at secondary school level. Also of importance here, the critical realist perspective allows for a consideration of causation even if the power used to enact it is latent (Sayer, 1992; Porpora, 2015). Here, Porpora provides a useful example which is relevant to the matters under investigation in this study:

> … the principal retains the power to expel students even while he or she does not exercise it. Put otherwise, as a capacity, the power to expel is not reducible to the observable event of its exercise. As an ever present threat, even unexercised, the power to expel reigns like a shadow over the interaction between students and principal. The principal's power to expel thus becomes *power over* students and as *power over* not just an atomic capacity but a social relation. Insofar as the principal's relational power over students shapes the entire interaction between principal and students, the interaction cannot be fully understood apart from that power and the capacity in which it inheres (2015, p. 34 emphasis in original).

As discussed throughout this methodology, such an analysis allows the full nature of inclusion and exclusion to be properly considered, particularly because in open systems the nature of human experiences, reactions to these experiences, and perspectives towards further experiences are complicated. If important lessons are to be learned, my argument is that a different approach to that used to investigate closed systems is necessary. Thus, a critical realist approach allows the experiences and perspectives of the research participants to be probed and considered within the conceptual framework of the study.

4.4   Research Design

To decide on the framework for the data collection, school exclusion data from the Department for Education were reviewed (DfE, 2021d). As discussed in Chapter 2, schools are required to submit these data each term and then they are later made publicly available on the DfE website. At the time of the commencement of the research, school exclusion data up to the 2017/18 academic year were available. These statistics were published in July 2019 because school exclusion data are collected two terms in arrears to allow for any changes in outcomes from appeals processes. In order to get a more representative picture, data for three years prior – 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 – were also reviewed. Therefore, a total of four academic years were analysed. The DfE defines exclusion rate as:

$$\frac{\text{no. of recorded exclusions across the academic year}}{\text{no. of sole and dual main registered students on roll as at January census day}} \times 100$$

The exclusion rate provides the number of recorded exclusions as a percentage of the overall school population in England. So, for example, an exclusion rate of 0.10 percent, is equivalent to around 10 students per 10,000 being excluded. School exclusion data are not provided at the level of individual schools but are provided for 152 upper tier local authority (UTLA) areas (county councils n=24; unitary authorities n=58; metropolitan districts n=36; London boroughs n=32; City of London n=1; Isles of Scilly n=1). From these data, I produced an average exclusion rate (AER) for each UTLA in England. This was done by calculating the average (mean) of the permanent exclusion rate across the four academic years and the average (mean) of the fixed period exclusion rate across the four academic years. The average (mean) of those two values provided the AER which, arguably, provided a sense of the scale of recorded exclusions over space (regions across England) and time (four academic years). I then ranked the AERs by sorting them from highest to lowest, thus the UTLA with the highest AER was ranked '1'.

Following this, these data were compared to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) (Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government, 2019) which measures the proportion of children between the ages of 0 and 15 who live in income deprived households (data also provided by UTLA). Here, an average score of each UTLA was provided and a rank of this score was also provided, with '1' being the most deprived area. This revealed a series of 'hot-spot' and 'cold-spot' areas of school exclusions and child deprivation (Appendix B). The Social Mobility Commission has previously produced a report which discussed hot-spots and cold-spots (Child Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission, 2016). In that report, social mobility hot-spots were defined as the best performing areas and social mobility cold-spots

were defined as the worst performing areas. Similarly, therefore, in this thesis, I define 'hot-spots' as the areas with the lowest AERs and lowest levels of child deprivation and 'cold-spots' as the areas with the highest AERs and highest levels of child deprivation. Next, the 152 UTLAs[1] were placed into quartiles for the two separate categories – AER and IDACI rank. Once this was done, the quartiles were compared to see if there were any UTLAs that appeared in the same quartile for both categories, in other words, the quartiles matched.

Table 4. 2: England UTLAs AERs and IDACI quartile 1 and 4 matches

Quartile	UTLA	Region
1: *Coldest spots* highest exclusion rate, highest child deprivation	Middlesbrough Blackpool Knowsley Nottingham Manchester Hartlepool Islington North East Lincolnshire Stoke-on-Trent Redcar and Cleveland Hackney St. Helens Doncaster Barnsley Enfield Tameside	North East North West North West East Midlands North West North East Inner London Yorkshire and the Humber West Midlands North East Inner London North West Yorkshire and the Humber Yorkshire and the Humber Outer London North West
4: *Hottest spots* lowest exclusion rate, lowest child deprivation	Bromley Barnet Sutton Herefordshire Harrow Warwickshire Trafford Central Bedfordshire Cambridgeshire Hertfordshire West Sussex Leicestershire Wiltshire York Kingston upon Thames West Berkshire Buckinghamshire Surrey Rutland Windsor and Maidenhead Wokingham Isles of Scilly	Outer London Outer London Outer London West Midlands Outer London West Midlands North West East of England East of England East of England South East East Midlands South West Yorkshire and the Humber Outer London South East South East South East East Midlands South East South East South West

This suggests that UTLAs that are in quartile 1 for their AER and quartile 1 for IDACI are areas with high recorded exclusions and high child deprivation and UTLAs that are in quartile 4 for their AER and quartile 4 for IDACI are areas with low recorded exclusions and low child deprivation (see Table 4.2). These data revealed a clear north-south divide in the UTLAs in

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[1] By the release of the latest IDACI data in 2019, there were 151 ULTAs as the Borough of Poole was merged into one unitary authority: Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. For the purposes of comparing the rankings between the AER and the IDACI, Bournemouth and Poole were given the same rank.

quartile 1 and quartile 4 areas with northern areas having higher rates of exclusion and child deprivation and the converse in the south (see Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2).
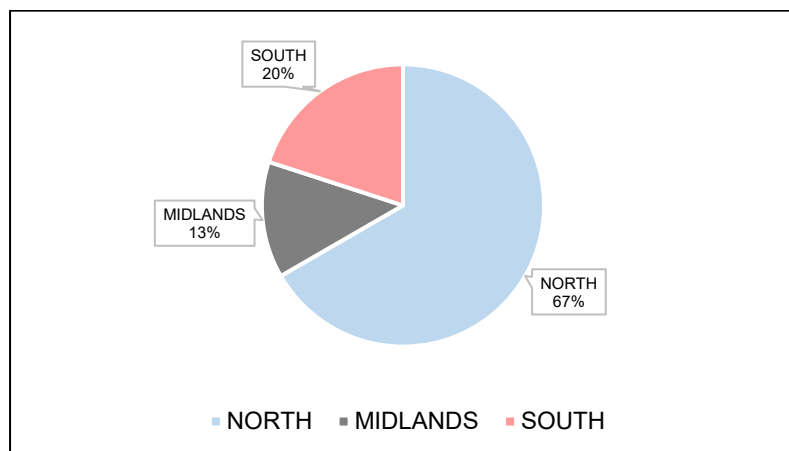
Figure 4. 1: Cold-spot (matching quartile 1) regions
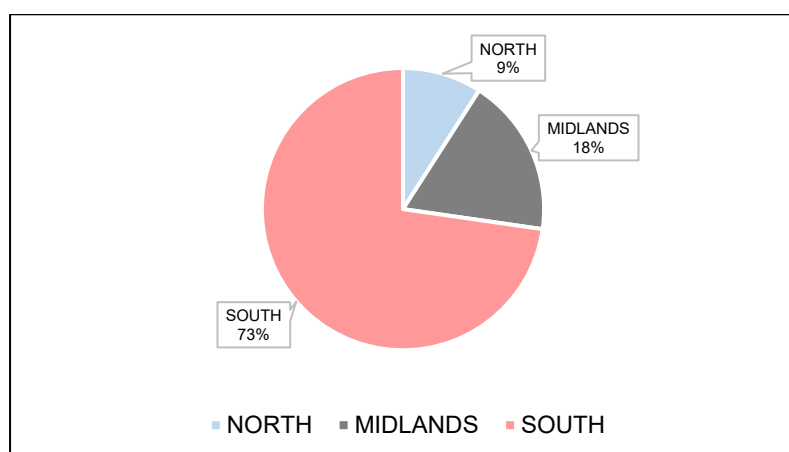
Figure 4. 2: Hot-spot (matching quartile 4) regions

In pursuit of the answers to the research questions a comparative design was used:

> Put simply, this design entails studying two contrasting cases using more or less identical methods. It embodies the logic of comparison, in that it implies that we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations (Bryman, 2016, pp. 64–65).

I wanted to get a sense of how 'disadvantage' manifests itself in different regional contexts. For both research questions I sought to conduct research in a northern and southern context, preferably with different demographics of students. My approach to schools and pupil referral units was made on that basis.

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For RQ1, I started with a questionnaire. For this I also wanted to compare the approaches in quartile 1 and quartile 4 areas. The sample for the survey was all schools in these areas (n=744) in quartile 1 (n=209) and quartile 4 (n=535). This was a purposive sample as I did not seek to sample research participants on a random basis as "[t]he goal … is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are posed" (Bryman, 2016, p. 408). The schools were thus approached with the deliberate goal of comparing and contrasting the perspectives and experiences of senior leaders in both hot-spot and cold-spot areas to gain a sense of viewpoints on exclusion from mainstream perspectives. Full responses were received from 44 school leaders – quartile 1 (n=9) and quartile 4 (n=35). Due to the low response rate (6 percent), particularly from quartile 1 schools, perhaps because of the pressures of COVID-19 on schools, I have not added the results to the findings in this study. I have, however, included the results in Appendix C.

The survey did, though, help me to recruit participants for interviews from mainstream schools as I asked participants if they would be willing to take part in a follow-up interview. I subsequently interviewed three senior leaders working in different contexts – two senior leaders in quartile 1 areas (a headteacher of a school in the south and a deputy headteacher of a school in the north) and a senior leader of a school in a quartile 4 area (a headteacher of a school in the midlands). It is not possible to know the reasons why these leaders agreed to follow-up with an interview. In any case, questions of bias are less relevant here as the qualitative design means that they were never intended to be a statistically representative sample, rather to provide a range of experiences and perspectives to help with the answers to the research questions.

For RQ2, the aim was to explore the experiences and perspectives of disadvantaged secondary school students (and staff who support them) who have experienced exclusion. Therefore, again, a purposive sample was used – the target institutions were not mainstream schools but pupil referral units (PRUs) which generally provide education to young people who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. Again, due to the comparative design, there was a specific goal of seeking the views of students in contrasting areas of deprivation – particularly comparing cases in the north and south. An email was addressed to the gatekeepers – the headteachers – of a variety of PRUs in the quartile 1 areas. It took several follow up phone-calls and emails to recruit the two PRUs where the research was conducted. The headteachers delegated responsibility to other colleagues (research facilitators) to help organise the research participants. I liaised with the research facilitators to explain the nature of the research and the participants required – disadvantaged children who had been excluded from their schools and staff members who worked with the students and were able to provide their views. The research facilitators also helped to organise the

distribution of the Participant Information Sheets (Appendix E) to the research participants and also to ensure that the parents/carers of the children involved agreed for their children to take part.

The sample size was dictated somewhat by those who were willing to participate in the research. 10 of the 12 research participants from the Pendenford PRU had been permanently excluded from mainstream secondary schools directly before joining the PRU. Two of the students (Brendan and Kirsty) were deemed at risk of permanent exclusion and were on a term placement at the PRU as an intervention to try to prevent this from happening. All of the research participants at the Alberton PRU had been permanently excluded from mainstream secondary schools directly before joining the PRU. Due to the recruitment process, there may be some bias in the sample as the type of students and/or their parents who chose to provide/decline their consent could not be known. Nevertheless, at both research sites a range of students and staff were interviewed, and a range of perspectives and experiences were shared. There were, additionally, important practical elements: whilst conducting this research I was also working full-time, and similarly, all of the participants were either students attending PRUs or staff working in schools/PRUs. This meant that the interviews needed to take place at mutually convenient times for the research participants and myself. Again, the nature of this type of research method means that there are no claims of statistical generalisability to excluded students or spaces across the country. Nevertheless, researching perspectives and practices in contrasting areas of disadvantage has provided contributions to spatial theory, helping to develop conceptual grammar around inclusive and exclusive exclusion. The research may also, further, be relevant to others who recognise the findings in their particular contexts (Bryman, 2016, p. 399).

It should also be noted that this research took place against a backdrop of severe disruption to schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic resulted in a number of legal restrictions which, at certain times, severely limited the ways people were able to interact with each other. During the 2019/20 academic year, there was a national lockdown (from March 2020) which, in turn, led to a nationwide school closure to all but the children of keyworkers and vulnerable students (broadly a child with a social worker). All other students continued their education remotely at home. Public exams were cancelled and grades were awarded based on predicted grades from teachers. Schools reopened to a few students (Years 10 and 12) in the last couple of weeks at the end of the summer term. In the following academic year, 2020/21, there was further disruption. Schools were again ordered to close during the first half of the spring term, from January 2021 to February 2021 with similar arrangements to the first closure put in place. Again, public exams were cancelled with students awarded grades based on teacher assessment. Consequently, this was also a feature of this study both

indirectly (by virtue of the participants being involved in the pandemic) and directly (because the pandemic affected the way the research could be conducted and also because these experiences were discussed as part of the interview schedule).

4.5   Research Sites/Spaces

From mainstream schools, I interviewed three senior leaders for their experiences and perspectives:

St John Kemble School is a mixed-sex, Catholic-denominational comprehensive school of broadly average-size (student population) with over 1,000 students on roll. Just over half of the school's Years 7 to 11 (11- to 16-year-olds) population are officially disadvantaged which is well-above the national average. The school is located in a large, urban, ethnically diverse area in the south of England where White British people make up less than half of the borough's population with significant minorities of Black British and Asian British people. St John Kemble is located in a cold-spot upper tier local authority area and the postcode of the school is an area which is in the top 10 percent for income deprivation affecting children (IDACI) in the country. At its most recent Ofsted inspection St John Kemble was judged to have a 'good' level of overall effectiveness. I interviewed Victoria Moore who has been Headteacher of the school for several years.

Oakside Grove School is a mixed-sex, non-denominational comprehensive school of broadly average-size (student population) with over 1,000 students on roll. Just under half of Oakside Grove's Years 7 to 11 (11- to 16-year-olds) population are officially disadvantaged which is well-above the national average. The school is located in a large, suburban area in the north of England with the vast majority – over 90 percent – of the borough's population White British with very few ethnic minorities. Oakside Grove is located in a cold-spot upper tier local authority area and the postcode of the school is an area which is in the top 30 percent for income deprivation affecting children (IDACI) in the country. At its most recent Ofsted inspection Oakside Grove was judged to have a 'good' level of overall effectiveness. I interviewed Graham Evans who has been the Deputy Headteacher of the school for several years.

Crestview School is a mixed-sex, non-denominational comprehensive school of broadly average-size (student population) with just under 1,000 students on roll. Around 2/5 of Crestview's Years 7 to 11 (11- to 16-year-olds) population are officially disadvantaged which is below the national average. The school is located in a small, rural area in the midlands with the vast majority – over 97 percent – of the borough's population White British with hardly any ethnic minorities. Crestview is located in a hot-spot upper tier local authority area and the

postcode of the school is an area which is in the bottom 20 percent for income deprivation affecting children (IDACI) in the country. At its most recent Ofsted inspection Crestview was judged to have a 'good' level of overall effectiveness. I interviewed William Harris who has been Headteacher of the school for several years.

From the exclusion spaces, I interviewed the students, headteachers and staff of two pupil referral units for their experiences and perspectives. Pendenford PRU is located in an area broadly similar in nature to where St John Kemble School is based. Alberton PRU is located in an area broadly similar in nature to where Oakside Grove School is based. All but two of the students had been permanently excluded from mainstream schools including for some, more than once. Brendan and Kirsty at Pendenford PRU were on a placement as part of a behaviour respite programme because their schools identified them as being at risk of permanent exclusion. Across both PRUs, the students had experienced a range of different traumas including domestic abuse, neglect, peer-on-peer abuse, child sexual exploitation and a stabbing. There were also students across both PRUs that had special educational needs including Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) as they required the highest level of support.

4.6   Research Methods

Predominantly qualitative approaches were used in this study as I was interested in understanding the practices and experiences of exclusions, and from there to explain the generative mechanisms that shape these practices and experiences in England's secondary schools. To gain this understanding, the experiences and perspectives of students and staff who support them in excluded spaces as well as senior leaders who frame mainstream spaces were probed. Merriam and Tisdell note that "the decision to use interviewing … should be based on the kind of information needed and whether interviewing is the best way to get it" (2016, p. 109). As is evident from the research questions for this study, the key focus was on experiences and perspectives to elucidate the production of space and its distinct social relations and outcomes for disadvantaged students in the English secondary school context. Interviews were used for this endeavour because this method is "necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them … [and] when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 108). For this study a total of 31 individuals were interviewed. This comprised 13 one-to-one interviews and six focus group interviews (comprising 18 children). As noted in the ethics section, below, pseudonyms have been used for all research participants and settings.

For RQ1, three interviews were initially intended to be used to gain the perspectives and experiences of senior leaders working in mainstream spaces (see Table 4.3). However, during

the course of the interviews with the headteachers and staff of both PRUs it became apparent they had previously worked in mainstream settings as senior leaders, so the relevant parts of their interviews also contributed to the findings comparing mainstream and exclusion spaces.

Table 4. 3: Interviews with senior school leaders for Research Question 1

OVERALL RESEARCH ENQUIRY:			
Collateral Damage? The Layering of Exclusion of Disadvantaged Students in England's Secondary Schools			
RESEARCH QUESTION 1 (RQ1):			
<u>Experiences and perspectives of those excluding:</u>			
In mainstream spaces, what are the experiences and perspectives of school leaders on the nature and impact of the inclusion and exclusion of disadvantaged students in the education system?			
Participant	Context	Interview Nature	Interview Date
Victoria Moore, Headteacher St John Kemble School	Mainstream, South Cold-spot	Virtual (zoom)	25/03/2021
Graham Evans, Deputy Headteacher Oakside Grove School	Mainstream, North Cold-spot	Phone	29/03/2021
William Harris, Headteacher Crestview School	Mainstream, Midlands Hot-spot	Virtual (zoom)	28/05/2021

RQ2 involved research in two PRUs in contrasting areas of deprivation (cold-spots). This followed permission from the gatekeepers (headteachers) that interviews could be conducted with students and staff at the institutions. Pendenford PRU is in south England and Alberton PRU is in north England. I visited each PRU for one day in the summer term of the 2020/21 academic year (Pendenford on 11 June 2021 and Alberton on 13 July 2021). All of the interviews with students were conducted via focus group settings (the justification for this is explained below). Most of the interviews with staff were conducted face-to-face, however some were conducted virtually – with the Headteacher and Teaching Assistant from the Pendenford PRU due to time constraints and with the Headteacher of the Alberton PRU due to his illness on the day I attended the institution. A total of six student focus groups (3 in each PRU) and 10 staff interviews (3 in Pendenford and 7 in Alberton) contributed to RQ2 (see Table 4.4). Again, there were elements in the other interviews which also helped to provide elucidation on this research question and therefore, they were also referenced in places.

For the research, the staff were interviewed individually, and students were interviewed in focus groups. A focus group "is a form of group interview in which there are several participants (in addition to the moderator/facilitator) … the accent is upon interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning" (Bryman, 2016, p. 501). This method was used following discussions with the research facilitators at Pendenford and Alberton. It was thought that the students may be more comfortable discussing their experiences in this format than a one-to-

one interview, particularly as I would be unfamiliar to them. The students in the focus groups knew each other as they had attended classes together.

Table 4. 4: Interviews with students and staff for Research Question 2

OVERALL RESEARCH ENQUIRY:	
Collateral Damage? The Layering of Exclusion of Disadvantaged Students in England's Secondary Schools	
RESEARCH QUESTION 2 (RQ2): <u>Experiences and perspectives of those excluded:</u> *In exclusion spaces, what are the experiences and perspectives of disadvantaged students (and those who support them) on the nature and impact of their inclusion and exclusion in the education system?*	
Pendenford PRU Participants	Alberton PRU Participants
Student Focus Group 1: Da'juan (Year 10) Jessica (Year 10) Lucy (Year 10) Tracey (Year 10)	Student Focus Group 1: Sophie (Year 10) Charlotte (Year 10) Student Focus Group 2: Emily (Year 10)
Student Focus Group 2: Brendan (Year 7) Kirsty (Year 8)	Jennifer (Year 10) Student Focus Group 3: James (Year 10)
Student Focus Group 3: Hani (Year 9) Lamar (Year 9) Andre (Year 10) Anthony (Year 10) Leanne (Year 10) Vanessa (Year 10)	Charlie (Year 10) Staff Interviews: Annette Gibson, Deputy Headteacher Denise Shaw, Head of Studies Hillary Howard, English Teacher Katie Johnson, Technology Teacher Annie Stubbs, Attendance Officer
Staff Interviews: Carrie Hunter, Designated Safeguarding Lead Celina Lee, Teaching Assistant (Virtual – 14/07/2021) Mary Turner, Headteacher (Virtual – 23/07/2021)	Tara Webster, Admissions Officer Tom Baker, Headteacher (Virtual – 29/07/2021)

As I work in a school, I have Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance. However, as the PRUs were separate institutions to the school I was employed at, both PRUs required a member of staff to be present during the interviews with students. Whilst my personal observations were that the participants seemed quite forthright in discussing their experiences and perspectives, it is not possible to know if (or how) the presence of the staff member affected the answers they provided. Similarly, it is also not possible to know how recording the interview affected their answers, although I did explain on the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix E) and then reiterated at the start of each focus group session that their responses would be confidential and anonymised (see below). One of the

advantages of the focus group method for use with child participants is that it "offers the opportunity of allowing people to probe each other's reasons for holding a certain view" (Bryman, 2016, p. 501). Nevertheless, there were important factors that I had to be aware of as the moderator, as the different dynamics between and within each group required a slightly different approach. This involved ensuring that certain participants did not monopolise discussions and ensuring that discussion could flow freely but intervening to bring out salient issues (Bryman, 2016).

For both the focus groups and the one-to-one interviews an interview guide – the questions to be asked – was prepared (Appendix D). In the guide I endeavoured to avoid multiple questions in one, leading questions, yes-no questions and technical jargon (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). In accordance with my research questions, the aim was for them to be "open-ended and yield descriptive data, even stories about the phenomenon" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 120). I decided to take a semi-structured approach to interviewing as "[t]he problem with using a highly structured interview in qualitative research is that rigidly adhering to predetermined questions may not allow you to access participants' perspectives and understandings of the world" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 109). I started each interview and focus group by reiterating the purpose of the research and the ethics underpinning the research. I also checked if the participants had any questions before they began. I was aware that the nature of the interview topic – behaviours which led to exclusion – could involve some controversy. I deliberately tried to take a stance that was "non-judgemental, sensitive, and respectful of the respondent" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 130). Before I conducted the interviews, I discussed the questions with my supervisor and the interviewing process was somewhat iterative, as I incorporated findings from earlier interviews into later interviews. Some of the interviews were conducted virtually, via a video conferencing program called Zoom which had practical benefits as it allowed greater flexibility with scheduling (Bryman, 2016, p. 492). The interviews were recorded on an electronic audio recorder, these data were then transferred to an encrypted password-protected device, and I later transcribed all the interviews in full.

4.7   Research Analysis

The way I analysed the research data was influenced by the conceptual framework of the study. My positionality may also have influenced my mode of analysis and I have considered this below. The way I structured the study seemed to fit with a thematic approach which "is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Therefore, the themes I identified "[captured] something important about the data in relation to the research question[s], and [represented] some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82 emphasis in original).

As the key areas of investigation were drawn from the conceptual framework, a largely deductive theoretical approach was taken in relation to the development of the themes identified. In other words, these concepts directed the focus. In keeping with the critical realist approach to my research, a latent approach was taken which involved looking at more than just the semantic content of the data and "[examining] the *underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84 emphasis in original). I used the six phases of thematic analysis data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to analyse the research, which I describe below:

4.7.1   Familiarisation with the Data

This step involved immersing myself in the data I collected to become familiar with their depth and breadth (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As I had conducted all the interviews, I already had some familiarity with the data. A key part of re-familiarising myself with the data I collected was in the transcribing process. The number (n=19) and length (approximately 30 minutes) of each interview meant that transcribing was a very time-consuming process, especially as the interviews with the students were done in focus groups and therefore, had several different voices to identify. Nevertheless, there were a number of benefits to transcribing the interviews (Bryman, 2016, pp. 479–483) particularly, as doing so allowed me to more thoroughly examine what the interviewees had to say. During the interviews I made notes and I reviewed these, along with adding to these whilst transcribing. Once I had finished transcribing, I read through the transcripts and notes to consider the themes and codes that I could use in my findings.

4.7.2   Generating Initial Codes

This step involved examining the answers provided by the participants and grouping them into different categories (Bryman, 2016). As the conceptual framework is a key part of this study, the coding was also theory-driven. As the data corpus for this study comprised many pages, to support with the coding process I used NVivo 12 which is computer assisted qualitative data analysis software. This simplified the coding process by allowing various chunks of data to be coded, organised, and collected in a user-friendly manner. The nature of the interviews meant that the coding was slightly different for the different data-sets – mainstream senior leaders and staff and students in the PRUs – but, nevertheless, there were similarities and differences both between and within the data-sets.

