

Young Women's Reflections on Attending a Private Girls' School

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to debates on the merits, or otherwise, of single sex education through exploring the experience of attending a private girls' school from the perspective of recent alumnae. In this study, 50 alumnae aged 23-28 years were surveyed, and 10 interviewed, reflecting on their experience of school and early career progression.

The alumnae all progressed to higher education, entering elite institutions, broadly in line with the private sector as a whole, reflecting a 'premium' in terms of access to elite universities and professional careers. It is difficult to determine the extent to which their progress is attributable to their social background rather than the school. However, the alumnae reported high levels of confidence they believed to have developed through school and continuing through their early careers. They reported a high degree of engagement with school activities, suggesting identification with the school and making much of the opportunities available. They also reflected on the quality of friendships, the support from teachers, as well as difficulties with cliques. Finally, many reported the freedom to 'be themselves', and not conform to traditional gender stereotypes. These elements underpin the confidence the alumnae believe was developed in school. A sense of 'fitting in' at school is associated with school engagement and can enhance confidence. The quality of friendships and being part of a friendship group appears to be an important, and arguably unique, feature of girls' schools. Confidence is enhanced through group membership; thus, friendships are important for the development of confidence. The experience of gender stereotyping can reduce girls' confidence, whilst its reduction can help build confidence. Expectations of heteronormative femininity may be reduced, and girls have greater freedom to 'be themselves' and speak up.

This study contributes to the wider literature by broadening our understanding of the sector and offers a particular perspective on the wider role of engendering confidence in education. The thesis concludes by discussing how some of the positive aspects of the school, reported by the alumnae might be incorporated into less socially and academically selective environments.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 A personal context

I have been working in a private girls' school for the entirety of my professional career. Attending my interview was the first time I had set foot in such a school, and I was very uncertain as to what to expect. My own background and schooling were very far removed from what I expected to experience, and what I have come to experience. My background is working class, my secondary school was a poor performing suburban mixed state school that served council estates, some poor and some middle-class areas, and anything in between. To want to learn was not considered 'cool' and was the subject of derision.

On entering the private girls' school, I experienced what could only be described as 'culture shock'. The girls were well-behaved, interested in learning, and completed their homework, on time, to a good standard. The parents were supportive and interested in their daughters' education. There were high expectations that each student could and should achieve her best (whatever that might be).

Most of my teaching, and the basis of my career progression, has been in the sixth form. The girls and young women I have worked with have struck me as assured and, in the main, confident in themselves. Initially I attributed this to their background, the majority coming from a middle-class family. However, I have been forced to re-consider this as a good proportion of students were from more modest backgrounds and yet, most also seemed to have the same confidence that they will be successful too. I began to wonder whether this confidence had come about not just through privilege (in terms of social background or wealth) but through the experience of school itself, and led me to question what elements of the school could contribute towards the inculcation of such assuredness. I was also curious about progression beyond school. Whilst their academic records were available to me, as well as their immediate destinations beyond school, I did not know of how they fared beyond. Was this academic success and confidence contributing to their career development, both in terms of degree outcomes and their subsequent careers?

This question was the inspiration for this thesis. I wanted to understand how these young women developed their confidence, and to understand what features of the school might have contributed to this. Ultimately, I wanted to know whether these features could be defined and incorporated into other contexts where girls without a privileged background might also be supported to develop similar confidence.

This research is important as there are valuable lessons that can be learned from schools that lead league tables. There is much rhetoric about the place of private schools as well as single sex education, and whether such institutions should continue to exist. Whilst I am not entering a debate about the politics of education, there is a case for not ‘throwing the baby out with the bathwater’. If we can distil the features of what makes a private girls’ school successful in terms of academic outcomes, these features could be replicated elsewhere. Many of the assumptions about such schools relate to both wealth and academic selection. Whilst it may be the case that ability to pay, as well as academic selection, may explain academic outcomes, it should be recognized that private schools offer scholarships based on talent, as well as bursaries to enable those from less wealthy backgrounds to attend. This means that in many cases, the average private school will comprise pupils from a wider range of backgrounds than some may assume.

From my own observations and experience, as well as the available literature, I was interested in exploring whether there was a private school premium in terms of access to elite universities as a result of making aspirational choices, as well as a strong work ethic. I was also interested in the development of confidence in girls and what factors might underpin this, and was keen to explore whether there are particular features of the school which might serve to raise confidence. Whilst acknowledging the selective nature of the school, as well as a skewed demographic, I was curious to consider whether the development of confidence is not solely the preserve of an elite but could be achieved by all. In addition, I was interested in understanding my own context as an exemplar of a private girls’ school, that whilst a selective school it is unlike the more elite traditional public schools. In addition, I was interested to apply my own theoretical interests to this analysis. Specifically, with a background in psychology, I was interested to apply some of the theoretical constructs here, in addition to concepts from

the fields of sociology and education. As I did not feel confined to any particular discipline, I was open to exploring an inter-disciplinary approach.

.1.2 Aims

The key aim of this thesis is to understand the experience of attending a private girls' school from the perspectives of those who had attended one. Given that the majority of literature pertains to highly elite schools, I wanted to explore the experiences of attending a school that is less elite, and in turn to contribute to the existing literature in order to understand the private sector more fully. Moreover, much of the literature, sociological in nature, relates to discussions of privilege, and advantage. Whilst I fully acknowledge the importance of this, I believe there is much more to be added, beyond privilege. To this end, I wanted to contribute to the literature in an attempt to understand what is the 'x-factor' of the school, beyond privilege, that allows the girls of a variety of dispositions to flourish. In addition, I was interested to 'get into the heads' of the alumnae, as I felt this was an area that had not been explored in terms of the psycho-social understandings of the experience of attending a private girls' school. Whilst there is a body of work exploring the reproduction of privilege, and the descriptions of particular practices that are connected with elite contexts, I was interested in what might contribute to success, confidence, or otherwise, from the perspective of those who had experienced the school. In illuminating some of these, I have attempted to understand them using a range of theoretical positions, drawn from both social psychology (reflecting my own academic roots) as well as sociology. In this, I offer a different perspective that can draw these disciplines together, allowing for interdisciplinary dialogue that might be used in future to inform other, similar research. Whilst I cannot claim this to be unique, I have not come across many such cross-overs in the process of the literature review. I have noted that the literature from the fields of sociology, education and social psychology, in my reading, whilst reflecting each disciplines over-arching paradigm, also use different language; I have attempted to unite this in taking a interdisciplinary approach by drawing together theories that are not ordinarily connected. Whilst mindful of the nature and scope of the Professional Doctorate, I cannot make claims of a unique thesis, I do believe this work adds to the literature in taking a different approach to studying an aspect of private schooling less well understood, as well as taking a

more interdisciplinary approach. I have also applied Stereotype Threat (Steele and Aronson, 1996) as a lens to view the impact of a range of gender stereotypes in a school context, and to consider whether some stereotypes are rendered more, or less, powerful in a single sex context.

I aimed to take a partly inductive approach, as, since I had some pre-conceived ideas of what questions I might ask in relation to aspects of the school, I was more interested in learning about experiences of school from those who had attended it. Therefore, I was very open to learning from the narratives offered what *they* believed were important aspects of their schooling.

1.3 Overview of chapters

In Chapter Two, I present an overview of the girls' school context by looking at the history of girls' schools and contemporary debates about the perceived need for such schools. This helps to set the scene in terms of what may be the advantages and disadvantages of attending a private girls' school. This leads to Chapter Three which explores the instrumental outcomes of private schools in general, and girls' schools in particular. Here I consider literature relating to academic outcomes, career trajectories and the reproduction of privilege. The second literature review in Chapter Four concentrates on confidence. I consider literature concerning the confidence of girls in general and I explore three different areas that could contribute to, or undermine confidence: gender stereotypes, school engagement and friendships. The literature review points to several areas to explore in terms of the research and in Chapter Five I explain the methodological decisions made and the methods used to collect and analyse data. In addition, I explain the theoretical frameworks I use to interrogate the data, and finally I explain how I went about analysing the data. From here I present the data in two chapters, reflecting the two foci of the literature review. Chapter Six presents the findings in relation to the instrumental outcomes of the alumnae, looking at higher education destinations and subsequent careers. I also explore how success is manifested and what aspects of the school the alumnae attribute this to. Chapter Seven presents my findings in relation to confidence. Initially I consider confidence before moving on to consider the role of gender stereotypes,

school engagement and friendships (in terms of confidence). Chapter Eight presents my conclusions and a discussion of the scope and limitations of the research, opportunities for further research and my concluding comments.

Chapter Two: Why Girls' Schools?

2.1 A history of private girls' schools

In the UK, private schools (or public schools as they were originally known) were established along similar lines as the first universities: to follow a liberal arts curriculum, for boys, based on Ancient Greek and Roman schooling (Thomas, 2013). They sought to offer a traditional curriculum of literature, arithmetic and classical languages. Schools were also used to develop 'character', to prepare the sons of the elite and powerful to become the future elite and powerful, some of the earliest being established in the 10th Century. However, these schools were for boys, not girls.

Prior to the Victorian era, there were very few schools for equivalent middle- and upper-class girls who would usually be educated at home by governesses or visiting teachers. They tended to be boarding establishments, with a curriculum focused on accomplishments, i.e., those skills considered emblematic of middle and upper class femininity – for example, needlecraft, French literature and music rather than maths, Latin or science. Some of these were charitable institutions, or Endowment Schools - funded by charitable commissions or endowments. In the Victorian era, teaching was one of the few acceptable occupations for unmarried middle- and upper-class women. The establishment of the Queens College in London in 1848, allowed young and mature women to attend lectures, and in turn, to act as better-informed teachers and governesses. Gradually during the Victorian era, more schools were established for girls, but many continued to focus on accomplishments, rather than an academic education (Walford, 1993). This began to change as the women heading the schools started to take a more radical approach to the education of girls. The Heads of North London Collegiate School (Frances Mary Buss) and Cheltenham Ladies' College (Dorothea Beale) began to introduce a curriculum to match that of boys' schools, in the belief that girls are equally capable as boys. From the 1870s, more schools were being established along similar lines so that by 1882, there were 90 public schools for girls, with a focus on academic education, rather than accomplishment (Manthorpe, 1993).

In the 1944 Education Act, cost-free education was established for all children, and made compulsory to age 15: Grammar schools, Secondary Modern and Secondary Technical Schools became a tripartite system that served to educate for different purposes – Grammar schools for academic progression, to university or the Civil Service, Secondary Modern to provide a basic, functional education, and Secondary Technical to provide training in technical skills. In addition to these, the previous Endowment Schools were reformed, and some became Direct Grant Grammar Schools. These were often city, or larger provincial town schools (rather than rural boarding) that were now part-funded by local authorities. These Direct Grant schools were selective, with 25% of places funded by central government and the remainder funded by private payment, or payment from the local authority. In essence, they were very similar to other Grammar Schools. The difference was that they had previously been either private, fee-paying schools, or charitable schools, or a combination of both. The Direct Grant scheme was in place from 1945, and was phased out in 1976. These were still in existence during, and beyond, the growth of comprehensive education for all in the mid-20th century (Gillard, 2011). The move to comprehensive education did not really impact upon existing class divisions as the upper classes still sent their children to public (private) schools, whilst the rest largely attended comprehensives. Despite the attempt to homogenise comprehensive schools, the intake and ethos' could still vary considerably. In England, a few Local Authorities chose to maintain their Grammar schools, and still today, these remain highly sought after.

Girls' schools today

In the UK, there are currently 161 Girls private schools, in comparison with 112 for boys and 1,104 mixed schools (ISC, 2021). In the UK, both in the state and private sectors, the number of single sex schools has been in decline for some time, suggesting that the arguments in favour of single sex schools are weaker in comparison to the arguments against. The decline has been two-fold. In the state sector, single sex schools have either closed or merged. In the private sector it is more common for single sex schools to become co-educational. The decline in the private sector has been marked with a halving in number over the past 20 years (Paton, 2014). Those that remain choose to present themselves as providing an education specifically for girls,

where it is perceived that girls can be liberated from gender stereotypes and go on to enjoy success as confident and aspirational young women.

2.2 Arguments for and against girls' schools

2.2.1 Introduction

In the 1970s, feminist authors questioned whether girls were experiencing equality in their education, suggesting that in single sex schools girls had more teacher attention and benefitted from a 'girl friendly' curriculum and feminine teaching styles (Spender and Sarah, 1980). The educational policy that introduced comprehensivisation led to a dramatic decrease in the number of single sex schools (Younger and Warrington, 2006). In the 1990s a gender gap emerged in the attainment of boys and girls with girls outperforming boys. The response was largely to increase mixed provision (particularly in the private sector) in order to boost the results of boys or, perhaps cynically, to use girls' results to boost positions in league tables.

Parents often choose single sex education for their daughters since there is a popular belief that girls fare better academically in girls' schools (Jackson and Bissett, 2005). In addition, they are viewed as being better placed to cater to girls' (unspecified) needs. In the parents they surveyed, Jackson and Bissett found that parents assumed that mixed schools already catered well for boys, providing an additional social advantage, whilst girls' schools were more academic. Moreover, parents felt their daughters benefitted from the lack of distractions from boys, although this was unclear whether they referred to classroom distraction or social distraction, as well as better opportunities in science (Jackson and Bissett, 2005).

Feminist arguments that schools 'short change' girls also prevail. For example, in an often cited study, Sadker and Sadker (1994) conducted observations on American high schools and reported an 'insidious sexism' where more questions were directed to boys, and that they were allowed a greater time to respond. They concluded that all-girl classrooms were an 'obvious remedy', (1994: 89).

2.2.2 Understanding gender differences: Essentialism

Underpinning much of the discourse related to girls' schools are differing accounts of the sources of gender differences, or indeed their absence. These different approaches are important to examine since whether a difference between boys and girls exists, how such differences come about and whether as a result girls and boys should be educated differently, impacts upon one's views of single sex education.

Essentialism views differences between boys/girls and men/women to be an intrinsic biological difference, that is immutable and fixed (Liben, 2015). Such differences are assumed to be 'hard-wired' and will lead to boys and girls developing different skills and preferences. Gender essentialism gives rise to assumptions that there are fields of study more suited to men or women: for example, in the sciences girls gravitate towards living systems and healthcare, whilst boys gravitate towards physical sciences (Sikora, 2014). At the same time, gender essentialism is invoked to justify segregation of the sexes for education. Essentialism has also focused on areas of neuroscience and brain-based research. Over the years, as technology has developed, there has been a continued interest in the differences between men's and women's brains. However, whilst there are small differences in the brains of men and women, the significance of these is uncertain (Fine, 2010) but these differences have been misinterpreted or exaggerated into claims about boys' and girls' brains being more fundamentally different.

An arguably unfortunate outcome of this research has been the way in which it has been used to justify single sex education. Leonard Sax (2006) is a strong advocate. As a prolific author of popular educational literature, he makes strong claims about the differences in the brains of boys and girls to the extent that they should be educated in different ways. In the US, where there has been a growth in either single sex or sex segregated schooling, Sax's recommendations hold sway with a number of 'neuromyths' and associated pedagogical 'recommendations' (Eliot, 2013), for example:

- Boys hear less well than girls – teachers should speak in raised voices to boys and soft tones with girls

- Boys are more resistant to stressors – boys should be challenged more, girls should be coaxed
- Girls' spatial abilities develop much later than boys' – girls cannot learn geometry at the same time as boys.

It is claimed these differences are based on research evidence, but there are significant issues: some research is based on animals, and differences in brain structures are often minimal and/or not replicated. Fine and Duke (2015) refer to 'brain mosaicism' where an individual can have a variety of male and female forms of each dimorphism. Such 'mosaics' they argue, come about not because of hard-wiring, but from the interactive influence of biology and environment. This means the experiences we have mould and shape us in important ways. In turn, the schooling context will have important implications for the person we become. Failure to recognise neuroplasticity – a process of organising, re-organising and pruning in the brain as a result of experience – as a potential source of brain differences (where they exist) between men and women is a failure to recognise the role of experience and the environment in shaping the brain. It could be argued that there are no essential differences in the brains of children and that differences only emerge through experience and plasticity (e.g., Salomone, 2013; Eliot, 2013). Ultimately this would mean there is no such thing as a male or female brain at all.

The alternative position is to point to differences as a result of socialisation, raising an important distinction between sex, as biological, and gender, as a social construction. Gender and the norms of behaviour, preferences and persuasions may be as a result of socialisation, moulding girls and boys into gendered versions of their biological sex (Wharton, 2012). Such persuasions can then be internalised as ways of 'being girl' (or boy). Gender can also be viewed as performative (e.g., Butler, 2006), rather than essentialised, thus gendered behaviour, traits and preferences are different means to perform, or communicate gender. Given there are choices in performance, there may be variation in the ways of 'doing girl'. Whilst I am not going to engage in a lengthy debate about the processes involved, nor indeed the current culture wars in this respect, a key aspect of this relates to gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4) are sets of expectations and assumptions about a person, depending on their (perceived) biological sex (Golombok and Fivush, 1994). These

powerful messages are communicated through many means, including media, family, school and interpersonal relationships. Internalising these, or not, leads to forms of girlhood that can conform to these stereotypes. In turn, this can lead to differences between boys and girls based on their gender, rather than just their biological sex. In addition, through categorising persons based on their gender, this leads to expectations in terms of their behaviour and persuasions (Wharton, 2012). These expectations can vary, and indeed vary across cultures and through history suggesting there are many potential sets of differing expectations. Thus, in terms of 'being/doing' girl there are a myriad of ways in which these could be expressed.

In education, the debate concerning single sex education rages, particularly strongly in the US, more than in the UK, and the strongest advocates use the 'brains are different' thesis to add weight to their cause. However, the differences are likely to be overstated and invite opposition such that the debates become over whether girls and boys are different. However, this detracts from reasonable questions about whether girls, or boys, enjoy a better educational experience if they are educated separately. This is not because girls and boys are essentially different, but because girls may not be so restricted by the (traditional) stereotyped expectations reinforced by boys in mixed contexts and thus girls' schools:

...provide a safe haven for students to break out of gendered attitudes and behaviour patterns and develop a broader range of sensibilities (Salomone, 2013: 971).

In contrast, critics have also argued that single sex education may serve to reinforce gender stereotypes. This is certainly possible, and would be the case if schools adopted the difference thesis: if teachers were to follow the advice of Sax, then schools would certainly reinforce stereotypes – girls would be discouraged from taking risks, they would be surrounded by pastel colours and would not be taught geometry until they were 12. This has been an issue in the US where educators have begun to use such practices. In the UK, there has been little application of the difference thesis, if any. Instead, girls' schools tend to promote the challenge they pose to traditional gender stereotypes, for example those relating to participation in STEM subjects post 16. Amanda Spielman, OFSTED Chief Inspector rose to the defence of single sex schools stating that:

If women are to take their full place in a world which is, to some degree, loaded against them, then it is reasonable for parents to choose single sex schools, to stop girls from selecting themselves out of some areas of education... That is why most single-sex girls' schools emphasise tackling gender stereotypes and push girls to pursue their interests in typically male subjects (The Times 16 October 2017).

In summary, by debunking essentialist arguments, this strengthens the argument that boys and girls become different through socialization, reinforced by **traditional gender** stereotypes.

Therefore, a single sex context might offer girls alternatives to such stereotypes in the context of school and allow a wider range of persuasions to flourish. The Girls' Day School Trust (an organisation of 25 leading girls' schools in the UK) suggests that girls' schools offer a curriculum 'beyond limits' (<https://www.gdst.net/about-us/about-the-gdst/>), whilst the Girls Schools Association (a membership body for all girls' schools) suggests that

Girls' schools minimise stereotyped, gender-weighted expectations. There is no such thing as a girl's subject or a boy's subject and girls are free to follow their inclinations with little of the pressure they might otherwise feel (<https://gsa.uk.com/schools/benefits-of-girls-schools/>)

However, the nature of gender stereotypes warrants further elucidation. It is not enough to assert that the effect of stereotypes are reduced without specifying which stereotypes are being referred to, and moreover, if all stereotypes are disadvantageous. This issue is explored in more detail in Chapter Four, however at this point it is worth briefly establishing the nature of gender stereotypes for girls. Girls are traditionally expected to embody (hetero-normative) femininity, such traits include passivity, kindness and attractiveness. Girls are stereotyped as not being good at maths, or physical sciences. Cleverness, or specifically, showing off one's cleverness is seen as unfeminine. Such traits could be summarised as a 'girly-girl' persuasion (e.g., Allan, 2006; Renold and Allan, 2007). If girls' schools 'minimise stereotyped, gender-weighted expectations' it is important to be clear about which stereotypes are in question, and whether girls' schools minimise them, or offer opportunities for other persuasions to flourish. In a single-sex space, is the pressure to conform to the 'girly-girl' stereotype reduced? Specifically, are girls more able to show interest in maths and physical sciences? Or more able to be clever (and proud of it)? Or indeed, without experiencing pressure to not be of these

persuasions? Gender stereotypes may not be minimised simply due to the absence of boys, as such stereotypes persist in the the world beyond the school gates, and indeed before joining the school. It may be the important factor is that girls schools can offer alternatives to such stereotypes, with validation, allowing the girls to choose ways of 'being/doing girl' from a wider 'smorgasbord'. These questions are unpacked in more detail in Chapter Four.

Summary

In this introductory chapter I have considered the arguments for and against girls' schools. For some, essential differences between boys and girls support the need for girls' schools, for others, mixed contexts offer greater opportunities for development. Finally, there is the argument that girls' schools offer alternatives to traditional stereotypes- The issue of gender stereotypes is explored in more detail in Chapter Four. The next chapter explores the academic outcomes for both private schools in general, and girls' schools in particular. I also consider the extent to which private girls' schools perpetuate privilege, as well as considering why girls may achieve better academic outcomes.

Chapter Three: Unpacking the Private School Premium

In the previous chapter I introduced some of the arguments that have been made for and against single sex education. In this chapter I consider private schools, and private girls' schools in particular. I initially consider literature concerning the academic outcomes, before moving on to consider entry to elite universities and subsequent careers. I also consider literature relating to privilege and the perpetuation of privilege through private schools, as well as to consider why it is that girls in private girls' schools may enjoy a private school 'premium'.

3.1 Academic outcomes

Looking at the top performing schools in the GCSE and A level league tables, the vast majority are private schools (The Times Parent Power 2020). Of the top 20, ten were girls' school, six were boys' schools and four mixed schools. Since the top-performing girls' schools were all private, it becomes difficult to determine whether their pupils' academic success was due to having attended a single-sex or co-educational school, attending a private school, or both. In considering the top performing state schools, all were selective. Seven were girls' schools, ten boys' and three mixed. This would suggest that pupils attending selective single sex school achieve better exam results than those in mixed schools. Moreover, girls attending private girls' schools fare even better academically.

In comparing the outcomes for women who have attended single sex or mixed schools it is often easy to assume that girls perform better in single sex environments, particularly academically, and that they are more likely to study science and maths post-16 and then go on to be more inclined towards Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) routes beyond school. However, it is difficult to compare like with like, as single sex schools are more likely to also be selective. This 'muddies the waters' as some of the above claims may be equally explained as a factor of selection, rather than a factor of single sex. In addition, parental background and level of education adds a further dimension particularly in addition to the issue of selection, making it challenging to disentangle the effects (if they exist) as being attributable to single or mixed sex contexts. As in the UK, so too in the US, single sex schools where they exist, are almost invariably private schools (or Catholic Charter Schools) that are selective for

entry in some capacity. Thus, differences in attainment may be due more to selection than being single sex (e.g. Robinson and Smithers, 1999). The challenge of comparing mixed and single sex schools whilst accounting for selection has been addressed occasionally. Harker (2000) compared academic outcomes in schools in New Zealand, where there are equivalent numbers of single and mixed sex schools, both selective and non-selective. From the data, Harker concludes that girls achieve higher levels of academic success across both mixed and single sex schools. Moreover, when selection is accounted for, there were no differences in attainment for girls in mixed and single sex schools. However, a closer examination of the data points to a marked difference in the attainment of girls: in comparison to boys in single sex schools, girls were far outperforming boys in maths, physics and chemistry. If we assume that boys' schools are at least as selective as girls' schools, then it would appear that girls do indeed fare better in girls' schools. Sullivan and her colleagues working within the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS) examined the differences in attainment for those who had attended single and mixed schools. This series of studies was unique in that by drawing on such a rich data set, they were able to control for the type of school (i.e., state/private), as well as attainment prior to schooling. They made use of the National Child Development Study (NCDS) following a cohort born in a single week in March 1958 as well as the British Child Development Study (BCDS70) following those born in 1970. Given that there were as many, if not more, single sex schools as there were mixed in that time, both within the state and private sector, there were good grounds for comparison. In addition, they were able to factor parental education, income and occupation into this to account for socio-economic background. In one study they examined the academic outcomes and found that girls in single sex schools were more likely to achieve a higher level of exams success (at O Level) than their mixed educated peers. For boys there were no differences (Sullivan et al., 2008). Hayes et al. (2011) also claim to have accounted for selection by comparing girls who had been admitted and rejected from a single sex school by examining their academic achievement before attending the school. Admission to the single sex school was by lottery amongst those of equal ability. Here it was found that girls' academic achievement was higher in the single sex school. Moreover, when examining achievement before attending the school, those attending the single sex school

outperformed their counterparts when taking into consideration prior attainment. Thus an 'average' student at 5th Grade went on to outperform her equivalent 'average' student in the mixed school, with the same true for higher and lower ability students.

More recently, Dustmann et al. (2017) also found significant advantages for girls (and boys) in single sex schools – an effect that was reversed when the same children moved to a mixed school and vice versa. The advantage was attributed to the single sex classroom, rather than on matters of selection or privilege. Furthermore, meta-analyses tend to suggest moderate advantages for girls in maths in single sex schools (Pahlke et al., 2014a; 2014b). Overall, girls in girls' schools are more likely to achieve higher academic outcomes than those educated in mixed schools. On the other hand, some time earlier, Robinson and Smithers (1999) interviewed undergraduate students attending a high-ranking UK university and found clear differences in the GCSE and A level scores of those who had attended single sex or mixed schools and attributed these to the overall quality of the school and the fact of selection in the private sector. However, their data also showed higher outcomes for pupils who had attended single sex private schools compared with mixed private schools. Taken together, these suggest an overall advantage for girls in a single sex setting, whilst attributable to academic selection, this is not the only factor since when selection is controlled for, the advantage remains. This suggests that the single sex context itself may be an important factor.

3.2 Access to elite universities

...we know that fee-paying schools continue to dominate access to what are widely understood as the more selective 'elite' universities (Davey, 2012: 509)

Power and Whitty (2008) and others have suggested that private school pupils are more advantaged than similar peers in state education. A Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (SMCPC, 2015) report indicates that even if students are of lower cognitive ability at age 5, attending a private school will still make these children more likely to get a degree than their less advantaged counterparts (McKnight, 2015). More recently, Sullivan et al. (2018a), through examination of the 1970 British Cohort Study data, reveal those who attended a private school were more than three times more likely to get a degree, and in turn, more

likely to gain it from an elite university – elite here being defined as a Russell Group university¹. In an earlier paper, they concluded that ‘private schooling is powerfully linked to degree chances’ (2014: 12) with a threefold increase in elite university access (Sullivan et al., 2014). More significantly, this difference was largely maintained even when compared to state educated peers with the same A level grades. This confirms earlier studies linking access to elite universities, degree quality and subsequent earnings (e.g., Hussain et al., 2009; Green et al. 2012). Similarly, Boliver (2013) found how a striking disproportion of university applications from privately educated young people are made to Russell Group universities whereas for state school pupils the applications are highly skewed towards ‘new’ and less prestigious universities. Crawford and Vignoles (2014) concluded that young people from affluent families are more likely to apply to higher status universities (even if they have the same A level grades), graduate with higher degree classes and enjoy higher incomes. Whereas working class students were more likely to apply to a lower status university, and to apply locally (Mangan et al. 2010). Power et al. (2006) examined the outcomes for those who had been place holders in the Assisted Places Scheme² (APS) and found that they were more likely to have attended an elite university. In addition, they were admitted to Oxbridge with lower A level scores than their state school counterparts. Examining this cohort is particularly illuminating since the APS enabled bright children from more economically disadvantaged backgrounds to attend private schools. Here the impact of a private education is brought into focus, since if this cohort achieved as well as their more advantaged contemporaries and achieved more than their peers attending state schools, then the likely impact of the school itself is made more visible.

¹ The Russell Group are a group of 24 self-selected UK universities that define themselves as ‘Research Intensive’. They are typically the most selective in terms of entry requirements.

² The Assisted Places Scheme was introduced in 1980 by the Conservative government with the aim of funding places for more economically disadvantaged pupils to attend private schools. Whilst the intention was egalitarian, it was criticised for not including enough disadvantaged pupils since many qualified by virtue of being in a single parent household, meaning many more advantaged pupils accessed places too. The scheme was scrapped by the New Labour government in 1997

3.3 Access to elite careers and earnings

Entry to elite professions is dominated by those from privileged backgrounds (e.g. Ashely et al., 2015). This can be explained whereby elite professions selectively recruit from a narrow range of elite universities whose graduates are more likely to have attended private schools (Ashley et al., 2015). Similarly, those who had been privately educated were 35% more likely to enter elite occupations, than their state educated counterparts (Macmillan et al., 2015). There is a private school earning 'premium' of approximately 7%, even within the same occupation (Crawford et al., 2016). For example, three and a half years after graduating, privately educated employees were paid more for the same job, than their state educated counterparts. Examining data from those who had attended private schools through the Assisted Places Scheme in the 1970s-1980s, Power et al. (2013) concluded that almost all of them (88%) were in professional or management roles despite nearly 20% having not attended Higher Education at all. In their analysis of the 1970 British Cohort Study data, Green et al. (2018) concluded that those who had attended private schools showed higher self-esteem, and higher aspiration compared to state educated peers, whilst controlling for social background. They observed a 21% earnings premium for women, whereas for men this was 34%. These recent data support the concept of an earnings premium. Critically, since they controlled for social background, this could be more confidently attributed to having attended a private school in the 1980s. In analysing the same data, Sullivan et al. (2018b) describe an Earnings-Education-Destination triangle and claim that destinations in occupations are 'fully accounted for by educational pathways' (2018b:777) and observe that the 'influence of childhood social advantage is entirely channelled by education' (2018b: 792) with no direct link between. Here then, educational context has a greater impact than social background alone. Thus education, rather than social origins, was a stronger indicator of occupational outcomes.

One area that has received little attention has been the longer-term outcomes of single sex schooling. One rare finding however has suggested long-term economic advantages. Sullivan et al. (2011) examined longitudinal data from the National Child Development Study (NCDS) of a cohort born in 1958 and the British Child Development Study (BCS70) of a cohort born in 1970.

These data are unique as they can control for the effects of selection and socioeconomic background. This is because at the time of their schooling, single sex state schools were in high number and across different types of schools (comprehensive, technical and grammar) and locations. This has allowed Sullivan and her colleagues to control for socio economic factors, as well as selection in grammar and private schools. In their conclusions they noted a 'positive premium' of 5% on the wages of women who had attended single sex schools. This was attributed to better academic performance post-16. Using the same data, in a different article, Sullivan (2011) concluded women who had attended single sex schools were more likely to study science related subjects and pursue science related careers. This may also, at least in part, explain the higher wages since such areas tend to be paid more than other areas more typically associated with women.

3.4 Character

It has been suggested that the inculcation of soft skills and 'character' are key features of private girls' (and boys') schools. These skills are seen as important for success beyond school and may or may not be related to socioeconomic background. Jerrim et al. (2016) found that family background and higher levels of academic attainment were correlated with occupational income. However, they also noted how this could not be solely accounted for by parental income. They suggest this may be related to the inculcation of particular skills and values. Green et al. (2016) found a clear economic difference which they attributed to the inculcation of skills, including leadership and 'hard work' in private schools, that are then advantageous in work. Moreover, privately educated workers were more likely to be in positions of responsibility with the experience of leadership in school proposed as a contributory factor. In a study of graduates, Brown et al. (2016) found they attributed success to hard work, where 'being pushed to work hard in pursuit of their goals was viewed as the essence of an elite education' (2016: 201). In a series of papers examining the outcomes of people in the 1970 British Cohort Study, the consistent finding was a substantive private school advantage (Sullivan et al, 2018c). The private school advantage was explained partly by A level outcome, but they go on to suggest that aspiration is as important a factor (e.g. Sullivan et al, 2014). Being bright

was not necessarily enough, since those who had attended selective grammar schools did not achieve as highly as those who had attended private schools. Using longitudinal cohort data has also allowed for examination of the factors the participants believed were influential. Green et al. (2018) concluded that:

...advantage [was] typically attributed to a combination of substantially superior resources, academic selection of pupils from more affluent and stable households and independent governance (2018: 758).

and argued that private schools foster enhanced self-evaluation and aspirations as a form of 'cultural capital'. This confirmed the findings of deAvaujo and Lagos (2013) who found that self-esteem has a positive and significant indirect link to wages. Whilst Baumeister and Learey (1995) in an earlier study could only find a correlation between self-esteem and success, this was confirmed by Drago (2011) with a positive association between self-esteem and earnings.

3.5 Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1986) describes the Cultural Arbitrary as the markers of taste and culture (Moore, 2004). It is arbitrary as there is no intrinsic economic value in appreciation of paintings or literature per se, rather, what is valued more than others is subjective and capricious. Decisions about what comprises the arbitrary are made by those in positions of power and privilege; through the creation of these indicators of elitism it becomes possible to regulate who has access to this material, language and preferences. This process is described as 'Symbolic Violence' (Moore, 2004) by conferring value on things that have no intrinsic value, and simultaneously limiting access to these things. Cultural Capital is described as being cognisant of, and conversant in, the cultural arbitrary. It is the 'knowledge of or competence with high-brow aesthetic culture such as classical music or fine art' (Reay, 2004). Those who have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the arbitrary, to know, discuss and embody it will be in possession of greater cultural capital. By limiting access, high degrees of cultural capital are the preserve of the privileged, and transmitted to the privileged, thus ensuring exclusion and the maintenance of the status quo (Sullivan, 2002).

It may be that private schools are in a better position to help ensure their pupils go on to elite circles because they enable a sophisticated engagement with cultural capital through a traditional curriculum, as well as a wide variety of co-curricular activities. Such breadth of activities is a key feature of private schools and reflects both resources, as well as an interest in wider activities. In order to participate, the characteristics of hard work and organisation will be inculcated, as well as the immersion in forms of cultural capital. The concept of Habitus can be used to shed light on the reproduction of privilege through the inculcation of particular attitudes and values which go on to enable the pupils to dominate elite universities and professions. Linguistic structures and the development of skills act as a lubricant to foster networks and to be literate within elite networks (Reay, 2004). Private schools therefore have the capacity to inculcate a particular set of attitudes and values, which in turn affect how the pupils engage with the school, and with other institutions (e.g. University or the workplace).

In girls' schools today, there is a focus on 'character', and the development of 'soft skills' that ensure the success of their pupils. For example, Forbes and Lingard (2015) describe these as emotional intelligence, communication and motivation that form a particular habitus that ensure the success of the pupils and add to that an 'assured optimism' – a confident and aspirational quality inculcated by the school that they studied. In a study of a variety of fee-paying schools, Davey (2012) comments that:

...whilst there is a visible and ostentatious display of middle-class codes, for example through the value placed on particular kinds of sport, music and drama, these are decorations and embellishments that serve to camouflage the production of cultural capital (2012: 522).

On entry to university, the young women may be far more likely to join societies as their experience of school has led them to expect a wide variety of activities. In turn, this will develop additional skills and networks of similarly minded individuals. Here the private school habitus will again serve to advantage the alumnae. Participation in extra-curricular activities can be seen as a mechanism for inculcating non-cognitive skills, that are useful as human capital (Coulangeon, 2018) and include organisation, perseverance and self-esteem. In addition, Coulangeon (2018) describes the relationship between participation and cultural capital:

Participation has an intrinsic efficacy but is rather emblematic of the cultural arbitrariness of the school system. Schools tend to reward the possession and control of a certain number of attributes and cultural competencies that tend to be monopolised by the ruling class (2018: 201).

Here the academic curriculum and the wider co-curriculum offers an opportunity to refine and enhance capital, and ultimately accredit it.

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed literature relating to the overall private school premium. Those who have attended private schools typically have higher academic outcomes, particularly so for girls. Whilst this could be attributed solely to academic selection, there is also research that suggests this is not the only explanation. Following this, private school pupils are more likely to attend elite universities. Again, this could be explained by academic outcome, however, private school pupils tend to make more aspirational choices, being more likely to apply to a Russell Group university than state school educated pupils with the same academic profiles. Private schools, with much broader co-curricular offers, are in a position to help their pupils to develop 'soft skills' including hard work, leadership and communication that are valued by employers. This could be viewed as a form of social capital since such skills are valuable in terms of future employment and earnings. Finally, private schools are also in a position to continue the 'concerted cultivation' of its pupils and immerse them in valued cultural capital. Whilst this can be viewed as a mechanism of ensuring the elite remain elite, it is possible for any person to develop academically, socially and culturally if they immerse themselves in the culture of a private school. In the next chapter I consider confidence as an important indicator of aspiration, where confidence raises aspiration that, in turn, can account (at least in part) for the premium shown. I then consider literature that could help explain the development, or otherwise, of confidence. I also consider the ways in which, particularly for girls, single-sex contexts can further develop confidence.

Chapter Four: Unpacking the Psycho-Social Aspects of a Private Girls' School

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore the concept of confidence and consider the importance of this in young women. Through a sense of confidence comes the wherewithal to try new things, to risk failure, and to believe that the achievement of goals is possible. I present literature that suggests how confidence may be developed as well as the relationships between confidence and self-efficacy. I draw on Bandura's (1997) conceptualization of self-efficacy to show the relationship between confidence and a 'can-do' attitude. I then consider the extent to which confidence is inculcated, or expected, within girls attending private girls' school, and whether this is related solely to privilege. In subsequent sections I go on to explore how traditional gender stereotypes, school engagement and friendship can all serve to build, or undermine, girls' confidence.

Defining terms: Self Concept, Self Esteem, Self-Efficacy and Confidence

In social psychology, there is much discourse about notions of the self. The first concerns Self Concept – a sense of who I am. Morf and Koole (2015) define self-concept as the:

Cognitive representation of our self-knowledge consisting of a sum total of all belief we have of ourselves...everything we use when asked to describe who we are (2015: 133).

There are a number of aspects to self-concept, but to maintain focus, I will consider two: Self Esteem and Self Efficacy. I will then show the relationship between these and confidence.

Self Esteem is not the same as confidence, although the terms are often conflated. Self-esteem involves a sense of how we feel about ourselves, how we judge ourselves (often in relation to others). For example, 'I feel good about myself' is an example of high self-esteem or worth. On the other hand, confidence concerns how well we think we can do something, for example 'I know I can do this (well)'. Whilst the two are closely inter-twined it is important to make the distinction as if we are to define confidence, we need to be able to say what it is, as well as what it is not. A simple definition from the authors of 'The Confidence Code' is a sense that you can achieve what you set out to do (Kay and Shipman, 2014). It is not simply self-affirmation (i.e., telling yourself you can) rather, it is a more implicit sense that you can. This echoes the

concept of self-efficacy so closely that the two terms could be viewed as interchangeable. Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief they have the ability to do something (Bandura, 1997), i.e., 'I can do this', again more implicit than simple self-affirmation. For Bandura (1997) there are four sources of self-efficacy: Mastery Experiences (times when a goal is accomplished); Vicarious Experiences (witnessing a similar role model experiencing mastery); Verbal Persuasion (support and encouragement) and Emotional and Physiological States (how one is feeling). Of these, the most important was shown to be Mastery Experiences as indicated by a meta-analysis of 222 studies on self-efficacy (Sheu et al., 2018). These are important considerations and are relevant to this thesis. The importance of mastery indicates that the experience of achievement builds confidence. Furthermore, the vicarious mastery of role models is also important. Role models are selected on the basis of a number of factors, primarily similarity (Bandura, 1997), gender and age being two key characteristics. Here the relevance is clear, in a girls' school, all those who achieve goals are other girls – this increases the belief that 'if she can do it, so can I'. The importance of verbal persuasion suggests the role of peer support (or friendships) in increasing self-efficacy. The connection between self-efficacy and confidence is clear with the definition of confidence as:

The characteristic that distinguishes those who imagine, from those who do. It is the stuff that turns thoughts into actions; it is life's enabler (Kay and Shipman, 2014: 50).

Confidence and self-efficacy could be considered interchangeable as both concern action – i.e., the belief that one can do something (and expect to be successful). In turn, this fosters aspiration, that is, to want to achieve more. Capitalizing on successes builds confidence. This creates a cycle of aspiration, achievement, confidence, and further aspiration. This suggests confidence can be developed and it is not something that one is born with. This means that schools could be a context where confidence is engendered, through positive experiences of success (however small), or undermined through repeated experiences of failure. Furthermore, if confidence is built on success (goal achievement), then this can only happen if one tries (knowing that you might fail).

Confidence may be built in different ways in a school context in terms of academic, skills or social development. For example, performing well in a class test, shooting a goal in hockey or

through the support and encouragement of friends (and/or teachers). For these reasons, it can be argued that confidence is key to aspiration and that confidence can be built through engaging with all aspects of school life (both academic and co-curricular) and through friendships. Finally, as confidence can be undermined in terms of traditionally stereotypical notions of female talent and success, contexts where these are challenged, or alternatives are offered can also build confidence, particularly in male dominated domains.

4.2 Confidence in schools

Confidence, or indeed over-confidence, is positively associated with learning (Sullivan, 2009). Sullivan (2009) argues that judgements of one's competence or self-efficacy are made in comparison to peers as well as to one's performance in other domains. In a selective school, all peers are relatively high achievers, and it has been argued this will reduce self-efficacy since one could compare oneself unfavourably against others. However, the focus here is on a single sex context, and whether this has any impact on self-efficacy, or confidence. In a comparative study of private schools, Cherney and Campbell (2011) found that girls attending single sex schools had higher self-esteem and higher self-efficacy than those in mixed schools, suggesting that a single sex context provided positive experiences for girls in comparison to mixed contexts. Similarly, Cribb and Haase (2016) compared girls in single sex and mixed schools, finding that those in mixed schools typically had lower self-esteem. In a single sex school environment, they suggest 'protective factors may attenuate negative associations between socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance and self-esteem' (2016: 107). They concluded that single sex schooling may improve self-esteem due to the stronger peer support that is not compromised by boys' heterosexual-normative expectations and competition amongst girls whilst in school. In addition, the simple absence of boys (an obvious feature of a girls' school) may lessen the impact of negative stereotypes and expectations, again contributing to confidence. This suggests that traditional gender stereotypical beliefs about the differential talents of males and females may impact on self-efficacy. For Bandura, low self-efficacy in women:

...arises less from the discrete skills themselves than from their linkage to stereotypically male occupations and behaviour. Gender stereotyping of pursuits that suggest lesser ability diminishes judgements of personal efficacy for the required skills (1997: 423).

Whilst Bandura was referring to the workplace, if applied to schools, then gendered expectations of ability will undermine girls' self-efficacy in traditionally male dominated domains. Much of the literature relating to girls' confidence focuses on the realms of science and maths, as these are domains where girls consistently underperform in comparison to boys (e.g., OECD, 2015) and this issue is explored in more detail in the next section. However, in terms of confidence, in PISA created measures of self-efficacy in science (2006) and maths (2012), overall, girls showed lower self-efficacy and higher measures of maths anxiety than boys in every OECD country (OECD, 2015).

In a mixed school, girls may compare their performance in maths and science unfavourably with boys, whereas in a girls' school, without this comparison, they may have much higher self-efficacy. This is because girls may have both positive experiences of themselves and do not directly compare with boys (Sullivan, 2009). Furthermore, girls in single sex schools have been found to have a higher self-efficacy in science compared to their mixed educated counterparts (Simpson and Che, 2016). This illustrates the relationship between confidence and gender stereotypes. Where these are challenged by a single sex context, confidence in male dominated domains increases. Similarly, girls showed an increase in maths confidence when placed into single sex classes (Eisenkopf et al., 2015). In an earlier study, again looking at the impact of single sex classes (this time in physics) on confidence, Gillibrand et al., (1999) concluded:

...freed from the dominating and competitive behaviour of boys and their perception of not being up to the boys' standards, girls felt free to participate in classrooms (1999: 360),

and increased in confidence. Finally, in terms of competition, boys are stereotypically more competitive. However in single-sex contexts, girls show much higher levels of competitiveness compared to girls in mixed schools. When single sex-educated girls enter mixed contexts, they behave much more like boys (Booth and Nolan, 2012). This means they remain just as assertive,

whereas girls from mixed contexts remain quieter, suggesting higher levels of confidence in the single sex educated girls.

4.3 Confidence in private girls' schools

Forbes and Lingard (201) describe an 'assured optimism' held by young women attending private girls' school in Scotland (2015: 218). In essence, they describe confident young women, with a strong expectation for future success. They held an assumption that they would go on to elite higher education, and on to a professional (global) career. Given the typical academic achievements of previous alumnae, this would be a reasonable expectation. Maxwell and Aggleton (2010, 2013, 2014) have written numerous papers on girls in elite private schools, both Day and Boarding. The girls are invariably described as confident and articulate, with expectations for bright futures. In addition, they also describe the 'concerted cultivation' of the self by young women themselves in private school settings, with deliberate attention paid to the development of skills and attributes that will help to secure such futures. The young women who were interviewed are described as confident, aspirational and with an assumed progression into elite universities or professions. Maxwell and Aggleton (2015) describe a 'cosmopolitan sensibility' an internationalism and open-mindedness as a further form of cultural capital. This echoes Igarashi and Saito's (2014) cosmopolitanism as:

...dispositions on openness to foreign others and cultures and competencies to enact such an openness with ease (2014: 225).

Similarly, Forbes and Lingard (2015) also noted a clear focus on cosmopolitanism in both the school ethos as well as an assumption of a global future in their study. Allan and Charles (2014) describe 'can-do girls' who are independent, motivated and confident, and engaged in a process of developing a 'portfolio self' with skills and experiences beyond the academic curriculum. All of these studies describe a very particular form of confidence in the young women studied – an assuredness, the confidence to try new things, and self-belief.

It is possible that the confidence observed in studies of elite girls' school has arisen from privilege (a subject explored more fully in the previous chapter) rather than a single sex school. However, it is important to note that these are studies of young women attending highly

exclusive schools, the daughters of famous and well-known entrepreneurs who describe the 'whole public-school scene' of holidaying in the Alps with their Harrow and Eton friends. Such schools have been described as 'Tatler Schools' (Green et al., 2018) referring to the most highly ranked, and exclusive, schools according to Tatler magazine (a UK lifestyle magazine that targets upper-middle class readers). This is quite a different 'bubble' from that of the urban private school (whilst Forbes and Lingard's study was of such a school, it was also highly selective and offered almost no bursaries or scholarships). As such, whilst confidence could be attributed to privilege and the assumptions that may come with that, this is unlikely to explain the confidence of young women of more modest backgrounds. There are likely to be other contributory factors that instil confidence, whether the school is selective or not. The following section explores the first of these and builds on some of the arguments already introduced in this chapter. The problem of gender stereotypes, as already suggested, impacts on confidence, particularly in male dominated domains.

4.4 Gender Stereotypes

Single sex schools may have positive impacts on academic achievement to that extent that they reduce gender stereotyping of the academic domains among students that attend them (Patterson and Pahlke, 2011: 747).

In this section, I explore the importance of gender stereotypes and the impact these may have on girls. I begin by introducing constructivist views on how gender identity develops and how gender stereotypes mould girls into particular ways of 'being girl'. I go on to describe the ways classrooms and subject choices are gendered, reinforcing a range of gender stereotypes. I show how single sex contexts can offer girls an alternative narrative to such stereotypical notions of feminine behaviour, increasing confidence in terms of making less stereotypically gendered choices. Finally, I show how the concept of Stereotype Threat (Steele and Aronson, 1995) can be used to understand how self-efficacy (confidence) can be undermined by both gender stereotypes, and the presence of boys, in turn reducing confidence in mixed contexts.

Constructivism holds the view that any differences in gendered behaviour and preferences have come about through the processes of socialisation and cognitive development, where a child comes to construct their own identity through their experiences in the world (Wharton, 2012).

Such experiences are then mediated through the child themselves. Gender Schema Theory (Martin and Halverson, 1981) assumes that gender is constructed actively through a child's intentional interaction with their environment. For Liben, this means:

...self-driven forces lead boys and girls to select differentially from the smorgasbord of what they happen to encounter in the environment (2015: 410).

Broadly, constructivism views underpin the advocacy for mixed education. However, it could be argued that such a position also favours single sex education. If children are selecting from a 'smorgasbord', and they are given messages about what is appropriate for boys and girls this will affect their choice. A central tenet of Gender Schema Theory is that as soon as children can identify their own gender, they will actively seek similar role models from whom to learn what it is to be a girl/boy. If a child is given stereotyped versions of this, then far from selecting from a wide range of options (the smorgasbord Liben (2015) suggests) this becomes restricted to the much more modest buffet of gender appropriate behaviours and interests. If these stereotypes are less prevalent, or there are alternative options then the child has a far greater range of options. Thus, it can be argued that mixed education would not reduce the impact of certain gender stereotypes at all but could achieve the opposite. Girls will be unlikely to identify with boys (due to their difference) and therefore not choose 'masculine' subject options. This can be said of both mixed and single sex contexts. However, a difference in single sex schools, particularly for girls, is that they are not additionally exposed to boys who may themselves promote narrow and educationally disadvantageous stereotypes for girls (e.g., inferiority of girls in science and maths), and seek to dominate classrooms and discussions. Self-evidently in a girls' school, it is girls who are in control and occupy leadership positions. It is girls who are best at science and maths, and it is girls who excel in competitions and in sport. All providing strong positive role models for girls to aspire to and, critically, identify with.

Gender stereotypes refer to the norms and codes of behaviour associated with each gender (Golombok and Fivush, 1994). Maccoby (1998, 2002) has written extensively on the processes of gender socialization and argues how gender differences (in preferences, behaviours, and attitudes) are a function of powerful socialization mechanisms, rather than 'natural' ones. This

begs the question of whether traditional gender stereotypes are reinforced, or more acute, in single sex contexts – where there is less opportunity to experience other behaviours, or whether such stereotypes break down in the absence of social comparison. Does the ‘othering’ of boys reinforce the girl's identity, and in the physical absence of boys, allow for a wider range of norms? For example, in a comparison of single sex and mixed friendship groups, girls in mixed groups showed higher levels of interpersonal aggression and reduced overt aggression (a topic explored in more detail in the next section on friendships) in the presence of boys, than only in the presence of girls (Killeya-Jones et al., 2007). They argue, that for the girls to be liked by the boys, they were required to conform more to heteronormative and traditional gender stereotypes in the presence of boys. According to Liben (2015) Feminists advocate single sex schools because ‘single sex settings may be favoured as a means of protecting girls from sub-optimal educational conditions’ (2015: 401). These sub-optimal conditions are for example, more questions being directed at boys, and/or boys dominating classrooms (e.g., Sadker and Sadker, 1994).