4.7.3   Searching for Themes

This step involved analysing how the various codes could be combined into themes. Themes hold several different codes and are, therefore, broader and more overarching (Braun and Clarke, 2006). At this stage I had already conceptualised school exclusion as being wider and

deeper than is popularly discussed. From my own practice and experience, I also understood that within this conceptualisation some forms of exclusion are generally considered 'better' than others. The 'better' forms of exclusion are usually considered to be those that keep the child in the school. My research deliberately focused on two separated spaces – mainstream schools and pupil referral units. Therefore, at this stage my themes revolved around 'positive' and 'negative' aspects of both spaces. The themes I identified were 'relationships', 'rules', 'reputation', 'learning', 'environment' and 'socio-economic'.

4.7.4   Reviewing Themes

This step involved two levels of review: level one – re-reading the extracts within the codes to consider whether they formed a coherent pattern and level two – ensuring the themes accurately reflected the meanings in the data-sets (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I was content at this stage that the themes I had identified when I first searched for them still stood, though I added a new theme – 'curriculum', as I felt that this was slightly different to 'learning': curriculum was more about the 'what' of learning whereas, learning was about the 'how'.

4.7.5   Defining and Naming Themes

This step involved "identifying the 'essence' of what each theme [was] about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme [captured]" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92). I had already come up with the concepts 'inclusive exclusion' and 'exclusive exclusion' and at this stage, I considered how the data fitted into these concepts. This also allowed me to consider the overall story I was telling with the data in relation to the overall research enquiry and questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke advise that the "[n]ames need to be concise, punchy, and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about" (2006, p. 93). Therefore, the final themes I identified for each chapter were: *mainstream spaces* – 'closing the gap', 'rules' and 'perspective gap'; *inclusive exclusion spaces* – 'rupture', 'detachment' and 'incompatibility'; *exclusive exclusion spaces* – 'relevance', 'divergence' and 'aspiration'. I felt that these terms were in keeping with the themes I had identified, while they also managed to provide a description in a word or two about what was happening in each space. I also produced a diagram to describe how these worked together in relation to the research enquiry (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 attempts to show how I identified the exclusion of disadvantaged students working in the education system. The mainstream is at the centre and is dominated by rules. The inner square box represents the school. The diagram shows the perspective gap which ruptures the mainstream border. If a student is not able to operate successfully in mainstream space then they are moved into inclusive exclusion space. This is a more opaque and to some extent less legible space and it is not easy to gauge everything that happens in this space. Nevertheless,

the student remains connected to the school. For some students, they become detached from the school as they are deemed incompatible with the institution. This, in turn, leads to permanent exclusion: a final break with that particular school, where the student now operates in exclusive exclusion space. As the diagram demonstrates this is a marginal space. However, some students are deemed re-compatible with mainstream schooling and return, others are not, and do not.
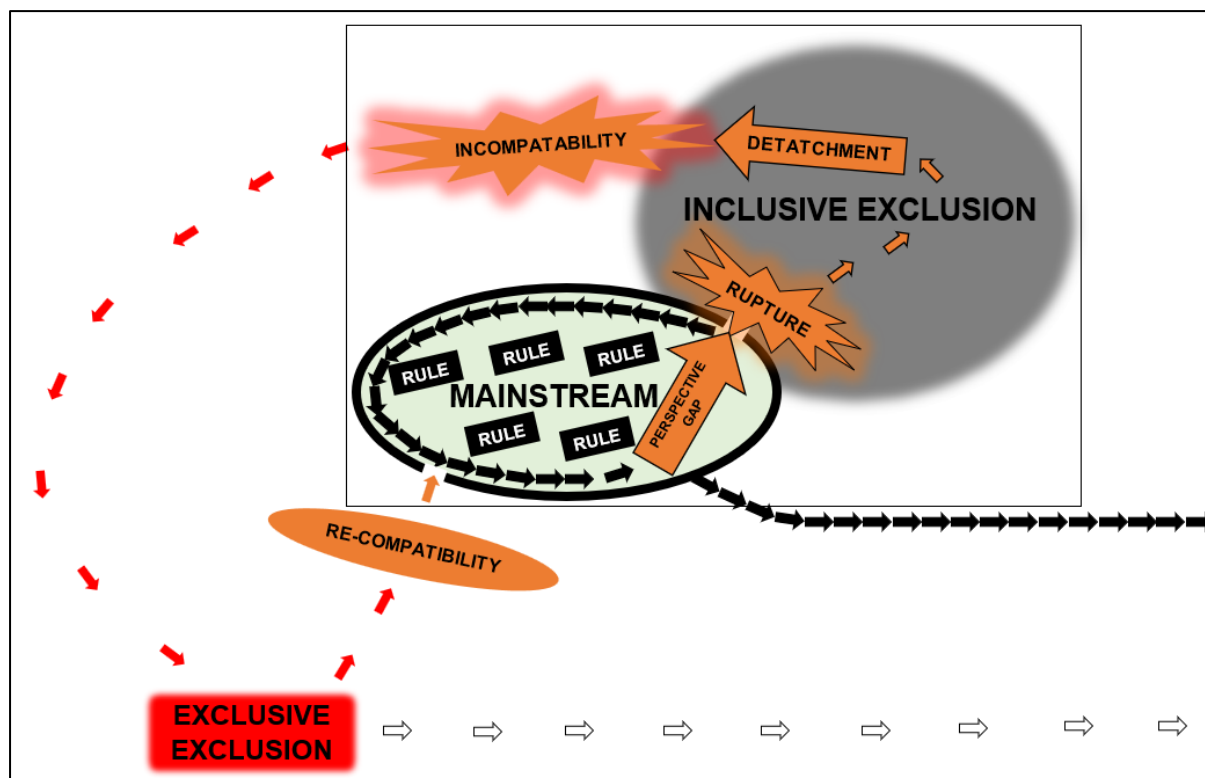
Figure 4. 3: A diagrammatic representation of the layering of exclusion

4.7.6 Producing the Report

This step involved writing-up my research findings. My aim was to provide "a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data [told] – within and across [the] themes" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 93). Here, Braun and Clarke advise that "[e]xtracts need to be embedded within an analytic narrative that compellingly illustrates the story … [that] go *beyond* description of the data, and make an *argument* in relation to [the] research question[s]" (2006, p. 93 emphasis in original). And so, I viewed "[t]he reporting task … not simply [as] an act of recording the outcomes of the analysis but also an active construction and re-presentation of the form and nature of the topics being explored" (White *et al.,* 2014, p. 368). The way I wrote up the research was partially influenced by my observation that exclusive exclusion spaces are often forgotten spaces. Pupil referral units, although responsible for educating children and subject to the same Ofsted inspection

framework as mainstream schools, are not classified as schools, but as 'alternative provision'. An 'alternative' has a number of connotations, sometimes positive and sometimes negative. In the context of schooling, arguably, the connotations carry a negative bent. And yet, these spaces contain some of the most vulnerable children in the country and, once permanently excluded, there are no further responsibilities towards these children from the mainstream schools they previously attended. These are therefore, arguably, marginal spaces and, consequently, it is easy to forget these children. The situatedness of these children, in particular, was a key reason why my approach to this research was underpinned by Article 12 of the United Nations Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which is the right of children to express their views on all matters affecting them and to have these views properly considered (OHCHR, 2013).

This approach, in turn, necessarily impacted on the way I presented the data. This is because "[r]eporting is a continuation and refinement of the analytical journey" (White *et al.*, 2014, p. 368) with its primary aim being to "explore, unravel and explain the complexity of the findings in an engaging and insightful way while at the same time producing an accessible and coherent narrative" (ibid). There were a number of approaches from White *et al.* (2014) that I followed in the write-up process. These were: avoiding numerical statements because "the purpose of qualitative research is not to measure prevalence, but to map range and diversity, and to explore and explain the links between different phenomena" (White *et al.*, 2014, p. 377). I also agreed with the contention that the use of the interview data was able to convey emotion with a particular view more powerfully than description and therefore, my general approach with the use of quotations was to illustrate and amplify (White *et al.*, 2014).

4.8   Research Credibility

Often when discussing the credibility of research, matters of reliability and validity are discussed (Lewis *et al.*, 2014; Bryman, 2016; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Mason, 2018). Reliability "refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. In other words, if the study is repeated, will it yield the same results?" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 250). Validity "refers to the extent to which a finding is well-founded and accurately reflects the phenomenon being studied" (Lewis *et al.*, 2014, p. 354). Due to the nature and methods of qualitative research a specific set of considerations are required to discuss these matters which go to the heart of the credibility of the research produced. This is because, "[o]ne of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 242). This has been termed 'abstraction', that is "a way of individuating objects, and of characterizing

their attributes and relationships … Even where we are interested in wholes we must select and abstract their constituents" (Sayer, 1992, p. 86).

Therefore, "qualitative researchers seek to exhibit, well-grounded links between the concepts and conclusions they develop, and examples drawn from the data from which these have been derived" (Lewis *et al.*, 2014, p. 357). Nevertheless, it is a "need to be reassured about the sturdiness of a finding, beyond just the study sample, that links questions about reliability to those surrounding generalisation" (Lewis *et al.*, 2014, p. 355). Therefore, what follows are my thoughts on how generalisations can be drawn from my research in relation to the parent population of the sample (representation generalisation); other settings in which similar conditions to those studied may exist (inferential generalisation); and as a contribution to generating or enhancing ideas and theories (theoretical generalisation) (Lewis *et al.*, 2014, p. 359).

There are 3,458 state-funded secondary schools in England with 3,493,507 students who attend them (DfE, 2021c). These statistics do not include pupil referral units (PRUs) which generally provide an education to students in local authority areas who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. There are 348 PRUs in England, attended by 12,785 students. Most students in PRUs are boys (72.9%) and over half of the students (53.1%) are eligible for free school meals (DfE, 2021c). However, the research in this study was based on interviews with small samples of participants of this wider phenomenon, who were based in particular geographies of the country and, therefore, the findings cannot be generalised on a statistical basis. As explained above, the samples were chosen not to be statistically representative, but to provide a range of opinions to support with the answers to the research questions. Therefore, it was a deliberate choice to aim to carry out the research in a pupil referral unit in the north as well as the south and to interview senior leaders working in schools in different parts of the country with different cohorts of students and, therefore, different contexts of socio-economic disadvantage.

I have, consequently, set out the theoretical basis for the study and provided the time and context in which they were found to hold (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is argued that for qualitative studies, transferability relies on "the degree of similarity between sending and receiving (or earlier and later) contexts" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 316). Thus, whilst I cannot specify the external validity – the degree to which the findings can be generalised outside the research sites – of my enquiry, I have, as far as is ethically possible, provided thick description about the context of the research sites and participants "to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (ibid). My research may also contribute to the broader social theory in this area,

what has been termed 'theoretical generalisability' (Lewis *et al.*, 2014). It is argued that "[t]he particular value of qualitative research lies in its ability to explore issues in depth, from the perspectives of different participants, with theories and explanations developed inductively from the data" (Lewis *et al.*, 2014, p. 353). Therefore, my research may also contribute to spatial theory in education and, also, to more general theories about school exclusion which I have outlined in the, above, conceptual frameworks.

The design and conduct of research, of course, impacts on questions of credibility. I have reflected on these matters in the above sections on design and method. Here, however, I reflect on my positionality as the researcher which also links to the credibility of the research. This is because in social research "human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, [and therefore] interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 243). Despite this,

> … the thought objects of those who are being studied are not, except in self-reflection, the same as those of the investigator, and it is misleading to imagine otherwise. *Although social phenomena cannot exist independently of actors or subjects, they usually do exist independently of the particular individual who is studying them* (Sayer, 1992, p. 49 emphasis in original).

The University of Cambridge's Doctorate of Education is "aimed at professional practitioners and those in related fields … who are committed to extending their understanding and improving practice" (University of Cambridge, 2021). Consequently, "there are also methodological issues, particularly related to the role of researcher in conducting studies, that are theoretically grounded in any critical perspective analyzing power relations that need to be considered in critical qualitative studies" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 62). Although reflexive approaches have been criticised for being too subjective (Lynch, 2000), it can be useful for social science researchers to "be reflective about the implications of their methods, values, biases, and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate" (Bryman, 2016, p. 388). Doing so allows the reader to make judgements on "the researcher-participant relationship and how one affects the other in the research process" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 63) because, "[t]he researcher is viewed as implicated in the construction of knowledge through the stance that he or she adopts in relation to what is observed and through the ways in which an account is transmitted in the form of a text" (Bryman, 2016, p. 388).

In my research I attempted an 'empathetic neutral' approach, that means I "[strove] to avoid obvious, conscious or systematic bias and to be as neutral as possible in the collection,

interpretation and presentation of data" (Ormston *et al.*, 2014, p. 22). Despite this, I recognise ways in which my position may have affected the nature of my research. My perspectives have probably been shaped by my background growing up in London, my education in state-schools and universities, my interest in current affairs and my teaching career. I currently work full-time as Head of School of a large, comprehensive school in London. This is the second position in my career, to-date, on the senior leadership team of a school and also, the second position where my role has a significant pastoral aspect (outside of being a form tutor). Both of these roles, combined with working in schools with proportions of disadvantaged students above the national average, has exposed me to an awareness of various very traumatic encounters that some young people have experienced including living in homes where domestic abuse has taken place, young people who have been victims to (and have committed) various types of assaults and other misdemeanours and, also, a number of young people who have been taken into care both before and since joining the secondary schools I have worked in. My experience has been that these types of events generally happen in dysfunctional, socio-economically deprived households. Despite these challenges, some of the disadvantaged students I have encountered during my career have gone on to achieve some impressive things, including academically, whilst at school. However, too many have not. For me, there are a number of inequalities that must be addressed in society to enable many of these young people to properly have a fair shot in life.

My research is focused predominantly on the exclusion of disadvantaged students. Working in senior leadership has meant that I have been involved in several decisions which have led to young people being excluded – both inclusively and exclusively. My view is that it is sometimes necessary for young people to be excluded; mainly when their actions adversely affect the safety and/or wellbeing of others. My general experience of the worst behaviours in schools is that, on the whole, they occur when young people are in groups and play off each other. My experience has been that there are a small minority of students, not always those diagnosed with special educational needs who do not seem able to cope with a mainstream timetable in the way it is currently constituted in secondary schools. By 'cope' I mean behave in a way which does not persistently defy the rules in place in the school. In my current school, I have worked to implement a 'school-within-a-school' model which educates these young people away from the main school population. It is designed to be different from an isolation room (which has been a feature of all the schools I have worked in) as it is not intended to be a sanction. Nevertheless, as these young people are not receiving the same experience as the mainstream population of the school, I recognise that this is a form of inclusive exclusion. My broader perspective on this is that many of the disadvantages that these young people encounter are socio-economic, emanating from outside of the school, but affecting their

participation in it. Consequently, many of these disadvantages need to be better addressed with policy and practice at the state level.

The fact that I was researching in a field that I work in means that I was an 'insider' and this status "can affect whether one has access to participants, as well as to the kinds of stories they will tell the researcher" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 63). In my request to conduct research with the schools and pupil referral units in this study, I informed the headteachers that I am a senior leader in a secondary school. I also informed the research participants of this fact. On the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix E) I gave to the interviewees, I stated that outcomes for disadvantaged students have long been a concern for those in and around the educational community. Also, that these students find themselves excluded at a disproportionately higher rate than their peers and so the research I conducted sought to further understand the factors within schooling that led up to these exclusions. These are factual statements, and I did not reveal any of my wider perspectives or experiences as I did not want these to influence the answers that interviewees gave. Nevertheless, the fact that I was researching in this area in the first place, probably revealed that this was an area of interest to me. The Participant Information Sheet (Appendix E) was also on paper headed with the University of Cambridge logo. It is not possible to know how this approach or how I, as the researcher, were perceived by those who chose to take part and, indeed, those who chose not to, but I recognise that my positionality may have affected the willingness of the interviewees to take part in the research and, also, the answers they gave. Although with thematic analysis, "researcher judgement is necessary to determine what a theme is" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82), the themes in this study were driven by the theory in the conceptual framework and the experiences and perspectives of the research participants. Reflexivity was also maintained with regular meetings with Professor Susan Robertson, my supervisor.

4.9   Research Ethics

Conducting social science research requires a consideration of a number of ethical concerns which "relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research and of the disciplines that are involved" (Bryman, 2016, p. 120). My research proposal gained ethical approval from the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge. Underpinning my ethical approach is a commitment to the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018):

   a. Social science is fundamental to a democratic society, and should be inclusive of different interests, values, funders, methods and perspectives.
   b. All social science should respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values and dignity of individuals, groups and communities.

c. All social science should be conducted with integrity throughout, employing the most appropriate methods for the research purpose.

d. All social scientists should act with regard to their social responsibilities in conducting and disseminating their research.

e. All social science should aim to maximise benefit and minimise harm.
   (BERA, 2018, p. 4)

The BERA (2018) sets out seven responsibilities that researchers have towards participants. What follows is an exposition of how the research I conducted complied with these responsibilities.

4.9.1 Consent

Research participants were given a 'Participant Information Sheet' (Appendix E). The sheet contained information about the research and a consent form. In order to conduct the research, the 'gatekeepers' of the schools – the headteachers – were approached and agreed to the research being conducted. I started each interview with a verbal explanation of the research and a chance to ask any questions. As most of my research participants were secondary school aged children (11- to 16-year-olds), this required further ethical considerations. Here, I committed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly the best interests of the child being of primary consideration (Article 3) and the right of children to express their views freely in all matters affecting them (Article 12). The children who took part in the research were selected following discussions with research facilitators – staff delegated by the headteachers who helped with identifying students who would be able to provide their experiences and perspectives that addressed the research questions. There were no obvious factors affecting the ability of these students to provide informed consent. Parents/carers also consented for their children to participate in the research.

BERA (2018) guidelines also encourage researchers to reflect on how their own practice may impinge upon others for example, in an imbalance in power relationships arising from the dual roles of teacher and researcher which "may also introduce explicit tensions in areas such as confidentiality" (BERA, 2018, p. 13). Therefore, despite being Head of School in a mainstream secondary school during the course of this research and having a working relationship with colleagues who worked in the pupil referral unit in the borough, I chose not to conduct any research in these institutions.

4.9.2 Transparency

BERA (2018) guidelines also state the "[p]rinciples of consent also apply to possible reuse of data … if data are to be reused, this should be made clear as a possibility when gaining initial

consent" (BERA, 2018, p. 17). Therefore, the Participant Information Sheet set out that the interview data may be used in future presentations or articles in anonymised form. There were not deemed to be any conflict of interests in the research conducted.

4.9.3   Right to Withdraw

Research participants had the right to withdraw from the research for any reason or no reason up to the point of the anonymisation of the data. The Participant Information Sheet also informed participants that if they wanted to raise any questions or concerns, they could contact me (my University of Cambridge email address was provided) and/or my supervisor (whose University of Cambridge email address was also provided).

4.9.4   Incentives

No financial incentives were offered or provided for participation in the research.

4.9.5   Harm Arising from Participation in Research

The research involved participants reflecting on their perspectives and experiences on the nature of school exclusion. I did not anticipate that this would cause specific harm to the participants but recognised that recounting experiences may re-live traumatic events. I took a non-confrontational approach to interviewing and allowed participants to share what they were comfortable with, albeit following-up if I thought more detail could be provided. All the research with the children was conducted in the pupil referral units they attended. I have Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance which is required for adults who work in regulated activity with children (DfE, 2021b) and all the interviews with child participants took place in the presence of a member of staff from the pupil referral unit. The workload pressures on teachers were anticipated and therefore, I tried to be as flexible as possible with when and how the interviews could take place.

4.9.6   Privacy and Data Storage

I took note of Recital 26 of the GDPR (Privazy Plan, 2021) and in order to protect the privacy of the research participants, real names of people and institutions have been replaced with pseudonyms. If the roles of any participants seemed quite specific, I have generalised these. If other people or places have been discussed in interview responses, these have been redacted or pseudonymised. During the course of the research, a number of revelations were made about traumatic encounters that the students had experienced, I have not tied these home-life experiences to specific students, despite anonymising the participants. I have, however, provided a sense of the traumatic experiences amongst all of the students when discussing the research spaces, above. Interview data were stored on an encrypted password protected device and transcribed. All identifiable data were deleted following the completion of the study.

4.9.7   Disclosures

There were no disclosures by research participants that I deemed of specific concern either for their safety or of others that required further action.

4.10   Chapter Conclusion

If we are to make progress on addressing the position of disadvantage students in the education system, we need to better understand why they disproportionately find themselves excluded from the mainstream. I have argued in this chapter that this cannot be done by reference to numbers alone. Indeed, if it could, perhaps, we would have a better handle of the problem than we presently do; statistics have their uses – they consistently reveal the poorer position of disadvantaged students compared to their more advantaged peers and, in doing so, reveal the scale of the problem. Statistics, however, reveal less about what it is in the education system which leads to these outcomes. An overreliance on numbers when dealing with complicated social problems can lead to a 'level-abstracted' view of the problem (Elder-Vass, 2010). Therefore, I argue in order to make progress on this issue we need to listen to, and reflect upon, the experiences and perspectives of those who frame and maintain mainstream spaces – school senior leaders – and the experiences and perspectives of those who find that they cannot properly engage with what is expected in these spaces – certain students. Therefore, this study uses a critical realist methodology to attempt to understand these challenges. Doing so, helps to provide a more nuanced and deeper understanding of causation; not just the 'naïve objectivism' (Sayer, 1992) of positivism which relies on surface-level analysis or the 'radical relativism' (ibid) of constructionism which relies on what anyone says, goes. Critical realism allows for a consideration of the generative mechanisms behind the dilemma which contribute to these problematic outcomes. And it is to these mechanisms which this study now turns.

Chapter 5: Mainstream Space

5.1 Chapter Introduction

What makes a mainstream space 'mainstream'? The latest school census (January 2021) revealed that there are 3,493,507 students attending 3,458 state-funded secondary schools (DfE, 2021c) so, the average sized secondary school has on its roll around 1,000 students. Mainstream spaces, therefore, have to be particularly large and all-encompassing. In schools, these spaces are "for children who can be taught in the same way as most other children" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). In this chapter I consider how the mainstream schools in this study go about this, and the subsequent implications for those students who do not fit comfortably in these spaces.

Firstly, there is a discussion of how creating a good reputation is fundamental to the way mainstream schools operate. A key element of any school's reputation is the academic outcomes of its students. For schools with disadvantaged students this also includes the 'closing the gap' agenda. The gap is the distance between the outcomes of disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged peers. As observed, above, nationally this gap is substantial, and all of the case schools believed they had an important role in closing it. This approach naturally emphasises datafication, particularly ordinalization (Fourcade, 2016), and is an important aspect of the framing of the mainstream spaces in the schools. A potential problem with this approach, however, is that it focuses our attention on averages and negates nuances and contexts. The case schools are all operating in varying challenging contexts and consequently, socio-economic disadvantage looks different in all three settings. The state's approach to tackling this challenge is compensatory – the pupil premium – however, although this funding is welcomed by the schools there are differing views about to what extent this goes far enough.

Next, I consider how the schools work to protect their mainstream spaces. This is done by making these spaces normative, establishing certain rules. Acquiescing to the rules leads to rewards and defiance of the rules results in sanctions which involves exclusion from the mainstream space in some form or other. A key contention of this study is that exclusion is broader than it is popularly conceptualised; it can be inclusive *and* exclusive, to be further discussed in the following chapter. Two of the schools – Oakside Grove and Crestview – took a 'no excuses' approach to the maintenance of the rules in their schools and the other – St John Kemble – took a less strict approach. This all revealed a balancing act for the schools as to where 'the bulge' appeared when dealing with students whose behaviour ruptured the

mainstream border. In some cases, this bulge appeared with fixed term exclusions, and in other cases with internal exclusions and detentions. What the students in this research project clearly expressed was their disdain for these rules, and those who they felt were imposing them.

Finally, and leading on from the observations about the maintenance of rules in mainstream spaces is a discussion about how this develops from, and further contributes to, a perspective gap. A key element of this gap in perspectives was a feeling by the students that they were being forced to learn content that was not entirely relevant to their lives. This becomes an important aspect of how they navigate exclusion space and will be discussed further in Chapter 7. What the students seemed to be describing was their feelings of a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) towards them by the education system. There were a number of examples which seemed to highlight the perspective gap and for the students, they were all characterised by opprobrium towards teachers in mainstream spaces.

5.2   Closing the Gap

The notion of 'closing the gap' has become a national priority in education and it is both an important value and aspect of the work of the schools in this study. For the leaders of these schools, the Progress 8 score and the gap between the score of pupil premium students and non-pupil premium students is a key part of their school's identity and purpose. At St John Kemble, where around half of the students are officially classified as disadvantaged, the Headteacher, Victoria Moore, was proud that the school's most recent Progress 8 score was practically the same for these students as for the students not classified in this group. Ms Moore expressed that "in the real exams in 2019, the pupil premium gap was zero," which she described as "one of my proudest moments". She explained how "we've been eroding it and eroding it for years and then finally getting to the state where … we'd cracked it." This approach is unsurprising in a school where so many of the students are disadvantaged, but it was also a source of pride for the Headteacher of Crestview School, William Harris, where a much smaller proportion of students are officially disadvantaged. Mr Harris described how he was "proud to say that we've got a really good progress score for our disadvantaged children." This all seems to highlight the importance of data in education systems, and subsequently datafication practices in framing normative values in these spaces. An example of the scale of these datafication practices was given in a response from Graham Evans, Deputy Head at Oakside Grove:

Graham Evans: So we collect data on positive and negative behaviour events. We collect data on attendance. We collect data on such things as that relate to our personal ethos … and those all have points attached. So those are behaviour style rewards. And then

> we have a set of data that we capture at three data points in order to make sure we meet the statutory requirements for reporting. Within each of those points we collect for all year groups. We obviously analyse the sub-groups such as SEN, male and female, any ethnic groups and so on and so forth in order to make sure we cover any students such as PP that we need to keep a close eye on in terms of national performance against outcomes especially if we've been seen to be performing poorly in the past. So we do know that we have an issue historically with White British boys underperforming against peers both nationally and in our own school. Consequently, the pupil premium White boys are our key group and we do frequently monitor those in terms of ensuring that we are there to intervene with support from intervention strategies, progress leads, form tutors, their individual class teachers and then there's a range of different activities, strategies, interventions that we put in place in order to meet those groups.