As suggested in the introductory sections, there are different ways of ‘being/doing’ girl. When referring to gender stereotypes (for girls) this tends towards a heterosexual-normative model. However, this is not the only way of being. Gender (identity) can take different forms and can be both malleable and fixed as Cavacho et al (2021) describe:

Gender is a social construct that assumes two distinct dynamics: on the one hand, it is heterogenous and diffuse, as a direct result from the context, relationships and negotiations, and yet, on the other, it is fixed and guided for stability and reproduction (2021: 32)

Thus whilst aspects of gender are more intrinsic, other aspects may vary as a response to the context one is in.

Broadly a heterosexual-normative feminine gender stereotype expects girls to be passive, hyper-feminine, pre-occupied by appearance, ‘nice’ (i.e., a good friend – see later section on friendships), and poor at maths and science (e.g., Ringrose and Renold, 2010; Stone et al., 2015; Golden et al, 2018; Barth et al., 2022). The implications of these are that girls are expected to uphold such stereotypes both in the wider world (particularly in terms of femininity) as well as

in school, as seen in terms of subject choice and participation (see below). In addition, girls are expected to not deviate from such codes of behaviour. These traits are heterosexual-normative in that heterosexuality is viewed as a norm, and that girls are expected to be different from boys (who of course have their own set of expected heterosexual traits), and in turn ensure they are attractive to them, thus femininity is coupled with heterosexuality (Charles, 2010). As such, heterosexuality is the way in which gender is constructed, in a binary manner, in accordance with biological sex (Renold, 2006). In addition, a hetero-sexualised gender stereotype expects girls to be attractive (to boys) and to conform physically in appearance (e.g., in terms of body shape), as well as to be less intelligent or competent in comparison to boys (Spears Brown, 2019). As such, this may be described as conforming in accordance with the 'male gaze' (e.g., Renold and Allen, 2007).

Conformity to stereotypes is 'policed', in school, by peers. Such policing may take the form of direct bullying (an area discussed in more detail in section 4.11 on cliques), as well as exclusion and gossiping. This victimisation increases when there is more pressure to conform (Masters et al., 2020) and this may be more so in mixed contexts. Conversely, it may be reduced in single sex spaces. However, some suggest that conforming to gender stereotypes is more likely in single sex contexts, where peer victimisation increases the policing of girls, by girls (Drury et al., 2012), and where in-group deviants are more denigrated than out-group deviants (Abrams et al., 2014). Here it is the 'female gaze' that polices other girls, where girls are 'faithful employees of the 'male gaze'' (Renold and Allen, 2007: 462). Similarly, girls may also regulate themselves in accordance with the 'boy in the head' (Allan, 2009), with girls adopting hyper-femininity to avoid being (mis)recognised as lesbian. This being intensified in the absence of men and wishing to avoid stereotypes such as girls attending girls school are 'all lesbians'. Whilst there may be pressure to conform, perhaps the possibility of other ways of 'being/doing girl' would allow for a greater range of persuasions to flourish.

One version of girlhood observed in an elite girls' primary school is that of the 'girly-girl' (Allen, 2006) who are hyper feminine, popular and hetero-sexually desirable. In contrast to the more dominant stereotype (in wider society) such girls were also expected to be clever. To be expected to be both beautiful and bright has also been observed (Renold and Allen, 2007),

whilst the traditional gender stereotype for girls assumes each to be exclusive of the other. In contrast to the 'plodding princesses' (the pretty girls who worked hard) were the 'talented tomboys' (Allen, 2006) who were proud of their academic achievement as well as being described as competitive (a masculine trait). Tomboys would reject the feminine preferences of the girly-girls, whilst the girly-girls reject the masculine preferences of the tomboys. Similarly, Paechter (2010) also observed a clear delineation between the tomboys and girly-girls. The role of tomboy has been suggested as:

Perhaps one of the few remaining subjects of girlhood that can directly deflect the male heterosexual gaze and subvert...girlie culture (Renold, 2006: 503)

In an earlier study of a mixed setting, Renold (2001) described 'square girls', high achieving girls who were 'enjoying success with their academic studies' (2001: 578) and differentiated themselves from feminine girly-ness. For other girls, being a 'square' was rejected. Another trope is that of the 'girly-swot', a bright girl who likes to contribute in lessons, but is less attractive (a good example is the character Hermione Granger, in the Harry Potter series). It is possible that in a mixed context being a girly-swot, a tomboy or a square is less desirable given the pressure from others (both girls and boys) to conform to what boys expect of girls. Whereas in a single-sex context, this pressure may be reduced, allowing a wider range of femininities to be expressed with more confidence, and less subject to derision.

4.5 Participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM)

In the US there has been a resurgence of interest in single sex schooling, particularly in relation to girls' participation in STEM and for boys' overall achievement. As in the UK, far fewer women are working in STEM areas, and this is underpinned by fewer STEM subject choices. In sciences there is a strong and stable gender segregation in science (Sikora, 2014) with women under-represented overall and with a clear gender difference in fields of science: life sciences and healthcare for women, physical and mathematical sciences for men.

A key area of research has explored girls' participation and success in STEM subjects; in single sex schools, girls are more likely to opt for science subjects post-16, and to achieve higher grades in science and maths in comparison to their mixed school peers (Ceci and Barnett,

2009). However, such comparisons are thwarted by the difficulty of comparing mixed and single sex schools. Overall girls' schools are more selective and hence it would make sense that overall achievement is higher. However, this cannot automatically account for the differential patterns of attainment. If it were selection alone, then we would not expect differences in choice. One explanation invokes traditional gender stereotypes, in short, girls in girls' schools are less exposed to the gendered expectations of success in science and maths, whilst in school. Some feminist scholars argue that girls are more likely to participate in maths and science if they are in girls' schools. For example, Ceci and Barnett (2009) suggest that single sex environments make girls less affected by such stereotypes. Cherney and Campbell (2011) compared girls in single sex and mixed private schools in terms of self-esteem, motivation and maths performance. They concluded that girls in single sex schools performed at a higher level in maths, as well as enjoying higher levels of self-esteem, and with higher levels of intrinsic motivation. They conclude that in single sex schools, girls have higher expectations of success in science and maths, as they have had experience of such success, due to not competing with boys. They noted that:

...expectations of success are shaped by the person's self-concept of ability which is shaped by past events and his or her interpretations of those events' (2011: 715).

Therefore, if girls have positive experiences in science and maths then they will have higher expectations of success. In Germany, it was found that girls in single sex schools have a better physics related self-concept (Kessels and Hannover, 2008) and when compared to their mixed school peers they outperform them on spatial tasks. Titze et al., (2011) compared the performance of girls and boys in a mental rotation task. Pre- adolescence there are negligible differences in ability between boys and girls, however, during adolescence a gap widens with boys continuing to develop their ability, whilst for girls their ability stalls and remains at more or less the same level. As this gap emerges at puberty, it would be compelling to attribute this to differences in levels of sex hormones and/or differences in the developing adolescent brain. At the same time, this difference could also be attributed to stereotyped beliefs about ability. If the former were true, then the contexts in which girls find themselves should be irrelevant. Titze et al., (2011) tested this ability in adolescent girls who were educated in either mixed or

single sex schools. Girls in mixed schools performed as expected, at a much lower level than boys. In single-sex schools however, they performed better (albeit not as highly as boys) and the gender gap had narrowed. This points to two conclusions, one that biology alone cannot account for differences and that traditional gender stereotypes, or where alternative narratives are presented, can account for differences. Salomone (2013) has suggested that females have a lesser sense of 'belonging' in a perceived male domain and are therefore less likely to choose to continue with maths and science. Whilst more recently, Barth et al., (2022) suggest a sense of belonging is important in terms of STEM participation, whilst gender stereotypes undermine this sense of belonging (for girls). Sullivan et al., (2008) in their examination of longitudinal data found that women who had been educated in girls' schools were more likely to gain their highest qualification in male dominated fields and that they attained more highly in gender atypical subjects (maths and science).

The greater participation shown, and the differences in attainment may be due to the alternative narratives a girls' school may promote in terms of STEM. In contrast to the stereotypes that 'girls can't do maths', a girls' school may also present stereotypes that counter this. Indeed, these are the narratives presented by the schools themselves in their promotional literature, as well as by their overarching membership organisations, and actively seek to promote a 'girls in STEM' image. It is worth noting that STEM careers are more highly paid overall, and hence this pathway is seen as desirable. There are of course, many other profession and careers that are typically 'male', but are also classed. For example, construction is a stereotypical 'male' occupation, but perhaps would be viewed of lower status, hence whilst the broad construction industry might be seen as a 'good' STEM career (and run counter to gender stereotypes), it is more likely that girls in private schools might be steered more to civil engineering, rather than bricklaying.

4.6 Stereotype Threat

Stereotype Threat (ST) theory was developed by Steele and Aronson (1995) in their work on racial stereotypes. In this much cited paper, they reported on the differences in tests of intelligence outcomes between white and African Americans. When race is made salient (for

example by indicating one's race on a test paper) performance worsens in African American students compared to their white counterparts, whose SAT scores prior to the test were matched. Similarly, merely suggesting that minority students tend to perform less well on the test also has a deleterious effect on performance. Since the original study, the effect has been replicated widely. In a review of the literature, Sackett et al., (2004) report several studies confirming the effect of ST in relation to race, social class and gender. For example, in relation to gender, Moe (2009) explains stereotype threat as when women are told that women perform poorly in a task, they will go on to perform poorly, in effect, a self-fulfilling prophesy. In research in France, Huguet and Regner (2007) asked schoolgirls to complete tasks in either mixed or single sex settings. When they invoked a Stereotype Threat by highlighting boys' higher ability in spatial tasks beforehand, girls performed better in single sex contexts, suggesting that in such contexts girls may be less prone to conforming to traditional feminine stereotypes. At a very simple level, maths test performance has been shown to be inversely proportional to the number of males in the room (Inzlicht and Ben-Zeet, 2000). This is an important point, as it shows that is the *physical* presences of males that makes the difference. Whilst it is certainly possible that performance can be affected by invoking a stereotype in an single sex testing environment, the effect is all the more pronounced when males and females are tested together. This would counter a suggestion that performance can be adversely affected simply because males (and their traditionally stereotypical superiority) may be in the minds of females, and the stereotype may be internalised to affect performance, the physicality of the male in the room, has a significant impact. Beasley and Fisher (2012) define stereotype threat (in the context of maths) as:

...when women and girls take maths tests, they may worry that their performance will be judged according to this stereotype [that women are less able] and they may fear confirming the stereotype if they perform poorly (2012: 514).

Cherney and Campbell (2011) invoked ST by making stereotypes about male and female performance salient. A maths test was administered to both single sex and mixed private school girls. Half were exposed to an ST condition. Single sex educated girls outperformed those who

had attended mixed schools overall, but importantly, this was much more apparent in the ST condition. Casad et al., (2017) suggest that simply being outnumbered can invoke ST:

Environments dominated by males can be threatening to women and girls and can elicit stigma and stereotype threat, which can lower their sense of belonging, increase feelings of exclusion and isolation, and lead to disengagement from the domain (2017: 513).

Whilst their research focused on maths engagement, this could be extended to explain lower participation in STEM subjects and careers beyond school. Similarly, Beasley and Fisher (2012) use this to explain high levels of attrition from STEM fields. Taasobshirazi and her colleagues undertook a series of studies looking at the impact of ST in physics (Marchand and Taasobshirazi, 2013), chemistry (Sunny et al., 2017), and biology (Taasobshirazi et al., 2018). In each study, female science majors were exposed to stereotype threat and were assessed for self-efficacy and identification with the domain. For biology majors, the effect of ST was not shown, and the female participants indicated high self-efficacy and identification with the domain. For physics and chemistry, the reverse was true. This series of data can help shed light on the differences in the engagement with life sciences as compared to physical sciences. Women in life sciences appear to have a greater sense of belonging and an expectation to perform well. The impact of ST for career progression is also of importance, and can help explain the wide differences in the numbers of men and women in STEM careers. Huguet and Regner (2009) suggest:

There is ample evidence today that distinct social processes such as Stereotype Threat may contribute not only to the lack of female advancement in strategic careers, but also to the robust male advantage (2009: 1024)

In contrast, Wolff (2019) found that in the recollections of women who had been educated in girls' schools maths was their most disliked subject. They had the opinion that it was the subject they believed they performed least well in, and as a result, did not choose to study it at a further level, believing they were not naturally good at it, despite having a good academic record in maths. Wolff describes this decision as:

Choosing non-traditional feminine subjects and pursuits may be understood as latent in-belonging, as becoming other (2019: 209)

The assumption being that maths was associated with masculinity, and as such was rejected due to not wanting to appear more masculine. Overtly they described 'not being good enough' whilst the hidden motive related to expectancy to conform to stereotypes. On one level, they may have internalised such stereotypes about femininity and maths as Wolff suggests, but in their narratives they describe something more akin to Fear of Failure (Martin, 2012), where maths was regarded as a high stakes and high status choice, and that in order to ensure a good final academic score, they may have made a (to them) pragmatic choice. Whilst this is an interesting point of contrast, and deciding not to choose a subject at higher level may indicate a lesser sense of belonging, the fact is that all of the women interviewed were good at maths, suggesting that they may have been able to learn maths, whilst cognisant of stereotypes (and performing counter to them), but that ultimately they turned from maths in order to ensure a better academic outcome. In addition, this study involved the recollections of women approaching, or at middle age. It is possible that when they had been in school, the stereotypes regarding girls and maths were much stronger in wider society, and perhaps less likely to be countered in a girls' school. Whilst more recently, girls' schools have made much of encouraging girls in STEM subjects and career choices.

In summary, gender stereotyping can be used to explain why women are under-represented in STEM, particularly in relation to physical sciences. Stereotype Threat Theory can be used to explain the lack of confidence and sense of belonging women might feel. This trickles down into schools where in a co-educational physical sciences classroom, boys may assume superiority and seek to dominate, whilst girls assume the superiority of boys and lose confidence. In a single-sex context, the immediate physical absence of boys may have some impact in reducing the extent to which ST might be felt, or shown. Although, just because the boys are not physically there, it does not mean they are not 'in the head' of the girls. However, it is unlikely that girls will be as concerned about the opinions and judgements of boys if they are not there, in comparison to when they are, to the extent that this would significantly disrupt their maths or physics performance whilst in the classroom at least.

In the next section I look at the importance of school engagement. I draw on both Bernstein's theories in relation to school engagement as well as Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory to explore how identifying with the aims and ethos of school as well as school community membership can also foster confidence.

4.7 School Engagement

In this section, I explore the ways in which school engagement reflects identification with the school. I consider Bernstein's (1966) conceptualization of four different ways in which pupils can identify and engage with the school and consider how this may be manifested. In addition, I consider how 'fitting in' with school is an important factor in identifying with the school.

The degree to which one feels part of a school, fitting in, or to use Bourdieu's (1986) term, being 'a fish in water' is an important factor to consider. For a girl entering a private girls' school, the extent to which she might feel a 'fish in water' will depend on how well she can identify with her peers (and to a degree, the teachers also). Therefore, for a relatively feminine girl, conforming to dominant gender stereotypes, identification with other girls should be easy. Similarly, a girl from a middle-class background should again fit in to the dominant social class of the school. This begs the question, how well will a girl fit in, and engage with the school, if she does not align with the dominant culture? Moreover, does it matter? On one level, fitting in and finding a friendship group is important for self-esteem. Self-esteem matters in terms of self-efficacy, and feeling able to do things matters in terms of school engagement – whether academically or socially. Similarly, this aligns with confidence, with a relationship between self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) can be used to explore the relationship between school engagement and confidence. According to this theory we all have a motivation to belong to a group. Feeling a sense of belonging bolsters self-esteem. Whilst the original theory relates, at a micro level, to belonging to groups of people with whom we share some form of affiliation, the same could be said, at a macro level, of belonging to an institution. Private schools make much of such affiliation, boasting of strong networks of alumni as well as creating a school identity. Emblems such as uniform, school songs and traditions foster a sense of identity. If

identification with and belonging to a group can build self-esteem, so too can a sense of belonging to and sharing the school identity build self-esteem. Self-esteem is closely allied to confidence and, as argued in the section on confidence, in-group identification can build such confidence. Moreover, through in-group bias we view our own group more favourably than the out-group. This could also reflect inter-school rivalries.

4.8 Instrumental and Expressive orders

Bernstein (1966) describes two orders, or aims, within a school: Instrumental – the development of skills and knowledge that are vocationally important, and Expressive – conduct and character, which the school transmits both formally and informally. In terms of character, this could include the values of hard work leading to success, and aspiration. Engagement, or involvement with a school depends on both an individual, and the family, understanding the means of achieving both orders, as well as accepting them. Bernstein describes four different ways in which engagement with the school is realised: the highest level of engagement is Committed, where a person understands and accepts both the Instrumental and Expressive orders. This could be where the person achieves well academically, as well as immersing themselves in the social aspects of school, for example through co-curricular activities and/or friendships. Detachment is where the Instrumental aims are accepted and understood, but the Expressive aims are not accepted. Here a person may achieve academically, but socially they are detached from the school (Lehman, 2012). Estrangement is where the instrumental aims are understood, but not realised, whilst the expressive aims are both accepted and realised. Thus, the person may not achieve highly academically, but will have immersed themselves in school. Finally, Alienated is the level of least engagement with school, where the instrumental and expressive aims are understood, but not realised or accepted. Here the person would not achieve highly academically, nor would they engage with the school more generally. (Lehman, 2012). Furthermore, Bernstein describes four key factors influencing school involvement: family; the social structure of the school; peer-group relations and the perception of ultimate occupational destination. King (1969) applied this model to a study of a Grammar school and explored the relative involvement of the students in accordance with their social background. King also added a fifth factor – the social status of the school, defined in terms of how elite (or

selective) it is perceived to be. This adds a pride at being awarded a place in the school, bolstering involvement. Whilst King's work was a study of boys, there are a number of factors that might equally be applicable to girls. King also described the 'cultural continuity' between home and school. Simply put, a middle-class child in a middle-class school should have good continuity – good continuity being linked to higher school involvement. This does not automatically mean however that a working-class child could not have similar continuity; if the family hold pro-school attitudes, then these will fit those of the school – affording higher continuity.

In a body of work on relatively high achieving adults, reflecting on their experiences of school, Power and her colleagues (Power et al., 1998; Power 2000, Power and Whitty 2002) applied Bernstein's model to a sample of men and women. They observed that those who engaged at the highest level – Commitment - were typically from a middle-class background where the person accepted and understood both the instrumental and expressive aspects of school. Similarly, those classed as Committed showed an understanding that the dual purpose of school is the formation of 'character' and were willing and able to engage in activities that could contribute to this. Detachment was seen in those of lower socioeconomic status – typically where friendships were maintained with those outside of school, leading to disengagement from co-curricular aspects of school. Lehman (2012) applied Bourdieu's concept of habitus to explain how a working-class student might find engagement with school more problematic. Lehman suggested that those from such backgrounds may understand and accept the Instrumental means and ends, but do not quite understand the 'rules of the game'. As a result, this may impact on understanding the expressive means and ends, leading to Detachment, or to Estrangement and academic under-achievement. This was partly observed in Jackson and Marsden's (1966) classic study of working-class pupils entering a grammar school; those who engaged with the school the most tended to be those who stayed into sixth-form, and on to enter higher education. Those who retained their neighbourhood friendships, separating school and home to a greater degree, tended to leave before sixth-form. Of the 88 children studied, 75 went on to higher education, and tended to have adopted school codes, changed their accents, and severed ties with neighbourhood friends. These would have been described as Committed

and working actively to fit in with their middle-class peers. This suggests that for a working-class girl to fit in to a middle-class private school, she will need to immerse herself fully with both the academic and social aspects of school, perhaps to the extent that she adopts the language and attitudes of those around her. In effect, she becomes more middle class. On the other hand, given that she does not possess the 'right' kind of social and cultural capital in the first place, could she still feel a 'fish out of water', forever on the fringes. One initiative that allowed exploration of this was the Assisted Places Scheme (APS). Introduced in 1980 by the Conservative government, this provided subsidised places in participating private schools for disadvantaged children. The definition of disadvantage included low income and single parent families (which applied to a large proportion of beneficiaries). In another body of work, Power and her colleagues tracked the outcomes of those who were Assisted Place holders. In a report for the Sutton Trust, Power et al., (2013) drew on previous studies as well as the most recent study of 77 Assisted Place holders, now in their early forties, to reflect on the outcomes, as well as the perceived important factors in their school experience. They concluded that overall, each of the 77 had attended more prestigious universities (if they attended) and had entered into professional and managerial jobs to a greater extent than their state educated peers. Even those who did not go on to university were in managerial or professional jobs, suggesting an overall private school effect, beyond that of academic outcomes. In their reflections, the respondents attributed the school as having inculcated self-discipline and self-reliance, these in turn being the factors underpinning their success, alongside hard work, and ability. The Assisted Places Scheme faced much criticism, one factor being that the recipients were not always the disadvantaged, and that the inclusion of single parent households as an eligibility criterion meant that more wealthy or advantaged children could gain a place, whilst the most disadvantaged were under-represented. In the 2013 report, this factor was acknowledged where, whilst the majority of respondents were enjoying successes, the most disadvantaged were less likely to have gained higher levels of qualifications and were more likely to leave at the age of 16. In a 2006 paper, Power et al., found that whilst many of the Assisted Place holders had gone on to be relatively successful, a number seemed unwilling or unable to capitalize on the opportunities afforded them, these being often the more disadvantaged. To

understand this, Power et al., (2010) interviewed the more disadvantaged members of the cohort, and applied Bernstein's model to their experience of school. Here they investigated 25 more disadvantaged adults, including working class and intermediate family backgrounds. They found Commitment and Detachment as the most frequent forms of involvement, with a few designated Estranged or Alienated. Of note was the fact that of the Committed, the vast majority were female, despite there being only a small number in the sample (6/8) compared to men (2/15). Of those who were Estranged or Alienated, only one of the five attained any post-school qualification. Those who were Committed, engaged with extra-curricular opportunities and reported favourably on the academic 'push' the school gave. Much like Jackson and Marsden's (1966) cohort, they made strong in-school friendships, at the expense of neighbourhood friendships. This would suggest a deliberate immersion in the school. Of those who were Detached, the vast majority were male, and whilst they engaged with the academic (instrumental) aspect of school, they did not engage with the social (expressive) aspect, despite understanding it. There was a sense of not quite fitting in, and of feeling more comfortable with their family or out-of-school friends. Estrangement was shown in those who understood both the social and academic aspects but were unable to realize them. Either the academic work was too much, and/or did not feel they fitted in, undermining confidence. For both, their academic outcomes were relatively poor. Alienation is marked by a rejection of both the academic and social ends, and similarly did not go on to achieve high academic outcomes.

From this it could be suggested that those from a typical middle-class background could engage more readily with school, as these reflect middle-class values. It also suggests that those not from a middle-class background could also engage, as long as they both understand and accept the expressive means and ends. Whilst for Bourdieu, social mobility was restricted by the exclusive nature of the elite, for Bernstein, mobility is possible, so long as one aligns oneself with the dual aims of a school. Through engagement with the expressive role (participation in co-curricular activities and the like) it becomes possible to develop the character so valued by society. Whilst this may not necessarily be entirely 'cultural' in nature, it could develop valuable skills and qualities, as well as offering opportunities to engage with more 'highbrow' aesthetics.

Moreover, this begs the question of whether rather than always being a 'fish out of water', the working-class student can learn to be a 'fish in water'.

4.9 Co-curricular opportunities

Private schools are well-placed to offer a myriad of co-curricular opportunities. This is generally because of greater financial capital, as well as a longer school day. As an earlier section showed, private schools are credited with the development of character, and this is attributed to the co-curriculum as well as the academic curriculum. There is plenty of research that shows both the breadth of opportunities as well as the positive impact these can have. For example, participation in structured, organized activities in school has been associated with school performance and academic expectations (Behtoui, 2019). Similarly, participation has also been linked to the development of social skills, networks, and self-esteem (Mahoney et al., 2005). Participation has also been associated with forming relationships, working with others, and fitting in (Covay and Carbonaro, 2010). In Lareau's (2002) *Unequal Childhoods* ethnography she described the concerted cultivation of middle-class children, partially through engagement in co-curricular activities, reflecting a 'class specific cultural orientation' (Weininger et al., 2015: 482) and reflecting wider class practices (Ball, 2002). Sports have been credited with promoting social development and the social ties between students and schools, where these allow children to access adult practices and promote social development (Broh, 2002). Finally, access to higher education can also be affected by participation in activities, particularly if the participation crosses traditional gender boundaries (Kaufman and Gabler, 2004). This is of particular relevance because not only are activities valued by university admissions, but the type of activities engaged in also matters. Thus, for girls, if they are participating in STEM-related activities this stands out more than art, for example. In a single-sex context, girls may be more likely to choose such activities more readily than in mixed contexts due to the impact of gender stereotypes (an issue explored in more detail in the previous section). Engagement in school is one the *five Es of Elite Schooling* (2009: 199) as documented by Gaztambide-Fernandez (2009) in work on elite American boarding schools. In such schools, all pupils were expected to engage and become elite, regardless of background. Through engagement with the institution a sense of identification is fostered. By identifying with the school, this motivates

engagement and participation and fosters the expressive understanding and acceptance in accordance with Bernstein's theory. Finally, as selective, academically focused schools the second part of the picture is also promoted in the understanding of the instrumental aims of the school, although this does not guarantee acceptance of it since this reflects academic achievement.

In this section I have considered the impact of school engagement in terms of confidence. By identifying with the school this forges a clear identity, which in turn fosters self-esteem. I have also considered the importance of engagement and participation as one of the aims of school, a particular feature of private schools in terms of the provision of a broad and varied co-curriculum. The breadth offers wider opportunities to more pupils to participate in ways most state schools cannot, and through participation this can strengthen a sense of belonging, which is important for self-esteem, or confidence. In the next section I explore this further by considering the importance of friendships as an interpersonal, or micro- level of identification.