There is a quandary here: on the one hand, without data, there may be erasure. That is to say, data indicate to us the differentials in outcomes between disadvantaged and non/less-disadvantaged students. If we did not know about this, then the problem may go unmasked. In other words, if we do not create groups of students, then inequalities may go unaddressed. Mr Evans' contention that a "close eye" needed to be kept on certain groups for national performance measures was telling, however. This is because the other hand of the quandary is that data can sometimes mean that the nuance of the situation can be lost. As Robertson notes, "[d]ata can be used to point to, and make visible, particular objects/subjects in the landscape … Quantities of data, and processes of quantification, tend to flatten reality and nuance in an effort to make things comparable" (2022, p. 205). These comparisons are made with both national and local data. This appears to demonstrate the dominance of ordinality as a mode of classification which, necessarily, relies on comparison: in order for there to be a gap to close, there must be at least two different positions. Fourcade observed that "modern ordinal judgments often tend toward numerical commensuration (and thus cardinality), which removes the sting of opinion and turns the production of rankings into a seemingly dispassionate exercise of quantification" (2016, p. 178).

At a national, quantifiable, level it would be difficult to handle the data in any other way. However, at the school level this may be a more problematic approach. This is because, whilst these data help to keep a focus on the position of disadvantage students, by lumping all disadvantaged students together as a piece of datum, the focus can become blurred. These data are, of course, averages. Averages, by definition, as well as having a middle and an above, must also have a below. This seems to be an important aspect of the exclusion that some disadvantaged students experience in the education system; in trying to fit the border around all 1,000 or so students in a given school, some students fall out of place. This

underlines the challenges with the one-size-fits-all approach currently operating in the English education system. Nevertheless, it is clear that each school, even in the two cold-spot areas, are working with a set of challenges particular to their context. These socio-economic contexts that the schools operate in are crucial parts of their identities and are also important in determining how these school leaders frame the mainstream spaces within their schools.

Thus, perhaps, a key problem with the 'closing the gap' narrative is not so much the intentions behind the endeavour by schools, but that it locates this gap narrowly as an academic, rather than a socio-economic, gap. And a focus at this level is likely to be 'level-abstracted' (Elder-Vass, 2010). Ms Moore explained the transient nature of such a focus:

Victoria Moore: So one of the things that we found out to our cost and I'm sure that lots of schools do this, so you have this plethora of things that you're doing, so, you know, cherry-picking these little things from this group and that group and it all kind of seems to work and you're really happy with yourself and smug because you've closed the gap and then the next year it widens out again.

This is also represented at the national level where if current trends continue, it is estimated that it would take over 500 years for this gap to be eliminated at secondary level in English and maths (Hutchinson, Reader and Akhal, 2020). Thus, the problem with this narrative is that it relies on the notion that all students are operating on a level playing field and that any deficits can be adjusted by education alone. As Bourdieu (1984) discussed, one's practice is both structured (influenced by socio-economic circumstance) and also structuring (continues to shape that practice). This, of course, affects how one operates in the field. However, "one does not embark on the game by a conscious act, one is born into the game, with the game; and the relation of investment, *illusio*, investment, is made more total and unconditional by the fact that it is unaware of what it is" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 67 emphasis in original).

The leaders of the case schools explained how the nature of the socio-economic disadvantage some of their students face contextualises both the ways these children approach the education provided to them and, also, the ways the school then provides this education to them. At Oakside Grove, Mr Evans explained how disadvantage tends to run in chains. He described how most of the families at the school have not been in work and then had subsequent children which he said, "creates a pattern of students who end up in disproportionately low paid jobs, have poor outcomes and are unlikely to improve their life chances." The vast majority of students at Oakside Grove School are White British, which Mr Evans contrasted with the more ethnically diverse schools he previously worked at in the same local area in the north of England. Mr Evans said he believed "the challenges are much more difficult in a White working-class school." He said this was because there is a "general lack of

willingness to take responsibility for underachievement." He believes that this is a cultural issue and compared it to his experiences in previous schools he worked at with higher proportions of African families and Asian families who he said were "willing to support the school in trying to find the best for the child all the way through the school."

Mr Evans' observation about the students not seeing the worth in it was an important part of my research findings that came up several times. I consider this later in this chapter when I discuss the perspective gaps that develop in secondary schools between some students and the staff who work in them. Mr Evans' contention, however, about the challenges being more difficult in a White working-class school may not necessarily be the case outside of his specific experiences. In a more ethnically diverse school in a different area of the country – the south of England – with very high proportions of Black and Asian students, the challenges appeared to be very similar, with Ms Moore, the Headteacher describing the school as "very, very complex." And in this context, it was the variety of needs, which Ms Moore described as the "triple or quadruple whammy," that often made the situation more challenging.

However, whilst Mr Evans identified the nature of White working-class British students lacking engagement with school, for Ms Moore it was Black Caribbean students. Both leaders also discussed how a number of these students had special educational needs and as Ms Moore observed, "one or two of those things together might not be that complex, but suddenly you've got three or four and it becomes a much harder nut to crack." These factors of student identity allow me to revisit a discussion I had earlier in the introduction of this thesis. This is Fraser's argument that people need to be "weaned from their attachment to current cultural constructions of their interests and identities" (Fraser, 1997, p. 31). As these matters of identity are so integral to one's experiences and perspectives, I am not convinced that Fraser's argument is a feasible one. Nevertheless, at the same time the similar challenges that both schools encountered despite their different contexts also seemed to confirm the centrality of class in engendering specific outcomes in the educational context (Archer and Yamashita, 2003; Gazeley *et al.*, 2015; Lim, 2020).

In contrast to the two schools in cold-spot areas, Crestview School is located in a hot-spot rural area. The proportion of students classified as disadvantaged is much lower than at Oakside and St John Kemble. This caused William Harris the Headteacher of the school to have a different perspective on disadvantage to the two other senior leaders who I interviewed. Mr Harris asserted:

William Harris: First of all, not that I was any great fan of Theresa May, you understand, but she did come up with a phrase which had a certain resonance and has a certain value and that was 'just about managing'. Because what tends to happen is all the policy

making and all the media interest is focused on those young people and those families who are the most extreme end of the socio-economic spectrum and of course their need is great, of course it is, no-one would dispute that … but actually what that ignores is a great swathe of potentially as many as 20 or 30 percent of the population who for various reasons aren't quite at that level of deprivation, but nevertheless they are only just above it and they're only just keeping above it and their parents are unlikely to have a great deal of education and life consists of making-do and long working hours and all those sorts of things that are very much part of that life and that feeds very much into those children's lives.

Crestview is located in an area which serves the children of members of the armed forces. These children attract a 'service pupil premium' of £310 per student in contrast to the £955 per student that the pupil premium provides to secondary schools. Mr Harris said this failed to adequately recognise the social disadvantage of these children who, he argued, were "every bit [as] socio-economically deprived." He said that this was an "unfair" situation and criticised what he perceived as a lack of focus on rural deprivation. Mr Harris described how there was a large army base in the middle of his county which did not get counted in the census because of the mobility of the battalions. He pointed to different indicators of disadvantage of the students who attended his school which are not the kind that are used to judge free school meal eligibility and, therefore, he observed "an awful lot of our kids, probably as many as 70 or 80 percent of them come from families who fit the description of 'just about managing'". Mr Harris complained that "rural deprivation tends to get mixed up with isolation and a lack of access to opportunities." Mr Harris observed that this was problematic for his school "because deprivation and disadvantage take many forms and some of them are more visible than others and some of the less visible ones are ones that are nevertheless important." This observation about the visibility of disadvantage highlights a discussion I began above in the introduction. There I recognised the concern about how accurately free school meals as a metric is able to capture the scale of deprivation in the country (Hobbs and Vignoles, 2010; Gorard, 2012; Taylor, 2018). Under this metric, about 1 in 5 students are eligible for free school meals which does not capture the full level of deprivation. Nevertheless, although this may be an unsatisfactory situation, it does allow us to gain some insights on the scale of the problem. This is notwithstanding my earlier arguments about the specificity of schools' contexts and the need to address socio-economic inequalities at a level higher than the school.

The school leaders believed that their schools had a role in addressing socio-economic disadvantage although they had differing confidence on how successful this could be. Although Ms Moore believed that by working with their young people and their families they would "eradicate disadvantage and … change it forever", at the other cold-spot school in the study, Mr Evans expressed more caution about the school's ability to compensate for the

socio-economic disadvantage experienced by many of the school's students. He said that was an outcome that was "unlikely", however, he did believe "we can use it in order to influence some members of individual underachieving groups." The students in the research also recognised the impact that socio-economic disadvantage could have on their educational experiences:

Brendan: People may think that £10 is a waste, say like rich kids, £10 is nothing, but to someone who has hardly any money, like a mum yeah that has like 5 children and she can't pay as much, that's a lot to them. And the Prime Minister should give like money to them or stuff like that.

Consequently, the students indicated that there needed to be more understanding from schools towards disadvantaged students. When I asked about her message for senior leadership teams in schools, Kirsty's response was "just to understand the kids and what they're going through. Some of them, you don't really know what's going on at home. They might be faking it at school … and you shouting at them or telling them off, I don't think is going to help them." I found Brendan's and Kirsty's reflections on what the government could do to improve the situation for poorer students particularly interesting:

Brendan: Like PE stuff, extra school clothes. Say someone lost their PE kit, don't give them a detention. Like for football, after school club, they can get a school football kit. School football shoes and stuff like that.

AM: Is that because you think it costs a lot of money, so you think that's a big pressure on parents?

Brendan: Yeah. Sometimes parents can't afford that.

Kirsty: Same as him, give more money to schools. Some kids they don't eat because they can't pay for the food there or some of them can't buy the school clothes that are there because it's too much and they're getting too overwhelmed with the pressure.

Of course, the government would point to its pupil premium policy which is its main directive on addressing the position of disadvantaged students. Although on the face of it, the policy apparently allows schools autonomy in how they use the funding this brings in, there was some criticism from the school leaders about its approach. Mr Evans criticised the funding for not being sufficient to address the scale of the challenge, and due to its fluctuating nature from year to year based on student numbers in the school, he said this made it hard with some elements of financial planning. In a slightly different vein, however, Mr Harris raised concerns that the reason the pupil premium has not made a substantial difference to addressing the educational gaps so far is because of the way selection works in the education system:

William Harris: The one thing I do think is important is that every school has a good balance of children from different backgrounds and that's why the comprehensive system kicks in there, because that's what should happen and it doesn't happen in this country. It is ghettoised with schools with extremely privileged children and others with very underprivileged children (…) get rid of parent choice, frankly. I know that doesn't play well politically but that's what you've got to do (…) That's what counts. That's what matters. Now, there's no amount of money that I can spend that will make that happen in my school, because that's dependent on the wider national policy framework, but it's important.

This all appears to illustrate what Ball (2003) referred to as 'self-regulating regulation'. In other words, on the face of it, the state grants autonomy to schools to compensate for socio-economic deficits that emanate from outside the school but heavily impact the way that many disadvantaged students access the education provided to them and, in turn, the academic outcomes they attain. In reality, however, this may be only the *appearance* of freedom in a devolved environment – "[c]entral to its functioning is the translation of complex social processes and events into simple figures or categories of judgement" (Ball, 2003, p. 217). Here, this simple category of judgement is the pupil premium policy, the efficacy of which is part of the Ofsted inspection framework. However, as I observed earlier, this is rarely placed into context to other socio-economic funding cuts affecting the same students (Britton, Farquharson and Sibieta, 2019; Hunter, 2019; Bolton, 2021).

5.3   Rules

This chapter began with a consideration of the implications of being 'mainstream'. The Cambridge Dictionary defines the mainstream as what is "considered normal, and having or using ideas, beliefs, etc. that are accepted by most people" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). But what is 'normal' and, perhaps, more importantly *why* is what is 'normal' normal? This consideration is important because, as Lefebvre (1991) noted, these social spaces do not just appear, they are produced. Mainstream spaces are considered 'normal' (what is expected and accepted) because 'normativity' (what is valued) is made the 'norm' (what tends to happen). Lefebvre (1991) remarked that social spaces are conceptualised (conceived space) and, for the operationalisation of space in schools, rules are not only vital but play a key role in the production and reproduction of space and its social relations.

By law, every school in England must have a behaviour policy and a review of the policies of the mainstream schools in this study reveals a number of rules that are common to all three including: wearing uniform correctly; having the correct equipment; ensuring mobile phones are not used; ensuring banned items are not brought to school. All of the policies refer to the importance of respect, good discipline and positive relationships. The policies set out the

rewards to be given to students for following the rules and the sanctions (including exclusion) for not doing so. Spatial practice takes place within a triad or trialectic (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996), and the way that space is both perceived and conceived necessarily impacts on the lived experiences of those operating within that space.

School leaders are crucial in shaping this space and it was interesting to note the differing approaches of the schools in the study. Oakside Grove and Crestview take a 'no excuses' approach. At Crestview, Mr Harris justified this approach because he contended "if you make a huge deal about the small stuff and you're very strict about that, you never get to the big stuff because you've already fought those battles." The clearest difference came with approaches to exclusions. Mr Harris explained that exclusions were used because "there are one or two families that are so toxic, so anti-education, so anti-authority whatsoever … that they will refuse to accept [sanctions short of exclusion]." At Oakside Grove, Mr Evans stated, "over the past three years we've had a historically high fixed term exclusion rate and we've had to readdress our EHCPs, SEN policy in order to make sure we address some of the issues that we've had as a result of that." Mr Evans also explained in the last full academic year (before lockdown necessitated school closures), seven students were permanently excluded. At St John Kemble, Ms Moore described a similar challenge, but a different approach:

Victoria Moore: We did have some really, really high exclusions. And then you have a lightbulb moment, almost, and you say this isn't working, so we're excluding all these young people, but it's making no difference. They come back and their behaviours are the same, so doing that does not change the behaviours that you are seeking to change. So we made a decision, I decided that we would try half a term not excluding any child to see what would happen. Would the system fall apart? Would there be rioting in the classrooms? Would we have mayhem in our corridors? And the fact of the matter is that none of those things happened. Nothing changed. So we might well have needed to look at improving behaviour, but exclusion wasn't part of that. And so we just radically changed. That was it really, that was the moment, that was about four years ago now and now we've got the lowest exclusions in [the borough], very low exclusions. Yes, we do still have some, but I see that as a failure when we've come to that point.

At this stage, it seems important to consider the importance of leadership. There exist a wide variety of conceptions of school leadership (Bush and Glover, 2003), with one author referring to an 'alphabet soup of leadership' in the education field (MacBeath, 2003). In turn, it has been asserted that this complexity has "splintered the notion into fragments to be isolated, studied, quantified, and made more objective" (Cuban, 1988, p. 192). In England, all teachers must follow teaching standards (DfE, 2011b) and headteachers have additional expectations (DfE, 2020). The state, therefore, asserts that "[p]arents and the wider public rightly hold high

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expectations of headteachers, given their influential position leading the teaching profession and on the young people who are their responsibility" (ibid). Nevertheless, there is some debate as to the extent of the influence. It has, for example, been argued that "the purposes of schools and schooling are determined elsewhere, by central government, by the World Bank, by a private consultancy firm, where the message is codified and transmitted to teachers" (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2008, p. 337). There is probably merit in this argument as schools are, after all, public organisations and state schools must work within a framework set by the state. This framework is, arguably, the "increasing challenges and constraints offered by new public management reforms characterized by an era of standards- based agendas, [and] enhanced centralized accountability systems" (Cranston, 2013, p. 213). Given this, it is patently not possible for headteachers to have full autonomy over their decision-making processes. I have already described one area where this is the case – the datafication of the education system. Nevertheless, it is also fair to say that school leaders do have powers within the framework set for them to make important decisions. But these decisions are further mediated, as I have argued throughout, by the context of the given school. And so, leadership is about choices, but these choices are always framed by local, national, and international contexts.

It is useful to go back to the discussion about the differences in approach on formal exclusions between Oakside Grove and St John Kemble. Although I noted there were commonalities of rules across all three case schools, what was revealed is the very difficult balancing act of how to enforce those rules. This is particularly the case if the school contains students who display behaviour that is contrary to the normative approaches being enforced in the space. Based on the accounts of Ms Moore and Mr Evans around four years ago there appears to have been a level of convergence in their approaches regarding the use of exclusions. Ms Moore explained that she wanted to change the system because it "made no difference." Perhaps, this is also the case at Oakside Grove. Certainly, the level of permanent exclusions in the last fully open academic year of the school – seven – seems to provide some indication that this is the case. Both leaders made interesting observations on what leads to pause for thought on such matters – perceptions of the staff. When I asked Mr Evans what he thought would be the impact of not externally excluding students he replied, "I think ultimately the question would be how the staff would view whether there was any authority in decisions that were being made." Similarly, Ms Moore said: "when I first said to staff "I'm not excluding," they literally threw their eyes up to heaven and went "yeah really, what's she on now!" ... I think people thought there's something wrong with that and they didn't like it because they thought they didn't get punished." This is probably an understandable perspective given that it is these staff

who are at the chalk-face with students and this all typifies a perspective gap between the two groups which I will discuss in the next section.

This all seems to indicate the importance of the perspectives of school leaders in shaping the normative values and approaches that constitute their mainstream spaces and this is an important part of how exclusion is layered in secondary schools. The change of approach initiated by Ms Moore at St John Kemble seems to have at its focus keeping students in the school, albeit some of the mainstream-contrary behaviour remains. To some extent, this all represents the shifting of a bulge. At Crestview, for example, Mr Harris noted, "we have loads of detentions. You get a detention in this place for breathing in the wrong direction … so the answer is detentions after school, all over the shop …" He also noted that the school "[fought] a lot of battles" at the level of internal exclusion. This was a similar situation at St John Kemble, where as Ms Moore said: "there is a role for internal exclusion because sometimes things do go wrong and there does need to be another sanction that you get to." In contrast, at Oakside Grove, Mr Evans told me that the school does not have a detention system or isolation room, and this may explain the high rates of formal exclusion at the school. I call these *inclusive excluding* practices which do not receive the same level of criticism that more exclusive excluding practices do. Perhaps, this is justified. Either way, their use deserves further consideration which will happen in the next chapter.

What came through very strongly from the students in this study was an almost complete intolerance of the rules in place in the mainstream spaces that they used to attend. Even the most apparently mundane of rules were viewed with quite profound contempt, as this exchange with Nathan exemplifies:

AM: Nathan, do you think there are any rules in secondary school that are fair?

Nathan: No.

AM: None at all? What about an expectation to get to school on time?

Nathan: Nah, because there could be traffic innit.

AM: What about getting to lessons on time when you're actually in school?

Nathan: If you got a big school and you have one lesson on the other side and you gotta get to the other lesson.

AM: What about when you're in a lesson, focusing in the lesson?

Nathan: What kind of a rule is that?

AM: Like not talking in the lesson or something like that?

Nathan: Oh. Nah, coz you might be talking about the work.

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At the heart of this intolerance of the school rules appeared to be a significant gap in perspective between the school leaders who were framing mainstream space and the students who were expected to operate in these spaces, to which this chapter now turns.

5.4 Perspective Gap

Our perspectives both determine, and are determined by, our values, judgements and approaches. So far, this chapter has outlined several commonalities in how mainstream spaces operate in relation to disadvantaged students – the values ('closing the gap'), the judgements (the rules) and the approaches (the sanctions and rewards and the pupil premium strategy). But not all students are always on board with these values, judgements and approaches; they see things differently, they want something different – this is the perspective gap. At the heart of this gap seems to be a difference of opinion between school leaders and teachers and some students on what the purpose of school is and what it should be. Most of the children I interviewed were in Key Stage 4 – Years 10 and 11 – which is typically the phase of secondary education when students study GCSE courses. The results of the subsequent exams are the lifeblood of any mainstream school and, as the school leaders indicated with their observations on the importance of data, are vital in framing their spaces. However, whilst the students generally recognised the importance of gaining GCSE qualifications, there was a strong sense of resentment at being forced to learn content they felt was irrelevant to them, as this exchange with James and Charlie exemplifies:

James: They don't teach you anything you need in life. When am I gonna have to fucking calculate lines on a triangle? How's that gonna help me? When am I gonna need that? Never. Ever.

AM: Do you think that GCSEs are important?

James: I think they are but they shouldn't be.

AM: And Charlie, you were talking about wanting to go into mainstream school because you wanted GCSEs. Is that right?

Charlie: Yeah, but if I was head of schools in England, I'd say you do everything in primary school, the basic stuff and then you get given options straight away going into secondary school. So it's like you can pick a certain amount of lessons that you do more than others and you still have your basic maths and English but it just won't be every single day like it normally is. Because I think if you just give— how old is it when you go into high school? 11?

AM: Yep.

James: I don't really think you know what you're gonna do when you're 11 though.

Charlie: I know but I think if they gave you like— you can have these options to pick and you can change them when you get to Year 9. So you can do these and then when you get to Year 9 that's when you actually get to decide your GCSE options. But I think giving kids, even though they don't know what they're doing, I just don't think anyone's gonna engage. I don't think every kid's gonna engage with regular maths and English every day. I think they should still do it but I don't think it should be like, constant. I think kids will be able to engage a lot more if they would be able to choose their lesson from the start. Coz even if you don't like them lessons, then they still feel like right I've chosen these so they're wanna go into it more because they feel like they're in charge of it and they have more ownership of it.

This is the perspective gap. James and Charlie had both been permanently excluded during this academic year when they both started at the PRU. They had both gone through primary school which they started aged 5. They then started their respective secondary schools aged 11. As they had both been excluded in Year 10, they had been through four years of secondary school and, like so many of the other students I spoke to, simply did not see the use in what they were doing at school and felt powerless in their studies. And yet teachers spend their whole careers teaching content which some students simply feel is irrelevant. Relevance is a topic I discuss later when I consider the operationalisation of exclusive exclusion space. But first, I wonder, what is at the heart of this perspective gap in mainstream spaces?

A key feature of the perspective gap is some very poor relationships between these students and staff at their secondary schools. Power is at the heart of any relationship and the students seemed to resent what they felt was their lack of power in this relationship. This was a feature of the responses at both PRUs. At Pendenford, Hani told me that he would like to see schools "not have so much power." On the back of this observation from Hani, Leanne replied that "they can literally tell you to do anything" and Hani then said: "they can tell you to go away and you can't really do nothing about it." Strangely, it seemed as though the students resented both being at the schools where these relationships were poor, but also not being at them. I have previously observed the combination of needs that many of these students have and James' and Charlie's reflections on their experiences of having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) at their schools seemed to illustrate the sense of powerlessness that all the students expressed in some form or other:

AM: And when do you think things started to go wrong in secondary school?

James: Soon as I joined.

AM: Why's that?

James: All the teachers were just weird and like, coz obviously I've got ADHD as well but they didn't try to do anything to help me with it like. They'd be like "yeah we're doing our best" but they weren't doing anything. Forced me to take my medication which turned me into a zombie, that's not helping nothing.

Charlie: That's exactly the same at my school. They kept saying "we're doing everything we can," when really they just give you a time-out card which would calm you down for a bit, but then you go back in and then it's straight back into it isn't it? So with my school they were meant to put me on some health care plan, which you get when you're on the ADHD pathway. So I was diagnosed with it by Year 8 and they never put it on, like they had two years to do it but they never put it on. If they'd put that on before everything happened in Year 10 then I'd probably still be there now.

During the interview both boys seemed really aggrieved at their experiences at the secondary schools they used to attend. They felt unsupported by their schools. For James in particular, this seemed to manifest itself in a sense of bitterness about the mainstream space, as this exchange demonstrated:

James: I don't try to be a cunt. I don't try to do things wrong, it just happens innit. Like, I can't control what I do.

AM: How would your experience have been better in school?

James: I'd want them to show a bit of respect innit. They demand respect, but they don't give me any. That's not how it works.

AM: And how could they have shown that respect to you?

James: If I like put something on the floor by accident, not getting in my face and start screaming. Like, chill out.

AM: Is there anything else about your experience in school that they should know or could have done differently?

James: They kicked me out straight away without like much warning. Like literally caught me one day with some'it on me, kicked me out. But my mate who goes to same school, he's got like a half-timetable innit. So it's just treating everyone different innit, it's not right (…)

Charlie: Well in my school the headteacher said that he doesn't believe in ADHD. I don't really need to say anything else really do I? If the headteacher of a school doesn't believe in things like that, then how does any kid that's got ADHD or autism or Asperger's or some'it, how do they have a chance in that school if the headteacher doesn't believe in it? Then it's like they don't really understand it. It's like what he was saying like I don't try to be a cunt, it's like you do things and the teachers just

kind of think oh you're just showing off, you're trying to get a 'laff, when really it just happens, like it's an impulsive thing and they don't really understand that.

It was interesting to compare the boys' perspectives with that of the Headteacher of the strictest case school in my research. Doing so clearly revealed the nature of the perspective gap:

William Harris: (…) we have a very simple behaviour system, we call it 'ready to learn'. And in ready to learn, kids know how to behave, unless there is something which is very seriously wrong and diagnosable and I don't just mean that ADHD label that's thrown about at anything that's a bit of a problem or moderate learning difficulties which is another euphemism for we don't know what's going wrong, but actually this kid isn't behaving themself I don't mean that. We medicalise far too much of this. There are kids that have deep rooted medical and psychological conditions that need a different approach but that ain't most kids, even if they're labelled as such. Most kids need clarity and care in their home lives and in their school lives. They need stability. They need the adults to stick around in their life.

These perspectives are clearly diametrically opposed and it seems obvious how, in turn, this gap in perspective may lead to the kinds of rupture of the mainstream border that I discuss in the following chapter. During the course of the interview with Charlie and James, we got on to a discussion about Charlie's habit of tapping his pen on the table during his lessons. Charlie recognised that this may be disruptive and said it would be "fair enough" if a teacher with "a level of respect" told him to stop doing it. James, on the other hand, was particularly opinionated in his defence of Charlie's actions and would not countenance how such behaviour might disrupt a lesson:

James: I don't think a pen can disrupt a class. And if it can you're not ready for the real world so, too bad. Get used to it.

AM: When you say you don't feel a pen can disrupt a class, why do you say that?

James: Well if you're getting distracted by a pen being tapped then you're not ready for the real world are ya? So get used to it.

AM: Does it depend on what's happening in that lesson at the time?

James: I don't see how it can ruin someone's day, just sitting there tapping a pen. Like get used to it.

Charlie: I think it just depends on what kid it is coz you don't know what other people in that class are like. Like someone else in that class could have ADHD as well and then you're there going [knocks three times on the table] and they're getting all frustrated because they can't focus—

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James: That's the world. Get used to it. Can't change it.

Again, the mainstream-contrary behaviour that this perspective gap leads to is what ultimately results in these students being deemed incompatible with mainstream space, which is the last vestige of these students' links with their secondary schools in inclusive exclusion space. James' constant reference to the "real world" seemed significant and appeared to link with the observations of the students that what was happening in mainstream spaces was not relevant to their lives – it was not their real world. This is something I consider further, when I discuss the experiences of the students in their exclusive exclusion spaces. These perspective gaps were a dominant feature of the reflections from the students and also the views of the staff in the schools they used to attend. At Alberton Emily told me, "on the day I was excluded I literally never saw the school again. One day, one fight and then I was just gone. So I think that was a bit bad. I feel like they treated me a bit shitty really …" And, in the same focus group, Jennifer told me that "there are some teachers that have lied about so many things and got me in so much trouble at home and mum obviously didn't believe me because it was an adult." These, however, were completely different perspectives to the schools they used to attend. Although I did not interview staff at Emily's and Jennifer's previous schools, Denise Shaw, Head of Studies at Alberton PRU, explained the reasons their schools gave for excluding them. Jennifer's fight was described by her former Headteacher as "the worst fight she's seen in her entire history of teaching" and Jennifer was excluded for "constant disruptive behaviour … silliness that's got out of hand."

It is difficult to overstate just how much disdain the students had for the staff in the schools they used to attend. This contrasted with the feelings they had towards their teachers in the exclusive exclusion spaces. Lucy, for example, said that in the exclusive exclusion spaces "teachers aren't as rude and that like. They'll talk to you on a level and shit. They don't talk to you like you're a kid and that. They'll treat you with the respect that they want to get back." Da'juan explained that he would "do the work for some teachers here coz I like them. Like they're a nice person. But I won't if they talk shit. Like if they try to say stuff like she's my mum." These were, then, highly transactional relationships. The opprobrium towards their teachers in mainstream spaces from the students appeared to be a reaction to the symbolic violence they felt they were experiencing from the 'pedagogic authority' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). At its most obvious, this is invested in teachers who deliver the education but also, and perhaps more significantly, in those who control curriculum content – the state. This is significant because it is the state which directs schools as to what is valid and invalid. The National Curriculum; the nature and content of GCSEs; what counts towards success criteria for schools; when and how this success criteria should be measured – these are all decisions made from the perspectives of those working in government. But these perspectives are

dominated by similar sorts of people with similar sorts of experiences which, in turn, excludes the perspectives of many in disadvantaged groups. Again, the perspectives of James and Charlie are illustrative here:

James: I just think like, they just don't really care. They just wanna get their money and go home. Put a PowerPoint together, go through it, get their money and then go home. They don't really care about students—

Charlie: That's like what one of my maths teachers said. She said, "I don't like kids, I'm just here because I get paid." You're not meant to have teachers like that. You shouldn't be a teacher if you don't want to teach. That's not what being a teacher is, it's not– it is a job but it's a—

James: You're supposed to be role models innit?

Charlie: Like it is a job, but it's like the NHS. Like if you work for the NHS, if you're a doctor, it's your job but you don't go in there coz you wanna get paid. You go in there to help people. Coz if you're a doctor and you just go in there to get paid, you're not gonna be the best doctor are you? So I think when schools are hiring teachers, the people that are interviewing them need to have a serious understanding of like why do you wanna work here?

What the students seem to be describing here might be understood as a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This was the belief by the students that, rather than school being something *for* them, on the contrary, it felt like school was something that was done *to* them. Symbolic violence relies on the cultural arbitrary which is the "*misrecognition of the truth of the legitimate culture as the dominant cultural arbitrary, whose reproduction contributes towards reproducing the power relations*" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p. 31 emphasis in original). I have already noted the frustrations felt by the students of feeling powerless and symbolic violence is all about power imbalances. As Massey noted, "[s]pace and power imbue each other in a myriad of ways" (2009, p. 16) and this is an example of the 'power-geometries' at play in mainstream spaces. Mainstream spaces in schools are social spaces and although the power in social spaces is relational (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005, 2009), these students feel at the receiving end of this unequal relationship. These perspectives seem to chime with Bourdieu's and Passeron's observation: that "pupils feel and seem to be "at home" or "out of place" in school" (1979, p. 13). This, in turn, leads to "an unequal rate of scholastic achievement between the social classes" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979, pp. 13–14). Some of these students who feel out of place in school display mainstream-contrary behaviours which rupture the mainstream border and begins the exclusion process. This rupture tends to involve a minority of the school population which, necessarily, means these students stand out. In essence – they are very visible and highly audible. However,

paradoxically, these students find themselves at the same time invisible and silenced. This was a point one of the teachers at the Alberton PRU seemed to intimate. Denise Shaw at Alberton PRU who sat in on the interviews I did with the students there told me in a later interview with her that it was "so good to hear them, it really is. They don't get the opportunity to voice their opinions like this which is so important as well. It's just so fascinating, it really is."

It is noteworthy that student voice is largely lacking from the literature on school leadership: "[s]omehow educators have forgotten the important connection between teachers and students. We listen to outside experts to inform us, and, consequently, we overlook the treasure in our very own backyards: our students" (SooHoo, 1993, p. 389). Student voice may be said to involve "seeking advice from pupils about new initiatives; inviting comment on ways of solving problems that are affecting the teacher's right to teach and the pupil's right to learn" (Rudduck, 2005). Such an approach is consistent with the UNCRC (OHCHR, 2013), which seeks to enshrine that "the child who is capable of forming his or her own views [has] the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (Article 12). As part of this agenda, school councils are utilised increasingly in schools to provide students with the opportunity to discuss their opinions (Parker and Leithwood, 2000; MacBeath, 2003). Schools are not required to have a student council, although there have been recommendations that they should be (House of Commons Education & Skills Committee, 2007). Concerns have been raised about this ending up being a tokenistic process "confined to the relatively restricted matters of lunch breaks, discos and school trips [with teaching] and learning … largely forbidden areas of enquiry" (Fielding, 2001, p. 101). Concerns have also been raised about students being given this level of power (NASUWT, no date). However, if progress is to be made on this perspective gap, more effort will need to be made with engaging young people with the purpose of school and this does actually involve listening to, and properly considering, their views and perspectives.

A number of the PRU staff in this study had previously worked in mainstream spaces. One of them, Hillary Howard, an English teacher at the Alberton PRU, explained that she left the mainstream space where she had been teaching for over 20 years to "get off the round-a-bout." This provided these teachers with important dual perspectives which allowed them to look inside-out and also outside-in:

Hillary Howard: I mean my background, I've come from a mainstream background, so I know what it's like to be on the receiving end of continuous poor behaviour for whatever reason and that feeling that if I could just get rid of that student out of that class, but there's a whole, whole heap of reasons for that, largely because I don't think that the training

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for understanding any form of SEN, trauma, ACEs, everything that you can learn about when you come to a school like this, it's not there, but nor is the capacity for teachers to want that either because I think the teachers are focused so much on their targets for the year which are always grade based they're never holistic based, there's never anything like that at all.

This was something a number of the staff working in the exclusion spaces pointed to – namely that there was neither the time, nor the inclination in mainstream spaces to care about these students as individuals. It was significant how staff who had worked in mainstream spaces developed a different perspective when outside of those spaces. It was also noteworthy that the staff said they had actively chosen to leave mainstream spaces in order to make more of a difference in the education system. This then led them to view their colleagues in mainstream settings with a level of annoyance. In my interview of the Headteacher of the Pendenford PRU, Mary Turner and the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Carrie Hunter, both discussed what they felt to be a punitive culture in many mainstream spaces. Ms Turner noted that "mainstream teachers are not very good with fresh starts" and Ms Hunter reflected on a course that she had just been on for trauma-informed schools. She told me that "all the headteachers … [talked about] the difficulties of selling that to the staff who want the punitive outcome and also the difficulties of selling that to the parents." Ms Turner, who herself, used to be a deputy headteacher in a mainstream school noted that this approach "takes a huge amount of courage."

Staff at both PRUs were well aware of the traumas that many of the students who attended their institutions had experienced. Sally Stubbs, the Attendance Officer at Alberton PRU illustrated these harrowing childhoods:

Sally Stubbs: We have a lot of children that come through our doors that come from underprivileged backgrounds, a lot of broken homes, a lot of domestic violence, drink and drug abuse. And these children have seen this first hand. And although some children, and the bravado they would give off here like nothing bothers me, it deeply saddens me that— before coming to this role I was a police officer, so I've been on both ends of it, so I've seen why these kids behave like they do and now I'm dealing with the education side of it so it's looking at linking in with all the multi-agencies, social services and trying to put a supportive plan together for these families.

In my interviews with staff they discussed how important their training on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) was to enabling them to better support their students. ACEs are "potentially traumatic events that can have negative lasting effects on health and well-being. This includes maltreatment and abuse as well as living in an environment that is harmful to

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their development" (Boullier and Blair, 2018, p. 132). This understanding emanated from a study (Felitti *et al.*, 1998) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente in the United States and is now widely used (Hughes *et al.*, 2017). The quantitative research investigated several categories of adverse childhood experiences: psychological, physical, or sexual abuse; violence against the mother; or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal, or ever imprisoned. The research found a strong graded relationship between the breadth of exposure to abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and subsequent socio-economic problems later in life:

> Due to the high level of stress in their environment, children who experience more adverse events are more likely to develop behaviours that are harmful to health, such as smoking, drinking alcohol or antisocial behaviour. This then puts the individual on a pathway to poor adult health with higher risk of many diseases including cancer, cardiovascular, liver and lung diseases (Boullier and Blair, 2018, p. 133).

Consequently, the "outcomes associated with ACEs, such as substance use problems (e.g., alcohol problems), are symptoms of trauma that may perpetuate the same ACEs to the next generation, giving rise to the intergenerational cycle of these exposures" (Dube, 2019, p. 12). To support children who have these experiences, it has been recommended that those in the education system be trauma-informed. This means understanding the widespread nature of trauma, recognizing its symptoms and understanding its effects in oneself (Dube, 2019). Amongst the traumas the children in my research experienced were living in households where domestic abuse took place, parental neglect, foetal alcohol syndrome, familial criminality, being taken into care, alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, being stabbed and homelessness. In turn, a number of the students exhibited a number of these same behaviours themselves. It was incredibly depressing to know that children of 14 and 15 had experienced so many challenges in their relatively short lives. It seemed unsurprising that these children brought their chaotic experiences into the schools they attended.

5.5   Chapter Conclusion

The key question raised by the findings of this chapter is: is enough being done to understand the experiences and perspectives of disadvantaged students and how these, in turn, impact some of them whilst they navigate mainstream spaces? The goal of closing the gap in educational outcomes whilst socio-economic gaps remain gaping wide outside of schools is, of course, important and schools would be morally negligent if they did not keep working hard for every single child. And yet, for too many years this endeavour has proved futile at a widescale level. The compensatory approach which compartmentalises the problem rather

than dealing with it in a holistic manner has proved a fruitless endeavour at a widescale level. This is because it is in conflict with the normative frameworks in place in secondary schools. In these spaces, the chaos that many of these students face in their home lives comes up against a rules based-system and a curriculum which seems alien to them. The subsequent symbolic violence felt by the students leads to a gap in perspectives which runs wide and deep. This is a gap that needs to be addressed not by continuing with the same processes that have failed many disadvantaged students over many years, but by properly considering their experiences and perspectives on the education system of which they are a part of. As I explained above, doing well in this system is crucial to their lives and livelihoods, but perhaps the system needs to be pressed further to doing well by them. I begin this understanding with a focus on how these students get on when they find themselves operating in the margins of mainstream space; this is a matter to which I now turn.

Chapter 6: Inclusive Exclusion Space

6.1 Chapter Introduction

Exclusion is rarely binary, it usually takes place in multiple, layered forms. Inclusive exclusion space is where students reside when they are not quite fully engaged in mainstream space but they are also not fully excluded either. A kind of educational purgatory, it is an unseen type of exclusion because these students are marked 'present' on registers. They are 'present' if sat outside the headteacher's office for the day or in the internal exclusion room, or if they spend the end of their school days in detentions. They are also 'present' (by virtue of being dual-rolled) if they are sent to alternative provision or 'managed moved' to another school. This chapter discusses why some students find themselves in this space and what happens to them whilst they are there.

The chapter starts with a consideration of how students' behaviours seem to rupture the border around mainstream space, and from there find themselves inserted into a different layer of school space. One form of rupture emanates from the perspective gap and subsequent defiance of the rules that were discussed in the previous chapter. The school leaders of the mainstream schools in the study recognised socio-economic disadvantage played into this rupture. Sometimes the rupture comes with a one-off incident, but generally is termed 'persistent disruptive behaviour' and happens over a period of time with several incidents that are contrary to the normative values of mainstream spaces. This mainstream-contrary behaviour leads to the development of a reputation which the students feel precedes them and results in unequal treatment. This research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic which impacted all of the students, some of whom were technically in mainstream spaces, but this was for many virtual because of the school closures which resulted from the lockdowns caused by the pandemic. The students expressed negative viewpoints about the way schooling took place during the pandemic, and the additional rules this created which they struggled to navigate.

This is followed by a discussion about the detachment that takes place as the students become further embedded in inclusive exclusive space. The detached space is often considered a more acceptable type of space because of the proximity of the rule-breaking student to the school. This often means it is characterised as 'inclusion' in practice, however because it emanates from a student's detachment from mainstream space, it is still, arguably, exclusionary. This is a particularly controversial space and one in which many of the students feel is not reached as a last resort. Obviously, this contrasts with the perspectives of

mainstream school leaders who consider the behaviour of these mainstream-contrary students a threat to the orderly running of the school. A number of inclusive exclusionary strategies are discussed: lesson removals, isolation rooms, managed moves, and alternative provision. In keeping with the contested nature of this space, the research participants had a number of strong views on their use.

The chapter finishes with a consideration of why students find themselves in these spaces and whether there are some students who are simply incompatible with mainstream spaces. There is a sense from some teachers and students that there is a state of being 'secondary ready'. This is being able to successfully navigate the rules and expectations of the secondary school environment. Some students appear fatalistic about their ability to operate in these spaces, and some see it as their natural destination even if they have been previously permanently excluded from a mainstream school. For some, the secondary school space is distinct from primary school spaces and is far less forgiving. For others there is not too much difference between these spaces. Perhaps, primary schools do not do enough to prepare students for the rigours of secondary school. Nevertheless, the size of the secondary school and the stretching of resources for all who need support were raised as barriers to the effective inclusion of some of the types of students who are the focus of this research.

6.2   Rupture

The purpose of a border is to protect what is within from that which is beyond. But protecting large spaces is rarely straightforward. At the time of writing, one of the main news stories is about what has been popularly described as a 'migrant crisis'. 2021 saw more than 25,000 refugees attempting to make the journey from France to England across the English Channel in often treacherous conditions using flimsy boats. This is three times the total number for the previous year for these types of crossings. This is the nature of borders: despite the attempts of those who construct and maintain them, they are only as strong as they are allowed to be by those who operate within and along them. As Robertson notes, "[i]t is the strength (or weakness) of the *insulation* – or the border, and practices associated with maintaining the border – that creates a space in which a category can become specific" (2011, p. 285 emphasis in original) – in this example those who can claim the identity of citizen.

But these borders require the consent (or, in some cases, domination) of the vast majority of those who operate on each side of the border. In other words, the rules that shape how life happens within the boundaried space creates a level of compliance inside which maintains the social order within that space. However, sometimes there is disorder, when consent breaks down which can easily rupture the border. At a large scale this can include most of the school as was the case at Pimlico Academy in March 2021, which saw mass student protests and

staff disquiet about changes to its curriculum and policies, including plans for a stricter new school uniform (Parveen, 2021). Such was the turmoil, the headteacher of the school was compelled to resign. This, of course, is an extreme case and most instances of rupture affect only a minority of the school's population.

This is the perceived space (Lefebvre, 1991) where certain students become increasingly visible due to their mainstream-contrary behaviours. The stricter the school, the more fragile and porous the border, and the more easily and quickly ruptures take place unless, of course, it is a regime of absolute domination. At the strictest case school, Crestview, it is apparent how this rupture may take place if students fail to adhere to the stringent rules in place at the school as the headteacher described:

William Harris: So you go into a classroom in our school and there are three simple rules, not controversial. Rule number one: you respect and listen to the teacher at all times, total silence, it's not optional, total silence. Number two: you get on with your work when you're told in total silence, unless the teacher tells you. Number three: you've got no right and you must never disturb anyone else. Very simple, nothing wrong with that. Some people say "oh that's a bit draconian", not at all, our classes are very happy, lovely places. So three simple rules. Then what happens if a child breaks the rule it's very clear, it doesn't matter whether they're a lovely kid or whether they're a kid that's really quite sort of unpleasant a lot of the time. If they break the rule, they get one warning, one formal warning and then they're gone. And they're not just gone for that lesson, they're gone until half past four, they're gone until an hour after school. And then we ring the parents up and we say to the parents "you come and pick your child up and sit down with us and talk through what's gone wrong, because you're part of the solution" and if the parents say "we can't do it," we say "your child's back in isolation for the whole of the next day until 4:30 until you can do it" (…) So that's very clear and very strict and it works very well. And kids from all backgrounds, they get it, they're okay with that, it's nice and clear, they know what's going to happen, that happens fine.

Those who support students who fall foul of these kinds of rules, and often end up in PRUs, argue that these types of procedures are too restrictive. Mary Turner, Headteacher of the Pendenford PRU took the view that some behaviour policies are "insane" and "ridiculous" and place too many restrictions on students at school. She pointed to uniform expectations, for example: a student who is "excluded because you had two studs in your ears, when actually you could've just taken the studs out and stayed in school. So there's quite a bit of that."

The mainstream headteachers observed how socio-economic disadvantage contributes to disorders in the social order, giving rise to potential ruptures. Mr Harris was concerned at the way the school admissions system works: "if you're in a classroom where the teacher has got

80 percent of kids from very deprived backgrounds, you've got practically no chance because immediately you're placed within a situation where your environment is shouting out to you: this is what you are, this is what you will be." I have already noted that research points to a substantial level of clustering of poor students in particular schools (Gorard, 2010). This is because of the nature of admissions in England's education system, which allows parents to choose the school their child attends. In a society characterised by wider socio-economic inequalities, this inevitably leads to subsequent disparities both in, and across, schools. It is believed, for example, that around 30 percent of students living in poverty would have to change their schools if they were to be evenly spread (Gorard, 2010). Mr Evans and Ms Moore pointed to the chaotic disorder and social demands outside of school life for many of the students attending their schools. This impact is felt within the school and often requires adjustment by the school:

Graham Evans: It starts off first thing in the morning with their ability to get into school on time. Frequently they don't. They are not able to do that because they're taking care of siblings, so as a school we've got to end up putting in things which will support the students in order to make sure they can support families to drop off siblings at local primary schools which means a joint network of childcare clubs which means our students can come in and get a breakfast which means that they don't have to settle for a day in a way which means that they're not going in to the first lesson hungry. So it's about providing opportunities to eat. It's about ensuring that through the day there are different opportunities to ensure they have everything they need because frequently they may be quite disorganised.

There are numerous examples of the persistent ruptures at the inner mainstream border by the students that led to them being placed the other side of it. Sometimes this rupture can be quite sudden, with a particular incident, as was the case for Vanessa:

Vanessa: Well in primary I wasn't a bad kid. I used to be afraid of getting in trouble. It's never really been my behaviour. It's just like I made a big mistake one time. And that mistake is like a proper big mistake – like in Year 7 when I got permanently excluded.

AM: Are you able to share or not?

Vanessa: Okay, well basically I just had weed in my bag and it was like, quite a lot. They didn't want to permanently exclude me straight away so they managed moved me and if that didn't work out I would just get permed, so I did.

More often the rupture happens over time and at different points of the border. These students are often termed 'persistently disruptive' and, indeed it is this category which is and has been the most common formally recorded exclusion reason for many years. Often a final rupturing involves the accumulation of mainstream-contrary behaviours by which time a reputation has

been acquired by the troublesome student. This was something that the students brought up regularly in the interviews as exemplified by Jennifer's reflection on her time in her mainstream school:

Jennifer: At high school it's hard to explain, if they have a grudge then they have a grudge and that's it. You can't redeem yourself, that's just who you are. So obviously my mindset was like well they don't wanna make me a different person so I'm just gonna be the person they think I am. That was kind of my mindset which obviously it shouldn't have been but that's kinda the way it was.

I found it interesting that Jennifer implicitly recognised that her behaviour was mainstream-contrary but also expected the school to "make" her "a different person". It is likely that Jennifer's school did try to make her a different person by sanctioning her behaviour but this is, ironically, at the same time what would have led to Jennifer's 'persistently disruptive' reputation and as she observed of her behaviour became a self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968). As discussed in the previous chapter, this persistent disruptive pattern involves a perspective gap which manifests itself in an intolerance of some of the key aspects of mainstream secondary education – including, even, the very act of attending lessons. The students' attitudes and actions result in rupturing the mainstream border because they continually chip away at it as this discussion with Da'juan and Lucy exemplifies:

AM: I know this might be a while ago, but can you pinpoint when things started to go wrong for you in school?

Da'juan: I don't know, school was just like never for me innit like. Just a waste of my time innit.

AM: Why do you say that?

Da'juan: Because I don't like being told what to do.

AM: Can you give me some examples? When you say you don't like being told what to do, what kinds of things were you told to do that you didn't like?

Da'juan: Like go to lessons, do this, go detentions.

AM: When you say go to lessons, what was it that you didn't like about going to lessons?

Da'juan: I don't know, it was just like— it was just, I don't know, I couldn't be arsed innit. They just started putting all my lessons in the exclusion room innit.

AM: Did you like going to lessons when they weren't in the exclusion room?

Da'juan: I only liked going to certain lessons innit.

AM: Like what?

Da'juan: Like history, PE and drama.

AM: What about you Lucy?

Lucy: Mine was Year 7. I was calm in primary. I just didn't like secondary school. Coz in secondary school the teachers are just verbal.

AM: Verbal in what way?

Lucy: They're just so rude for no reason.

AM: Rude about what?

Lucy: Everything (…) You walk in like five minutes late and they think you've just stabbed someone.

[Laughter amongst the group]

They're just so rude for no reason like. Just talk to me on a level and I'll talk back to you nicely but they're so rude.

AM: Okay, if you walk into the lesson late, do you expect a consequence for that or not?

Lucy: Well not really. Well it can be like "you're late, why are you late?" But not get all funny about it and be weird like. There's just no point.

Classroom rules were a point of contention for many of the students, as were uniform expectations. At Alberton PRU Sophie and Charlotte told me that they did not like rules which required them not to talk in school. Sophie said, "like the school just wants you to sit there and do your work in silence and it's like what the fuck!" Both girls also described their deliberate defiance of uniform rules which they described as "strict." Despite having school shoes, Sophie said "on the odd day, I just wore my trainers." I discussed earlier the powerlessness that the students felt in mainstream spaces. Perhaps this deliberate defiance of the rules represented an attempt to rebalance the power dynamic in the school. Ultimately, however, this was a fruitless exercise by the girls in terms of remaining in the mainstream space and it eventually led to their exclusion from it. Several of the students also recognised they had trouble with controlling their tempers. This was manifest in fights and displays of other violent behaviours. The students described having short-fuses and using violence when annoyed. Of her regular fights, Jennifer told me, "I don't remember half of them. It was just like little things, like someone could do something to piss me off and I would just go mad."