4.10 Friendships

In this section, I consider the importance of friendships and the ways in which belonging to a friendship group can foster confidence. I go on to consider cliques and clique membership alongside the problematic nature of these. In the final section, I consider relational aggression and bullying as the 'dark side' of girls' friendships and consider their impact on confidence.

Friendships in adolescence are a vital part of life. It is widely acknowledged that during this time, the quality of these relationships (and difficulties with them) have a significant impact on the well-being of young people. Adolescence is a time of forging an identity, as distinct from parents, as well as testing the boundaries of independence. Erik Erikson's (1950) theory of social development gave an early insight into the mind of an adolescent. This life stage was characterised by the conflict between Identity and Role Confusion and exemplified in the question of 'who am I'? For Erikson, the adolescent will 'try on' a number of identities (Identity Crisis) until they find one they are comfortable with (Fidelity). In the process, adolescents will identify with others who are similar, to form cliques and groups of like-minded individuals (McCleod, 2018). As different identities are explored, belonging and exclusion are a natural

consequence. Whilst this is an old theory, there is much to resonate with contemporary adolescence, the desire to fit in, to forge a sense of self and to coalesce with like-minded individuals will strengthen identity. More recently, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) has explored the need for identity in more detail. In forging an identity, initially we categorise into us and them – in-group/out-group - highlighting in-group distinctiveness. By highlighting in-group positive qualities this raises self-esteem. Therefore, by identifying as a member of a group, we raise our self-esteem. This leads to social comparison where self-esteem is raised by comparing one's in-group favourably against the out-group. Thus, belongingness will be important to an adolescent's fragile sense of self. Social Identity Theory is a useful lens through which to consider the importance of friendships. People, and girls in particular, show a Need to Belong (Baumeister and Leary, 1995) and as such will show dispositions to form groups. Once groups are formed, membership of a group forms a social identity (Hogg and Adams, 1988). Social Identity Theory predicts that once groups are formed, members categorise themselves as similar. Group membership can be quite arbitrary, as in Tajfel and Turners' (1979) original research, or based on similarities. Group members will go on to accentuate the similarities between group members (the in-group) and the distinctiveness of others (the out-group), thus creating in-group norms and out-group stereotypes (Hogg et al., 1995; Stets and Burke, 2000). This social comparison adds to self-esteem through the positive evaluation of the in-group in comparison to the out-group. Such in-group favouritism is favourable to the self, as, if the group has favourable qualities, in turn, each member also possesses these. (Hogg et al., 1995). Group membership reinforces norms particular to the group and stereotypical norms to the out-group. Positive inter-member attitudes can be seen as a form of social attraction, or affiliation where members are liked because they embody the group – the more they conform to the prototype, the more they are liked (Hogg and Hains, 1998). Thus, friendships and group membership are important predictors of self-esteem and confidence.

There is a considerable body of work on the friendships of girls (and boys) during adolescence and the positive and negative impact of these. During adolescence, friendships are vital in ensuring well-being. As De Goede et al (2009) suggest:

Because friendships are thought to be characterized by equality, mutual respect, mutual trust and symmetrical reciprocity, friends might be the pre-eminent persons adolescents turn to for fulfilment of these needs (2009: 1105).

Friendships can be defined as:

Personal, private and voluntary relationships between autonomous individuals; they are based on choice and free-will and entail sentiment and intimacy (Winkler-Reid, 2015: 167).

They can be powerful in mitigating against stressful life events, including the victimization by peers (Hodges et al., 1999), and popularity is particularly protective for girls (Closson and Watanabe, 2016). Further, both the quality and quantity of friendships can ameliorate the effects of loneliness and depression (Nangle et al., 2003) with the lack of friendships associated with the development of depression (Witvliet et al., 2010).

For girls, the literature suggests a more powerful influence than for boys:

Girls depend on close, intimate friendships to get them through life. The trust and support of these relationships provide girls with emotional and psychological safety nets; with their friends behind them, they can do and say things that are remarkably creative and brave and 'out of character'. With their friends at their back, they will stand on principle, rebuke a school bully, report sexual harassment or abuse, develop a radically new idea, fight stereotypes (Brown, 2003: 4).

Girls describe higher quality friendships than boys and seek these for intrinsic purposes (i.e., self-motivated) and go on to enjoy happy and intimate relationships (Ojanen et al., 2010).

Elsewhere, it has been suggested that:

Girls' socialization...is heavily focused on relationships and empathetic connectedness. This suggests that (gender normative) girls have a greater vested interest than (gender normative) boys in maintaining friendships and resolving conflict (Ging and O'Higgins-Norman, 2016: 806).

One feature of friendships is that they tend to be based on similarity (Brown and Klute, 2006) – a shared interest, similar backgrounds, and the same social class; in school there is an opportunity to extend friendships to the boundaries of this, whilst within a more diverse social mix than that afforded at home (Papapolydorou, 2014). In addition, in her ethnography of girls'

friendships, Griffiths (1995) described physical proximity, intimacy, disclosure and trust as features of girls' friendships. These factors have been confirmed more recently in numerous studies (e.g., Winkler-Reid, 2015).

Friendships therefore allow for companionship and intimacy and, in turn, can help build identity and self-esteem; for some scholars, friendships can serve more instrumental purposes, particularly for middle-class girls. In their study, Hamilton and Deegan (2019) suggest that friendships are a form of Habitus where the:

...interplay of dispositions, structures and practices, which are not visible or public, but often lie hidden in language and discourses within social relationships and friendships (2019: 1003).

Moreover, the girls studied were described as using a form of 'conscious agency' (Giddens, 1984) to choose friendships and friendship groups to both facilitate their time in school, and also to further their status. Groups are chosen because of their habitus (for example, those who are more academically minded) and the advantages this might bring. Hamilton and Deegan (2019) go on to suggest that such manoeuvring can 'facilitate middle-class female advantage' (2019: 1004). Friendships can also be viewed as a form of Social Capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in that they comprise and support networks (Papapolydorou, 2014), and can offer resources. Whilst these could be connections in a professional context in later life, these could operate during adolescence in the form of popularity and social approval.

4.11 Cliques

Dyadic friendships coalesce into cliques, or friendships groups. Cliques are tightly knit, socialising agents (Heinrich et al, 2000), membership can be fluid, becoming less tight as members mature (Brown and Klute, 2003) and can 'form an important context for the social development of adolescents' (Pattisellanno et al., 2015: 2257). A clique can be described as:

...well-defined and quite exclusively connected networks consisting of members who tend to be friends and who frequently interact with one another (Witvliet et al., 2010).

They will tend to show similarity of interests and beliefs, this could result from aggregation due to similarity, conformity to group norms or a combination of these influences:

Individuals...coordinate and accommodate their values, thoughts and behaviour with those of others. Group members willingly accede to this process if the group engenders a sense of identity, inclusive safety and preferential treatment (Ellis and Zarbatany, 2017: 227).

Clique membership therefore offers companionship, as well as a sense of identity – an important element of adolescence. Inclusion, and the desire to be included, is seen as a key marker of adolescent friendships (Warrington and Younger, 2011). For girls, this is seen as more important than for boys. In part, this is due to girls having fewer friends overall, and hence the importance to keep and maintain these friendships (Pattisellano et al., 2015). Cliques vary in their status, with ‘popularity’ being an important marker of this. Popularity refers to how well-liked a clique (or individuals within it) is. Memberships of such popular cliques is often desirable, and in turn this raises the status of the clique. Some cliques are of overall higher status, and within different strata of cliques there can also be a status hierarchy (Pattisellano et al., 2015). This affords power to individuals, and to the clique, in regulating group inclusion, and exclusion. Exclusion from cliques can be problematic as it is:

...uniquely associated with subsequent depressive symptoms even when other aspects of problematic peer relations (i.e., peer rejection and friendlessness) are taken into account (Witvliet et al, 2010: 1053).

This association between isolation and depression is viewed as the result of loneliness wherein feelings of rejection are internalized. It is important to note however the term *association* as this means there is a relationship between the factors, but does not allow a causative conclusion. It may be equally the case that girls with low self-esteem, or a preference for solitude, may not be chosen as friends. The study does not ask the question as to whether their respondents *wanted* to be in the cliques or not – this is an important question, as peer rejection is a different experience to choosing to have fewer friends. Indeed, in the same study, those who were not in cliques did have good dyadic friendships. Where clique membership is desirable, this affords power to the clique in terms of regulating membership. Similarly, for clique members the possibility of exclusion becomes a source of control, particularly for higher status members. The higher the status of the clique, the more control they have over individuals within it (Ellis and Zarbatany, 2017). Such control can include expectations of

conformity to clique norms, perhaps in codes of behaviour, attitude, or appearance. To ensure this conformity, a variety of strategies may be used (Ellis and Zabatany, 2017). The higher status the clique is, the greater power it has to ensure this conformity, and the higher the likelihood that forms of aggression are employed (Pattisellano et al., 2015). The dominant code of behaviour tends toward heteronormative expectations of femininity: style of dress, body shape, and sexualised behaviour and appearance. Therefore, clique inclusion demands certain behaviours, language and attitudes which are linked with being a 'normal girl...actively engaging in hegemonic heterosexual identities' (Warrington and Younger, 2011: 153). In terms of appearance this involves the displays of the latest consumer goods, attractiveness, and adornment (but not too much) and a perceived 'importance of conformity to gender stereotypes' (Warrington and Younger, 2011: 156). Being popular demands conformity to these ideals at all times, driven by an awareness of continued scrutiny and the risk of exclusion (Brown, 2003). There are fine lines of acceptable femininity - to be pretty, thin, sexual (but not 'slutty') and under surveillance (Currie et al., 2007). Whilst girls are the ones policing this, it is done through the 'male gaze'. Boys do not even need to be present for this policing, they just need to be in the minds of the girls (Ringrose, 2008).

Cliques can use verbal aggression to regulate inclusion and exclusion, as well as the extent to which individuals are conforming. This is commonly referred to as gossip and bitching, or more specifically, relational aggression. The term 'relational aggression' was coined by Crick and Grotpeter (1995) in their examination of gender and aggression. In their work they argued that girls are just as aggressive as boys, rebutting the stereotype of aggression being solely a male trait. However, they also argued that the aggression is relational rather than physical. Relational aggression is where girls use the closeness of female friendships as weapons of inclusion and exclusion, and verbal weapons of gossip and 'bitching' so whilst friendships can be 'sanctuaries from harm', they can also have a 'dark side'. Friendships can offer disclosure, intimacy and companionship, but also gossip, exclusion and the threat of rejection (Bouchard et al., 2018). Such relational aggression can also be viewed as bullying:

Girls' fighting and friendships are organized around academic and social competition and popularity vis-a-vis boys, which sets up a terrain of brutal heterosexualised

competition between girls that become fertile ground for claims of bullying (Ringrose, 2008: 512).

Relational aggression- gossiping, back-biting, 'bitchiness' - conforms to the stereotype of girls (particularly middle-class girls) being duplicitous, competing over the attention of boys/men. On the surface girls are expected to be 'nice', but underneath can be ruthless. Holt and Bowlby (2019) comment that:

Among the polite, civilized and empathetic girls, these power relationships are generally insidious, and played out in relation to different degrees of closeness of friendships, or through more subtle means (2019: 172).

In their research, they noted how on the surface the girls valued and embodied a caring and feminine persona and denied aggression and conflict – whilst simultaneously engaging in relational aggression. In turn, this 'provides a cover for unfeminine emotions like anger' (Brown 2003: 16). Girls who are popular tend to be so because they are 'nice' and embody approved femininity. Other girls aspire to this and will try to conform to these codes. The notion of a 'mean girl' was described extensively in the early noughties (e.g. Brown, 2003; Ringrose, 2006) and essentialized the inherent, or natural meanness of girls. For Brown, relational aggression, or meanness, is a channel through which girls can express aggression in a socially acceptable way. Moreover, it is a means of reinforcing stereotypes as:

They unwittingly participate in and maintain our society's largely negative views of girls' and women's relationships as untrustworthy, deceitful and manipulative (Brown, 2003: 4).

In addition, by using aggression towards each other, girls can regulate femininity and demand conformity to ideals of femininity. These include to be the right size, not be too pushy or 'bossy', sexual, but not 'slutty' or 'frigid', not too clever or too stupid. In doing so, 'girls become the handmaidens to insidious forms of sexism' (Brown, 2003: 150). Ringrose (2006) in part concurs, but with a more critical lens. She views the discourse on 'mean girls' as a way of pathologizing girls (particularly successful, middle-class girls), such that is seen as the norm to be mean. Thus, to be a mean girl becomes a part of femininity and 'works to re-establish the bounds of femininity disrupted by feminism' (2006: 419). Meanness has also been naturalised

to the extent that it is ‘part of the normative cruelties of ‘doing girl’’ (Ringrose and Renold, 2010: 586). Here the exclusionary and verbally aggressive acts are viewed as a taken-for-granted aspect of femininity. By viewing relational aggression as normal, bullying becomes overlooked, as it is just part of ‘being girls’. The naturalization of middle-class girls as mean, reinforces to girls as well, the notion that they should be mean (Ringrose, 2013) and in turn, can cause girls to conform to this stereotype.

Relational aggression tends to be heterosexualised, in that the weapons wielded (exclusion, name calling, gossiping) relate to appearance and conformity to stereotypical notions of femininity. In short, their appeal to boys, which begs the question, would there be more, or less, relational aggression in the absence of boys? On one level, the physical absence of the direct ‘male gaze’ may ameliorate positive relationships amongst girls in that such behaviours may be caused by jealousies over male attention, in the moment. If this were the case, then we would expect relational aggression to be confined to contexts where boys are present. On the other hand, there is no reason at all to assume that girls will not be ‘mean’ when boys are absent since such stereotypes of ‘meanness’ could be firmly entrenched. Moreover, girls in a girls’ school are not in a bubble; they exist in a society that is mixed and they interact with boys beyond the school gates, both literally and figuratively, as well as online. In turn, heterosexualised relational aggression may be exacerbated in a girls’ school, as the scarcity of male attention (at school) makes competition for it all the more fierce. If this were the case, the ‘naturalness’ of competition and jealousy over boys as a driving factor of the ‘naturalness’ of meanness could indeed be worse in a girls’ school. On the other hand, if meanness and the weapons used to ensure heteronormative conformity are driven more by conformity to a stereotype of meanness, then it could be reduced as the pressure to conform is reduced. It may be that in an all-girls context, meanness exists (as interpersonal aggression) but the heteronormative pressures are reduced, aggression is channelled differently, and there is a wider acceptance of difference and non-conformity to heteronormative stereotypes. In the absence of substantive literature, this question is difficult to answer directly since research tends to focus on mixed contexts, and mixed cliques. Particularly in mixed groups, heteronormative displays prevail: boys jostling for status, whilst girls conduct aggression in a

hidden way (Killea-Jones et al., 2007). Underlying all of this is the assumption that each are competing for the attention of the opposite sex. The paucity of such research is surprising, since a defining feature of friendships is gender (Maccoby, 2002).

In this section I have considered the importance of friendships for girls, and the stereotypes concerning the natural 'meanness' of girls. Friendships and secure friendships groups can foster confidence, and group belongingness can also foster confidence. Conversely, relational aggression can undermine confidence.

4.12 Synthesis

In this chapter I have explored confidence in girls and have considered three areas I believe to be important in developing girls' confidence, and whether being in a girls' school can help girls develop their confidence. This relates to gender stereotypes in two key ways, First, girls are not exposed to the the assumed superiority of boys in STEM subjects whilst in school, nor the dominance of boys in the classroom. These are important as girls may be more confident in their abilities in STEM subjects, being more likely to go on to choose these subjects for subsequent study or careers and, in turn, this is linked to higher earnings. Without the presence of domineering boys, girls can develop the confidence to contribute, question and debate. The second impact in relation to gender stereotypes concerns the pressure on girls to conform to heteronormative modes of femininity. In the absence of the direct 'male gaze', girls may be at greater liberty to 'be themselves', or to adopt alternative ways of being, such as a 'girly-swt' that allows girls to flourish academically with less experience of derision for not conforming to being a less academic 'girly-girl'. The development of confidence is also related to identification with, and engagement with, the school itself. Feeling a sense of belonging and being part of a school community could also help develop confidence. Such identification can be built through, and reinforced by participation in the wider school and the co-curriculum, of which private schools offer a wide variety of choices. Engagement with the school can thus build confidence as participation offers more opportunity for Mastery Experiences and Vicarious Experiences (Bandura, 1997) which in turn, fosters self-efficacy, or confidence. Finally, the quality of friendships matters. The question of whether girls in girls' schools are more 'bitchy' than those

in mixed schools is not entirely clear. Although it may be that if such relational aggression relates to the surveillance of girls in relation to heteronormative expectations and competition for the attention of boys, then it may be that relational aggression is reduced. Belonging to a friendship group and having supportive friends will also foster confidence through Verbal Persuasion, a third aspect to Bandura's (1997) theory concerning self-efficacy, or confidence. Conversely, problematic peer relations will serve to undermine confidence. Hence the importance of friendships in terms of confidence.

In the previous chapter I considered literature relating to the private (girls') school premium, where those who had attended private girls' schools had overall better academic and career outcomes than those who had attended mixed schools. Notwithstanding the difficulty of disentangling academic selection from this, it is clear from many research studies that privately educated students tend to make more aspirational choices than their state-educated equivalents (i.e., those with the same A level grades). These choices will reflect aspiration, and in turn these aspirational choices come about through feeling the confidence to achieve them.

In drawing these seemingly disparate strands together, it may be that the private girls' school premium comes about because of confidence, and that private girls' schools are well-placed to help develop that confidence.

In the next stage of this thesis I show how all of these aspects are linked, and consider the importance of confidence for girls. I hope to shed light onto the experiences of those who had attended a private girls' school to question whether confidence really is the key, and to understand how this may, or may not have been developed.

Chapter Five: Methodological Framework, Theoretical Frameworks and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I described the existing literature relating to private girls' schools and have shown how confidence may be related to making aspirational choices. Moreover, I have shown how there may be a number of factors that could be related to the development of confidence that could be particular to a private girls' school. In this chapter I set out my approach to the research and how I designed the research strategy. I go on to an overview of the context of the research and my place within it. I then give an account of the ~~case study~~ design I adopted and justify this choice. I explain how I chose my specific methods and designed the research instruments. In the second part of the chapter, I detail sampling and ethical considerations. I then introduce the main theoretical frameworks by which the data will be interrogated. Finally, I explain how I approached the analysis of the data.

Aims

The key aim of this thesis is to understand the experience of attending a private girls' school from the perspectives of those who had attended one. Additionally, I wished to understand to what extent specific aspects of the school they felt contributed to this confidence, or otherwise.

5.2 Methodological Framework

5.2.1 Epistemological Approach

In adopting an Interpretivist epistemology I am seeking to understand, rather than to explain, the experiences young women had in school (Bryman, 2016). Furthermore, I am attempting to understand, from the perspectives of these young women, what factors might be important in the development of confidence. This could best be described as a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975), since I am interested in understanding and interpreting, as well as understanding from the perspective of the actors who have experienced the school. In addition, I have taken an iterative-deductive approach to data collection and analysis. Whilst not fully embracing Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) as an approach, I did also look to consider the data to determine some of the direction I took.

Whilst starting with some pre-conceived ideas and directions of inquiry, I also intended to be responsive to the data, and open-minded about the research trajectory. Thus my approach was iterative in this respect and I was keen to explore what might emerge from the data, that may be well beyond my initial expectations.

5.2.2 Research Strategy

Having completed two research methods modules on quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as a module on research design in the taught element of the Professional Doctorate, I feel I have an in-depth grounding in research methods and approaches, and do not intend to rehearse these here. As a result of the modules, I felt well-placed to make informed decisions regarding my choice of research methods. In terms of research strategy, I have taken a pragmatic approach rather than a defined 'qualitative' or 'quantitative' approach in order to avoid the 'paradigm wars' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998) that felt too prescriptive in terms of defining research methods, and that by 'choosing' between either, I might collect data that is not entirely 'fit for purpose' (Hammersley, 2013: 15). As Edwards and Holland (2013) observed, selecting the methods appropriate to the research aims is more important than subscribing to a particular paradigm or epistemology. To this end, the nature of the methods used create the type of data generated (Symonds and Gorard, 2010), rather than adopting methods that will only generate one type of data, and this approach seemed the most logical. Thus, electing for a mixed methods approach enables whichever data collection strategies are best for answering the research questions. In adopting a mixed methods approach, a Convergent Parallel Design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011) is used, where both quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously, with equal weighting. The data are then combined to allow for triangulation or corroboration, as well as giving complementary, and more insightful accounts.

5.2.3 Research design

I have undertaken a form of Insider Research (e.g., Fleming, 2018) where I am researching within my own context. This is a common method in the Professional Doctorate (Mercer, 2007) where the aim is to research one's professional context. This research might have been

considered a case study design, since the attempt was to capture the ‘essence’ of having attended a specific ‘type’ of private girls’ school (see Chapter One, and below). The case in question was a single representative sample of this type of school. Therefore, the term ‘case study’ could be applied since I have considered this case as representative (Yin, 2009), or exemplary (Bryman, 2016) of a particular context. According to Yin (1993) a case study is appropriate when attempting to understand a phenomenon (in this case, experience of school) and the context in which it is occurring (the school), and the context is thought to ‘contain explanatory variables about the phenomenon’ (Yin, 1993: 31). My understanding of the case study design is informed by my background in psychology and I understand a case study to be an in-depth study of a single person, or organisation. In this instance the ‘case’ is the school itself, rather than individuals within it, and hence my aim is to gain an understanding of the school through the reflection of the alumnae who had attended it. To this end, the data can be used to exemplify a particular case or context. On the other hand, a case study would typically comprise multiple data collection methods (Hamel et al., 1996), each enabling the triangulation of the data. In this study however, only two sources of data collection was considered. To this end, the study may best be described as Cross Sectional (Bryman, 2016) in design, where the aim is to obtain a ‘snapshot’ of data. In this case the chosen data collection methods (survey and interview – see below) allow for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data at a single point in time. Thus, whilst the sample is drawn from a single case exemplar source, the cross-sectional design is an attempt to gather data from those who had attended the school, reflecting on their experiences, in order to understand the specific context in question.

5.3 The research context

5.3.1 Locating the Research

Greenfields School is an independent girls’ day school, located in a leafy suburb of a city in southwest England. The majority of pupils live in the surrounding areas, loosely described as middle class. The profile of the school is broadly the same today as it was in the time the research participants attended the school. It is selective, with entry through an examination at age 11 and through GCSE scores for sixth form. Currently, pupils are expected to achieve at

least 6 6s – equivalent to 6 high Bs, for the research participants this will have been equivalent with entry of 6 B grades. In year 7, the top performing students in the entrance examination are offered a place. There are currently circa 100 places available in year 7, with five form entry. The schools' website describes the curriculum as 'fully rounded'. At the time when the research participants were at school, the academic curriculum was, and still is, traditional, offering at least one modern foreign language (French, German, Russian and Spanish), sciences, humanities and maths. In addition, arts, music, drama, and technology are taught. At GCSE, students may also opt for Business, Computer Science, Drama, Dance, PE, and Music in addition to traditional subjects. All students study Latin in years 7 and 8 and may continue to through sixth form. In sixth form, students study traditional subjects, and may opt for Business, Economics, Philosophy, Politics, Psychology, and Computer Science, in addition to Music, Drama, Art and Technology. There is a focus on sport, with many sports played and taught. Considerable time is allocated to sport on the timetable and all students are expected to participate. In addition, there are numerous sports clubs and teams, with sessions before, during and after school. Performing arts are encouraged, there are twice annual concerts, two major school productions, as well as numerous informal events. Finally, there are a broad range of clubs and societies reflecting a diverse range of interests, debating, film production, radio broadcasting, and feminist and LGBT+ societies.

The school has a long history, from early charitable beginnings to a forward-thinking school in the late Victorian era. It was initially funded by charitable endowments, becoming a Direct Grant Grammar school in 1945, following the 1944 Education Act (Vanes, 2014) Studying this context adds to the literature since much contemporary research has focused on more elite contexts, and this particular school context can be differentiated from some other private schools, upon which much of the existing literature is based. Green et al., (2018) offer a helpful distinction in describing some schools more elite than others as 'Tatler Schools'. These are the top private schools in the UK according to The Tatler magazine (a UK lifestyle publication marketed towards upper-middle class readers) which charge higher than average fees. They tend to be boarding, are more academically selective, and include the old 'public schools' often known as the Clarendon Schools such as Harrow, Elton College and Rugby (Worth et al., 2022)

as well as other more 'exclusive' schools. In examining the current top 30 Tatler Girls' Schools (www.Tatler.com), the vast majority are located in London and the Home Counties (22/30), and are boarding or mixed day-boarding. Typical Day fees are £8,000 - £10,000 per term, whilst boarding fees are in the region of £14,00 per term (www.isc.co.uk). Only six of the schools are former Direct Grant schools. This would suggest there are different tiers of private schools: those with charitable and urban origins and locations, that had been part-funded by government; and those that are in wealthier locations, or rural. Furthermore, a recent paper exploring the trajectories of private girls' school-educated women concluded there are 12 elite schools. These are described as those most commonly sending alumnae to Oxbridge (Worth et al., 2022), and these alumnae were 20 times more likely to be entered into Who's Who (a cumulative list of the most influential people in the UK). Of those schools, only two were former Direct Grant schools. As suggested in Chapter One, it appears there are different tiers of private schools: those which are former Direct Grant schools, and those that were not. The former tend to be located in cities, or larger provincial towns. Their funding from 1945-1976, coming from both central government and local authorities, as well as private fees, reflects the aim of incorporating former private schools into the larger education provision, whilst maintaining academic selection. Typical (beyond London) fees are in the region of £5,000 per term. In terms of the existing literature, much relates to elite schools. Whilst these schools are not named, my reading of these was that much of the research related to such elite schools, rather than an explicit examination of schools that may have a different history. This school and its alumnae can tell the story of a former Direct Grant private girls' school, with a relatively (to the sector) diverse population, in a suburban context, and hence considered an exemplar case of other, similar schools. Therefore the case school can be seen to represent similar private girls schools, i.e., those in an urban-suburban location, charging comparatively lower fees, that are former Direct Grant schools.