It was easy to see how these perspectives and behaviours ruptured the mainstream borders of the schools the students attended. Successful navigation of the secondary school requires social capital, which "depends on the size of the network of connections [an agent] can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic)

possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21). Here, it seemed as though these students lacked the 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1998) necessary to navigate the rules of the secondary school environment. This, in turn, resulted in these students being placed in marginal spaces so that they did not affect the experiences of those children who did have the 'feel for the game'.

At the time of the research, the COVID-19 pandemic was affecting the country. In England, this led to the closure of schools for most students (other than vulnerable students – broadly, those with a social worker – and the children of 'keyworkers') from 20 March 2020, as part of a nationwide lockdown to try to prevent the spread of the virus. Although schools reopened in the following academic year, after the first term, there were further closures of schools for around half a term from 5 January 2021 until early March 2021. This unprecedented action led to schools having to provide education to students remotely during these closure periods. When schools reopened for the 2020/21 academic year, a number of safety measures were put into place including 'bubbles' of consistent groups, face coverings, hand cleaning expectations, self-isolation and contact tracing and regular testing. The students were universally negative about these experiences. This was mainly down to rules that they already struggled with, becoming even stricter. Jennifer explained how breaking the COVID-19 protection rules at her school was the final straw for her. She explained that she had previously had a governors' meeting with a review period every two weeks "and then I made one mistake, I broke a COVID rule and then obviously I got permo'd." Lucy told me that her school got "bear strict" and explained how she got excluded for mixing with her friends in Year 11 (she was in Year 10) because it broke the bubbles, this was despite walking to school with them. The confusing nature of these additional rules led to further opportunities for poor relationships with school staff and further distance from the mainstream:

Charlie: Well when corona came out, the rules were so confusing it was like you can be around your friends at break and lunch but you can't walk next to them in the corridors. Like you can only walk one way around the school despite being everywhere in that school. What's the point in only being able to walk around it one way if you walk around it the entire way, then you've been everywhere in it. Know what I mean? It just doesn't make any sense so it's like just dead frustrating. And then they had this thing with coats, like they said you can wear your coat inside now because of weather and that. And then some teachers didn't and some teachers did. So say I'm walking down the corridor and then some teacher that doesn't know that rule is like "get that off" and I'm like "I'm allowed," "no you're not, you're missing your break and lunch because you're wearing a coat." And it's like what the fuck!

Due to the lockdowns implemented during the pandemic, lessons took place remotely, that is online. The students seemed quite matter-of-fact about not doing their work during the school closure periods. Some did not bother at all with the work, others tried but gave up after finding it a pointless exercise:

Charlie: I hate the online lessons, I just can't do them so I'd much rather just be in school. I can't sit down and look at— if my computer's in front of me and I'm at home, absolutely no chance you're gonna get me to sit there for an hour straight and not go do some'it else and sod it off, it's just not happening. So I prefer being in school because I knew I could actually do some'it in there.

AM: James, what was it like for you?

James: Just stayed at home innit.

AM: Were you invited into school?

James: Nah.

AM: So you were told to stay at home?

James: Yeah.

AM: Did you do your online lessons?

James: Nah.

AM: Why not?

James: Coz like I went in and I was literally answering the question yeah, and she was like if you're not going to engage then there's no point you being here. So what's the point? I just left the call.

AM: Do you feel like you missed out or not?

James: Nah. It was like 4 x 6 or some'it. I'm 15, why do I need to learn 4 x 6? I know how to do basic maths.

There was a concern at the PRUs that the impact of the pandemic on the students might be felt for years to come. Ms Turner at Pendenford explained how it had led to more exclusions from the mainstream schools in her local authority and for increased requests from those schools for behaviour respite provision at the PRU. Ms Turner explained how she had to relax the admissions process at Pendenford for 12 months to avoid an influx of permanent exclusions. This involved an at-risk panel where schools referred students who they believed were at risk of permanent exclusion and these students then attended the PRU for six weeks with the proviso that they would return to their schools following this period of time. Most of

the referrals were for Year 9 boys which has, Ms Turner observed, had "an awful lot to do with sitting at home during COVID and being online and things like that …"

It became clear the perspective gap both led to and combined with rupture to place the students in inclusive exclusion spaces. These were spaces that the students remained in for different periods of time. It also seems likely that their schools had serious concerns about their behaviour adversely affecting the order of the mainstream space. With the exception of Brendan and Kirsty, who had been placed in the PRU as a form of temporary respite, all the students had been permanently excluded. The nature of the detachment involved from the mainstream space will now be discussed.

6.3   Detachment

When educationalists discuss the goings on in a given secondary school they often talk about teaching and learning which, for the most part, takes place in chunks of roughly an hour or so in classrooms with students sat at desks and a teacher at the front of the class. This is the secondary school. This is the 'ideal'. Sometimes, though, they also discuss exclusion. This is a student being told they may not physically enter the school for a given period of time and they must complete their work at home. If the exclusion is not permanent, they may return to the school on a given date. This is all far too simplistic. It fails to recognise the practical realities of schooling which is full of hidden spaces. Spaces that can be utilised to create a sense of inclusion, but are still, nonetheless, exclusionary. It has already been discussed how datafication practices draw our gaze to what we 'should' see. But what about what we do not see? There are very few government statistics about these spaces; they operate in shadows.

This is the vast array of space around the mainstream where certain students who do not conform to the rules operate. It is still within the school, *per se*, but it is a different layer of the school experience. It is a seemingly more acceptable form of exclusion because the child remains close enough to the mainstream border. Nevertheless, children who regularly operate in this space are detached; they are disconnected from the mainstream. This is usually over time as well as space (Massey, 2005) and takes a number of different forms. School leaders have a great deal of latitude in shaping the nature of their inclusive exclusion spaces. Take, for example, Da'juan's experience. Da'juan went to his secondary school from Year 7 to Year 9 and then he got 'managed moved' to another secondary school. When that failed, he was permanently excluded within six weeks. Of this experience Da'juan said, "I can't lie, my mainstream they 'lowed me. I was meant to get kicked out from like Year 7 innit. I just done some weird shit innit." But Da'juan's school did not kick him out in Year 7. He survived another couple of academic years until this exclusive exclusion – that is permanent exclusion – took place.

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Nevertheless, during the years he was at his mainstream school, Da'juan told me that "they just made me come in at 10 and leave at 12 innit. So that was good." It therefore seems that he is unlikely to have received much of an education at all. Maybe Da'juan was marked present in the morning and the afternoon and was therefore 'present' for the day. It is beyond the scope of this research project to know for certain. But this is the nature of inclusive excluding – it happens in opaque spaces which are difficult to view. In another focus group, the students discussed their experiences of inclusive exclusion which overlapped with some exclusive excluding practices. Vanessa told me, "I feel like exclusion should be a last resort depending on the circumstances", but instead, Leanne said, "it's the first thing they think of." The students' opinions about there being a 'last resort' was noteworthy. This is also, of course, the language in the document that schools must follow although, here, it only says that it is permanent exclusion, not fixed term exclusions which should be used as a 'last resort' (DfE, 2017b, p. 6). There was also a sense from those who supported the students that the 'last resort' had often not been reached as Tara Webster, the Admissions Officer at Alberton PRU explained:

Tara Webster: Number one: the code of practice says very clearly that a permanent exclusion is the last resort when every other available strategy has been tried and failed. Alberton schools are underfunded and social care is underfunded, so there's a bit of a social situation. The schools don't recognise behaviour as a need. Behaviour, poor behaviour, is often the result of unmet learning needs and unmet social needs or a combination of the two. So because of the massive underfunding, I feel that social needs are not met, learning needs are not met, other difficulties like housing etcetera. So there's this layer of students who are disadvantaged, so they go in to school, find it difficult, they've not been parented awfully well because their own parents have difficulties and so it goes round because that wasn't dealt with, schools get exasperated with them. Some of our schools are very good at doing a big, long list of all the support packages that they've put in but on that list it will be things like detentions, well what use is that? That's just punitive (…) It doesn't work like that especially not in Alberton where the PRU is massively underfunded as well. We've got kids crawling out of the walls and we haven't got enough staff to manage them ourselves, so it isn't the answer but they think it is.

The 'last resort' may also be part of the perspective gap between these students, those who support them and leaders of mainstream spaces who have rules that must be followed and borders that must be protected. This is partly because the concept of a 'last resort' is very subjective and, therefore, somewhat intangible. Lucy for example said:

Lucy: They didn't tell me things. For like three years they was like "ah, you're gonna get permed, you're gonna get permed." And I lasted three years and I guess I just thought I was gonna get away with it and then when I actually got kicked out they

> told me it was a five day [fixed term exclusion]. Went home, they rang my dad and told him that I can't come back. So I never actually got to defend myself or like say anything.

Lucy's inclusive excluding lasted for three years and yet she was still shocked when the 'last resort' was finally reached, perhaps indicating in the end, in these circumstances, the 'last resort' is always likely to be something of a shock. The subjective nature of the 'last resort' sometimes meant the students felt that inclusive exclusion space did not just differ across schools, but even within the same school. Jennifer, for example, said, "every naughty thing I've done, I've never done it alone … So if I'm wagging, I'm with someone. If I've done this, done that, I'm with someone." Nevertheless, she went on to say that "out of all my mates I'm the only one that's been excluded but they're still in that mainstream school … so it's kinda just like pick and choose."

During the course of my research, I discussed with staff both in mainstream spaces and exclusion spaces, their views of some of the inclusive excluding practices that go on in schools. The three schools in this study revealed different approaches to lesson removals. One school – Oakside Grove – does not remove students from lessons. As noted above, at Crestview if a student is removed from a lesson, they are removed from circulation for the whole day. Mr Harris said that this means there are not many instances of students being removed from lessons "because they don't play games, they know exactly what's expected." St John Kemble School used to have a similar system, but Ms Moore told me that they made this change so that students were "not out for the day because something's gone wrong with one teacher or one event." The PRU headteachers discussed their belief that removing students from lessons compounded problems. Mr Baker discussed how the removal leads to students who are typically already behind, falling further behind and Ms Turner observed that the initial removal can lead to further exclusion:

Mary Turner: The three strikes and you're out thing is incredible. You'll often hear kids who get told off in the lesson, they get sent out, they're in the corridor, some teacher will come along and go "why are you in the corridor?", "well I was just sent out of the lesson", "don't answer me back, you're going to the isolation room." Then they're made to sit in another room that they can't fit in, the senior member of staff is called, then they have a thing with them and then they get excluded and it all stemmed from the removal from the lesson.

It was suggested that this was because teachers were insufficiently informed about the social, emotional and mental health needs of the children in their classes. Ms Turner reflected on a strategy that had been utilised at a school she used to work at which focused on trauma-informed practice – "they used a little 't' on SIMs [a management information system] and that

was to indicate that this young person … needed to be dealt with differently and there needed to be more flexibility."

Another inclusive excluding strategy is the use of 'isolation rooms' or 'internal exclusion rooms' or 'seclusion rooms'. Despite the different names, what these spaces have in common is that they are a sanction where students are expected to stay during the school day away from the rest of the school population. Again, mainstream schools have different approaches regarding their use – Oakside Grove does not operate an isolation room but as discussed, above, Crestview and St. John Kemble both do. Mr Harris, Head of Crestview, noted that the school did "fight a lot of battles at that level" and Ms Moore noted they are "an issue for us." Both PRU headteachers had previously worked as senior leaders in mainstream schools where isolation rooms had been in operation. Both Mr Baker and Ms Turner recognised positive and negative aspects about their use. For Ms Turner at Pendenford PRU, the use of isolation was a safer option because it kept students in school:

Mary Turner: I mean, look, I used to run my exclusion room and I used to run it with an iron fist, nobody spoke in there, but I'd never do it again. I do think there is a place for exclusion and sanction, of course there is, there has to be. I think internal exclusions are a way to avoid fixed terms, so they're safer for young people but it's about what the internal exclusion is. Do you have a member of staff in there who is well trained to be able to get that young person to realise why they're there, so they can change something different?

Mr Baker observed that sometimes students need to be placed in these spaces to allow others the opportunity to learn:

Tom Baker: Internal exclusion and isolation is an interesting one isn't it? I think that needs to happen on a restorative model as opposed to the old-fashioned model. It's the same thing as a detention, if you isolate a kid they don't learn anything from it equally what it does do is give the rest of the class a chance to learn, but what we should be doing is looking at why these kids are in these rooms and what we can do to help them not carry out those behaviours whereas at the moment this reinforces those behaviours: they keep doing it, they keep ending up in the rooms and it doesn't solve anything. There are other ways of doing those things that might be more supportive for those young people that will change those behaviours.

The students also recounted their experiences of these isolated spaces. In some respects, being isolated in school was viewed as a better alternative to being isolated outside of it. However, typically, the experience was perceived as a negative one:

Leanne: Isolation is so annoying.

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Hani:	[Mimicking being told off] "You stood up without permission – you're excluded. 5 days."
Vanessa:	That's what I'm saying. And communication with the students. I feel like putting a kid in isolation—
Leanne:	You literally just sit and look at the wall.
Vanessa:	You just sit in there and have no one to talk about it with. And then you get more angry. But if they were to sit there and have a little one-on-one with the student and ask them about it, it would be different.

I have already discussed the debate around the use of these spaces in Chapter 2. Yet these are under-researched spaces and, in any case, are likely to remain controversial approaches to addressing student behaviour with strongly held opinions on their use on either side of the argument. Nevertheless, as with the datafication observations, perhaps our eyes are being drawn to the wrong thing. Maybe the focus should not be just on their actual use, but what it is about the education system that necessitates their use. And once this has been done, if their use is still necessary, the perspectives I have just discussed are noteworthy. Both the staff and students in exclusive exclusion space could conceive that there were some instances where the use of such spaces was justified. It cannot be forgotten, after all, that some students can display some quite abhorrent behaviours towards others in the school community – including bullying and assaults – and, as in wider society, it is not appropriate for them to be in mainstream circulation until the harm they pose to others is reduced. Perhaps, the difference is what these inclusive excluding spaces should be focused on. Both the staff and students who had encountered these spaces in mainstream schools were quite clear that they should not be focused on further punitive approaches. Rather they should place attention on supporting the students who enter them to understand the harms inherent in their behaviour and then successfully reintegrating back into the mainstream population.

Other inclusive excluding strategies involve being placed, physically, away from the school. Managed moves are voluntary agreements between schools that a student with mainstream-contrary behaviour will be placed at another mainstream school, usually on a trial basis of several weeks before a decision is made to extend the trial, end the placement or for the recipient school to fully accept the student. There were differences of opinions about the efficacy of such arrangements. The leaders at Oakside Grove and St John Kemble were generally positive about their use believing it gave students an opportunity of a fresh start in a different school. However, Mr Harris told me that he was "not a big fan" of managed moves because they tended to be "a tit-for-tat thing and the school isn't usually the issue." He noted that this usually meant that "you're just passing the bomb round."

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Another inclusive excluding strategy which involves being placed away from the school is using alternative provision. This was a particularly contentious strategy for both the leaders in mainstream and exclusion spaces. The PRU headteachers raised serious concerns about the quality of alternative provision. Mr Baker at Alberton said, "a lot of alternative provision can be a bit like a zoo or a youth club … that's out of sight, out of mind." Ms Turner, also expressed alarm about their use across Pendenford:

Mary Turner: I have an issue you see with alternative provisions because I've asked for a formal audit from the Local Authority on alternative provision used in the borough because we need to know how many children are in alternative provision. Where are they? Why are they there? What year group are they in? What are they there for? Are they coming back? Because, for me, doing that is just hiding a permanent exclusion (…) what I've uncovered, particularly in the last year, is some Year 7s in alternative provision. I mean how has that happened? That's criminal. And then I've kind of relaxed my admission rules for the moment, so I'm taking in at risk students, you know, we've got Year 7 kids in who did six weeks at secondary school and then they got turfed-out to an AP where I know there's very highly affiliated gang members in that alternative provision.

There is no time limit in which a student can attend alternative provision. It is feasible that a student could spend his or her entire secondary school experience at an alternative provider. Clearly, the longer a student remains in alternative provision, the less likely they are deemed suitable for mainstream space. I have already observed in Chapter 2, that disadvantaged students are overrepresented in these institutions (Mills and Thomson, 2018). I have also noted concerns about the variability in quality of these spaces (Thomson and Russell, 2009; DfE, 2018a). Although the mainstream schools used alternative provision for some of their students, there was some recognition that its quality was variable:

Victoria Moore: So alternative provision has got a really bad reputation and I understand that, why that is. But if you are looking at it for the right reason, then I haven't got an issue. So we work with [an alternative provider] which is really inclusive and restorative and for some of our children who've got significant mental health issues etcetera, they find it very difficult to be here and so you look at what will work for those young people and that's a very small number that will go there, but it works really well (…) So this is not the punishment, this is a genuine attempt at alternative education for young people who find mainstream school a challenge. So I don't see that as an issue.

Certainly, Ms Moore described some really engaging practices that the alternative providers were able to offer. Nevertheless, it is useful to reflect on why Ms Moore deemed these spaces of use. She said they were useful because some students "find it very difficult to be here"

albeit, this is generally a "small number." She pointed to one provider "down the road from us" which was "a much smaller environment", which was "not the punishment" but "a genuine attempt at alternative education for young people who find mainstream school a challenge." This seemed to chime with findings I discuss in the following section about the nature of secondary schools, particularly their size being difficult for some children to navigate successfully.

6.4   Incompatibility

So far I have been discussing the perspective gap that plays into the exclusion of many disadvantaged students in the education system. However, increasingly during the research, it felt like for some of the students this was not a gap but a chasm. Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1996) referred in their work to three aspects of space – spatial practice, that is perceived (or 'Firstspace'), representations of space, this is conceived (or 'Secondspace') and representational space, that is lived (or 'Thirdspace'). The question for this research project however is: in England's secondary schools, do the first two of these spaces, make the 'Thirdspace' impossible for some students? In other words, are some students – many of them disadvantaged – incompatible with 'Thirdspace'? In this context, of course, 'Thirdspace' is mainstream space, and has been noted throughout this study, mainstream space is socially constructed space. Therefore, the question must be asked: are there some students whose experiences and perspectives are *too* mainstream-contrary. The initial answer might be that this must necessarily be the case because some students are permanently excluded from schools, with disadvantaged students disproportionately so. But some of these students are not permanently excluded from their schools and some, after being permanently excluded, get a chance to attend another mainstream school – re-compatibility. So, the last section of this chapter considers who these students are, and why some seem to make it (back) in mainstream spaces and some seem not to.

During my interview with the Headteacher of St John Kemble, Ms Moore, she discussed her belief that some students were not ready for the demands of a secondary school. She told me that "quite often they are not secondary ready and so they're on the back foot." Consequently, she described what the school is doing to work with parents "trying to get them to understand some of the behaviours that might lead, in a secondary school, to them not being as fully engaged as they need to be." The notion of being 'secondary ready' was an interesting one. It seemed to reflect Bourdieu's observation about the development of certain types of capital which allowed some classes of children to successfully navigate the education system (Bourdieu, 1986). It also seems to present an analogous question to Doreen Massey's (1979) problem: *in what sense a regional problem?* As Massey observed with 'regional problems',

being 'secondary ready' is an effect, not a cause. And again, the child and the family are to blame. As Massey noted, this approach can be divisive as it sets one group against another. This appears to be an effect of the way that the education system is structured so that it fails to consider that, as with all purely distributional struggles, "the real problem lies at the aggregate level" (Massey, 1979, p. 241) and for disadvantaged students, the pupil premium has, thus far, proven insufficient to compensate adequately for this deficit.

It also seemed to chime with the perspectives of some of the students that they would, in fact, never be 'secondary ready'. For example, when I asked James if he would ever want to go back to mainstream school, he replied "I'd get kicked out again so there's no point." For some of the students they seemed particularly scarred by their secondary school experiences that they had developed a level of fatalism about their chances in mainstream spaces. Leanne, for example, told me that she would not go back to a mainstream school because "in all my schools I literally lasted four months." However, for other students the mainstream space was more of a natural destination:

Andre: Yeah I wanna go back.

Hani: Next week me and him won't be here. We're going back.

AM: Same school?

Hani: Nah, different schools.

AM: And how do you feel about that?

Andre: It's alright.

AM: Have you been to the school? Do you know much about it?

Andre: Yeah.

AM: And looking forward to it?

Andre: I guess I am.

Vanessa: I would go back to my original secondary school. I would.

AM: But you can't because you were permanently excluded.

Vanessa: Yeah I know. I literally cannot.

Hani: That's stupid though. I think they should let you do it again.

AM: Why would you want to go back to that one in particular?

Vanessa: I don't know, it's just what I was used to when I first started secondary.

(…)

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Anthony: I'm here for six weeks.

AM: How do you feel about going back?

Anthony: Can't be arsed to go back.

AM: You don't want to go back?

Anthony: Nah.

Leanne: You prefer to stay here!

Hani: What a weirdo!

The shock that Anthony did not want to return to mainstream school suggests the other students believed that he was, perhaps, 'secondary ready'. And, this being the case, mainstream space is superior space. I therefore wondered to what extent the students' negative experiences at their secondary schools were intrinsic to the secondary stage of education itself. I asked the students to compare their primary school experience to their secondary school experience. Here, the situation was mixed; whilst some of the students noted there was not much difference between the two stages, most expressed a preference for the primary school environment as the two youngest students – Brendan, in Year 7, and Kirsty, in Year 8 – recounted. Although they had only been in their secondary schools for a relatively short amount of time, they had been placed at Pendenford PRU on a temporary placement because they were deemed at risk of permanent exclusion. Kirsty told me that she "got on better with primary." This was because in secondary school "you have to move around for all your classes, go all the way up, go all the way down, get dressed in the changing rooms." This is in contrast with primary school where "you just had to stay in one class and you just did all the lessons." She also noted that the teachers in primary school "weren't strict, but in secondary they're really strict." Brendan told me that in both his primary and secondary schools he "got into loads of trouble, breaking stuff and hurting other children." However, he said he preferred primary school "because they understand what I'm trying to say. Say you got into a fight, you could explain yourself", whereas "in secondary, you can't explain yourself, they don't care." In contrast to Brendan, however, Da'juan described his primary school as "calm." This was because "you can fuck about but nothing really happened innit." A similar observation was raised by Ms Moore, when she discussed the importance of the transition from primary to secondary:

Victoria Moore: So those children that are complex and difficult in Year 7 that are more likely to be excluded are the same children in Year 6, but for some of our primary schools there's a lack of honesty about that and dealing with that so when you dig deep, you find out that they're sitting outside the head's office for quite a lot of the year, in Year

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6. So they've not been properly educated, they're not being recalibrated and they're not being supported to change and then they come to you. So we've done a lot of work in the transition.

Several students described the challenges the size of the mainstream space caused them. For example, when asked when things started to go wrong for him, Lamar pointed to secondary school as the time because there were "more people." In a sense it seemed like there was too much going on in the space: too many relationships to develop and maintain, too many students and not enough support for them individually. The expectation that the rules were for everyone seemed problematic for the students and there was a feeling that the adults in the school were not on their side (this will be explored further in the following chapter, which addresses divergence – differences between mainstream and exclusion spaces). These observations from Jennifer and Emily provide an example of this:

Jennifer: Well mainstream, obviously because there were so many more kids there it was like you didn't get one-on-ones, you were just another one of the people that were there. But here— like in mainstream if I asked one of my teachers "can I go to the toilet?" Or "I'm hungry or I feel sick, can you help me with this, can you help me with that?" It's kind of "no, no there's 20 other kids in this." But here it's like if you ask for something, they'll sort you out if you need it. They won't go against you, here everyone's alright with each other. Everyone's just on one side, no one hates each other, so it's just better.

Emily: Yeah. The teachers have obviously got time for you here. They don't in a mainstream but they could still change their attitude a bit.

I was keen to get a sense from the staff who worked in the PRUs who the students they supported were. And by this, I mean the individuals behind the statistics which tell us that disadvantaged students find themselves excluded at disproportionate rates. Denise Shaw, at Pendenford told me that she believed children fall out of mainstream schools "because they're misunderstood and they do get labelled." There has long been concern about the effects of labelling. From within social interactionism, labelling theory dominated sociological explanations of the place of working-class students within the schooling system. In his 1967 study, *Social Relations in a Secondary School*, Hargreaves observed the impact of streaming by ability, noting that "high stream boys tend to come from homes which were more oriented to middle class values than were the homes of low stream boys" (1967, p. 168). These kinds of students, it was argued, were being labelled 'deviant' by those in power in the school community which "does not arise when a person commits certain kinds of act. Rather, deviance arises when some other person(s) defines that act as deviant" (Hargreaves, Hester

and Mellor, 1975, p. 3). It was noted that these labels were a particularly pervasive feature of the classroom and led to the children becoming outsiders in the system.

Ms Shaw also recognised that "we don't have the resources in mainstream schools to cater for everybody's individual needs." Like, Ms Shaw, all but two of the exclusive exclusion staff in the research, had previously worked in mainstream spaces. They all discussed how the students they worked with had unmet needs in the mainstream schools they attended. Celina Lee, a teaching assistant at Pendenford told me that she believed there were not enough teaching assistants in secondary schools. She said their importance was to "take that pressure off the teacher, work in small groups." She told me about her own experience with a daughter at secondary school who had ADHD and "was in and out like nobody's business," which was because, "it didn't seem … like she had the proper support and understanding for her needs. They'd rather just get her out."