5.3.2 Reflexivity – locating the researcher in the research

This research concerns alumnae who have attended the school I work in. As such, this is a form of Insider Research (Branick and Cochran, 2007; Chavez, 2008; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Fleming, 2018). Conducting research within one's professional context is a hallmark of the

Professional Doctorate (Mercer, 2007) and this may be achieved in different ways, for example by conducting research in a context similar to one's own, or indeed within the actual place of work. In choosing the latter this presented both challenges, as well as some advantages. Because I was attempting to examine one particular (exemplar) school to shed light upon what I have termed the 'x-factor', referring to the features of the school that may have contributed to the development of particular characteristic and persuasion of the alumnae, it made sense to research the school itself. The alternative was to approach a similar school, however, I was interested in examining *this* school. I recognise the problematic nature of this fact and have tried to build some 'distance' in the last six years between myself as a researcher and myself as a member of the institution I am researching. It is of course impossible to disentangle myself fully from both my own professional position, as well as any assumptions or biases I may have. I aimed to tackle this by distancing myself somewhat from the data as much as possible, recognising a need to make the 'familiar strange' (Delamont, 1999) in order to address the 'familiarity problem' (Delamont et al., 2010). This is a concern when researching one's own context as by being a part of the institution, I have been socialised into the institution, having an implicit understanding of the culture and its norms. Insider Research has both advantages and disadvantages. A common criticism concerns objectivity (Branick and Coghlan, 2007) since, as an insider, I cannot view the research as an 'outsider' might and hence may be prone to bias. Familiarity with the context can be problematic in that it could lead to taking for granted certain assumptions, or a myopia (Mercer, 2007) and lack of exploration, leading to 'thinner' data. A second concern is that of Informant Bias (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) where informants may be more willing to share confidences, or conversely, withhold information for fear of judgement by a researcher who is familiar. In this case, it is likely the sample included some alumnae who knew me or were taught by me, as well as some who were not, or did not know me. There was a possibility they would respond in a way that presents their experience of school in a more positive light in order to be 'helpful'. Or that they chose to be less candid. Moreover, those who chose to respond to the survey may have done so because of my place in the research. I could not control for this, but by acknowledging the issue I can be mindful of such biases in the data.

A further consideration relates to data analysis, again, with Insider Research there are potential problems in that there may be taken-for-granted assumptions, and that in analysis of the data one looks for such patterns, overlooking other trends. Here Fleming (2018) recommends the use of a 'critical friend' who could question such assumptions, a role my supervisor played in challenging my assumptions. With the data analysis my strategy was to let the data speak for itself. Here, I used methods such as counting frequencies before seeking interpretations of the data for example. Similarly, there were deliberate attempts to seek less dominant 'voices' within the data. Delamont et al., (2010) offer a number of recommendations for fighting familiarity, one of which is to observe a culture and or context dissimilar to one's own. I have never been a pupil in a private girls' school (although I am a teacher in one), this means I do not have any experience as a former pupil from which to draw. Indeed, my own state school and further education college were very different to a private girls' school (see Chapter One also). Indeed, not having been a pupil at a private, or girls' school I often found myself a 'fish out of water'. In this thesis, my aim is to understand the school experience from those who have experienced it, rather than to present my own account of how I view the school, nor indeed, to act as an advocate for the school.

Whilst acknowledging these issues, there is also the argument that as an 'insider' I am also in a position to understand the nuances of the context. This is seen as an advantage of Insider Research where shared understanding can facilitate data collection and interviews (Fleming, 2018). Moreover, as an insider (for many of the alumnae at least) there may be a degree of trust, openness and willingness to share (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). In addition, I have familiarity with the language and nuances of the school and these aspects are advantageous in terms of building rapport (Berkovic et al., 2021) and, in turn, facilitating conversation.

On reflection, my position may be both 'insider' and 'outsider'. An insider to the institution, but an outsider as I am not a (former) pupil. The insider-outsider question need not necessarily be viewed as a binary, it is possible to move between the two and what is more important is

An ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009: 59)

This was the approach I took, to attempt to listen to, and represent all voices. Even if they challenged any assumptions I may have had. I have aimed to be transparent and fair, acknowledging the problematic nature of being an insider, whilst being mindful of my aims in understanding experiences from the perspective of those who had the experience.

A second area for reflection concerns the extent to which the alumnae themselves would give authentic, or honest accounts of their experiences, either because they wanted to be 'helpful' or because they might have predicted what I wanted to know. The dominant discourses surrounding girls' schools point to academic advantage, bucking of gender stereotypes and confidence. It is possible that the alumnae would repeat these back, as if these were the experiences they had had. As an insider, would this have made this more problematic? Could it also be the case that whilst at school such discourses had been internalised by the alumnae, i.e., because they were *told* that girls' school increase confidence, that this increased their confidence? Thus, the alumnae may well have felt confidence, but not as a result of the school context, but by feeling that they ought be confident. Similarly with gender stereotypes, were their experiences at odds with stereotypes, or would the alumnae describe liberation from these, without actually making a-stereotypical choices? Moreover, in describing that they felt less impact of stereotypes, and then not choosing STEM career paths for example, does this mean they were, or were not experiencing such liberation? This is a challenge, and particularly so given my insider status. It may be the alumnae would feel some obligation to me, to repeat 'what everyone knows' about girls' schools in the assumption that I know this anyway (as an insider) and that this is what I was attempting to show in the research. To this end, and to attempt to mitigate this concern, my approach, as indicated above, was to let the data speak for itself. If all accounts reflected the shared assumptions about girls' schools, there might be more concern. If the accounts are more mixed, then this might allow me to conclude the reflections are 'genuine'. In addition, through data analysis I can consider the 'richness' of the

accounts. If the alumnae were simply rehearsing shared assumptions then I might expect the data to be 'thin', since elaboration, including examples, might point to authenticity.

5.4 Research Methods

In the spirit of a study where a combination of methods might be used, I elected to distribute a survey and to conduct interviews.

5.4.1 Survey

Initially I had intended to send a postal survey to all the alumnae. Their last home addresses are stored in the school records, and I had hoped their parents might pass on the postal survey, assuming they still lived at that address. However, this was to prove impossible with the new GDPR rules concerning data held since the address data did not have consent to be used in this way, and I had to find another route. In discussion with the school administration department, we came to the solution of posting a piece about my research on an alumnae e-newsletter. This invited alumnae to complete the survey by following a link to the survey platform. In addition, the same link was posted on the alumnae LinkedIn and Facebook accounts, drawing in a wider sample frame, as detailed below.

An online survey questionnaire was created using the Qualtrics platform. The web-based format was chosen since it allows for full anonymity as the distribution was through a link embedded within an e-newsletter. In addition, this allowed for the design of a variety of question formats. This flexibility of design ensured the survey maintained interest, as well as enabling me to ask similar questions in a variety of ways. Finally, it meant I could create filter questions so that a number of different, parallel 'routes' through the survey were possible, depending on the respondents' answers. The web platform is familiar to many people of the age I wanted to survey and could be completed on mobile devices. This format was also chosen over a postal survey to facilitate responses, despite there typically being a poorer response rate in comparison (Bryman, 2016). The survey (Appendix A) contained a mix of open and closed questions designed to capture data relating to education outcomes, career progression and salaries. Closed questions were used to capture opinions and preferences using ranking and

Likert scales to indicate agreement. Closed questions and scales allow for ease of comparison and generation of quantitative data that lends itself to descriptive and inferential analysis (Cohen et al., 2007). In addition, where Likert and rating scales were used in a matrix, I ensured there were a mix of positive and negative statements to avoid acquiescence bias (Fife-Shaw, 2006). The questions were generated by considering initially what range of data I wished to capture. Thus I began with creating questions concerning academic, and career progression, for example, higher education destinations and current employment as well as income brackets. I included questions on background demographics including ethnicity, parental occupations and whether family members had attended university. Then I created questions on qualities and characteristics that may be associated with school; these were informed by the literature and included typical 'soft skills' such as communication skills and teamwork. These also included the development of confidence and questions were designed to question both the development of confidence as well as the feeling of confidence at school, university and work. I then moved on to develop questions concerning happiness at school, a sense of fitting in, feeling successful as well as the best/worst aspects of school. I also added question concerning what they thought important in choosing a school for their daughters in the future. Many of these questions were open-ended as they were intended to capture opinions and values. Once I had generated the questions, the survey was re-organised so that it felt more 'interesting'. Finally the survey was discussed with, and approved by, my supervisor.

Initially my intention was to focus on the quantitative data and use this for comparison with national data. However, as I was creating the survey, I felt more scope for open-ended questions was necessary to probe opinions more carefully. Closed questions alone would provide ease of analysis; however, they do not allow for depth of responses, and I felt it important to gain a richer understanding and insight into the alumnae's experience of school and beyond. Open-ended questions were used to allow for text entry. Initially I assumed that the survey responses would form the majority of the data collected, and so felt it important to gather as much qualitative data as possible using the questionnaire. To this end, some closed questions asked for elaboration through free text. Other questions were very open and asked respondents to reflect on their experiences. Open questions allow respondents to explain their

thoughts and opinions more fully, without constraint. In addition, they allow for unexpected responses which might not have been possible in a closed format (Bryman, 2016).

The survey itself was piloted with my work colleagues initially, this was to ensure the questions were framed clearly, without ambiguity, and to ensure the survey flowed logically and correctly. Following a pilot with five colleagues, any glitches in the flow were addressed, as well as any ambiguities with the questions. The length allowed completion within 15 minutes, although some did take much longer than that.

I felt the survey itself worked well, however, there were some issues. Due to a low initial response it was sent twice. In addition, LinkedIn and Facebook Alumnae groups were also invited to participate. This yielded further responses. The survey finally yielded 52 responses, of which two were discarded since one had left the school much earlier than the focus of the research (1946) and the other who had only just left the school (2017). This number was disappointing as a larger sample would allow for more detailed quantitative analysis, and I had hoped to apply inferential analyses to establish significance. At this point I decided to focus more on the qualitative data: from open-ended questions in the survey and the interviews. The survey data thus served as a backdrop to the data, and is used to provide more global insights.

5.4.2 Interview

The survey was complemented by open-structure interviews (Hayes, 2010) conducted with 10 respondents (see Appendix B). These were recruited by an invitation at the end of the survey, asking for an email address should they be interested in the follow-up. Initially, 23 respondents indicated they were willing to be interviewed. These were contacted by the email address submitted, and the response was slow. This necessitated follow-up correspondence until I managed to secure 10 interviews. This process, whilst being mindful not to 'badger' individuals, was time consuming.

Appendix C includes a detailed account of the interviewees, the table below gives a brief summary

Table 1. Summary of the interviewees.

Pseudonym	Degree	University	Profession	Overall perspective
Anna	French and Italian	Warwick	Brand Consultant	Feels successful and confident
Becca	Classics	Exeter	Finance	Confident, happy at school
Carla	Geography	Durham	Events Manager	Feels successful and confident
Dayna	Anthropology	Durham	Customer Service	Feels confident and happy at school
Ellie	PhD (History)	Cambridge	Administration	Mixed views on school, very confident
Freya	Business and Management	Aston	Teacher	Credits girls school specifically with development of confidence
Gina	Music	Manchester	Teacher	Mixed views on single sex education
Hattie	Classics	Lampeter	Developing business	Describes herself as introverted, positive view of school

Isabel	Photography	Arts Bournemouth	Trainee Manager	Generally enjoyed school but difficulties with cliques
Juliette	Physics	Warwick	Teacher	Very confident in school, advocate of single sex

Interviews are considered a good strategy for collecting qualitative data (Silverman, 2004); the open-structure format comprised open-ended questions with a pre-determined schedule. This offered some flexibility, allowing me to respond to interesting comments, or to follow-up unexpected directions. This format also ensured focus (Edwards and Holland, 2013) and allowed the respondent to feel relaxed and to engage conversationally, as well as to feel their contributions are valued (e.g. Denscombe, 2010). The alternative, a structured interview, where the possibility for development of responses is not possible, was felt inappropriate for the purpose of this study. In contrast, an unstructured interview with a lack of pre-determined questions could have led to tangential and irrelevant responses. (Breakwell et al., 2006). The interview schedule was developed to explore three key themes: transition to work, transition to university and experience of school. I followed a reverse chronology to allow for ‘warm up’ questions relating to their current employment. The experience of university was then explored, looking at how they fitted in socially, what their experience of seminars and tutorials was like as well, as the transition from school. School experience was the main focus, with questions relating to school ethos, pressure, negative experiences, disadvantages of the single sex environment, choice of school, positive experiences, aspirations and expectations, parental background and the future of girls’ schools. In line with an iterative approach, the questions were initially generated as a response to my examination of the survey data that I had gathered at the time (around 20 responses). This had already given me a ‘feel’ for the data, as well as highlighting areas that seemed in need of expansion as the survey questions had only yielded either quite superficial, or limited responses. Therefore, the interview schedule was developed from my initial data, as well as a further exploration of areas I wanted to develop in more

detail, for example asking for more detail about cliques and friendships as well as gender stereotypes. The interview schedule was also approved by my supervisor. On conducting the first interview I was quite apprehensive, however I found I soon relaxed and enjoyed the process very much. As a result of the first interview, several questions were cut as they did not add additional data – they tended to be answered in other question areas. I did keep them as possible follow-up questions, but found them superfluous. Some questions were re-phrased a little, but the schedule remained with little change.

Each interview lasted between 40-60 minutes; half were conducted by telephone, the others face-to-face. All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. The interviews were initially transcribed using transcription software (<http://transcribe.wreally.com>), which had an accuracy of approximately 70 %. Following this I listened to all interviews again and ‘corrected’ the transcription. This was a useful process as it initially sped up the transcription and saved considerable time, but also allowed me to get a good ‘feel’ for my data in much the same way had I transcribed manually. My preference would have been to conduct all interviews face to face, however, the restrictions of working full time, family life, geography, and the time availability for respondents did not make this always possible.

I felt it important to supplement the survey with the interview questions, as the survey itself could only give superficial insights, whereas I was keen to probe aspects of the alumnae’s experiences in more depth. The discursive nature of an interview allows for more detailed exploration, as well as responsiveness to the interviewee’s comments. Whilst the fact of my ‘insider’ status could be critiqued as problematic, it also added a helpful dimension to the interviews since, as an insider, I was fully conversant with the structures and context that were described. This facilitated discussion, since there were shared understandings that were drawn on, allowing for a more natural conversation.

5.5 Reliability and Validity

Yin (2009) offers four ‘tests’ of the quality of research: Construct Validity, Internal Validity, External Validity and Reliability. Construct validity concerns the extent to which the research method used actually measures or captures a ‘thing’. This can be problematic since unless

measures are operationalised (made testable or quantifiable, e.g., Davis and Bremner, 2006), subjective interpretation may be relied upon that is too vague. One way to counter this is to use different data sources to allow for triangulation of the data. By using a combination of open and closed survey questions as well as semi-structured interviews I was attempting some degree of triangulation to enable me to corroborate the data. Internal validity is more of a concern with research that is trying to establish cause-effect relationships in ensuring all other possible variables are controlled or accounted for. I am not attempting to find causal explanations, rather to seek an understanding, however it is important to interrogate the conclusions drawn to consider other possible explanations. External validity concerns the extent to which the data and conclusions may be applied to other contexts (i.e., different people, different schools, different cultures). The issue of external validity is problematic for single case research as by its very nature it involves a single context. The school itself might be considered typical of girls' day schools located in suburban areas of UK cities. This is quite specific and therefore would exclude generalisation to boarding contexts, or to rural schools. However, there are numerous schools similar enough to make generalisation reasonable. To this end, the external validity of the research will be limited to only contexts similar in nature to the case school.

5.6 Sample and data source

This study was located within my own professional context and from the outset sought to access the reflections of the alumnae of the school. The target population was women who had left the school within the last six to ten years, at an early stage in their careers. This allowed me to probe the early career trajectories, as well as their time at school, with this still relatively fresh in their minds.

5.6.1 Sampling strategy

The survey sample was achieved through asking alumnae to respond to a request sent out via an alumnae newsletter. This was later followed up by invitations posted on the alumnae LinkedIn and Facebook groups, thus widening the sampling frame. This sampling method would best be described as 'purposive' (e.g. Tashakkorie and Teddlie, 1998) as I was deliberately

targeting a specific group of people. Furthermore, the final sample was self-selected, (Coolican, 1999) i.e., those alumnae who then chose to participate by completing the survey.

The next level of sampling related to the interviews. At the end of the survey, respondents were invited to provide an email contact, should they be interested in participating in a follow-up interview. Initially I had intended to contact these selectively to give a range of respondents in terms of positive/negative school experience. Whilst more than half elected to be contacted for interview, when invited, the uptake was slow, and in the end all were invited for interview and I conducted 10 interviews in total.

These methods had several limitations since only those who had chosen to be part of the alumnae network were accessible – meaning a proportion of those who did not choose to be part of this were automatically excluded from the outset. This was addressed when the survey was later posted in LinkedIn and Facebook alumnae pages, complementing those who had responded via the original newsletter. The extent to which a sample is representative is an important issue. Given the nature of the sampling method, the sample could be considered broadly representative of the school alumnae since by accessing the wider social media networks this could help to ensure a broader representation than those who had signed up to the school's alumnae network.

5.6.2 The sample

The survey yielded 52 responses. Two were discarded as one had attended the school far earlier than the intended sample, and one was still a full-time student. This resulted in 50 respondents. The respondents were aged 26-31 and all but one had stayed until the end of sixth form. All went on to higher education. All reported English as their first language. 98% described themselves as White British. One respondent described herself as Black of Caribbean heritage. This is somewhat at odds with the current school ethnic profile – 18% describing themselves as BAME. This may reflect a changing demographic in the school (i.e., it has become more diverse over time), or that students identifying as BAME may have felt a lesser connection to the school, in turn leading to less post-school engagement.

Of the survey respondents, a majority (23/52) said they were willing to be interviewed and provided their email addresses for this. After contacting them, 10 agreed to be interviewed.

5.7 Ethics

The research was required to meet ethical standards (Wiles, 2013). I was very mindful of my own relationship with the school and the potential respondents. In conducting Insider Research there are specific ethical concerns in terms of the relationship I may, or may not have with the respondents, such that coercion or obligation may be a problem (Poulton, 2021). This was addressed in part by not personally making contact with the potential respondents. The distribution of the survey via the newsletter offered some 'distancing' as I did not approach alumnae directly. Those who chose to complete the survey were not placed under any obligation to complete it, or to provide details for follow-up. The survey data itself made it very difficult to identify particular alumnae I may have known, and many would have been alumnae I had not known at all. Half of the interviews were conducted via telephone; this would arguably add to the 'distancing'. The ethical approval can be found in Appendix D.

Ethical approval was given with the following considerations.

Informed Consent was given by all alumnae. Initial introductory information was given on the alumnae newsletter and alumnae were invited to follow a link to the survey. The information on the nature of the research, as well as details concerning anonymity and the right to withdraw were detailed on the first page of the survey (see Appendix A). It was clear that by clicking 'next', consent had been given. In addition, it was clear that responses would only be recorded if the participants chose this at the end of the survey

Anonymity of the survey data was maintained as the distribution was completed via an alumnae network distribution – the list of contact details was not given to me directly. This meant I could offer full anonymity to the respondents. At the end of the survey respondents were offered the opportunity to participate in a follow-up interview. They were asked to provide an email contact address for this. It was made clear in the survey that their identity would be kept as anonymous for the purpose of reporting and that a pseudonym would be

used. All interview respondents were referred to by pseudonym and I was careful to not to use their real names during the recording of the interview.

Right to withdraw data was made clear at the beginning of the survey and at the end.

Respondents had the option at the end of the survey to submit their responses, go back and edit their responses or to leave the survey (the data was deleted automatically after one week for incomplete surveys). Respondents were also informed they could contact me using my Cardiff University email address should they have any questions about the research. For interview respondents it was made clear that they could withdraw at any time and had the option of not responding should they wish.

Sensitive data was collected including ethnicity and religion as well as salary information.

Parental status was also surveyed in the questionnaire. All questions were optional, and this was made clear at the start and end of the survey. Ethnicity and religion as well as languages spoken at home were potentially important factors in considering aspirations, experience of private schooling and educational outcomes.

5.8 Theoretical Frameworks

Four theoretical frameworks are used to interrogate the data, and were introduced in Chapter Four. Drawn from both social science and social psychology, these are not commonly linked together (if at all), but each can offer a useful lens through which to understand the experiences and reflections of the alumnae, in that they may complement each other and offer a more holistic interpretation when combined. These were adopted in response to the themes that emerged from the data (see below). As suggested in the introductory sections, I was interested in taking an inter-disciplinary approach to applying methodological constructs to the analysis of the data. Much like adopting methods that are suitable 'tools for the job', it is also possible to select appropriate theoretical lenses, irrespective of which discipline they originate from.

First, Bandura's (1997) conceptualisation of Self-Efficacy is a lens through which to understand confidence. I adopted this as I view self-efficacy (a belief that one can achieve goals) to be synonymous with confidence. For Bandura, there are four ways in which self-efficacy is

achieved. First, Mastery Experiences – i.e., times where goals have been achieved. This fosters the belief that one can achieve other goals on other occasions. In a girls' school, there may be more opportunities to achieve goals, particularly in male dominated domains, than in a co-educational context. Second, Vicarious Experiences, i.e., seeing others with whom we identify achieve goals. Again, in a girls' school, girls will see other girls achieving goals. Third, Verbal Persuasion, i.e., support and encouragement. This will come from peers and teachers in school, as well as home. This also echoes the importance of friendships. Finally, Physical and Emotional state, such as how you are feeling at the time. These can help to shed light on the ways in which confidence may be developed in a girls' school

Second, Bernstein's (1966) work on the ways in which pupils engage with their school offers a useful perspective on how the alumnae engaged with school whilst a pupil. For Bernstein, there are four types of engagement: Committed, Estranged, Detached and Alienated. Classification into these types relate to the extent to which the Instrumental aims of the school are understood and/or realised and the extent to which the Expressive aims of the school are understood and/or realised. The Instrumental aims equate to academic outcomes (measured in qualifications) whilst the expressive aims are the development of character (now commonly referred to as 'soft skills'). Instrumental aims can be both understood (as in recognising the academic nature of school) and realised (achieving qualifications). Expressive aims can also be understood (recognising the social aspect of school life) and realised (holding in-school friendships and participating in school life).

The types can be summarised thus:

Table 2. Summarising the relationship between Instrumental and Expressive aims according to type

	Instrumental Aims	Expressive Aims
Committed	Recognised and achieved	Recognised and achieved
Estranged	Recognised but not achieved	Recognised and achieved
Detached	Recognised and achieved	Recognised but not achieved
Alienated	Recognised but not achieved	Recognised but not achieved

I adopt this framework to shed light on the way in which school engagement is shown or encouraged has important implications for both academic outcomes and the overall relationship with the school. For much of the work cited in Chapter Three, the marker of the instrumental aims was post-school qualifications. For the alumnae I have studied, all went on to higher education. The differentiation I have chosen is whether they went on to an elite university (in this case the Russell Group), or not. To understand the expressive aims, I have looked at this in relation to participation in co-curricular activities (extracurricular, super-curricular and holding positions of responsibility). This theoretical framework can show the importance of school as both a place of learning, as well as the social nature of schooling. Those who show an emotional investment in the school, whether through participating in the wider school life and/or maintain in-school, rather than out-of-school friendships (i.e., those classed as Committed or Estranged) may indicate a greater sense of belonging and ‘fitting in’. It is interesting here to note Bourdieu’s work on the importance of fitting in to an elite institution and feeling a ‘fish in water’. Moreover, Power has shown the impact of fitting in, or otherwise, in terms of academic outcomes (e.g., 2010; 2013) Feeling a sense of belonging and fitting in may also be important considerations in the development of confidence or otherwise.

The third theory I draw on is Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Social Identity Theory (SIT) describes how we have a Social Identity, that forms part of our overall self-identity. Our social identity is our sense of who we are in terms of group belongingness. For example, as a female teacher, I belong to a social group comprised of female teachers. Group belongingness fosters self-esteem (for consistency I will use the term confidence from this point) by a process called Categorisation. Tajfel and Turner argue that we are naturally inclined to categorise ourselves, and others in relation to each other. Thus, I categorise myself as a female teacher, and categorise my male colleagues as male teachers. The next stage is Comparison where we compare our own in-group with the out-group, with a bias to in-group favouritism. This enhances confidence in group members. Of course, one's in-group is also another one's out-group; thus, group membership enhances the confidence of all (assuming groups have equal status). In-group membership can be seen on two levels: the Macro, a sense of identifying with the school, and the Micro, identifying with a friendship group. I see the macro-level as an extension of Bernstein's theory, in that through identifying with the school itself, this may foster more engagement with the expressive aims of the school, and that this could be bi-directional, the more one engages, the more one identifies. Through this mechanism, the relationship between confidence and engagement with school life is revealed. Second, on the micro-level, the quality of friendships and the sense of belonging to a friendship group can, through identifying with the group also foster confidence, and hence reveals the relationship between friendships and confidence.

The fourth theory is Stereotype Threat (Steele and Aronson, 1995), and is important for confidence, primarily in relation to gender stereotypes. This was discussed in Chapter Four in more detail, but briefly it suggests that where a negative stereotype is held about a group one is a member of, one is more likely to confirm the stereotypes when group membership is made salient. This is not through a sudden lack of ability, but more through a concern that they will confirm the stereotype, serving as a distraction, or worse, undermining confidence. For example, if there were a stereotype that female teachers have poor memories in comparison to male teachers, when asked to perform a memory task in a mixed context, female teachers will perform worse than when asked to perform in a single-sex context. This is relevant for single-

sex schools, and particularly in relation to performance in science and maths, subjects typically associated with male superiority. Moreover, where stereotype threat is diminished, the concern about confirming the stereotype, and the associated loss of confidence is also diminished. Thus, there is a relationship between gender stereotypes and confidence.

5.9 Data analysis strategy

In this section, I describe the ways I processed and analysed the data. As described above, I adopted a mixed methods approach as I wanted to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Two research methods were used: online survey and interviews. The survey contained a mix of closed and open questions, generating a mix of quantitative and qualitative data.

The **quantitative** data from the survey allowed me to establish trends and impressions of the career paths and reflections of the alumnae. My initial plan was to subject the data to inferential analysis, however, with a limited number of cases, this would not have been valid. Therefore, the quantitative data from the survey is subjected to descriptive analysis only.

In analysing the survey data I initially focused on the instrumental outcomes (i.e., university progression, employment and income). These were analysed by counting the frequency of income brackets, the frequency of attending a Russell Group university, the count of different subject domains and differentiating between professional and non-professional employment. Similarly, parental background was quantified according to professional/managerial or not and whether one or both parents were degree educated or not. Other rating scales, such as the extent to which confidence was developed in school and other similar measures, were also analysed as a frequency count of each rating given. A similar count was used to analyse engagement with co-curricular activities at school. The open-ended questions were initially subjected to a simple thematic count. For example, in the question ‘what was the best thing about school?’ I initially counted according to category. To illustrate, each mention of ‘friendships’ was counted. The complete response was also recorded and then subjected to thematic analysis along with the interview data, as described below.

5.9.1 Thematic Analysis

A Thematic Analysis refers to a set of steps that are undertaken to analyse qualitative data (Bryman, 2016). This strategy seemed the best approach since it allows for a methodical, transparent method of analysis, and I also wanted to apply this to both the qualitative data gathered in the survey, as well as the interviews. This approach is differentiated from Grounded Theory (Glasner and Strauss, 1967) which is a fully iterative process. I could not claim to take a purely 'bottom-up' approach as I had some pre-existing ideas of the understandings I was looking to examine. At the same time, I also wanted to know what the data could reveal in addition to this, or indeed whether my pre-existing ideas were flawed. For me, a Thematic Analysis felt the best approach to understand the data in this way. I applied the analysis using Clarke and Braun's (2013) method. As writers in qualitative research methods in psychology, they have written numerous papers on the application of thematic analysis in psychology, and as such I had some familiarity with their recommendations.

The first step was to read, re-read, and re-read again the data. This process familiarised myself with the data, and at this point I could recognise recurring concepts within the data.

The second step was to codify the data. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) describe coding as a process of 'data simplification' (1996:28). To do this, using a simple highlighting method, I identified words that seemed to recur. Whilst I had no exact measure of what qualified as recurrence, this tended to be more than four repeats. This process yielded a high number of codes. The third step was a process of aggregation of the codes. Some codes were eliminated in this process if they did not 'fit', or that they related to only one or two cases. Such data was used for balance against the dominant themes (for example, to illustrate specific instances).

Aggregation is the process of bringing codes together as categories. One common method is to look for repetitions (Ryan and Bernard, 2003) as these indicate 'importance' within the data, which Clarke and Braun (2013) describe as a pattern of response. An example of aggregation was in the theme of Friendships. The initial codes were: clique; cliquy; friends; mates; bitchy; friendship; relationships (peers, not teachers – a different code); girlfriends (not romantic). These codes were high frequency in occurrence, thus satisfying the measure of repetition, and

were often mentioned with emphasis in the interviews. Therefore, through aggregation, the theme of Friendships was identified. The next stage was to check the accuracy of this, by reviewing the data again. I also used this emergent theme as a framework for organising the data. I created a table entitled Friendships, I then organised the theme into two sub-categories: Cliques and Friends. From this, all mentions of either cliques or friends was organised under each heading. This meant I had quotes to illustrate each sub-category of friendships. This process revealed other themes: Aspiration, expectations and pressures; Confidence; Gender Stereotypes, and School Engagement

I made a deliberate attempt to find negative experiences as a foil against the overwhelmingly positive experiences as I wish not only to seek balance, and address my own biases, but also to 'tell the story' of all the respondents. The data presented in Chapters Six and Seven are a blend of both the survey data and the interviews, and is used to present a narrative account of the experiences of the alumnae.

The following chapters describe the data in relation to the aims of this thesis. In Chapter Six I present data concerning the instrumental outcomes of the school. Specifically focusing on access to elite universities and subsequent careers. I also present data concerning aspiration and perception of success as these are important for contextualizing the instrumental outcomes. Chapter Seven concerns confidence and I present data showing the degree to which the development of confidence was attributed to school. This data is interrogated in relation to Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). I then present data in relation to gender stereotypes and the ways in which the alumnae have reflected on this, particularly in terms of confidence. The data is also interrogated in relation to Stereotype Threat (Steele and Aronson, 1995) and confidence. The third part concerns school engagement in accordance with Bernstein's (1966) theory and explores the different ways in which the alumnae engaged with school. I also show how this relates to confidence. The fourth section focuses on friendships and cliques and I explore the different ways these have been reflected on. This data is also analyzed in accordance with Social Identity Theory and the relationships with confidence. Finally, I draw all of these together before presenting my conclusions.

A note on notation: interviewees are referred to using their pseudonym, survey respondents are referred to by number, prefixed by R (e.g. R28).

Chapter Six: Instrumental Outcomes: Successes and Pressures

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the career-related outcomes for the women surveyed. This is in terms of entry to higher education, elite institutions, occupations and salaries. These are discussed in relation to national data trends, and research presented in Chapter Three.

The intention is to understand career progression since leaving school and, in part, to compare the respondents' experiences with their state educated peers. I initially consider higher education progression and draw comparisons with their contemporaries nationally.

This chapter also explores salaries and the nature of current roles and positions. Here I also compare the respondents to the national picture. In exploring the subject studied, I can contextualise the incomes of the alumnae. Since STEM and medical routes tend to lead to higher incomes, this will help to understand the income brackets of the alumnae. The data gathered through the survey is compared to a number of different national data sources. The most useful is the HESA Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Longitudinal (www.HESA.ac.uk) Study which includes data on the destinations and salaries of graduates three and a half years following graduation. For the school leavers in 2012/13, they were surveyed in 2016/17. This data set would be the most appropriate to use since this is the closest graduation date to the alumnae surveyed (although there is a range, this would be the best fit).

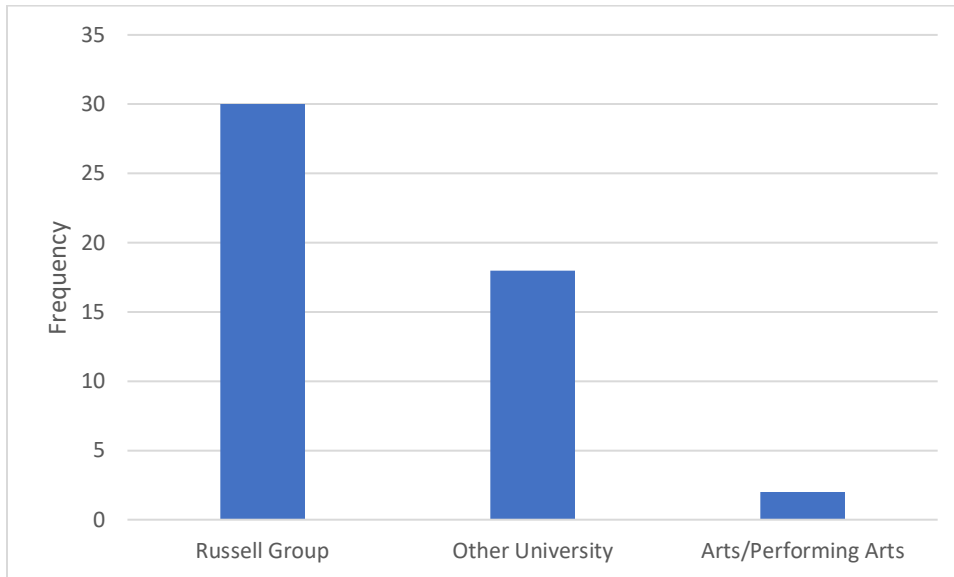
Finally, I consider some of the elements of the alumnae's experiences that they believe to have been important in terms of their success, or otherwise.

6.2 The Private Girls' School Premium

6.2.1 Entry to Higher Education

I begin by considering which type of higher education institution the alumnae began their post-18 studies.

Fig 1. Post-18 Destinations of alumnae (including those following a gap year)



All alumnae went on to attend Higher Education with the majority (60%) beginning their undergraduate degree at a Russell Group university. On examining the school's destinations reports over the past 10 years, this proportion is fairly typical and would represent the school cohort reasonably well, where over the past three years, the proportion of entry to Russell Group universities has been high (2021 70%; 2020 73%; 2019 67%) To this end, the alumnae who responded to the survey were reasonably typical of recent alumnae. There were no alumnae who responded who went on to Oxford or Cambridge, or to study internationally as their first degree. Typically, within a school cohort, up to 10% would progress to Oxbridge, with the occasional student choosing to study abroad. In comparison to the national picture where in 2014, 25% of female undergraduates began their studies in a Russell Group university (HESA), the cohort were considerably more likely to study in an elite university. This can be attributed in part, to the academic qualifications achieved as a means of accessing these institutions, since

they typically require higher entry tariffs. Entry to Russell Group universities is an important factor in career development. The Russell Group universities are among the top 25 institutions targeted by employers, hence the employability of Russell Group graduates is arguably higher overall (discounting vocational courses) (High Fliers, 2020).

6.2.2 Course choices

Examining the degrees studied in addition to where they are studied is also important since this can also shed light on career progression and salaries. I have organised this in accordance with the JACS (Joint Academic Coding System) 3.0 classification of degree groups (HESA) as this was the classification coding of degrees used by UCAS and HESA in the relevant time frame (www.hesa.ac.uk).

The majority went on to study courses in the Q group – Languages. These include modern foreign languages (MFL) as well as English and classical studies. It is interesting how so many chose languages, and this is against the current national trend for decline in languages at university, which is reflective of longer-term decline in MFL in schools. The private sector has maintained strong provision of MFL, and at Greenfields, the study of at least one MFL at GCSE was compulsory. The second largest proportion was in the Historical and Philosophical studies code (V), with the majority having studied History. In aggregating all STEM subjects, the overall proportion was 30%, with Biological Sciences (C) and Engineering and Technology (H) making the most studied.

In comparison with the national picture, female progression onto STEM courses was considerably less in the respondent sample. This is somewhat at odds with the school's destinations data over the last few years where the proportion of alumnae beginning STEM courses is typically 41-51%.

6.2.3 Occupations

The term 'graduate job' was defined as those which required knowledge and skills acquired through undergraduate study (Elias and Purcell, 2012). However, some of these are problematic as there are many jobs for which employers require a degree, but actually could not be prepared for through a degree. For example, a new paramedic must now be in possession of a degree in paramedic science, but a paramedic is defined as a non-graduate job. Given the

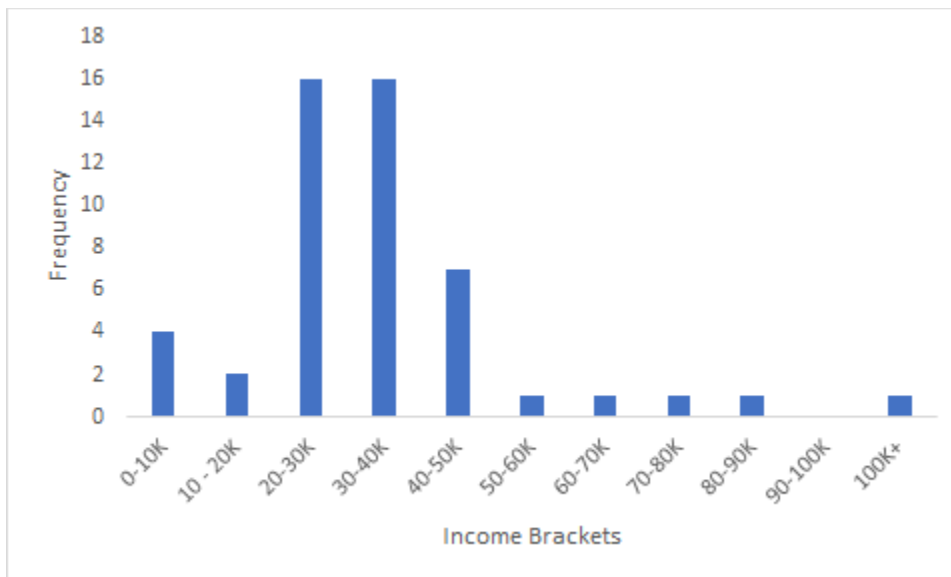
difficulty in defining 'graduate level' I have elected to use the HESA method of differentiation which uses the term 'professional'. These includes: Managers, Directors and Senior Officials; Professional Occupations; and Associate Professional and Technical Occupations (Elias and Purcell, 2012).

On classifying the occupations of the alumnae, 89% would be considered 'professional'. In comparison with the HESA data, this is somewhat higher than the national picture where 84% of graduates are in professional employment three years after graduation.

6.2.4 Salaries

The alumnae were asked to indicate their income bracket, rather than to specify their income.

Fig 2. The frequency of income brackets reported by the alumnae



Therefore, the sample are mostly earning £20-30,000 or £30,-40,000 per annum. In comparison to the HESA data these alumnae are earning slightly above the graduate average, where the median salary is £27K.

6.3 Attributions for success

I was interested in the extent to which alumnae considered themselves to be successful. A high proportion (76%) of the survey respondents considered themselves to be successful in their careers to date, with only four saying they did not feel successful. This is a significant proportion, particularly at an early stage of their careers. With salary, responsibility, and

prospects being viewed as meeting or exceeding expectations. In terms of salary this is in line with the higher earnings already discussed.

When asked in the survey, what are the important factors in success, the alumnae reported hard-work as the most important, followed by qualifications. Networking, competitiveness, and family connections were viewed as the least important (in order). In terms of the facility of networks in securing work experience at school, family was seen as the primary means of securing experience (46%), followed by securing it independently (37%). Whilst at university, 45% of placements were secured by the university, compared with 38% independently. Therefore, it is not surprising that networks were viewed as less important, since certainly beyond school, there was little evidence in the survey responses of reliance on networks. When asked how useful different agents were in their career progression, family was judged as most helpful (27%), however slightly more reported that nobody had been helpful (28%). School and university contacts were reported as helpful by only 8% and 7% respectively. The facility of family in securing experience is at odds with the view that family connections are seen as least important. From this it may be concluded that whilst they acknowledge how contacts and networks have been helpful, their own success (or otherwise) is attributed to their own efforts – hard work, determination and ambition. Hard work was viewed as the most important factor in success, alongside ambition and determination also being seen as important qualities. Being hard working and organized allows for engagement, as good time management and balancing academic and other commitments requires organization.

Becca works in finance and described the challenge of transitioning to a career from university:

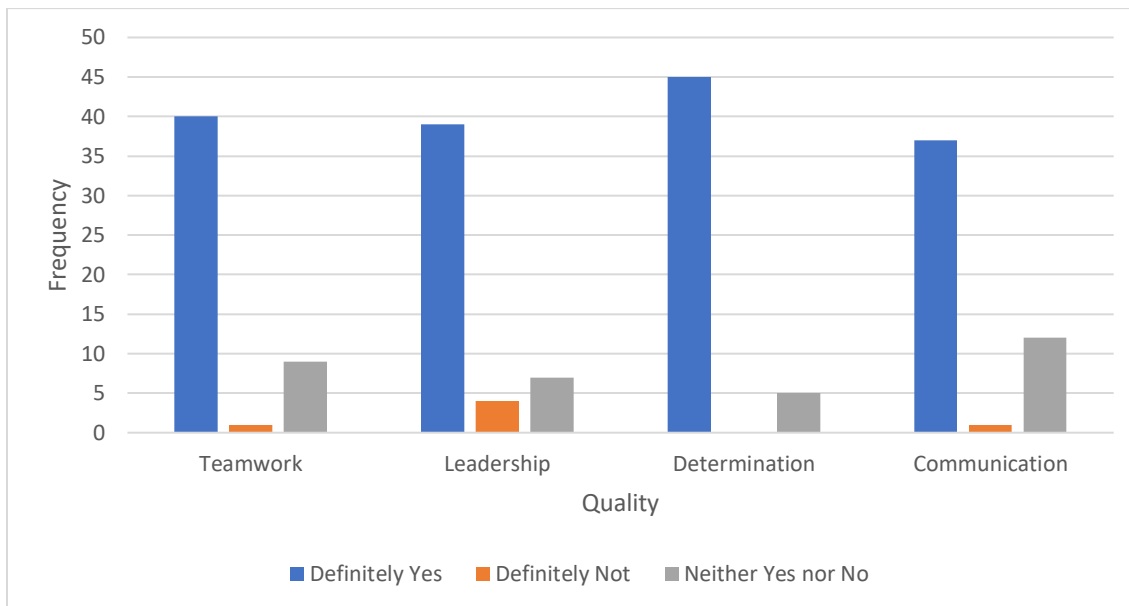
So it's been a struggle.., I've absolutely worked my socks off

Freya is a college lecturer and describes the challenges of beginning teaching in more challenging schools, quite different to her own experience:

So in terms of getting through the PGCE and all of that it was quite challenging, I did a TeachFirst PGCE that was challenging just because the sort of schools you were in and getting in to in the first place.

Therefore, hard work was seen as important both in terms of school as well as beyond. Participation in extra and super curricular activities can offer opportunities to gain and develop the soft skills that can facilitate career progression. In addition, these can be seen as ways of developing cultural capital, through the immersion with arts and ‘approved’ culture. Finally, balancing co-curricular activities against academic work, also could help develop organisation and time-management. The survey asked to what extent particular skills had been developed whilst at school:

Fig 3. Showing the proportions of alumnae indicating whether teamwork, leadership, determination and communication were developed specifically at school



This suggests that teamwork, leadership, determination and communication were attributed to school. This links to the opportunities afforded for the development of these through co-curricular activities. The majority of the alumnae described significant engagement with such activities, and it is possible therefore that this could have been a contributory factor in developing these skills. Teamwork, leadership and communication are all ‘soft skills’ that are seen to be important in potential employees and are related to success in careers (e.g. Green et al., 2016).

6.3 Expectations and Pressures

Aspirations and ambition are also seen as important for success (Sullivan et al., 2014; Green et al., 2018) and are seen as features of private schooling and means through which self-esteem is raised. These echo the experiences of the alumnae surveyed where 80% believed that ambition was fostered in school. Furthermore, they reported a culture of ambition, where it was seen as 'cool' to do well and try hard. The dominant culture was one where there were high expectations of academic success, both for themselves and in terms of the school. For example:

there definitely was the pressure that we wanted to do well because we knew it was important for the school that we did well (Dayna)

Whilst this may have also had a negative effect:

I think I've been set up for success, I genuinely do believe that...which has its own downfalls, doesn't it? ... I kind of I think I've fallen into that trap of thinking I should be more successful than I am (Becca)

Whilst high aspirations placed pressure on the women to work hard and achieve highly, the way this was experienced differed among the alumnae, with some recognizing the pressure they placed upon themselves, as Anna and Carla attested:

I'm a perfectionist. I never felt any pressure from school, but I think it was more the pressure that we all put on ourselves. (Anna)

*I was extremely critical of myself. In my GCSEs I got 9 A*s and an A and I came home and cried because I got one...most of my friends were similar, we were all very high achievers. (Carla)*

Some wanted to do well to make their parents proud, and often this was due to factors such as 'They worked really hard to pay school fees' (Becca), or their wider financial situation:

I wanted to make home proud.. So my mum was a single parent and she doesn't have any qualifications and she left school at about 14.... I think maybe you have a bit more expectation on you because you are an only child and that it's all resting on you and then with the scholarship at 50% then this applies pressure as well. (Freya)

The nature of success and what this meant also varied; for some it manifested in being able to be whoever they wanted and for this to be valued, for others this was the privilege given to Oxbridge applicants, and this being a limited measure of success.

There was a strong interest in getting into Oxbridge and I was quite resistant... and there was quite a lot of pressure put on me...the school was pushing my aspiration in a way that I wasn't quite comfortable with at the time. (Ellie)

And:

I had friends who were science and medicine focused and I think they did put themselves [under pressure] and I don't think the school necessarily helped by putting pressure on them as well. (Gina)

In contrast to this was a sense that all abilities and interests were supported:

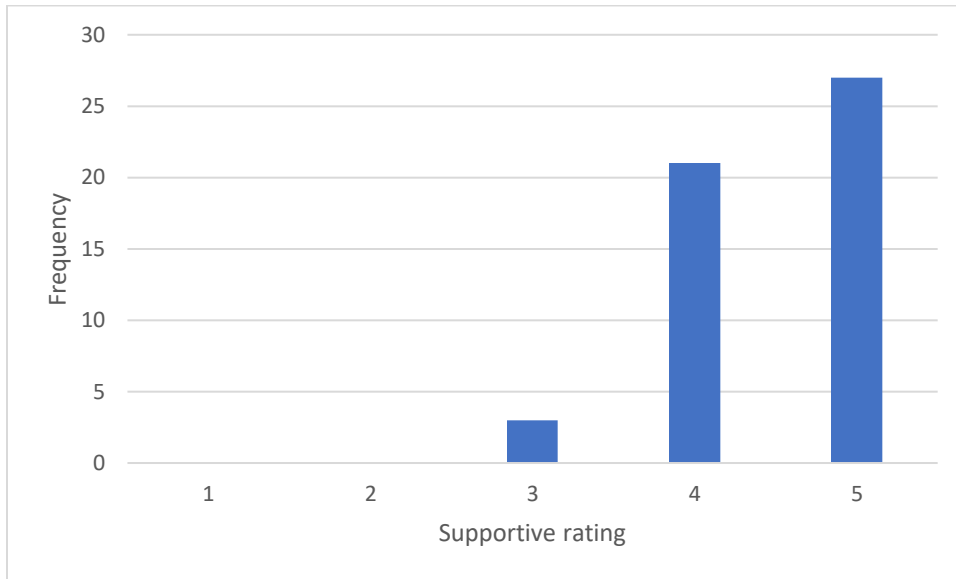
There was a lot of different personalities and lots of abilities and I don't feel like we were moulded to be like the one ideal pupil. I do feel like there was space everyone to be their own person. (Carla)

Overall, it seems pressure was felt, whether this came from school, home or themselves, it felt there was an expectation to succeed and achieve highly.

6.4 Support and encouragement

There were numerous references to support, indeed this was asked specifically in the survey:

Fig. 4. Showing the frequency of ratings for how supportive the school was (1-5)



This suggests strong feelings in terms of the supportive nature of the school. However, this could be in reference to friendships, the teachers or other aspects of the school. It is therefore difficult to draw any firm conclusions from this. The support from school was often mentioned in the survey in open ended responses such as the ‘best thing’ about school, but it is difficult to determine the nature of this unless specified, and this was mainly in reference to the teachers. There were numerous references to the quality of education, small class sizes, excellent teachers and academic support. For R10 the best thing about school was the ‘*supportive teachers*’; R16 described the school as a ‘*very supportive environment*’. Similarly, R17 described:

very supportive staff. Not always a focus on academia, they always brought out other aspects of you and celebrated that. Support given if needed and personalised education

Whilst for R49 ‘*always felt supported and it really instilled in me the belief that I could achieve anything I wanted to if I worked hard*’

Support from teachers was felt in terms of academic concerns:

Mrs. B was my teacher and I knew she would have been proud of me whatever I got because I tried my hardest. I definitely got the best grade possible because I wanted her to be proud of me. (Dayna)

In addition to wider pastoral concerns:

There was always someone there even if it was friends or teachers there was always someone there that you could talk to or just go into the office. (Isabel)

I think we were really encouraged to explore the things that we felt that we wanted to explore more... I think we had a really good system of pastoral care. I felt really supported if anything was going wrong at home at school. (Dayna)

Teaching quality was also a factor, although largely the emphasis was on support:

I do remember a strong rapport between teachers and students and genuine concern if something wasn't working well. (Hattie)

Carla described the support of peers as:

a powerful sort of almost like a mothering because you've got all these women learning together and so I think it can become super supportive and super nurturing just amongst peers

On one hand, there is support and encouragement, on the other there is a pressure to succeed which can be perceived as a rather narrow model of success. It might of course be possible to be pressured and supported simultaneously and it could be that an institution that trades on academic success would expect its pupils to strive for similar success, therein fostering a culture of aspiration, as well as creating a pressured environment. The respondents represent a spectrum of experiences. For those who describe the pressures, they also recognise this was often self-generated, rather than driven by the school explicitly. However, it could also be that

a culture of achievement is embedded within the school such that each pupil feels the need to work hard and achieve.