Indeed, the evidence indicates that teaching assistants are far more prevalent in primary schools than secondary schools. Around two-thirds are in primary schools compared to 18 percent in secondary schools (Andrews, 2020). Further, they are also more common in schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged students (ibid). In a piece of qualitative research of 30 semi-structured interviews with mainstream secondary school leaders that was commissioned by the Department for Education, findings showed that allocating TAs for targeted in-class support was the most commonly reported mode of deployment in secondary schools (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019). Disadvantaged students (usually described as those who attract pupil premium funding) was one of the groups identified as receiving TA support but generally only if schools had numbers of cohorts of other students with barriers to learning or disadvantaged students could be easily included in support provided to those groups (ibid). In an extensive study (Blatchford, Russell and Webster, 2012) on the academic progress of 8,200 students using observations, questionnaire responses and interviews, the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project found no positive effects of TA support on outcomes and students who received little or no support from TAs made more progress than those receiving more extensive support (ibid). One of the key concerns raised by the research was that students who received support from a TA could become separated from the learning taking place in the lesson, for example, having private interaction with the TA rather than listening to the teacher (ibid). The study identified positive effects: supporting teachers' workload and classroom behaviour management and supporting Year 9 students to have a more engaged approach to learning (ibid). However, two of the authors of the DISS study later sought to stress that the effects were not the fault of the TAs, but more about inadequate training for teachers on how to work with them and time to properly brief them before lessons (Blatchford and Webster, 2013).

During the interviews, concerns were also raised about the appropriateness of the curriculum for some of these students. In the interview with Mary Turner and Carrie Hunter at Pendenford, they discussed how inappropriate curriculum routes had contributed to exclusion:

Mary Turner: Oh look, six weeks ago we had a girl come. Honestly, if you looked at her scores when we did her baseline testing, she's doing History, she's doing French, she's doing a GCSE in Sociology (…) I mean she didn't even hit the graph! And I rang the school up and I said "look you do realise this is the reason? School is a social scene for her and you need to have an appropriate curriculum." But she hadn't been tested at the school since she was in Year 6.

Carrie Hunter: Well we've got all that data don't we about the— 65 months below their age related, six years below their reading level, three years, two years. Those are the students that are our cohort really, the ones that are not going to go back to mainstream. But on average their reading age is just, yeah. And their CATs [cognitive ability test] are almost always below 85 across the board.

I will shortly move on to discussing how the students who are deemed incompatible with mainstream space and even with inclusive exclusion space, operate in exclusive exclusion space. Before I do so, I wanted to get a sense from the two headteachers of the PRUs in my research what their experiences told them about who these students are. They were in excellent positions to provide informed insights on this for a number of reasons. Firstly, both had worked as senior leaders in mainstream schools before they moved into exclusive exclusion space, and secondly both continued to work with mainstream schools because of the transfer process of students between these spaces. Ms Turner told me:

Mary Turner: I worked in mainstream for 20 years and I sat at the permanent exclusion table and it pains me to look at some of the kids now who are either dead, in prison or whatever, whatever. But I think there is a way for schools to be able to operate which for that small minority of children, you're talking about probably less than one per cent of children in the school that they're with differently (…) we listen to kids, we talk to them, we have time for them and we're not trying to force them into something that they can't fit into.

And, Mr Baker explained:

Tom Baker: (…) there's all these kids where the schools don't want them, the sort of 10 per cent of every school where those are the kids that are causing you 90 per cent of the problems (…) And when I came here, what I found in the PRU was yes, we've taken all the tough kids, tough kids is the wrong phrase, originally I referred to them as all the kids that schools had failed. Secondary schools don't like that very much, but I do think kids are kids and from my personal point of view if you are in poverty, if

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you're going to school and you've not slept the night before and you're not fed properly, then you're not going to be able to go in and sit down in a lesson and behave yourself. You know I can't do that if I'm hungry, so I can't expect an 11-year-old to do that, so we've got to start addressing those social factors.

The PRU headteachers seemed to acknowledge that mainstream space, as it is generally constituted, is incompatible with some of these students being able to successfully operate there. A large part of this is down to the sheer size of this space, if further progress is to be made here, there needs to be a greater emphasis on ways that these large spaces can be made smaller for some students. Another aspect seems to be meeting the needs of students with very complicated, and in some cases, traumatised lives. However, it seems to become even more challenging meeting these needs, when they are added to students with similarly complicated needs in the same institutions, which is effectively what happens at the PRUs. More needs to be done to see how these students can be better supported with these needs before this happens.

6.5   Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has considered why inclusive exclusion spaces are so controversial. This is partly because these are much more opaque spaces than the classrooms, dining halls and playgrounds that most of the mainstream-conforming students operate in. Inclusive exclusion spaces are where students who rupture the mainstream border enter to be dealt with for their defiance of school rules. These are the students who develop a reputation for their mainstream-contrary behaviour. The detachment that follows from lesson removals, isolation rooms, managed moves, and alternative provision is debated, deliberated over, and contested, and this is always likely to be so. However perhaps this argument starts from the wrong place. A continued focus on the symptoms rather than the causes leads to a distorted diagnosis. In focusing on the causes certainly a great deal of work needs to be done on inequalities outside of the school. Also, wider debate and discussion needs to be had on the purpose of school especially for these students. Secondary schools can also consider if there are ways to make their spaces smaller and more supportive for students who find them too big, too unwieldy, and too challenging.

Chapter 7: Exclusive Exclusion Space

7.1 Chapter Introduction

In many respects, the education system is something of a zero-sum game; for every win, someone seems to fail. It seems anathematic to discuss education, which is so vital to children's future prospects in these terms, but it comes about because mainstream schools operate on the same terrain, where they compete against rather than work with each other. Although no two schools are the same, the criteria used to judge them are. For state-funded secondary schools, the principal criteria are a school's Ofsted judgement, and the exam results achieved by its students. As has been discussed in the previous chapters, in order to get good outcomes based on these criteria, school leaders must frame their mainstream spaces in ways that strategically respond to this endeavour. For schools based in more deprived areas, research shows there is a correlation with this as a factor and lower Ofsted grades (Leading Learner, 2018; Allen-Kinross, 2019; DAISI Education, 2020). So paradoxically, although the education system is promoted as a system for all, it works to exclude certain students from mainstream spaces. This may not necessarily be an intentional act but, inevitably, some students become the collateral damage of a one-size-fits-all system in which all do not and, perhaps, cannot fit. This chapter discusses how the students in the study operate in the space which is furthest away from the mainstream; a space of marginality and invisibility.

The chapter starts with a discussion of how the exclusive exclusion spaces have to work hard to find ways of engaging the students who are educated there. For a number of these students, they feel what happens in mainstream spaces is not relevant to their lives and are sceptical about the potential of mainstream spaces to enable them to achieve what they want to accomplish. A number of the students in this study expressed a desire to go into work that they did not feel mainstream spaces were preparing them adequately for. The second section explores the divergence of exclusive exclusion spaces. They are paradoxical because these are spaces that, on the one hand, are supposed to be preparing students for a return to mainstream spaces, but on the other hand, appear to foster a further entrenchment of mainstream-contrary behaviours. The biggest challenge with exclusive exclusion spaces is that they contain many of the same types of students, with many of the same types of challenges, and many of the same types of needs, all in the same place. Nevertheless, despite the many difficulties this situation entails, the exclusive exclusion spaces were characterised by positive relationships with the students commenting on how staff in these spaces have a greater deal of tolerance and care for them. The final section of the chapter presents the

aspirations of the students and their reflections on their situations. Most of the students were able to explain the kinds of jobs and careers they wanted to go into and finally, they gave their advice to the next generation of students about to embark on their secondary school journey. This advice, which seemed to be directed to their younger selves, was ruefully reflective.

7.2 Relevance

The debate about the education schools should provide is fiercely contested. This is not a new discussion and has been raging for many centuries. To this debate, the eminent 18th Century philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau contributed:

> Nature wants children to be children before being men. If we want to pervert this order, we shall produce precocious fruits which will be immature and insipid and will not be long in rotting. We shall have young doctors and old children. Childhood has its ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling that are proper to it. Nothing is less sensible than to want to substitute ours for theirs, and I would like as little to insist that a ten-year-old be five feet tall as that he possess judgement. Actually, what would reason do for him at that age? It is the bridle of strength, and the child does not need this bridle (1991, p. 90).

Rousseau likely would have taken issue with England's education system. Here, a relatively small number of academic disciplines dominate the expectations that frame educational success (DfE, 2019a). It has already been noted for the students in this research, this contributes to a perspective gap in which they struggle to identify the relevance of this conceptualisation of education to their lives. It is not possible to know for certain whether if these students felt more engaged with what happened in the mainstream schools they attended, they would, in turn, find themselves more comfortably situated in the mainstream space. Nevertheless, as discussed in the methodology, this study takes a critical realist approach to this problem and therefore, posits the potential mechanisms which result in the position that the students find themselves in. Jennifer, who as a Year 10 student has experienced several years of secondary school education, articulated a concern that most of the students expressed in some form or other, namely, that what happens in school is not relevant to her life:

Jennifer: Well I'd say like coz when you're sat in a classroom in a mainstream school you're sat in there with 30 other kids and they're teaching you algebra and times tables, it's like I don't wanna know that, I wanna know how to pay my taxes, I wanna know how to pay my bills, I wanna know how to get a car, pay a mortgage. I wanna know what to do when I go college. Like they just teach you unnecessary stuff, like I know you gotta have basic English and maths and science to go get a job but we all have basic English, science and maths. We're not all you know what I mean— we know how to count, we know how to read, we know how to write and I just think it's stupid.

> Like I'm sat there thinking this ain't gonna benefit me, like I don't wanna sit here and do this. I wanna learn about stuff that I need to do when I get older when I got no one paying for me or whatever.

As I observed in Chapter 3, this notion of school being less relevant once 'the basics' have been learned was also a feature of Paul Willis' seminal project, *Learning to Labour* (1977). You may remember I observed, above, that one of the lads commented that he did not "think school does fucking anything to you (…) It never has had much effect on anybody I don't think [after] you've learnt the basics" (Willis, 1977, p. 26). And now, 44 years on from the publication of that book, another generation of disadvantaged students feels practically the same. It would, of course, be easy for adults to dismiss Jennifer's opinions as the ill-conceived thoughts of a teenager who will 'get it' in time. This would further the symbolic violence the students already feel they are the brunt of. Students who display these kinds of views may be considered insubordinate or defiant if they truant the lessons they feel are either irrelevant to them, or where they misbehave in them. This is, perhaps, the misrecognition of the dominant culture (essentially, middle class values, judgements and approaches) as the legitimate culture which leads to the "illegitimacy of the cultures of the dominant groups or classes, [and] comes from exclusion, which perhaps has most symbolic force when it assumes the guise of self-exclusion" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, pp. 41–42). As Bourdieu noted, "[i]f it is fitting to recall that the dominated always contribute to their own domination, it is at once necessary to recall that the dispositions that incline them toward this complicity are the effect, embodied, of domination" (1996, p. 4).

This is what Skeggs described as working-class pathologisation that can often lead to "structural problems [being] transformed into an individualized form of cultural inadequacy in which a position of self is offered to the working-class … [which] becomes not just an individual's problem, but a threat to all respectability, a danger to others and a burden on the nation" (2004, p. 80). And therefore "paradoxically, those most disadvantaged culturally suffer their disadvantage most severely precisely in the situations to which they are relegated as result of their disadvantages" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979, p. 8). Thus, in some mainstream spaces, more work needs to be done on engaging *with* these students on the purpose of education. I emphasise the word 'with' because this needs to be more than telling these students that what they are doing will be relevant. Rather it is understanding what their aspirations are and discussing with them how they get to where they want to go. The algebra and times tables may be more palatable to Jennifer if it is part of an education which she feels is relevant to her life.

For a few of the students, being in a mainstream school was the only way they believed they could achieve what they wanted to achieve. Charlie told me, "I wanna do shit with music but I

can't really [because they] don't have a music class here, so I just wanna go back so I can get a GCSE in that so I can go to a music college." However, most of the students believed that their achievements would happen despite mainstream schooling, not because of it. For example, Lucy, Jessica and Tracey told me that they wanted to be hairdressers. In response to my question about whether they thought school would help them to achieve this, Lucy replied: "here yeah, but not mainstream." Providing the students with practical activities linked to their interests is something that the leaders in the exclusion spaces recognise as important and have worked to provide these opportunities in the spaces. The staff at Pendenford commented on the difference that this investment in something the students believe is relevant to them makes. In my interview with Carrie Hunter and Mary Turner, Ms Hunter told me that when she told them that a nail technician would be coming in after school for two hours, the girls did not have a problem with that. Ms Turner, replied "because they want to [do it]." She also explained how the place was full when the local driving school came to the PRU. She went on, "if they believe there is a vested interest for them, they will commit to it."

The creation of something that students could have a 'vested interest' in alongside the traditional curriculum subjects of English, maths and science seemed to be a key part of the work of both PRUs. At Pendenford, Mary Turner told me about the importance of careers planning at the PRU. "Well we actually listened", she told me. At Pendenford they have one careers lesson each week as well as personal one-to-ones with a careers advisor. They are also looking into further work experience opportunities because, as Ms Turner put it, "they sometimes need to get out." At Alberton, Mr Baker told me, "it shouldn't all be academics, we're going to run out of chippies and electricians and all of that because we're not teaching them how to do it. Some of these kids are brilliant at doing all of that kind of thing." At Alberton they have mentors who work with students who are not engaging with school. They do activities like orienteering and mentoring. Mr Baker described it as a "massive success … we've got kids who started to engage." As was the case at Pendenford, Mr Baker also described how they had to redesign the curriculum at Alberton to be more responsive to the aspirations of the students. He called this the "pathway approach" whereby "every morning they have a particular pathway and that will be their thing. So the idea will be for your Year 10 and Year 11 we can teach them a trade."

It did, however, seem somewhat of a perverse situation that in order to have educational experiences that they felt were more relevant to them, the students needed to be excluded from mainstream space. Although it was clear that for many of the students, exclusive exclusion spaces felt more relevant to them than mainstream spaces, it was also apparent that there was more to the spaces than just that. There were also different expectations and different relationships in exclusive exclusion spaces. And I suppose there had to be; after all,

these are spaces where students who have already been excluded operate. This ironically means they necessarily have to be more inclusive. It is with this in focus, that my findings now turn.

7.3   Divergence

During the research, exclusive exclusion spaces seemed to me to be paradoxical spaces. On the one hand, it felt like they were supposed to be transitory spaces; that is, spaces that students stay at temporarily before they return to the mainstream. They are, after all, 'alternative provision' spaces; that is, alternative to the principal provision of mainstream schools. Indeed, for a number of students I interviewed, this was a temporary stay and, following the permanent exclusion from one mainstream school, they were shortly to return to another. However, on the other hand, it seemed as though the perspective gap was further entrenched in these spaces. To some students, these exclusive exclusion spaces now stood in front of a kind of 'veil of ignorance' (Rawls, 1999) which revealed that school and therefore education could be different. Consequently, the mainstream spaces, (or, even, the inclusive exclusion spaces around the mainstream spaces) which they had become so accustomed to, were not the be-all and end-all. I was also struck by an observation from Ms Turner at Pendenford PRU who told me, "we've got five kids in the current Year 10 going into Year 11 and all of their parents came here, so they bring that baggage with them." Thus, this is a divergence not only within, but also, across, generations. And so, in this way, the exclusive exclusion space led to further divergence from the mainstream.

One of the most striking responses during my interviews came from Tom Baker, when he discussed with me his thoughts on the impact of permanent exclusion. As I have noted previously, Mr Baker has dual perspectives, having worked in mainstream schools and now in a PRU where students have been essentially removed from those same institutions. I asked him, based on that experience, what was his message to senior leaders in mainstream schools about those students in exclusive exclusion spaces and their education? His response was:

Tom Baker: (…) permanent exclusion is virtually a death sentence. It's a definite closing of every kind of door and a definite pathway to prison or it's really, really difficult to get out of that spiral and I think if headteachers saw that other side. And you know it's not that we don't— I've been in that position, I've done it, but I think we need a broader understanding of— I didn't know the trauma that it put a young person under, I didn't know that. I know if you're sacrificing one for a hundred then you've got to make that choice, but we're transforming somebody's life, irreparably often and I don't know any headteacher who went into teaching to do that in that nature. Everybody I know that went into teaching did it to do it the other way round. And I don't think there's any headteacher that does it willy-nilly or without any thought behind it but I think—

> There was an argument at one point, wasn't there, that everybody should have to work in a PRU for a bit of time and I don't think that's right either because it takes certain kinds of people, like it does in any kind of school. But I just think we need to think very carefully about what we're doing to our young people and what we're doing to their futures.

Interestingly, in a separate interview with Mr Baker's deputy, the metaphor of permanent exclusion being akin to death was also evoked:

Annette Gibson: They go through— it's a death, it's grief when they've been permanently excluded and they will go through those seven stages of grief. I don't think it's always seen as clearly when they do get permanently excluded by the schools what an effect that's going to have on them. And that's really sad that they don't see that. That changes their whole path, it shoots you off in a different direction. And what we really need is a halfway house I think, between the mainstream and us, where they go and reflect. They still might come to us but it's that chance where they can talk about what they're doing.

The staff at the PRUs described the challenges of having a number of children who have been permanently excluded from schools across the borough all being placed in the same space. Mr Baker described the difficulties of building a culture "because the good kids come and go very quickly and by 'good' I mean the ones that are well-behaved, but I would argue that they probably shouldn't be in the PRU anyway." Drawing on students with such varying social problems raised significant challenges to stability: "you might just settle the cohort you've got and then another young person will come." This was described as a very difficult situation because "we're drawing from the whole of the borough so they all know each other, so you could have a kid from a rival gang and that causes all sorts of problems …" Ms Turner also made similar observations and also believed that mainstream schools could do more to try to hang on to some of these students:

Mary Turner: (…) you can't run a school the same. Well, you can run a school the same way that I run this school here but on the fundamental things like you can't have a school where you call teachers by their first name. You can't. Because for the vast majority of children that's not necessary. But what you can do in mainstream schools is you can have provisions within school that do deal with that small percentage differently. Because actually for an awful lot of children who are permanently excluded it is a downward spiral. With the best will in the world because you're bringing 65 children all into the same building and they all latch on to each other and different kids latch on and we always say, "oh my God, here we go" and you try to mitigate the risk and manage it the best you can. I think we do a good job of it here but in the long-run, ultimately, that's very difficult.

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And this is where the divergence comes in. To some extent, the fact that schools permanently exclude children, and particularly so for persistent disruptive behaviour, indicates they either cannot or will not accommodate these adaptations to their set-ups. I had previously considered how some students are deemed incompatible with mainstream schooling including the inclusive exclusion space around it. During my research it was clear to me that some of these students would still likely be deemed incompatible with mainstream spaces due to their continued negative perceptions of mainstream schooling and their continued mainstream-contrary behaviours. Pupil referral units have rules too, but in order to accommodate these perspectives and behaviours, they need to be more inclusive which requires a more forgiving approach towards the students as this discussion with one of the focus groups at Pendenford PRU exemplifies:

AM: What's your average day like here?

Leanne: [Laughs] It depends on what day.

AM: Why's that?

Hani: Monday. It's always bad.

Leanne: Yeah Monday's always bad.

AM: Why's Monday a bad day?

Leanne: Because everyone just comes back— all the kids just come in and they're bear like just moody.

AM: And what time do you start?

[Laughter amongst the group]

Leanne: What time do we actually start?

Hani: She doesn't know because she comes in at like 12.

Leanne: Actually I came in at like 10.30 today.

Hani: Congratulations. Still not good.

Vanessa: I swear like Fridays you start 9.50.

Hani: It depends. So basically it's like 8.30 to 9. After 9 you're late. And then on Friday it's different because our timetable's less. We finish at 1.15 and on normal days we finish at 2.35.

AM: What does it mean if you're late here?

Hani: Nothing.

Leanne: They just call your phone and tell you to wake up.

Hani: Yeah they call you, they wake you up okay and then—

Leanne: Sometimes they come and pick you up.

Hani: If you don't pick up, then they come to your door.

AM: So the main thing is the school just wants you in.

Leanne: Yeah. But they call your phone—

Hani: Until you die.

AM: Until you die? That's a bit extreme.

Hani: [Laughs] Until the phone dies.

It was difficult to see how this approach to punctuality from the students would be tolerated in a mainstream space. In fact, it was difficult to see how this would be tolerated in wider society. Maybe they will change their approach as they grow older but it is of course difficult to know. Uniform expectations were also quite relaxed at both PRUs. At Pendenford, there was a uniform – a jumper and polo neck shirt – this was generally worn quite casually amongst the students I interviewed. There was no uniform at Alberton which was part of a general approach that the Attendance Officer, Sally Stubbs, took issue with. She indicated this was symptomatic of lax standards where "they seem to be allowed to just walk about and they've got a lot of freedom …" However, this was an approach the Headteacher, Mr Baker justified in a separate interview. He said there is not a uniform at the PRU because "it's like a badge of dishonour." This is because with a uniform they would be "going across the whole of Alberton … labelled as a PRU kid and that's not good for their self-worth as they've already been rejected and neglected by society and the community."

On entry to both PRUs, students were required to be scanned through metal detectors. James, at Alberton, expressed his displeasure with this situation, and the general environment. He told me that "it's pretty much a prison in here." He said this was because "everything's metal. All the doors are metal and everything's— you need a key card to get about. You can't do nothing." I asked him how he felt about that and he told me, "pretty shit, I'm not arsed if you lock the doors but it's like just feeling trapped in innit." However, Mr Baker, in a later interview explained to me why all the metal that James so disliked was necessary in the PRU. This was "because the kids were running and kicking them and it was costing about 50 to 80 grand a year to replace the doors and the only doors that are strong enough to stop that from happening are prison doors." This seemed another paradox about the nature of exclusion space; namely, that to be more inclusive it was necessary to be more restrictive and almost

prison like with the containment of the students. In both PRUs, getting students engaged with the more traditional curriculum was noted as a challenge as described by Celina Lee, a teaching assistant at Pendenford PRU:

Celina Lee: It's not easy, it's really, really not easy to get them engaged in education, really not easy. There's very few that will engage. You might get one that's engaged one day and then the next, no (…) My biggest challenge is trying to get them in the classroom. And getting them to stay. And getting them engaged. As a TA in a class, we're the ones, as soon as they leave the class we have to go with them and sometimes that's not ideal because they don't want someone following them. They want to be left alone. And it's really difficult, when you know that child is angry, you know, they're not in a good place and you're saying to them "oh come on, you need to go to class." They don't want to do that, they don't want to be told what to do. And it's really difficult to— I mean I like to just take a big step back and just keep an eye on them, because I wouldn't want to be bothered if I was like that, but that's part of our job role. So I find that really, really challenging, the walking around, trying to get them in class, because I'm not actually doing my job as a teacher, although I am doing my job as a TA in a PRU, so I find that challenging.

So although I recognised earlier all the work the PRUs had done to engage the students with careers education, engagement with the academic curriculum was still a major hurdle as these reflections from James and Charlie illustrate:

AM: Lessons?

James: Don't really do 'em.

AM: You don't do lessons?

James: I do but I'm outside half the time.

AM: Doing what?

James: Walking.

AM: What do you do when you're walking?

James: Punching walls and shit.

[James and Charlie laugh]

AM: Are you supposed to do lessons and you don't do them, or is it that you have a different timetable?

James: I'm supposed to but—

AM: You don't do them?

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James: Yeah.

AM: And why don't you do them?

James: Coz it's shit and I'm here and if I go back to mainstream, I'll get kicked out so it doesn't make a difference what I do here.

AM: Similar Charlie?

Charlie: Nah, I stay in my lessons most of the time because I don't get that bored easily because most of the time I just sit there watching Rick and Morty or some'it. But when it's like the actual lessons and they're trying to teach you shit, it's not very good. It's like they give you a sheet and you do the sheet. It's never like you sit down, look at a PowerPoint, I'll teach you this, I'll teach you that. It's just here's that, do it, if you don't know how to do it, I'll tell you how to do it. It's not engaging.

Again, it appeared a lot of the challenges came down to having so many children with so many needs all in the same space together. Katie Johnson, a technology teacher, explained the transformations she witnesses in the personas of students who join. She said "learnt behaviour is one of our biggest things in here because we have that many behaviours." She explained, of the students who come to the PRU for six-week placements that, "putting them in this kind of environment … they come in with beautiful behaviour and beautiful work and within six weeks it's ruined, but that's not our doing, they just copy off the other young people and think that's acceptable but it really isn't." English teacher, Hillary Howard, who has been working at Alberton PRU for five years, also described the challenges of the group mentality. She said "they're all biddable one-to-one [and] one-to-one every student could make the changes that they need to make in the time that we have them …" But, of course, all the students mix together "all in incredibly bad habits." This is why, for Ms Howard, "a PRU doesn't ever work unless it is flooded with staff and support both externally and internally." However, at Alberton, she said this is not the case because "what's said here is that you can't have more staff doing the roles that you would have in mainstream because we've only got so many students." It seems, however, that the challenges have become ever more difficult. Tara Webster, the Admissions Officer, told me:

Tara Webster: I can definitely say that the behaviour has got worse. It's got more challenging, it's got more high-end, it's got less controllable. And unless PRUs have got the resources to really drill-down to support these kids that are quite damaged— a 14-year-old who's got habitually bad behaviour is a very hard nut to crack. I just think that kids with behavioural issues, you can see it when they're five or six, you can predict it. So you should get in there and sort it out then, so that we've not got this mass of kids being permanently excluded round-about Year 9, 10 and even 11. So I think behaviour has worsened. I think the willingness to be inclusive with kids with

that level of need and that type of need, that's an issue. And in some ways, I also feel the sorry thing is, things haven't changed and it just keeps going. Alberton has always had a high exclusion rate. We've always had a high teenage pregnancy rate. We've also got poor dental health in the borough. All of this is saying the same thing isn't it? It's a very far-reaching big issue that Alberton doesn't seem to be able to get to grips with. We're pretty good at putting a good show on and planting a lot of flowers and getting a good photograph taken with the mayor and that kind of thing but when it actually comes down to dealing with the massive issues, they just don't get dealt with.

These combined challenges resulted in a number of incidents of unprofessional staff behaviour. At Pendenford, Ms Turner told me: "when I got here, and I don't wish to speak ill of anybody before me, it was chaotic, it was disorganised." She explained that whilst there were no major safeguarding issues, the "simple stuff that you and I take for granted in mainstream school, none of that was in place." She therefore had to implement appraisal cycles, parents' evenings and end of year reports, absence reporting, and return to work meetings. At Alberton, Attendance Officer, Sally Stubbs told me about how the challenges with the group mentality meant that some lessons could not take place:

Sally Stubbs: And I've just actually taken a call from a child that has taken me so long to get in: yesterday he came to school and there were four kids in his class, he really wants to learn. He knows he's at a PRU, but he wants to leave here with some GCSEs after Year 11 and make plans for his future. So he was in maths yesterday and the other three weren't listening, so the teacher turned round and said "oh well if you're not going to cooperate, I'll just put a video on." And he put 'Karate Kid' on and this poor kid's gone home, mum's phoned me this morning and he's refusing to come in and I said "why?" "Well they was in maths yesterday and they've put 'Karate Kid' on." I just thought, what! I'm doing my job, getting these kids into school, it's for the staff then in here to make sure that those kids are safeguarded when they're in school and that they're educated. Putting a DVD on, that's not even on the curriculum, that's nothing even to do with maths. You know if you wanted to put 'Countdown' or something on, 'Karate Kid'! Them are the challenges that I have all the time with school.

Although both PRUs were having to deal with a number of challenges, it seemed from my interviews as though the Alberton PRU in particular was being stretched with the vast number and array of needs of the students in the space. I have already discussed, above, the ACEs and trauma that many of the students have encountered. Ms Howard, explained how these traumatic experiences could, in turn, be manifested in the classroom:

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Hillary Howard: When I feel most sort of— not afraid, but when I feel that I need the most assistance is where there's a sort of group mentality, a mob-rule and there's maybe four or five students and you can see that they are— they're wanting to destroy and a lot of that I understand, it's an attention thing it's a desperate cry for some kind of help. I think that's the most frustrating thing is the damage to the infrastructure of the school, the damage to your personal property. And when they're at their worst the things that you are threatened with are eye-opening. There was one the other week that said, "I'll find out where your boyfriend lives and stab him and I'll rape your kids." Sorry to share that with you, but they can really, really plumb the depths. And that's when I start to think my God that's been said to them at some point or they've witnessed that behaviour being said to someone else, they haven't made that up, that's come from the environment that they come from.

It was noteworthy, however, that the staff who worked with the students in the exclusive exclusion spaces were very positive about them, even though many of them had felt on the brunt of several negative experiences with the students. At Alberton, Denise Shaw, Head of Studies, explained how having arrived after working at mainstream schools, she "absolutely loves it." She explained that she "needed to get out of mainstream and make a difference, so I wouldn't go back to mainstream at all." Ms Shaw explained that staff at the PRU have a greater level of tolerance than is afforded to the students in mainstream spaces:

Denise Shaw: They all come with their personal challenges and they all come with a real lack of self-esteem and self-respect. They've all had an experience which has really set them back in life and need positive role models to build them up. They all have challenging behaviour, whether it be violent, verbal or aggression, all sorts of extreme behaviour but it's about being able to understand why they are displaying that behaviour. People see them as naughty children, they're not naughty children, their behaviour is for a specific reason. And from listening to them that's how they see themselves. James is obviously ruined by the whole system, you know he just doesn't care. I mean he does care, very much so but they've just been let down at so many stages in life and it's being able to have that calmness and that level of respect for them that they need, I think more than other children because they are bright and I know what's happened to them but being able to give them that time and respect and different angles and directions to try to allow them to move forward.

Nevertheless, it felt as though the demands that have been placed on the institution were far too big and stretching. This was a space looking after children who mainstream spaces could not or did not want to accommodate, yet it appeared that there were not sufficient resources in place to do this. At Alberton, 44 of the students had EHCPs. This is a staggering number of students with learning needs to be in one institution and represents around one-third of the student population at the PRU. Mr Baker explained to me how "two years ago we only had 20

students and it now looks like for September, we'll have close to 50." I noted above that far more boys are permanently excluded than girls and Mr Baker described the challenges this caused:

Tom Baker: We are massively boy heavy in the PRU and that's unhealthy and creates all sorts of problems. So what you've got is that these boys have one of two female role models in their lives: either a very submissive mother or a very aggressive mother. Both of which give them a very negative view and strange relationship with women. Equally strange is that the PRU is heavily staffed with middle-aged women. So you've got this strange thing where the values that they have, the language that they use with females is horrendous. But you have to again look at why is this happening? It's because of their life experience – the father's very often not present and the mother often comes from abuse and their response to abuse. And then in the PRU there are very few females of their age to engage with. So we've either got young women who are struggling with their own sexuality or a few that the boys then fall over themselves for and don't know how to behave with. They're not getting a normal, societal relationship with women. So all the stuff that has gone on in their personal lives are kind of mirrored and worsened by what's happening in the PRU, so we're also trying to look at that because those are factors that cause social disadvantage and reinforce things (…)

Although the PRUs operate in the same landscape as mainstream schools, by virtue of being non-mainstream spaces (the PRU is a place students are sent to, not one they choose to go to), educating mainstream-contrary students they have a completely different spatial trialetic (Soja, 1996). This is, of course, because "representations of space have a practical impact, that they intervene in and modify spatial textures which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42). Staff at both PRUs felt that there needed to be more recognition of the important work they were doing under extremely trying circumstances, as exemplified by this response from Annette Gibson, Deputy Head at Alberton PRU:

Annette Gibson: I always feel like we're at the bottom of the barrel. Certainly, from a funding point of view. SEN funding has also been cut considerably and yet these students need much more support. And just to be recognised by the mainstream schools. I think that comes from government as well. We're part of the chain of education, as opposed to where you put somebody when you don't want them anymore. So I think I'd like the government to raise the profile of what the pupil referral service is all about and see it as a positive thing. That'd be the start. The way that you know that you're a bit of a show is because Louis Theroux asked us to come and film in here. Now you know why Louis Theroux would want to film you, don't you? You know that that's the reputation and you're considered a bit of a freak show and we need to try and change that.

7.4   Aspiration

In a survey that asked teachers, "what are the top three most prominent issues that you currently face with pupil premium students in your school?" the number one answer from secondary school teachers was 'low aspirations' (Angus, 2019). Unfortunately, there was no further amplification of exactly what 'low aspirations' were deemed to be. I wonder if this is another manifestation of a perspective gap, where aspirations were somehow being tied to engagement. It seems easy to imagine how students who find themselves excluded from the mainstream may be deemed to have low aspirations. After all, mainstream space is the 'gold standard' it is the land of high qualifications and other normative outcomes. Even students operating in exclusive exclusion space appear to recognise this – remember my earlier observation about Anthony being deemed a 'weirdo' for wanting to remain in exclusive exclusion space (Chapter 6). However, low engagement is *not* the same as low aspirations. Here, again, we return to the 'cultural arbitrary' which I remind the reader is the '*misrecognition of the truth of the legitimate culture as the dominant cultural arbitrary, whose reproduction contributes towards reproducing the power relations*' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p. 31 emphasis in original). The symbolic violence in this requires these students to move from their positions to other more valued positions. Take for example, Lucy's positivity about being able to do a hairdressing course compared to the reaction she encountered at her mainstream school – "On Wednesdays you go college and do hair and beauty, whereas in mainstream when I told my headteacher I wanted to be a hairdresser she looked at me like I was a dickhead." It is, of course, conceivable that to Lucy's previous headteacher, hairdressing represented 'low aspiration'. Thus, in this last section which concludes my research findings, it seems important to focus on the goals and aspirations of the students. I asked the students where they thought they would be in five years' time. Jennifer's answer was a typical response: "I'll have a house. But I wanna focus on getting me car first. Have a car, have a house. Have a good job, get some good money." It therefore seemed that the exclusion of the students did not appear to emanate from a lack of ambition. They too want financial security for themselves.

The desire to make money was a common response from the students. As I've discussed above, some of the students were quite clear on the specific careers and jobs they wanted. I noted above that some of the girls in the Pendenford PRU wanted to be hairdressers. Additionally, Vanessa told me that, "I wanna be in university. I wanna study something to do with food because I wanna be a chef." The two youngest students in the research were also quite clear about what they wanted to achieve; Brendan, in Year 7, told me that he wanted to be an engineer and Kirsty, in Year 8, said she wanted to be a therapist. Some of the students were less clear about what precise career they want to go into but were still clear about the importance of work to their lives. "I can't talk on that, I can't talk on that, I just can't" was

Da'juan's response when I asked him what he thought he would be doing in five years' time. However, his response when I asked him if he thought he would be in work was, "yeah of course." Similarly, Leanne told me, "I want to have my own business" and for Hani – "as long as I get money I'm fine with it, but it depends. I'll be working. The second I can get a licence I'll be working." I found Charlie's answer at Alberton PRU interesting. Although there was a level of pessimism about where he thought he would be – "I think that I'll have a pretty shit job" was his reply, when he talked about where he *wanted* to be in 5 years' time this was a completely different answer – "I'd wanna have some sort of scholarship in a dead posh school where I can go and sit in an orchestra and play something." I observed earlier that Charlie wanted a career in music and felt that he needed to leave Alberton PRU because it did not offer music GCSE, which he believed was important to enabling him to achieve his goals.

Finally, I asked the students what their advice was to the next generation of young people approaching their own secondary school journeys. It was fascinating that having described their own mainstream-contrary behaviours and defiance of school rules, all the students advised the next generation to be the opposite of themselves. Da'juan who told me that he did not like going to lessons himself, advised the next generation, "don't be with your friends like. Go to your lessons." The others in his focus group agreed. Jessica told me, "yeah, stop hanging around with the wrong people." Brendan, who reflected on his constant fights at school advised the next generation to, "stop getting into fights and acting bad in school. To behave." Similar advice was given from many of the third focus group who had expressed so many mainstream-contrary opinions. Leanne who told me that she would never go back to mainstream school herself advised others to "stay in school … [and] concentrate because when you get to Year 10 you're gonna have to work hard and do more catching up." The students appeared, also, to recognise the negative impact that some of their peers had on them:

Jennifer: Well I would just say go school, don't let no one know your business and don't let no one know who you are. Go school, get your head down, even if you've got no mates it don't matter, just go in and just do it or you're just gonna be messing about going to a PRU and then going back to mainstream and then leaving and going to college. My mistake was just going to high school and obviously everyone knowing who I was.

And even James, perhaps the most anti-school of all the research participants expressed his regrets at what had happened to him and advised the next generation not to do the same:

James: If you're good at something, don't fuck it up.

AM: Is that what you feel you did?

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James: Yeah.

AM: What were you good at?

James: Rugby.

AM: And why did you mess it up?

James: Started smoking weed. Ruined everything innit.

AM: Charlie?

Charlie: Well every parent says it goes a lot faster, but their kid never believes it until the end. So I'd tell them something that might not be true, but would scare the shit out of them so they'd just do it. So I'd probably tell them like you'll get shot if you don't graduate. And if you just told everyone that then no one's gonna get kicked out because no one wants to get shot.

AM: Why do you think that they need to be scared?

Charlie: Coz I think being scared is probably the best incentive to get someone to do something. Pretty horrible, but if I was trying to be efficient if I ruled a country then I'd do that and then once you graduate you'd be like "just kidding, you wouldn't have died but now you've got all your GCSEs and you're gonna be successful. You're not gonna be homeless or nothing, you're gonna have a job." You may have been shit scared for the last five years, but now you're thankful because now you're all set in life. No matter what, because you'll have those qualifications.

These perspectives were so very telling and perhaps the most surprising element of my interviews with the students. It is hard to overstate the level of resentment that the students expressed about their experiences in mainstream space. They felt overlooked and unheard in these spaces. They had disdain towards the staff in mainstream spaces and expressed a number of difficulties about operating in their schools. And yet, despite all this, their advice to the next generation was not to defy the rules in these spaces, like they had done, but to make it work, to learn to operate successfully in the spaces. It was difficult to know why this was the case. But then, perhaps, these are the aspirations of the students, not just that they will be able to make money and be financially secure as I observed at the start of this section, but also that others in their situations would be able to be in this position too. And, maybe, experience this without the pain and challenges that they themselves had endured. High aspirations for themselves and high aspirations for others also.

7.5   Chapter Conclusion

Exclusive exclusion spaces are marginal spaces. They are marginal spaces because they do not operate in the centre and are, therefore, not just easy to forget but are invisible in many respects. And yet, the children in these spaces have important experiences and perspectives to share. The students I interviewed were not a generation of no-hopers destined to fail because of their challenging starts in life but were young people with aspirations for themselves and others. But still the institutions they attend are full of children with high needs and adverse socio-economic experiences. Placing students all with these kinds of challenges and difficulties in their lives in the same space and without sufficient support to cater for these needs seems to be a situation which only reinforces socio-economic inequalities. And so, I will shortly move on to discussing what a more socially-just situation may look like for these students in the education system as I conclude this thesis.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1   Collateral Damage

In answering the question at the heart of this thesis – why are disadvantaged students collateral damage in the education system? – I return to where I started in the introduction with a discussion of social justice. Specifically, Young's (1990) *five faces of oppression*. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Young highlighted justice through the sphere of injustice. Using this framework I will now consider the injustices that disadvantaged students face in the education system and reflect on what a more socially-just approach might look like for these students.

The first face of oppression is *exploitation*. This is the oppression that "occurs through a steady process of the transfer of the results of the labour of one social group to benefit another" (Young, 1990, p. 49). Additionally, "[t]hese relations are produced and reproduced through a systematic process in which the energies of the have-nots are continuously expended to maintain and augment the power, status, and wealth of the haves" (Young, 1990, p. 50). In this regard, the state appears to distract our attention from this injustice with a compensatory policy – the pupil premium – which asserts that deep socio-economic inequalities can be addressed by a small payment to schools according to the numbers of disadvantaged students they have on their rolls. Meanwhile, as we have already established the very richest continue to dominate the highest echelons of society (Friedman and Laurison, 2019; Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission, 2019) and benefit from unequal distributions economically and socially. And so, a simple compensatory framework does not constitute justice because:

> The injustices of exploitation cannot be eliminated by redistribution of goods, for as long as institutionalized practices and structural relations remain unaltered, the process of transfer will re-create an unequal distribution of benefits. Bringing about justice where there is exploitation requires reorganization of institutions and practices of decisionmaking, alteration of the division of labor, and similar measures of institutional, structural, and cultural change (Young, 1990, p. 53).

And so while it may be easy to comfort ourselves with the belief that education is a meritocracy, this will only be the case when wider societal issues are addressed which impact on the education that is provided to children and, in turn, the way they receive this education.

The second face of oppression is *marginalization*. You may remember that Young argued this was the most dangerous form of oppression. And its implications are not just on distributive justice such as economic inequalities but "also involves the deprivation of cultural, practical, and institutionalized conditions for exercising capacities in a context of recognition and

interaction" (Young, 1990, p. 55). I have observed in this study that pupil referral units are marginal spaces. These are spaces that stand on the edge of the education system. They are spaces that contain disproportionate numbers of disadvantaged students and are spaces which are rarely discussed when conversations about education and schooling take place. They are spaces that are easy to forget. So are the inclusive exclusion spaces that, also, operate on the margins of mainstream space. These are spaces that disadvantaged students pass through on their way to exclusive exclusion spaces. Sometimes marginalization is a necessary outcome when wrongdoing or harm has taken place. However, these students' marginalization stems from the precarious position of their socio-economic status something which they were born into and something which has been a feature of society for a very long time.

The third face of oppression is *powerlessness*. Here, Young described the powerless as those who "must take orders and rarely have the right to give them" (Young, 1990, p. 56). To a certain extent, there will always be a power imbalance between adults and children, that is simply due to the nature of the greater levels of maturity and experience, in general, that adults have. So what then is powerlessness in the context of the education of disadvantaged students? Although the students described feeling powerless because of their experiences of exclusion and not being listened to by school leaders, powerlessness may also be about the reinforcement of what professions are deemed valuable and, therefore, what opportunities they have (or indeed, do not have) to prepare for these careers. Young contrasted the status of professionals with non-professionals:

> Being professional usually requires a college education and the acquisition of a specialized knowledge that entails working with symbols and concepts. Professionals experience progress first in acquiring the expertise, and then in the course of professional advancement and rise in status. The life of the nonprofessional by comparison is powerless in the sense that it lacks this orientation toward the progressive development of capacities and avenues for recognition (Young, 1990, p. 57).

Powerlessness, then, is seen in Lucy's observation that her headteacher looked at her like she was a "dickhead" when she said she wanted to be a hairdresser. For these students, it was in not having the kinds of interests and careers they wanted to pursue explored in mainstream schools. As I noted, above, it took them to be excluded from their schools to experience these opportunities.

The fourth face of oppression is *cultural imperialism*. This is the "universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm" (Young, 1990, p. 56). This face of oppression is closely linked with the powerlessness I have described above. It is

connected to Bourdieu's and Passeron's (1990) *cultural arbitrary* which is reproduced in the education system. And this, in turn, has implications for justice later on when these students enter the labour market:

> The group defined by the dominant culture as deviant, as a stereotyped Other, is culturally different from the dominant group, because the status of Otherness creates specific experiences not shared by the dominant group, and because culturally oppressed groups also are often socially segregated and occupy specific positions in the social division of labour (Young, 1990, p. 60).

This is the eschewing by the state of certain learning opportunities from the Progress 8 secondary accountability measures where there is hardly any space for practical subjects to sit alongside the traditional academic subjects of English, maths and science. This face of oppression is the assumption that disadvantaged students have low aspirations because they have different aspirations. The students in this research project had the same kind of aspirations that most of us have; to be financially secure in life and to enjoy the benefits that this security brings.

The fifth face of oppression is *violence*. This was identified specifically as a systematic act by Young, "directed at members of a group simply because they are members of that group" (Young, 1990, p. 62). For disadvantaged students in the education system, this violence is symbolic. Therefore, this violence is not necessarily obvious or explicit, rather it is *symbolic* precisely because it is more nuanced and implicit than that. This form of violence is closely linked with the forms of oppression I have already discussed above. It is the feeling by the students that they were being forced to study content they felt was irrelevant to their lives. And in turn, it is the pedagogic authority's assertion that their interests are invalid to count in the success criteria that is used to judge the effectiveness of schools. It is, therefore, "not as some believe, the product of a deliberate and purposive action" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 21), but "in a more subtle way [with] the arbitrariness of the distribution of powers and privileges which perpetuates itself through the socially uneven allocation of school titles and degrees" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. x). This is a violence towards disadvantaged students because it simply reinforces inequalities in wider society.

And, therefore, disadvantaged students have become collateral damage in an education system which promotes essentially utilitarian principles (Bentham, 2000). When the focus is on the greatest happiness of the greatest number, there will necessarily be casualties. And it is disadvantaged students who, disproportionately, have found themselves finishing school with worse outcomes than their more advantaged peers. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, if the outcomes are poor, there are also issues with the inputs. For the students in this research

there existed a disconnect between their aspirations and the lack of provision from the schools they attended to support these aspirations. As I have noted, these are inequalities which are then reproduced outside of the school and so the pattern continues. Regretfully a group of disadvantaged students who find themselves on the margins will continue to be collateral damage in a narrow, one-size-fits-all education system until these injustices in school and outside of school are addressed. True social justice in the education system would necessitate their perspectives being respected and valued alongside those of their more advantaged peers.

8.2   Reflections

8.2.1   Reflection on Conceptual Approach

To conclude this study, I return to the aims I put forward at the start of this project. In order to accomplish the aims of the research I set out two research questions, the answers to which overlapped with all three research aims. A reminder that these questions were 1) In mainstream spaces, what are the experiences and perspectives of school leaders on the nature and impact of the inclusion and exclusion of disadvantaged students in the education system? This question allowed me to consider exclusion from the perspective of those who frame mainstream space and therefore, define what exclusion means for their schools. And 2) In exclusion spaces, what are the experiences and perspectives of disadvantaged secondary school students (and those who support them) on the nature and impact of their inclusion and exclusion in the education system? This question allowed me to consider exclusion from the perspective of those who experience it.

The first aim I had was to broaden the conceptualisation of the nature of exclusion of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools. Here, I have argued throughout this thesis that the current conceptualisation of exclusion which dominates narratives in the education system is too narrow. This current conceptualisation relies on an acceptance that the school itself is the centre. And, so being, exclusion is simply the act of a student being placed away from the school either temporarily or permanently (DfE, 2011a). If we continue to accept this simple definition of exclusion, we will not make progress with providing a more socially-just position for disadvantaged students. This is because this conceptualisation ignores so many other forms of exclusion that these students encounter. These other forms of exclusion are, of course, not considered exclusionary because students who experience these acts are marked 'present' on school registers. In this thesis I have broadened the conceptualisation of the nature of exclusion by setting out how exclusion can be both *inclusive* and *exclusive*. I have realigned the centre to be what is accessed and experienced by the mainstream population *within* the school. I argue that this conceptualisation allows a more

focused and socially-just consideration of exclusion because it invites more difficult and integral questions as to why some students are not part of that mainstream population to be considered.

Having argued that current conceptualisations of exclusion are inadequate, my second aim was to explore the various ways in which space itself is mobilised as a means of governing student inclusion and exclusion and that these tend to be disproportionately selective of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools. I argue that exclusion can be a curriculum that one does not engage with, sitting in an isolation room, ending one's school days in the detention hall and many other acts where the student remains in the school, but finds himself or herself away from the mainstream. These are acts which take place in opaque spaces. I have argued that recognising that exclusion can take place *within* the school and not just from it allows a more in-depth and meaningful discussion about the purpose of the education system and how disadvantaged students fit into this. For the students in my research, their exclusion came about because of their intolerance of the rules in place in their former schools. And this intolerance emanated from a perspective gap between the students and the staff in the mainstream spaces. At the heart of this perspective gap was a difference in opinion about the purpose of school. As a result of this disjunction, the students found themselves further away from the centre, operating in inclusive exclusion space until eventually their ties with their schools were cut altogether, and they found themselves in exclusive exclusion space.

Finally, having broadened the conceptualisation of exclusion I sought to discuss ways in which the position of disadvantaged students in England's secondary education system may be improved. I have discussed the broader social justice implications of this above, and here I further highlight some of the findings that came out of my research on this matter. Firstly, it is incumbent on those working with these students to properly consider the levels of trauma many of the students have experienced. And more than this, to consider how these traumatic experiences may impact the way these students can sometimes behave in schools. There is then a question for schools and the state about whether more can be done to provide resources to include these students, even if this may mean utilising inclusive exclusive space in the short term. This is because placing students with high needs from across the entire borough into the same space, presents significant challenges to these students' educational experiences. Finally, greater consideration needs to be given to these children's perspectives. Many of them expressed frustration that what they were studying in school was not relevant to their lives. This should not be brushed to one side but should be given proper consideration by those with the power to shape what happens in schools and what is *valued* in mainstream spaces to ensure that disadvantaged students, too, are properly included.

8.2.2 Reflection on Methodological Approach

A number of methodological features were used in this study: a critical realist approach, a qualitative research design and a thematic analytical approach. I believe a key strength of this study is how well all the features combined with the conceptual approach to contribute towards new knowledge regarding the education of disadvantaged students. I have explained throughout this thesis the reasons why I believe that a focus on the experiences and perspectives of senior school leaders and excluded disadvantaged students has been an important point of research. As I have noted, understanding how exclusion is framed in mainstream spaces and how it is experienced by disadvantaged students who are disproportionately affected, may help us to be in a better position to address the root causes of the problem rather than continually chipping away at the surface.

It simply would not have been possible to arrive at the findings I have in this thesis without talking with staff and students and considering and reflecting on what they had to say. I recognise that this study is overly focused on depth, rather than breadth and I do make some recommendations for further research below which may help to provide even further understanding on these matters. Nevertheless, I agree with Sayer's observation that "[e]ven where we are interested in wholes we must select and abstract their constituents" (1992, p. 86). The mainstream – inclusive – exclusive framework chimed with my own observations of the schooling system and addressed lacunae in the literature which I have observed above. Thus, taking a critical realist approach has allowed me to consider the generative mechanisms leading to the educational outcomes of the students in the study, including several latent aspects, the analysis of which is a particular strength of the critical realist approach (Sayer, 1992; Porpora, 2015). Of course, I would not have been able to arrive at these findings if I had not employed qualitative approaches (semi-structured interviews) and the thematic approach has allowed me to present the findings in a way that fits within the conceptual framework of the study.