6.5 Discussion

Sixty percent (i.e., 30/50) of the alumnae went on to attend an elite Russell Group university, in keeping with the general pattern of the school. This reflects the findings of many studies (e.g., Sullivan, 2018a) where the proportion of private school educated pupils going on to elite universities is much higher in comparison to state school pupils, despite achieving similar A level grades (Sullivan, 2018; Crawford et al., 2016; Sullivan et al., 2014; Boliver, 2013). This indicates both higher overall academic outcomes (i.e., meeting the entry requirements) as well as aspirational choices. This is in contrast to working class students who are more likely to apply to a lower status university and/or locally (Mangan et al., 2010). The use of the Russell Group as an indicator of an elite university is potentially problematic however. This group defines themselves as 'research intensive' and typically demand a higher tariff for entry. They are also the universities targeted by recruitment (www.highflyers.co.uk) Thus, a graduate from a Russell Group university is potentially deemed more employable than a non-Russell Group graduate. To this end, attending a Russell Group university would be viewed as advantageous in the long term, but this does not necessarily make the university itself an elite institution. In terms of league tables, Bath, Lancaster, Loughborough and St Andrews all appear in the top 20, despite not being members of the Russell Group, whereas the Russell Group members Cardiff, Kings College London, Liverpool, Newcastle, Nottingham, Queen Mary, Queens Belfast and Sheffield do not (Good University Guide. The Times). In terms of entry tariff, the non Russell Group universities, Bath and St Andrews, are high, with Bath typically equating to Cambridge (average A*AA) and as such would be viewed as elite, academically at least. In terms of earnings, the vast majority of alumnae were earning 20-40K. Depending on their profession, their incomes were in the main considerably higher than the national average. This finding concurs with the average private school premium of 7% (Crawford and Vignoles, 2014) and echoes a 21% earnings premium for women (Green et al., 2018) and a more modest 8% premium reported by Sullivan et al, (2018c) in relation to single sex schools, compared to mixed schools. Of further note is the control for socioeconomic background in Sullivan and her colleague's work. In

agreement with numerous studies (e.g. Ashley et al., 2015; Macmillan et al., 2015), the proportion entering elite institutions, and, in turn, occupying professional roles and earning higher incomes are skewed in favour of these young women. What is notable, is how even with equivalent graduation from elite HEIs, those surveyed are also earning more than average. In essence, the unequal access to elite education and elite professions is perpetuated here. From these data, it appears that, like previous research has suggested, the alumnae had accessed degrees at elite universities, entered professional careers and were earning more than their state educated peers, or those who had attended mixed schools. Whilst the data indicate differences in outcome, this does not explain why the differences exist. It is possible this reflects higher aspiration as suggested by Green et al., (2018) in their analysis of 1970 British Cohort Study Data, where those who had attended private schools had higher aspiration than their state educated peers, whilst controlling for social background.

The vast majority of alumnae considered themselves successful in their careers to date. This is of course highly subjective, since the term 'success' was not defined or operationalised in the survey, thus one person's measure of success, might be another's measure of mediocrity. With this in mind however, it is clear that each in their own terms felt they were successful. This also fits with the expectation of success. They *expected* they would be successful (however this is imagined), therefore if their career falls short of this, inevitably they will feel unsuccessful. Hence, it would be reasonable to conclude the alumnae (in the majority) felt successful in relation to their expectations they had, or have of their career progression.

Being hard working and organised allows for engagement, as good time management and balancing academic and other commitments requires organization. The alumnae described how they have worked hard to get where they are currently. For many this was also described as part of their school experience where they had to work hard to meet the academic demands of the school and their exam courses. In this, it might be argued that a particular work ethic is a part of the school, but also to engage more widely in the life of the school, as well as outside of school, one has to 'work hard'. This echoes Brown et al., (2016) in their finding that graduates who had attended a private school attributed their success to hard work.

Soft skills are held as valuable by employers (Green et al., 2016), with hard work seen as a contributory factor in the success of undergraduates (Brown et al, 2016). The development of 'character' (Forbes and Lingard, 2014) through engagement with co-curricular activities has been described as a mechanism through which the middle classes can ensure the status quo by ring-fencing opportunities via the private (girls') school. Similarly, non-cognitive skills as a form of human capital (Coulangeon, 2018) including organization, perseverance and self-esteem, are all forged through co-curricular engagement. Engagement with a range of co-curricular activities, whilst encouraged, also enables girls to develop their cosmopolitan selves (Maxwell and Aggleton, 2016), able to enter a wide range of contexts. Arguably, it is the engagement with the various cultural emblems of middle-class accomplishment (music, arts, sport) that ensure the acquisition of cultural capital. Immersion in cultural capital being a mechanism whereby the elite come to embody the elite. It is not just the established middle-class alumnae who were engaged in this way at school, so too were those who came from families where neither parent had attended university. It is quite likely that the opportunity to engage in co-curricular activities can allow those without middle-class backgrounds to develop cultural capital and find themselves more able to navigate elite spheres as a result of these experiences, than might otherwise have not been available. Thus, for aspirational families, the private girls' school is more than an academic means to an end, but also a means by which their daughters might become more accomplished and able to fit in to more elite spheres more comfortably. Of the interviewees, Becca described her background as 'solidly working class'. At the same time, she also described how she felt she fitted in, and engaged with many opportunities in school. Anna, who attended the school by virtue of both academic scholarship and a bursary, also described how she fitted in, again engaging widely with the school opportunities. Both described how they have felt successful in their careers, maintaining contact with many of their friends from school, and is an illustration of the way in which girls in aspirational families might fare when given the opportunity. Much of the writing on cultural capital seems to view the elite as a 'closed shop' who find ways to preserve their elite status through arbitrary markers of elitism, excluding others. It is perhaps possible for those not raised in an elite family with such markers, to acquire cultural capital through immersion at school.

The success of women who have been educated in a private girls' school is often attributed to the effect of academic selection and their socio-economic background. Where access to elite higher education and careers is cultivated by the practices of parents (Lareau, 2007) in sending their daughters to such schools. Whilst this can, at least in part, account for the success of the alumnae surveyed, this does not tell the whole story. Not all of those surveyed were of the same middle-class background but did go on to the same trajectories as their middle-class peers. This means that parents with sufficient funds, or girls with sufficient intellect to be awarded a scholarship, were also able to enjoy the cultivation offered by the school. The cultivation of successful 'can-do' girls (Allan and Charles, 2014) through the structures and opportunities offered by the school, does not therefore confine itself to middle-class girls; in theory any girl can participate.

Those whose parents had not attended university accounted for 23 of the alumnae, of whom half the parents were not working in professional or managerial roles, were almost identical in terms of instrumental outcomes to the 27 alumnae whose parents had attended university and were in managerial or professional roles. They went on to an elite university, were confident in university and at school, and engaged in co-curricular activities. Similarly, there were equivalents of these who did not attend an elite university. As the numbers are comparable, it appears that whilst socio-economic background can contribute to assuredness, there are other factors within the school structure and that also cultivates assuredness, being middle-class alone does not make one necessarily more confident. The middle-class emblems such as accomplishment in music and arts, engagement with culture, and elaborated communication are not necessarily restricted. Immersion in the culture of the school allows outsiders the opportunity to develop these emblems for themselves. Much like immersion in a foreign country facilitates the learning of the language, the outsiders can become conversant in, and embodying the cultural capital that facilitates professional progression. From the perspectives of the alumnae, they felt confident, enjoyed school, and would choose to send their daughter to a similar school if possible.

On the other hand, there were those who felt less happy and confident in school, whose career progression is less illustrious, whose parents did attend university and are working in

professional or managerial roles. This suggests that background alone cannot be a predictor of how well one might 'fit in' to a particular context, nor indeed future successes or otherwise. High aspiration was a feature of a number of studies exploring the qualities of single sex schooled girls and young women with numerous reports of high aspiration and ambition (Maxwell and Aggleton, 2010, 2014, 2015; Cherney and Campbell, 2011; Forbes and Lingard, 2014; Cribbs and Haase, 2016; Green et al., 2018). Whilst many comment on academic pressure, no respondent described this as being detrimental to their development. The focus on high achievement in marketing, and within the school, certainly could foster this view. The alternative narrative of support and encouragement would indicate that the school does both. By focusing on academic achievement this fosters pressure, but also focusing on support and pastoral care, the pupils are also nurtured.

Summary

This chapter has explored the instrumental outcomes for the alumnae and points to a moderate advantage in terms of access to elite universities and graduate careers. This corresponds with much of the literature on private school advantage and adds to the literature in terms of girls' schools specifically. The following chapter explores some of the expressive and social factors that might, in part, shed light on the reasons for the instrumental advantages.

Chapter Seven: Reflections on Confidence

What has stayed with me is the confidence instilled in me that I could be whoever and whatever I wanted regardless of my gender! (R38)

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I explored the instrumental outcomes of school and concluded the testimonies of the alumnae surveyed reflect the patterns shown in existing literature in terms of access to elite universities and to earnings. I also showed how the overwhelming majority of alumnae described themselves as successful and that this was attributed to hard work as well as the support and encouragement by their teachers. This chapter draws on survey and interview data to explore confidence and is divided into four sections. The first concerns confidence as an overarching theme. Then, in relation to confidence: gender stereotypes and the 'male gaze'; school engagement; and friendships.

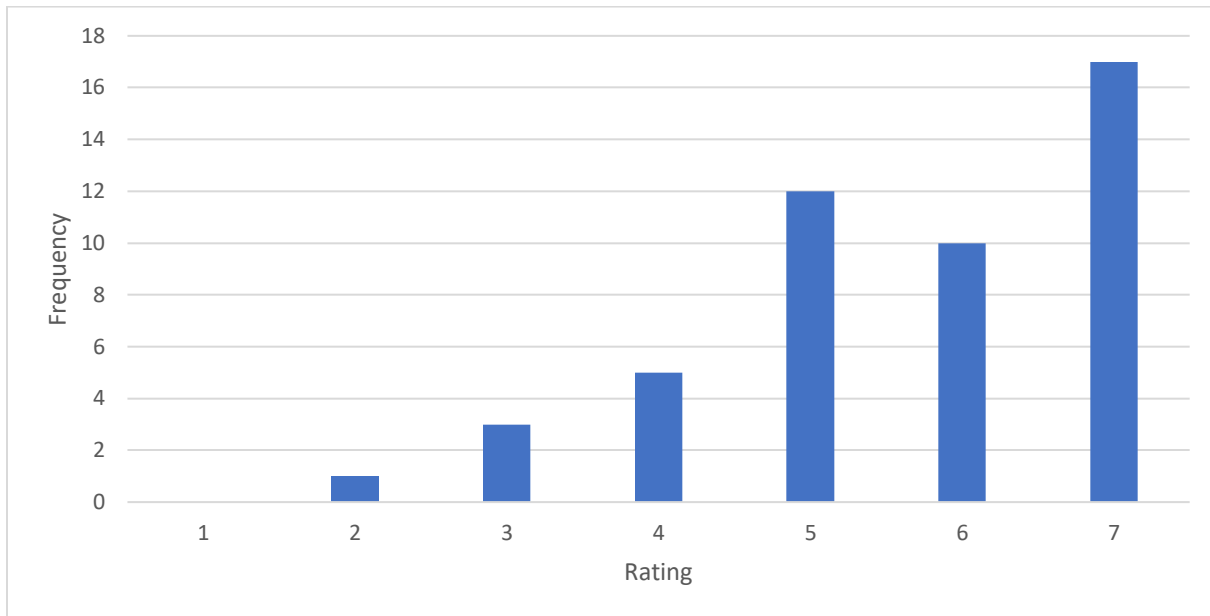
7.2 Confidence

Bandura's work on self-efficacy (see Chapter Four) is used as a model for understanding confidence, and defines confidence as self-efficacy, and the belief that one can achieve goals. Confidence underpins aspiration and setting ambitious goals. These are critical in determining the fulfilment of the instrumental aims as explored in the preceding chapter, as confidence may lead to high expectations in terms of university choice, and subsequent career choices.

7.2.1 Confidence in school

In the survey, the alumnae were asked specifically to gauge the extent to which attending a girls' school developed their confidence.

Fig 5. Ratings indicating the extent to which the alumnae believed confidence was developed through school



Of the maximum rating of seven, the modal response was seven, indicating that the most frequently given measure was the highest measure. Only four alumnae respondents gave a measure below 4. Two did not respond. This would indicate that the vast majority believed that attending a girls' school developed their confidence. Furthermore, the majority of survey respondents, and all but one of the interviewees, described the development of confidence as a key feature of school. Two interviewees who transferred into Greenfield from co-educational schools compared their experiences in mixed contexts:

Confidence was my main thing and the biggest comparison I have for it is I went to [a mixed independent school] and we had a drama class and I remember being teased by one of the boys and it was absolutely mortifying and I still think about that. I went to Greenfields instead and... I was in in all the plays and I absolutely loved it. (Dayna)

Similarly,

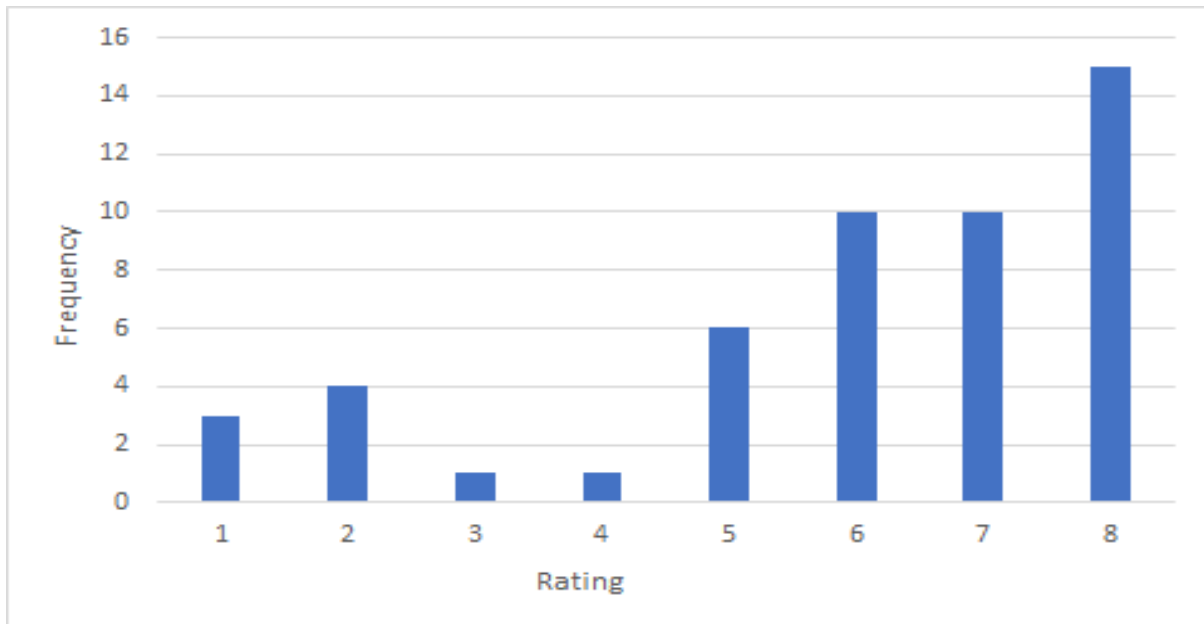
I started at a mixed state secondary school in year 7 but it was huge and I was too shy to get on there, so moving to [Greenfields] put me in a quieter environment which grew my confidence and meant that by the time I got to uni and beyond I was confident in all sorts of environments. (R45)

These comments suggest it was the single sex status of the school , rather than its elite status, that was important in instilling confidence. For other alumnae surveyed, it is clear how important a single sex context is/was

I always hoped I could send my daughter to [Greenfields] in order to develop confidence (R15)

In the survey, alumnae were asked how confident they were in class, whilst in school:

Fig 6, Ratings indicating the extent to which the alumnae felt confident in class



It is clear, that with nine exceptions, the alumnae felt very confident in class.

Juliette spoke about her experience of class

I was really really confident to put my hand up and give an answer all the time...and I also didn't care if I got it wrong. I just said whatever I thought...I felt like I could like point out if I disagreed with what the teacher was saying, which was quite good for my confidence as well.

Juliette's comments are quite striking, she was clearly very confident in class, but importantly, her lack of inhibition and courage to take risks shows high levels of confidence. Moreover, her relationship with her teachers suggests she was encouraged to challenge ideas. R19 also commented on her teachers:

these kind and supportive women were huge factors in teaching me to make my voice heard, have confidence in my opinion, not be afraid to question things or make mistakes and to follow my own skill and talent

Confidence in class has allowed these women to contribute their ideas, discuss and defend opinions, and in turn, helped develop these key skills. Having a sense that one's voice can, should, and will be heard is empowering, and instils an expectation that this will always be the case. Of course, such confidence may not necessarily be due to the single-sex nature of the school, therefore it is important to consider how confident they may have been in a mixed context as well as a single sex one.

Freya is now a teacher and reflected on her teaching experience, describing the lack of input from girls in mixed contexts:

I think when [boys and girls] are taught together, the girls are so much quieter. They seem so much more lacking in confidence. I don't teach any girls who happily volunteer things after the age of 12 or 13. So I think yeah just a complete lack of confidence that the girls seem to have that I don't remember being as much like that

These 'quieter' girls in mixed contexts are at odds with the alumnae who reported high levels of confidence in contributing in class, and it is striking in this account how the girls stop contributing at adolescence in the presence of boys. There was also a wider belief about the value of single sex classrooms:

the confidence and aspiration ... gave me is what I would want for any daughter of mine and I don't think that's always achievable to the same extent in co-ed schools. (R38)

Here it seems the contrast between attitudes towards single sex and mixed contexts is clear. The confidence to speak up in a class without boys dominating was clearly noted, as well as the encouragement to make one's voice heard. Eight alumnae reported not being confident, this is at odds with the majority, and some of these narratives are explored in more detail below. Thus, not all girls in single sex classes always contribute confidently, and classroom contribution should not be viewed as a singular measure of confidence. Some people are more introverted, and less inclined to contribute spontaneously. This should not be conflated with a lack of

confidence however (and conversely, extraversion should not be assumed to be confidence).
For example:

The reason why I placed confidence/voicing my opinion so low in this quiz is because that's just who I was as a teenager, that's who I've always been - not low self esteem, but just quiet and keeping myself to myself. Hattie (survey response)

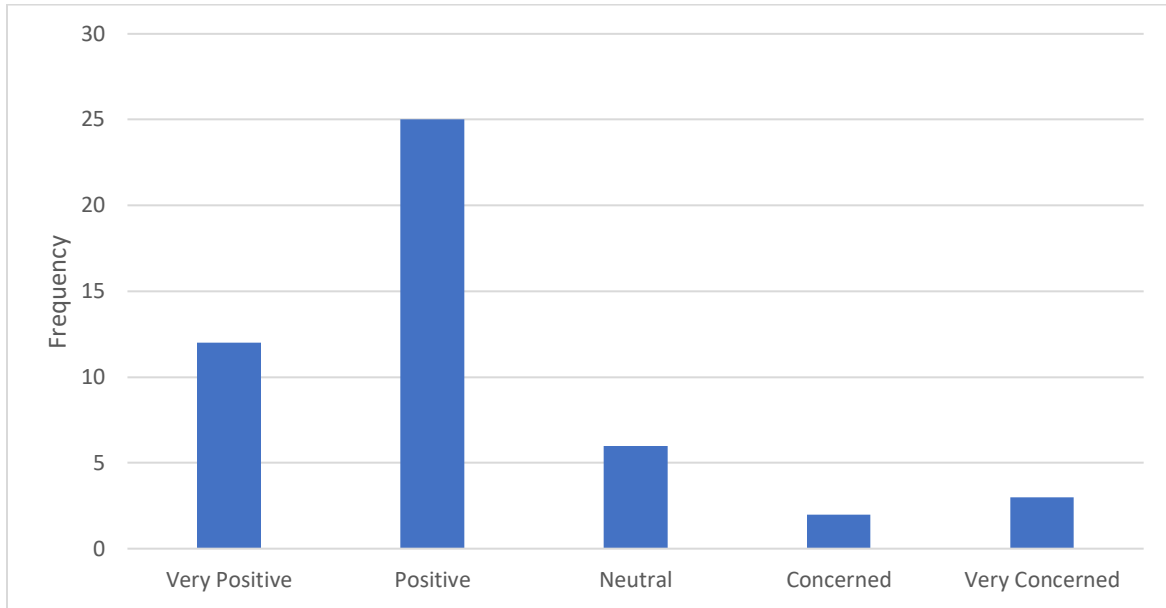
I was interested to know whether this confidence continued into the mixed context of university seminars. One common criticism of girls' schools is that they do not prepare girls for the 'real world', and that they will be ill-equipped when entering a world with men in it. Whilst these alumnae may have been confident in the single-sex 'bubble', the next section considers if this only transient and lost once out of the bubble, if the confidence was maintained when at university.

7.2.2 Confidence at university

A common assumption of girls' schools is that the girls are sheltered from boys. This may be true of a rural boarding school, but does not describe a day school in a city, and it would therefore be wrong to assume that the alumnae would have had very limited opportunities to mix with boys/men.

In the survey, the alumnae were asked how they felt about moving into a mixed educational environment. This was an open text question which revealed some interesting insights which I consider below. For brevity, these are summarised as Very Positive (e.g., 'excited'), Positive (e.g., 'fine'), Neutral (e.g., 'not bothered'), Concerned (e.g., 'nervous') and Very Concerned (e.g., 'terrified').

Fig 7. Frequency of Very Positive, Positive, Neutral, Concerned and Very Concerned feelings towards entering a mixed environment



With five exceptions (two did not respond) the alumnae looked forward to entering a mixed environment. This contradicts the common assumption that girls educated in single sex schools will find the adjustment more difficult. The most common response to this question was ‘fine’, but there was also a sense of excitement

‘Excited and a little unsure how to navigate it!’ (R7) suggests an acknowledgement of the change, but that it was not really an obstacle:

It wasn't something I was overly concerned about. It did take a bit of getting used to but I just saw it as a new challenge, just like everything else new I was faced with when starting Uni. (R3)

Some describe how it was not really a change as they already had male friends, for example:

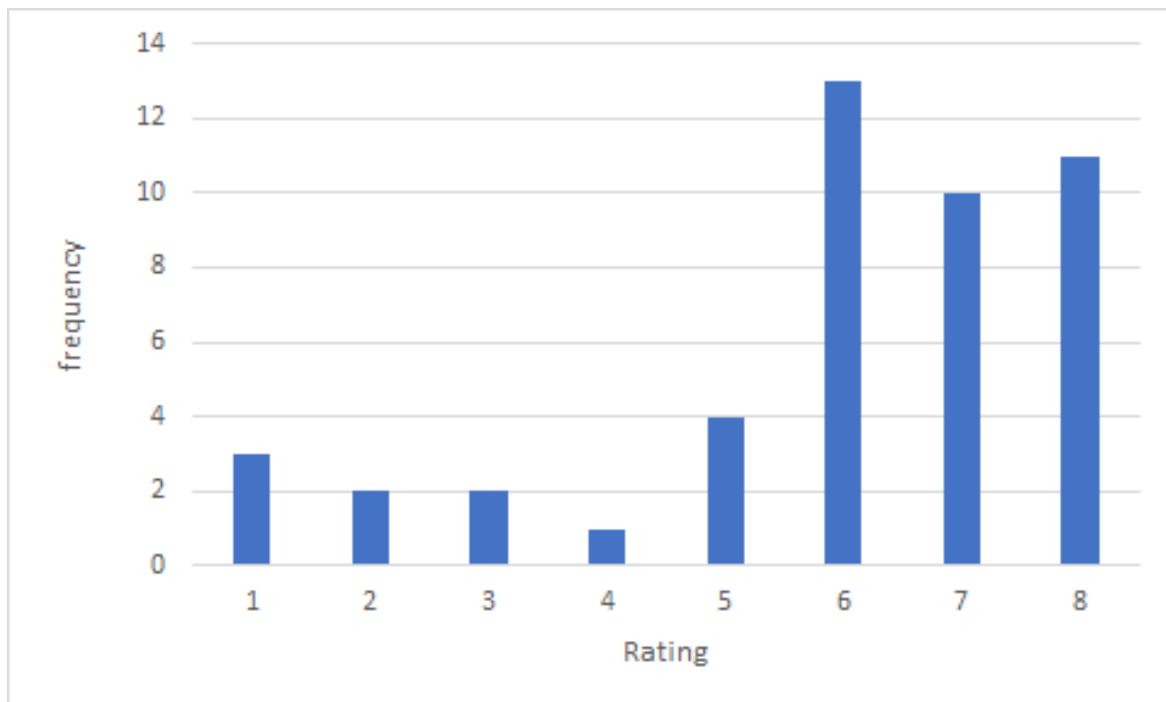
Confident as I had a lot of male friends outside of school

Or other experiences:

I had gone to a mixed primary school and mixed secondary school for year 7 and some of year 8. I had experienced mixed experiences with boys. I had grown up with male relatives my own age (R50)

Another survey question asked how confident the alumnae felt about contributing to seminars when they were in a mixed context at university, and whether the confidence they felt in school had continued. On describing how she felt about this one noted: [I was] *'Nervous about my confidence to share openly in a lecture/seminar environment'* (R29) and I wondered whether this was true of many.