8.2.3 Reflection on Areas for Further Research

Following the conclusion of the research in this thesis, I turn to two key areas that may help to provide further understanding on these matters:

1) What is the scale of inclusive exclusion practices in England's secondary schools and to what extent does this affect disadvantaged students?

We know a great deal about the scale and prevalence of formal exclusions in England's secondary schools. I was able to use these data to contribute towards the development of the Average Exclusion Rate (AER), discussed in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4). It is these data that reveal that disadvantage students are disproportionately excluded from secondary

schools in England. Consequently, although in this thesis I have been able to provide a qualitative perspective of the impact of inclusive exclusion practices, we know very little about the scale of their use. In this regard, further quantitative research may be useful in helping us to gain further understanding.

2) What are the longitudinal effects of inclusive and exclusive school exclusion experiences on disadvantaged students?

I have pointed to several studies regarding some of the wider socio-economic effects of exclusion when discussing the problem (Chapter 1), and also the impact of exclusion (Chapter 2). Some of these studies, whilst providing extant data, require fresh research so that we are able to get a more up-to-date understanding on these matters. In this thesis, I have been able to provide qualitative accounts of students who have recently felt the effects of the education system. However, further research – both qualitative and quantitative – over a longer period of time would help us to gain a better understanding of the impact of inclusive and exclusive practices when these children become adults and are operating in other societal spaces. As part of this, further research on household-based factors and their impact would be useful.

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Appendix A: Formal Exclusion Categories

Exclusion Reason	Description
Bullying	• Verbal • Physical • Homophobic bullying • Cyber bullying
Damage (includes damage to school or personal property belonging to any member of the school community)	• Arson • Graffiti • Vandalism
Drug and alcohol related	• Alcohol abuse • Drug dealing • Inappropriate use of prescribed drugs • Possession of illegal drugs • Smoking • Substance abuse
Persistent disruptive behaviour	• Challenging behaviour • Disobedience • Persistent violation of school rules
Physical assault against an adult	• Obstruction and jostling • Violent behaviour • Wounding
Physical assault against a pupil	• Fighting • Obstruction and jostling • Violent behaviour • Wounding
Racist abuse	• Derogatory racist statements • Racist bullying • Racist graffiti • Racist taunting and harassment • Swearing that can be attributed to racist characteristics
Sexual misconduct	• Lewd behaviour • Sexual abuse • Sexual assault • Sexual bullying • Sexual graffiti • Sexual harassment
Theft	• Selling and dealing in stolen property • Stealing from local shops on a school outing • Stealing personal property (adult or pupil) • Stealing school property
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against an adult	• Aggressive behaviour • Carrying an offensive weapon • Homophobic abuse and harassment • Swearing • Threatened violence • Verbal intimidation
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against a pupil	• Aggressive behaviour • Carrying an offensive weapon • Homophobic abuse and harassment • Swearing • Threatened violence • Verbal intimidation

Source: (DfE, 2017a)

Appendix B: UTLA Exclusion and IDACI Quartiles

Local Authority Code	LA Short Code	Local Authority Name	AER Rank	Exclusion Quartile	IDACI - Rank of average score	IDACI Quartile
E09000002	301	Barking and Dagenham	149	4	26	1
E09000003	302	Barnet	122	4	117	4
E08000016	370	Barnsley	2	1	35	1
E06000022	800	Bath and North East Somerset	59	2	134	4
E06000055	822	Bedford	128	4	96	3
E09000004	303	Bexley	86	3	86	3
E08000025	330	Birmingham	95	3	9	1
E06000008	889	Blackburn with Darwen	150	4	32	1
E06000009	890	Blackpool	9	1	2	1
E08000001	350	Bolton	36	1	42	2
E06000028	837	Bournemouth	21	1	101	3
E06000036	867	Bracknell Forest	81	3	142	4
E08000032	380	Bradford	94	3	34	1
E09000005	304	Brent	93	3	73	2
E06000043	846	Brighton and Hove	50	2	94	3
E06000023	801	Bristol, City of	14	1	52	2
E09000006	305	Bromley	147	4	114	4
E10000002	825	Buckinghamshire	137	4	144	4
E08000002	351	Bury	23	1	80	3
E08000033	381	Calderdale	100	3	61	2
E10000003	873	Cambridgeshire	131	4	129	4
E09000007	202	Camden	52	2	63	2
E06000056	823	Central Bedfordshire	125	4	128	4
E06000049	895	Cheshire East	57	2	132	4
E06000050	896	Cheshire West and Chester	90	3	103	3
E09000001	201	City of London	152	4	147	4
E06000052	908	Cornwall	113	3	84	3
E08000026	331	Coventry	60	2	43	2
E09000008	306	Croydon	104	3	70	2
E10000006	909	Cumbria	39	2	107	3
E06000005	841	Darlington	24	1	55	2
E06000015	831	Derby	46	2	47	2
E10000007	830	Derbyshire	77	3	95	3
E10000008	878	Devon	101	3	121	4
E08000017	371	Doncaster	3	1	33	1
E10000009	835	Dorset	105	3	124	4
E08000027	332	Dudley	38	1	51	2
E06000047	840	Durham	74	2	38	1
E09000009	307	Ealing	111	3	82	3
E06000011	811	East Riding of Yorkshire	106	3	126	4
E10000011	845	East Sussex	35	1	85	3
E09000010	308	Enfield	37	1	36	1
E10000012	881	Essex	110	3	104	3
E08000020	390	Gateshead	63	2	54	2
E10000013	916	Gloucestershire	80	3	116	4
E09000011	203	Greenwich	40	2	46	2
E09000012	204	Hackney	20	1	19	1
E06000006	876	Halton	73	2	25	1
E09000013	205	Hammersmith and Fulham	83	3	68	2
E10000014	850	Hampshire	109	3	137	4

E09000014	309	Haringey	48	2	49	2
E09000015	310	Harrow	139	4	122	4
E06000001	805	Hartlepool	4	1	8	1
E09000016	311	Havering	117	4	87	3
E06000019	884	Herefordshire	119	4	120	4
E10000015	919	Hertfordshire	123	4	130	4
E09000017	312	Hillingdon	99	3	90	3
E09000018	313	Hounslow	79	3	79	3
E06000046	921	Isle of Wight	22	1	74	2
E06000053	420	Isles of Scilly	151	4	151	4
E09000019	206	Islington	28	1	10	1
E09000020	207	Kensington and Chelsea	41	2	115	4
E10000016	886	Kent	69	2	89	3
E06000010	810	Kingston Upon Hull, City of	134	4	5	1
E09000021	314	Kingston upon Thames	148	4	140	4
E08000034	382	Kirklees	34	1	76	2
E08000011	340	Knowsley	11	1	3	1
E09000022	208	Lambeth	118	4	31	1
E10000017	888	Lancashire	72	2	81	3
E08000035	383	Leeds	26	1	56	2
E06000016	856	Leicester	62	2	22	1
E10000018	855	Leicestershire	130	4	133	4
E09000023	209	Lewisham	56	2	30	1
E10000019	925	Lincolnshire	89	3	83	3
E08000012	341	Liverpool	107	3	4	1
E06000032	821	Luton	27	1	62	2
E08000003	352	Manchester	19	1	7	1
E06000035	887	Medway	29	1	66	2
E09000024	315	Merton	103	3	111	3
E06000002	806	Middlesbrough	1	1	1	1
E06000042	826	Milton Keynes	58	2	97	3
E08000021	391	Newcastle upon Tyne	97	3	20	1
E09000025	316	Newham	112	3	59	2
E10000020	926	Norfolk	53	2	91	3
E06000012	812	North East Lincolnshire	17	1	11	1
E06000013	813	North Lincolnshire	8	1	72	2
E06000024	802	North Somerset	92	3	119	4
E08000022	392	North Tyneside	140	4	75	2
E10000023	815	North Yorkshire	43	2	141	4
E10000021	928	Northamptonshire	75	2	106	3
E06000048	929	Northumberland	68	2	78	3
E06000018	892	Nottingham	16	1	6	1
E10000024	891	Nottinghamshire	25	1	92	3
E08000004	353	Oldham	76	2	29	1
E10000025	931	Oxfordshire	85	3	138	4
E06000031	874	Peterborough	71	2	50	2
E06000026	879	Plymouth	65	2	57	2
E06000029	836	Poole	51	2	101	3
E06000044	851	Portsmouth	47	2	58	2
E06000038	870	Reading	84	3	88	3
E09000026	317	Redbridge	145	4	108	3
E06000003	807	Redcar and Cleveland	5	1	18	1
E09000027	318	Richmond upon Thames	91	3	148	4
E08000005	354	Rochdale	44	2	28	1
E08000018	372	Rotherham	10	1	39	2
E06000017	857	Rutland	143	4	146	4
E08000006	355	Salford	42	2	24	1
E08000028	333	Sandwell	45	2	15	1
E08000014	343	Sefton	138	4	67	2

E08000019	373	Sheffield	13	1	41	2
E06000051	893	Shropshire	88	3	125	4
E06000039	871	Slough	141	4	100	3
E08000029	334	Solihull	49	2	99	3
E10000027	933	Somerset	31	1	109	3
E06000025	803	South Gloucestershire	32	1	135	4
E08000023	393	South Tyneside	133	4	13	1
E06000045	852	Southampton	82	3	53	2
E06000033	882	Southend-on-Sea	55	2	65	2
E09000028	210	Southwark	102	3	23	1
E08000013	342	St. Helens	33	1	27	1
E10000028	860	Staffordshire	96	3	113	3
E08000007	356	Stockport	54	2	102	3
E06000004	808	Stockton-on-Tees	7	1	48	2
E06000021	861	Stoke-on-Trent	15	1	17	1
E10000029	935	Suffolk	108	3	110	3
E08000024	394	Sunderland	64	2	21	1
E10000030	936	Surrey	126	4	145	4
E09000029	319	Sutton	142	4	118	4
E06000030	866	Swindon	30	1	98	3
E08000008	357	Tameside	18	1	37	1
E06000020	894	Telford and Wrekin	6	1	45	2
E06000034	883	Thurrock	144	4	69	2
E06000027	880	Torbay	67	2	40	2
E09000030	211	Tower Hamlets	127	4	14	1
E08000009	358	Trafford	132	4	127	4
E08000036	384	Wakefield	12	1	60	2
E08000030	335	Walsall	87	3	16	1
E09000031	320	Waltham Forest	61	2	64	2
E09000032	212	Wandsworth	135	4	93	3
E06000007	877	Warrington	114	3	112	3
E10000031	937	Warwickshire	121	4	123	4
E06000037	869	West Berkshire	116	4	143	4
E10000032	938	West Sussex	115	4	131	4
E09000033	213	Westminster	66	2	71	2
E08000010	359	Wigan	78	3	77	3
E06000054	865	Wiltshire	124	4	136	4
E06000040	868	Windsor and Maidenhead	129	4	149	4
E08000015	344	Wirral	98	3	44	2
E06000041	872	Wokingham	146	4	150	4
E08000031	336	Wolverhampton	70	2	12	1
E10000034	885	Worcestershire	136	4	105	3
E06000014	816	York	120	4	139	4

Appendix C: Questionnaire and Results

1. What local authority is your school in?

2. What is the overall effectiveness grading for this school from its most recent Ofsted inspection?

1: Outstanding	2: Good	3: Requires Improvement	4: Inadequate	5: Not yet inspected

3. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   In this school fixed term exclusions are an effective behaviour management tool

1: Strongly agree	2: Agree	3: Neither agree or disagree	4: Disagree	5: Strongly disagree

4. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   In this school permanent exclusions are an effective behaviour management tool

1: Strongly agree	2: Agree	3: Neither agree or disagree	4: Disagree	5: Strongly disagree

5. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   In this school the government policy 'Behaviour and discipline in schools' is appropriate for addressing the schooling of disadvantaged students

1: Strongly agree	2: Agree	3: Neither agree or disagree	4: Disagree	5: Strongly disagree

6. In this school how influential is the government policy 'Behaviour and discipline in schools' in directing approaches towards the schooling of disadvantaged students?

1: Extremely influential	2: Influential	3: Moderately influential	4: Slightly influential	5: Not at all influential

7. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   In this school the government policy 'Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England' is appropriate for addressing the schooling of disadvantaged students

1: Strongly agree	2: Agree	3: Neither agree or disagree	4: Disagree	5: Strongly disagree

8. In this school how influential is the government policy 'Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England' in directing approaches towards the schooling of disadvantaged students?

1: Extremely influential	2: Influential	3: Moderately influential	4: Slightly influential	5: Not at all influential

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   In this school the government policy 'Pupil Premium' is appropriate for addressing the schooling of disadvantaged students

1: Strongly agree	2: Agree	3: Neither agree or disagree	4: Disagree	5: Strongly disagree

10. In this school how influential is the government policy 'Pupil Premium' in directing approaches towards the schooling of disadvantaged students?

1: Extremely influential	2: Influential	3: Moderately influential	4: Slightly influential	5: Not at all influential

11. In this school how influential are internally produced data in directing approaches towards the schooling of disadvantaged students?

1: Extremely influential	2: Influential	3: Moderately influential	4: Slightly influential	5: Not at all influential

12. In this school how influential are national data in directing approaches towards the schooling of disadvantaged students?

1: Extremely influential	2: Influential	3: Moderately influential	4: Slightly influential	5: Not at all influential

13. In this school how influential are international data in directing approaches towards the schooling of disadvantaged students?

1: Extremely influential	2: Influential	3: Moderately influential	4: Slightly influential	5: Not at all influential

14. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
    Schools can solve the apparent poorer academic outcomes of disadvantaged students

1: Always	2: Most of the time	3: About half of the time	4: Sometimes	5: Never

15. What is the percentage of disadvantaged students in this school?

0-10%	11-20%	21-30%	31-40%	41-50%	51-60%	61-70%	71-80%	81-90%	91-100%

16. In this school, on the whole, how does the attitude of disadvantaged students towards their academic studies compare with non-disadvantaged students?

1: Far better	2: Somewhat better	3: Neither better or worse	4: Somewhat worse	5: Far worse

17. In this school what would be the ONE most important thing (either internal or external) that would make a difference to the academic outcomes of disadvantaged students?

Qu. 1	Quartile	Qu. 2	Qu. 3	Qu. 4	Qu. 5	Qu. 6	Qu. 7	Qu. 8	Qu. 9	Qu. 10	Qu. 11	Qu. 12	Qu. 13	Qu. 14	Qu. 15	Qu. 16	Qu. 17
Barnsley	Q1	2	4	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	11-20%	4	
Hackney	Q1	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	2	2	1	2	4	2	51-60%	3	Aspiration - ensuring that leaders are aspirational and that this is communicated to the whole school community.
Islington	Q1	3	4	5	5	5	3	2	5	2	1	1	5	4	71-80%	3	curriculum
Islington	Q1	4	2	2	2	4	2	1	3	4	1	3	5	3	61-70%	4	Parental engagement
Islington	Q1	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	4	3	51-60%	4	Parent involvement
Manchester	Q1	5	2	4	2	2	2	4	1	2	2	2	5	2	41-50%	3	More staff
Manchester	Q1	3	2	2													
Middlesbrough	Q1	3	2	1													
Redcar and Cleveland	Q1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	1	3	4	4	21-30%	4	The government dealing with the inequality in society - tackling poverty and class/country divide with a sense of integrity and compassion.
St. Helens	Q1	2	2	3													
Stoke-on-Trent	Q1	2	3	2													
Tameside	Q1	5			2	4	3	4	2	3	2	3	4	1	21-30%	3	Early interventions pre primary
Tameside	Q1	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	4	2	2	2	2	4	31-40%	4	external
Barnet	Q4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	5	5	3	21-30%	3	Keeping them at the forefront of teacher's minds and putting PP students first
Barnet	Q4	1	4	5	3	5	5	5	3	4	2	5	5	4	0-10%	3	stability and care at home
Barnet	Q4	2	2	3	3	5	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	41-50%	4	High expectations
Bromley	Q4	2	2	2	2	4	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	4	11-20%	3	Being able to offer smaller class sizes
Buckinghamshire	Q4	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	5	3	11-20%	3	Access to technology.
Buckinghamshire	Q4	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	1	2	5	3	21-30%	4	Parental support.
Buckinghamshire	Q4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3									

Region	Q4													%		Description
Cambridgeshire	Q4	1	2	4	2	3	4	4	2	1	2	2	4	2	11-20%	4	Improving attendance
Cambridgeshire	Q4	2	2	4	2	5	2	5	2	4	2	2	5	4	11-20%	4	Parental ambition for their child and the instilling of a work ethic in support of the school
Cambridgeshire	Q4	3	2	2	1	2	4	2	2	2	1	1	5	2	11-20%	3	Parental engagement
Cambridgeshire	Q4	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	5	4	31-40%	4	High expectations in terms of behaviour, ambitions and quality T&L
Central Bedfordshire	Q4	3	2	4	3	4	3	4	2	3	2	2	4	4	11-20%	4	Parental aspirations for their children
Hertfordshire	Q4	1	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	1	2	3	3	0-10%	4	A better self perception and higher aspirations. Many of our PP learners feel like they are an 'other' compared with out largely affluent middle class cohort. This is our greatest challenge.
Hertfordshire	Q4	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	4	2	0-10%	4	Parental influence/support
Hertfordshire	Q4	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	1	1	3	4	2	11-20%	3	Continuation of funding to enable schools to identify the appropriate strategies to remove barriers and enhance the possibility of improving the outcomes for disadvantaged students.
Hertfordshire	Q4	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	5	4	21-30%	3	More money to employ more staff to support and implement support
Hertfordshire	Q4	3	2	2	2	3	4	4	2	3	3	2	4	4	31-40%	4	Genuine additional resources for significant access to 1-1 tuition and IT provision at home with 4G.
Hertfordshire	Q4	5	3	3	2	3											
Hertfordshire	Q4	2	4	4	4	5											
Hertfordshire	Q4	2	3	3													
Isles Of Scilly	Q4	5	3	3	3	3	3	5	1	1	1	3	5	2	0-10%	3	Early intervention.
Kingston upon Thames	Q4	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	4	4	2	2	3	2	11-20%	3	Ensuring that they 'buy in' to your school and they know that you are invested in them.

Region	Q4														%		Comment
Kingston upon Thames	Q4	1	2	4													
Leicestershire	Q4	1	2	5	2	2	4	2	1	1	1	2	3	4	11-20%	4	Parental engagement
Leicestershire	Q4	3	4	4	4	5											
Leicestershire	Q4	2	4	5	3	3	3	3									
Leicestershire	Q4	2	2	5													
Rutland	Q4	1	1	3	4	5	3	5	3	4	1	4	5	4	11-20%	4	Impossible to answer - all students are different as are the impediments to their progress.
Rutland	Q4	2	2	2	2	4	2	4	4	4	1	3	2	4	11-20%	4	ensuring they had personal access to a laptop and broadband access
Surrey	Q4	2	2	5	3	5	3	2	5	4	1	2	5	3	21-30%	4	Evidence shows that oif their was prolonged imput at a young age around learning the gap would not be created esepcially around the development of vocabulary. removing sure start centres has been wrong. All children should have the opportunity to have input at a young age for free.
Surrey	Q4	1	3	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	2	3	4	3	0-10%	4	Parental engagement
Surrey	Q4	1	3	3	1	3	2	3									
Surrey	Q4	3	3	2													
Surrey	Q4	2	2	2													
Sutton	Q4	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	5	5	4	0-10%	3	Access to the same 'life experiences' and cultural hinterland as wealthier families.
Sutton	Q4	1	2	2	2	4	2	4	2	2	1	3	5	3	11-20%	3	Parental support and engagement
Sutton	Q4	2	2	2	2	5	3	5	2	2	2	4	5	4	11-20%	3	Access to digital resources
Sutton	Q4	1	1	2													
Trafford	Q4	1	1	5	3	4	3	5	2	3	3	3	5	4	0-10%	3	I don't think it is possible to answer this question. If it were, we would be doing it.
Trafford	Q4	2	3	3	2	5	3	5									

Location	Q4														%		Comment
Warwickshire	Q4	2	2	2	3	5	3	5	2	3	3	3	5	4	31-40%	4	Being allowed to offer a curriculum that suits the needs and aspirations of the students. Many students would achieve more if they were able to take courses such as construction, motor vehicle, hair and beauty. These do not appear in the progress 8 score and the school cannot afford the score to be lowered by choosing subjects that do not appear in the league table
Warwickshire	Q4	1	1	5	3	5	3	5	3	1	3	3	3	3	11-20%	3	Expectations
Warwickshire	Q4	3	3	3													
Warwickshire	Q4	1	2	2	2	2											
Warwickshire	Q4	2	3	3	3	3											
West Berkshire	Q4	1	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	4	4	11-20%	4	Impossible to narrow down to one!
West Berkshire	Q4	3	2	1													
West Sussex	Q4	1	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	1	2	2	4	2	21-30%	4	Less external assessment
West Sussex	Q4	2	4	2	4	2	4	4	2	3	3	3	3	4	21-30%	3	more English and Maths Teachers and time for them to tutor
West Sussex	Q4	1	2	4	4	5	3	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	11-20%	4	Different parenting
West Sussex	Q4	2	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	1	2	3	2	21-30%	4	Staff personalisation in lessons to students needs and narratives
West Sussex	Q4	2	3	1													
West Sussex	Q4	5	4	4	3	5											
West Sussex	Q4	2	2	3													
West Sussex	Q4	2	3	3													
Wiltshire	Q4	2	4	5	2	4	5	5	3	4	3	4	5	4	11-20%	3	Greater engagement from parents in supporting the work of the school
Wiltshire	Q4	1	3	5													

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Mainstream School Senior Leaders

What's your background and what would you say have been the key influences on your educational outlook?

What is the context of this school?

How do disadvantaged students get on at the school? What factors play into disadvantaged students doing well or not doing well at the school?

What's your view on [various forms of exclusions]?

What's your view on the influence of national policies and approaches to addressing the education of disadvantaged students?

What's been the impact of COVID-19 on your disadvantaged students?

Pupil Referral Units

Headteachers

What's your background? What would you say have been/are the key influences on your educational outlook?

Could you describe [borough]? What are your thoughts on why deprivation and exclusion are so high here?

Do you think schools are doing all they can to avoid excluding challenging children?

What's the best thing about your job and the most challenging?

How would you describe the average day?

What is the general rhythm of an academic year?

What's your message to people like me, in leadership in mainstream schools?

What's your message to the government? What would be the one thing that would make a massive difference?

Staff

How long have you worked here?

What are most children like that come here?

What are some of the challenges (or extremes) you encounter?

What's your sense about why the children here fall out of mainstream education?

Do they get back into mainstream education? Why? Why not?

What's your message to people like me, in leadership in mainstream schools?

What's your message to the government? What would be the one thing that would make a massive difference?

What's been the impact of the pandemic on the students?

Students

Take me from Primary School to Secondary School - what school(s) did you go to? How would you describe those schools (in 3 words?)

When did things start to go wrong (or difficult) at school for you? Why?

Take me through the average day here? What's the difference between here and when you were in mainstream schools?

KS3 - do you want to get back into a mainstream school? Why? Why not?

KS4 - do you think you'll miss school? Why? Why not?

What's your message for people like me - on the leadership teams in schools?

What's your message for people in government?

What's been the impact of the pandemic on you and your time in school?

What do you think you'll be doing in about 5 years' time? Do you think school will have been important in helping you to be there?

If you were to give some advice to the next generations after you, what would it be?

Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet

![University of Cambridge logo]

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

What is the research about?

I am completing my Doctorate of Education at the University of Cambridge on the educational experiences of disadvantaged students in England's secondary schools. Outcomes for this group of students have long been a concern for those in and around the educational community. These students, also, often find themselves excluded at a disproportionately higher rate than their peers and, so, this research seeks to further understand the factors within schooling that lead up to these exclusions.

Research conducted will follow the ethical guidelines outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA).

What will participation involve?

You will be interviewed about your views and experiences in the education system. Your participation will be important as it will allow the perspectives of school leaders and students to be heard and considered. The focus will be not just on formal exclusion but also the factors within schooling that lead up to these exclusions.

How will my interview data be used?

I will record the interview and store it on a password-protected device. I will then transcribe the interview and store the transcription on a password-protected device. Once I have finished transcribing the interview, the digital recording will be deleted.

I will use the transcribed interview in my research findings. The interview data will be confidential; I may need to discuss the data with my Supervisor. All interview data will be anonymised so that individuals and institutions cannot be identified in the final study. The interview data may also be used in future presentations or articles – again, these will be anonymised.

Data will be held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). You have the right to request the interview data that you have provided for this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw, without prejudice, your data up to the point of its anonymisation. If you withdraw your consent for the data it will be deleted.

Who do I contact for further information or to raise a concern?

I am happy to provide further information or to respond to any queries or questions you may have. I can be contacted at: ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Susan Robertson ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CONSENT FORM

Please indicate you consent to participate in this study by ticking the following statements:

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet	☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and, if relevant, have had them answered to my satisfaction	☐
I agree to take part in this study	☐
I understand that my interview data will be confidential and anonymised in the research findings	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation without giving a reason	☐

SIGNED:	
PRINT NAME:	
DATE:	