Fig 8. Ratings indicating the extent to which the alumnae felt confident in university seminars



As with their time at school, high levels of confidence were reported, although it is a little lower than at school. Eight reported not feeling confident (the same number who described not feeling confident in class at school). The interviewees were asked about their confidence in seminars:

So I would [contribute] mainly because I'm only really used to small class sizes. So especially in like a in a seminar...getting up presenting...felt quite natural. The only thing that was different was that there were blokes in the room as well which I wasn't quite prepared for at all. But once you get used to it, it's fine. (Becca)

Thus, for Becca, whilst she was not accustomed to having men in the same teaching space, this did not seem to concern her in terms of contributing and making her voice heard. Ellie compared herself to other women in her seminar groups:

I really noticed in seminars and especially in history where I was the only girl who spoke, so there was lots of posh private school boys who were very comfortable with voicing their opinions and I was pretty comfortable voicing my opinion as well. (Ellie)

On one level, this might suggest she felt confident having come from a similarly elite background to the 'posh private school boys'. However, she went on to compare herself to girls with similar private school backgrounds to herself, but not from girls' schools:

But most of the other girls in the seminar groups wouldn't speak and as I often thought that that was because I came from an all-female school where nobody had ever told me not to speak. So I think it did have a big impact.... I was often the only woman speaking in several classes. (Ellie)

Ellie's sentiments were echoed by others

I was more involved in seminars than most of the other women once I went to university. It definitely gave me confidence I've seen other women lacking...it gave me the confidence I doubt I'd have got elsewhere (R46)

At least as reported here, it seems that confidence to contribute was noticeable in contrast to other women. Whilst there is no knowing what the prior experiences of their peers were, or whether they were from private schools, mixed or single sex, it is more likely they had been in mixed schools since girls' schools are relatively few in number. Furthermore, whilst this would not allow me to conclude that the alumnae from Greenfields were more confident than those who attended mixed school, the perception among the alumnae is that they were.

The confidence to try more things was also noted:

I think going to an all girls' school for me was actually really beneficial to the type to the person I was at University... having a lot more confidence to try new things and not be embarrassed about doing things like drama, which I really loved and all those sorts of things. (Dayna)

These accounts suggest that the confidence attributed to school continued into mixed environments, and beyond the security of school. The comparisons between themselves and

other women is particularly striking. As with school, this could have far-reaching implications in terms of engagement with the intellectual material, and the opportunity to debate and defend ideas.

Whilst I cannot make claims as to the school experience directly leading to successful outcomes in higher education or subsequent careers, it is likely that these women who describe themselves as confident in school and university, have gone on to describe themselves as successful. Indeed, by tracking back to other measures, this is the case.

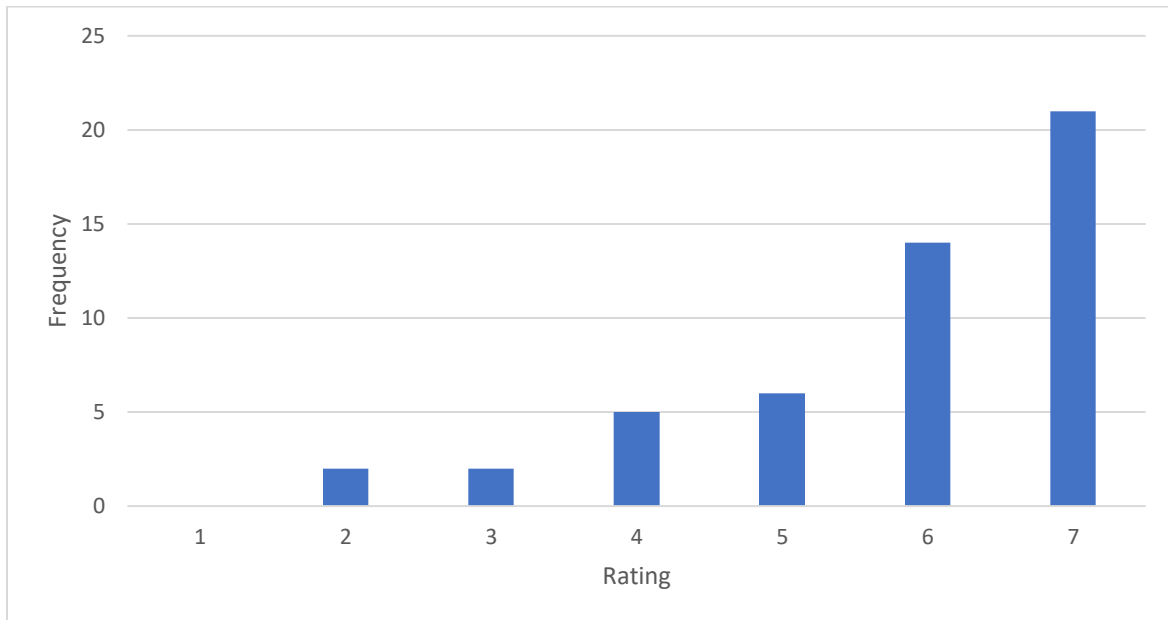
Similarly, there were other comments that attribute confidence to school

I think I did gain a lot of confidence from school because I feel like we were always told we could do anything we wanted... I do have quite a strong sense of self and I think I am confident in my abilities, which I think definitely was formed at school. (Anna)

7.2.3 Remaining Confident

Finally, I was interested as to what extent the alumnae are confident in their place of work, and asked how they felt moving to a mixed workplace. With two exceptions who were daunted or nervous, almost all were very positive. On asked how confident they feel in sharing their opinions in meetings or similar contexts, again there are high levels:

Fig 9 Ratings indicating the extent to which the alumnae feel confident in work meetings or similar contexts



Again, with two exceptions, there are high levels of confidence. This is interesting to note as the pattern of confidence is shown throughout the three life stages. Whilst it may be the case that confidence further developed whilst at university, the foundations of confidence were already there. For example:

I gained a confidence and assertiveness I would not have had, had I had to compete with the (generally louder) voices of boys. I didn't realise the value of my single sex education until I began work in a very male dominated financial environment and was more confident and assertive than other women around me and made me realise the value of the confidence instilled in being in an all girls environment (R31)

This observation is particularly interesting as she is suggesting that her confidence has allowed her to compete with men in a way different to other women; that she specifically credits the single sex school for the development of this confidence is particularly interesting.

7.2.4 Not feeling confident

Whilst the majority of alumnae rated themselves as confident, this does not tell the whole story. A number reported not feeling confident at school or university (or indeed beyond). It is important to consider why they did not feel confident and I explore four brief vignettes of those who reported lower levels of confidence at school.

Respondent 5 chose to remain to study in sixth form despite feeling less than happy, as most of her friends had chosen to stay. She did not participate in any extracurricular activities. She found it difficult to enter a mixed environment having been in an all-girls context and felt that school had definitely not developed her confidence. In class she rated herself as 2/8 in terms of offering opinions, whereas at university this rose to 5. Now in the workplace, this has risen to 7/8. Her final comment is:

I didn't feel there was the support for people who didn't have as much ambition as others and ones who were academically challenged.

Respondent 27 was happy at school but rated 3/7 in terms of development of confidence. She described the school as very supportive, as well as somewhat 'cliquey' yet safe and encouraging. She found it very difficult to enter a mixed educational environment. She very much lacked confidence in class, and was the same at university.

Respondent 31 described school as 'unhappy' and she felt isolated, she stayed in sixth-form as it was her parent's decision. She described school as 'closeted', 'cliquey' and 'somewhat supportive'. She indicated strongly that school sheltered her and made it difficult to enter a mixed environment. She did not participate in any extra-curricular activities. In school she rated her confidence in class as 2/8, remaining at 2 in university. She described herself as 'terrified' of entering a mixed environment. Due to family and health issues, she did not complete her undergraduate degree.

Respondent 41 was happy at school and described herself as 'fitting in'. She considered herself successful in her career as a civil servant. She rated confidence in class as 2/7, whilst at university this rose to 4/7. In her final comments she stated:

I loved a lot of senior school and had a wonderful supportive group of friends and the teaching was excellent however in sixth form I struggled with mental health problems and there was very little awareness or support for this.

Her mental health problems (undisclosed) may have been related to her lack of confidence, although it is not possible to conclude this. She did however rate 5/7 in terms of how much school developed her confidence.

7.2.5 Discussion

Whilst for a minority, school did not contribute to the development of confidence, and may even have undermined it somewhat, for the vast majority, confidence was seen to have developed at school. Arguably, confidence would develop anyway as a result of maturity, or socio-economic background. However, many of the alumnae attribute this directly to the girls only experience, specifically that once they left school, they were more vocal and confident than other women in seminars/tutorials at university. Here they were with predominantly people of similar backgrounds, but other women were quieter. A notable comment related to wishing to send their own daughters to a similar school, with confidence cited as a reason. In addition, two of the interviewees describe how they lacked confidence in a mixed school, but then on moving to Greenfields for Year 8 or 9, they found their confidence increased significantly. Again, this could be maturation, but for these women, it is attributed to school. For Becca, whose background is working class, she is clear that the school developed her confidence, again this cannot be attributed to social-economic factors. For Anna, raised by a single parent, non-graduate, she is a firm believer in single sex education for girls. As a teacher she notes, in particular, how girls become quiet when in a class with boys and does not want this to be the experience for her own daughter.

The experiences and narratives of the majority who felt school instilled confidence in them confirms other scholars' work. As discussed in Chapter Four, numerous studies have shown increased confidence in those who had attended a private girls' school (e.g, Cherney and Campbell, 2011; Cribbs and Haase, 2016). Bandura's work on Self Efficacy is a useful lens through which to consider confidence, being so similar as to be almost inter-changeable. Self-efficacy is the belief that one can achieve goals, and confidence is also the belief that one can

achieve goals. Thus, confidence is associated with a 'can do' attitude and in turn, self-efficacy or confidence is positively associated with learning (Sullivan, 2009).

Both in the survey and in interviews, the alumnae rated confidence highly, considering it a significant element of their education. This suggests that it developed at school, rather than being something inherent by virtue of background or natural self-confidence. This finding is more widely reported in the literature (see also Chapter Four) indicating higher levels of confidence in girls in single sex contexts compared to those in mixed contexts (e.g., Younger and Warrington, 2006; Forbes and Lingard, 2014; Maxwell and Aggleton, 2010, 2014, 2015; Green et al., 2018). There appears to be a relationship between attending a single sex school, and confidence, both in existing literature as well as within the women studied here. The difference, between existing literature and this research, is that I have asked to what extent confidence *developed* at school, rather than measuring how confident the girls in school are. This is an important distinction, as the alumnae describe both being confident, as well as attributing their schooling to the development of their confidence. It is important to note that they are not attributing confidence to their social background. Whilst this may be a hidden factor - i.e., their privilege has enabled them to attend the school in the first place – it is not the narrative that appears in the alumnae's accounts.

In considering *what* contributed to the development of confidence, two factors are reported. One, is the physical absence of boys. For example, in noting how she fared in a mixed school Dayna says, '*I was teased by one of the boys and it was absolutely mortifying*' when in a drama lesson, undermining her confidence. In contrast, when she was at university, and once again in a mixed context, she engaged with drama confidently. In a similar vein, Freya noted how with boys in the class, '*the girls are so much quieter*'. The second, related factor is being encouraged to speak. For example, some reported the teachers actively '*teaching me to make my voice heard*' (R19), and commenting that once at university she was the only female speaking '*because I came from an all-female school where nobody had ever told me not to speak*' (Ellie). It seems that the physical absence of boys – the main feature of a girls' school, is what makes the difference. In trying to unpick the reason for the presence of boys having a deleterious effect on confidence, the literature suggests some possibilities. Sullivan (2009) has suggested

that girls compare themselves unfavourably against boys, in turn reducing confidence. For Sadker and Sadker (1994), it is because girls are given less attention than boys in a mixed classroom. The reason for this could be due to teacher bias or preference, or more likely, the boys dominate, whilst the girls become quiet. As a result, more attention is given to the boys. This begs the question as to why girls go quiet and allow boys to dominate. It could be that this has been their experience, or that there is an assumption that boys should dominate – a form of stereotyping. This is revealed when comparing girls in single sex and mixed contexts where in single sex contexts girls contribute confidently whilst in mixed contexts they are quiet (Gillibrand et al., 1999; Booth and Nolan, 2012). One possible explanation for this is related to Bandura's theories, who suggested we tend to imitate those whom we are similar to (Bandura, 1977). If a girl sees others becoming quiet in the presence of boys, she may do the same. On the other hand, if she sees other girls articulating their views, she will do the same. In essence, a single sex context offers role models who are all female and are not exposed to boys who seek to dominate classrooms and discussions. In terms of self-efficacy, or confidence, one important element is vicarious experience, i.e., seeing others who are similar to oneself achieving goals (Bandura, 1997). This instils a belief that 'if she can, I can'. In a girls' school, it is girls who are in control and occupy leadership positions such as Form Rep, Head Girl etc. It is girls who are best at science and maths, and it is girls who excel in competitions and in sport. All provide strong positive role models for girls to aspire to and, critically, to identify with, and this increases self-efficacy – belief of the possibility for girls to achieve these positions.

There is of course a question of how confidence is or was understood, and the accounts perhaps indicate different meanings. For example, one alumnae may describe confidence in terms of how likely she was to speak in a class or seminar, whilst another may refer to an inner sense of self-belief. Whilst I have grouped all these possibilities under the umbrella of confidence, with an assumption of a shared meaning of confidence, this may mask significant differences in understandings. To address this, it was felt prudent to examine differing strands of confidence in different contexts: school, university and work. With hindsight, a clearer definition of confidence may have been a useful addition to the survey, although the conceptualisation of confidence as self-efficacy does appear to 'fit' many of the accounts.

In this section I have presented data on confidence. In accordance with existing literature, the alumnae almost all described themselves as confident, and attribute the development of this through school. One important factor seems to be the simple absence of boys in ensuring the girls feel confident to contribute and have their voices heard. This relates to gender stereotyping in that in mixed classrooms boys tend to dominate whilst girls become quieter, this is especially so in traditionally male dominated domains. In the next section I explore gender stereotypes in more detail, and examine the ways in which these were felt (or not) by the alumnae and the implications for confidence.

7.3 Gender Stereotyping: 'I never thought it was weird that I did physics'

In the previous section I presented findings concerning confidence and how the alumnae reported feeling confident, and attributed the development of confidence to school. In this section I present the first of three themes central to the development of confidence and features of a girls' school. Some gender stereotypes can work to undermine confidence in two ways. First by reinforcing gendered assumptions about ability and preference, and second, by reinforcing boys' assumptions of dominance. Related to this are traditional gendered expectations of femininity and what it means to be a girl.

7.3.1 Conforming to gender stereotypes

In the survey, alumnae were asked to what extent having attended a girls' school made them conform to gender stereotypes. From a maximum of 7 the mode was 1, suggesting that this was something they did not experience. R7 rated this as 4, although it is not apparent from her other comments exactly what stereotypes she was referring to. She was clear that she did not enjoy the single sex context, describing it as 'cliquey', 'competitive' and 'closeted'. R18 scored the stereotype question as 5. Her overall experience is very positive, suggesting that school developed her confidence, made her 'assertive', 'competitive' and encouraged her 'to take risks in a safe environment'. Again, there is no elaboration on the nature of the stereotypes she had in mind. R22 rated the stereotype question as 6. She described an overall positive experience, where she developed confidence in a 'safe and encouraging environment'. She described being a 'tomboy' and the hardest thing was trying to fit in, and commented that perhaps a girls'

school was not the best for her. Again, it is unclear exactly what stereotypes she was referring to, however, in describing herself as a tomboy, she may have been referring to not her conforming to traditional gendered views of girlhood, but that these were reinforced in the school. For each of these who rated conforming to stereotypes higher, they all went on to elite universities and considered themselves successful in their careers. In terms of careers, they are: Events Manager, West End Actor and Senior Consultant. Arguably, neither of these careers would be described as stereotypically 'female'.

7.3.2 Gendered subject choices

The interviewees gave contrasting responses when asked about the extent to which they were aware of, or conformed to, stereotypes. From an academic perspective, in terms of subject choice, some were clear that they did not feel a need to conform. For example:

I did maths all the way through and I don't think I had thought this is a boy's subject because you're in a classroom full of girls... I feel like because when you're in an all-girls environment, you can't stereotype it as much because you know, there's just the one gender (Anna)

In explaining why choices felt less gendered, Juliette, a physics teacher, commented:

I think that probably is like an all-girls school thing. Like I never thought it was weird that I did physics and actually I still don't really like that it's a white male dominated subject.

Juliette felt enough identification and confidence to go on to study physics at university. She is also keen, as a teacher, to encourage more girls to studying physics. She also added that she feels her own expectations in relation to gender are much less stereotypical than many other women:

Last year. I did a psychology study for someone and she was looking into teachers and...intrinsic sexism [using an implicit association test] every single time all the maths and science words I put in the same category as female words rather than male. She was like, oh my God I've never seen that before.

Similarly, there is a sense of wanting to achieve highly, and to enter what are considered male dominated spheres:

So many people in my year were going for quite stereotypically male subjects: maths physics [at university]... there was a high amount of ambition that translated into wanting ambitious jobs and ambitious careers, which stereotypically could be argued as more male dominated. (Carla)

For R25 (a software developer) the best thing about the school was that subjects:

Weren't gendered. I do think that a single sex school probably made me worry less about doing a 'male' job. Because I didn't ever consider that I couldn't do it.

The description of freedom from gendered expectations was interesting since in the sample there were actually only a few who made choices that directly contradicted stereotypes in terms of STEM and subsequent career choice. Indeed, compared to the recent leavers, the proportion going on to STEM courses was substantially lower. The important point, however, is that the respondents themselves did not describe themselves as pressured to conform to traditional gender stereotypes and felt they could 'be themselves'.

7.3.3 The 'Male Gaze'

Another theme reported concerned how the alumnae felt more able to 'be themselves'. It may be that the absence of the direct 'male gaze' meant they felt less pressure to conform to traditional gendered expectations. For example:

I could express myself in any way at a girls' school without feeling much judgement (R26)

Similarly, for R19 the best thing about school was to:

be able to develop as an individual without feeling the need to conform to gender stereotypes or compete with my fellow females... I believe its lack of male students, allowed me to be myself and develop without those sexist external pressures.

These two comments, taken together, suggest that the physical absence of boys at school meant there was a lesser sense of surveillance in terms of how they chose to present themselves at school. In addition the 'lack of male students' allowed for a wider self-expression. That is not to say that beyond the school gates they were 'immune' to those pressures, but that within the context of school, they felt, to an extent, that they were. For R4 the best thing about school was '*being treated as a person, rather than female*'. This is an interesting comment since

the school itself is a *girls' school*. The fact of being a girl is what attending the school is based on, therefore for her, the invisibility, or irrelevance of gender is striking:

I felt that being within a single sex environment allowed myself and others to express ourselves without feeling pressured to conform to what is deemed popular or attractive. I experienced this on the mixed school bus I travelled to school on and saw the negative, pressured and conformist impact this had, particularly on girls, which I am grateful for not having to endure at school. [School] gave me the opportunity to assert and express myself entirely as I am without judgement which has been hugely significant in my life (R18)

'Being themselves' refers to developing and making choices in ways that are not constrained by social expectations. This is felt particularly in relation to the expectations they have perceived beyond school. This is important to consider, because of course the girls/women were not living in a 'bubble', they were very much living in wider society and so exposure to expectations is not eliminated. In contrast, in school, during the school day, such expectations are perhaps rendered less visible. One way 'being themselves' is shown in through the reduced pressure to grow up, and to behave as women (rather than children). As Gina noted:

me and my friends were very immature for a very long time...stupid things like hiding in the bushes around school and singing songs and stuff until like year 10. We were just having fun all the time.

Similarly, Ellie believes her own daughter would benefit from a girls' school education because:

when the girls are on their own they're younger. They don't grow up as quickly they can be children for longer. They're less self-conscious. I think I think that's really what I got out of an all-female education was not questioning myself as much and being more comfortable.

In terms of feeling comfortable and not self-conscious, this may be due the absence of the direct 'male gaze' whilst in school, i.e., a tacit pressure to conform to stereotyped notions of femininity and to be attractive and sexualized. Whilst it is still possible that the 'female gaze' or the 'boy in the head' may still have curtailed behaviour, this does not seem to have been the experience of these alumnae. One way in which the impact of the 'male gaze' may be revealed is how the behaviour of the girls changed (in school contexts) when boys were present. Such as

on the occasions where joint, academic focused, activities occurred with a local boys' school. Hattie described how girls would react to boys:

The French exchange sometimes had boys over, [it was] just really interesting to see people's behaviour change around them.

Or to men in general:

a hundred percent they would change if there was a delivery man coming into the car park, and with boys, more giggly, some make up, make an effort to get attention.
(Dayna)

These comments suggest that in the presence of boys, the girls adjusted their behaviour to become more feminine and to attract the attention of males. This suggests how they were fully aware of the social expectations of femininity, but that in the physical absence of boys there was no less expectation to behave in this way.

7.3.4 The relationship between confidence and gender stereotypes

I gained a confidence and assertiveness I would not have had, had I had to compete with the (generally louder) voices of boys. I didn't realise the value of my single sex education until I began work in a very male dominated financial environment and was more confident and assertive than other women around me and made me realise the value of the confidence instilled in being in an all girls environment. (R31)

Freya is a teacher, and notes the contrast between girls in single sex and mixed contexts

I do think that [girls' schools] are needed to make them feel confident like when they're really good at science and math, but then give them up as soon as they can.

Similarly, respondent 28 commented on the value of single sex contexts for girls:

I am a strong believer in all female education. It gives girls huge confidence and allows them to explore who they really are

All three of these comments suggest a relationship between confidence and traditional gender stereotypes, where the women describe both developing confidence, and having the confidence to be themselves, and not conform to such stereotypes. Similarly, confidence in a classroom, or other academic contexts seemed to be eroded by the presence of boys/men. On speculating how she may have fared in a mixed classroom:

I do feel like if there were boys in a lesson, you know, like putting your hand up like I feel like maybe there would be so much pressure but I wouldn't want to as much. (Isabel)

This suggests how in a mixed context, Isabel would have felt more inhibited, echoing Freya's teaching experience. Carla compared her experience of mixed secondary school (before moving to Greenfields in year 8):

In my tutor group there was some really loud guys and they were quite forceful and degrading of the other guys or girls...that experience really put me off I think by then I had already sort of like thought to myself I'm not sure I want to learn alongside guys with that kind of personality.

Carla's experience confirms the argument that boys dominate classrooms, and in turn, inhibit girls. In considering *why* girls may be inhibited, it may relate to Stereotype Threat, in that they (implicitly at least) feel inferior in traditionally stereotypical male dominated domains. This may extend beyond realms where girls tend to outperform boys. Becca studied A level German, and languages are an area where girls outperform boys. She should have felt confident in working in a project with boys from the local boys' school:

I was much more concerned that there were boys there. Yeah. I'm like, oh my God, I have to speak German in front of a boy and I don't want to look stupid, I thought I just don't want these blokes to think I'm an idiot.

So, even though Becca ordinarily described herself as confident, in a subject where she was performing well, in a female dominated domain, she still was concerned about looking 'stupid' in front of the boys. Suggesting that the mere physical presence of boys is enough to cause girls to doubt their abilities and to undermine their confidence. Whereas the physical absence of boys, as well as the presence of other women and girls could increase confidence:

I felt quite empowered, we had these like amazing role models like teachers and older girls and just really all these kick-ass women bossing life. (Gina)

7.3.5 Discussion

The experiences and opinions of the alumnae suggest a freedom from the pressure to conform to traditional gender stereotypes whilst in school, in contrast to Liben's (2015) view that sex separation increases such gender stereotyping. This may be the case due to both the presence of girls who are not conforming to these gender stereotypes as well as the physical absence of boys who may reinforce them. It is certainly the case that the women felt more able to 'be themselves' without pressure to conform to what, to them, is attractive to boys. They were fully aware of the wider social expectations, however in a girls' school, somewhat ironically, the fact of being a girl is less relevant.

The impact of the perceived lack of traditional gender stereotypes manifests itself in terms of confidence in two key ways. First the confidence to speak up in class, and second the confidence to choose, and feel confident, in male dominated subject domains. In exploring the first, it is well documented how boys dominate classrooms, creating a sub-optimal education environment for girls (Sadker and Sadker, 1994), and the comments of the alumnae seem to support this in their experiences of mixed school contexts. Thus, girls in girls' schools are not inhibited by the physical presence of boys. These experiences of positive classroom interactions increase confidence in terms of Bandura's (1997) conceptualization of self-efficacy being increased through mastery experiences i.e., positive experiences cause one to assume future positive experiences. Furthermore, witnessing other girls' mastery, acts vicariously to also increase confidence i.e., 'she is speaking up, so can I'.

In terms of subject domains, female participation tends to be lower in male dominated domains as they feel a lessened sense of belonging (Salomone, 2013), reinforced by having fewer role models. In contrast, in a girls' school where those excelling in maths and science are all girls, this provides an alternative narrative in terms of subject belongingness. This may explain how women who had been educated in a single-sex school are more likely to enter male dominated fields (Sullivan, 2008) and where girls attending girls' schools are more likely to choose, and enjoy maths, than their mixed school contemporaries (Sullivan et al., 2008; Ceci et al., 2009; Cherney and Campbell, 2011). A similar effect has been found in relation to physics and physical

sciences in more general where girls show higher confidence in a single sex context (Kessels and Hannover, 2008) and accords with Sikora's (2014) finding that single sex educated girls were marginally more likely to choose physical sciences than those in mixed schools. Positive experiences of themselves and others in sciences may reduce the impact of Stereotype Threat (Aronson and Steele, 1997) where concern over confirming a stereotype leads to impaired performance. In the presence of boys, girls may experience Stereotype Threat in male dominated domains, whereas in single sex contexts this is not experienced to the same extent. Particularly in physical sciences and maths, the impact of Stereotype Threat is well documented (Marchand and Taachobshirazi, 2013; Sunny et al., 2017). However, this effect may not only be confined to science and maths, and may be felt more generally, and explains why girls become quieter in the presence of boys, across subject domains. This is through girls' concerns about looking 'stupid', or perhaps not conforming to traditional heteronormative stereotypes about feminine passivity (and male dominance) and becoming unattractive to boys. Fewer positive experiences, and the vicarious experience of female quietness undermines confidence. Hence traditional gender stereotypes can undermine confidence in girls, and when these are less salient in school, girls have greater confidence to both be themselves, and speak up for themselves.

In this section I have considered the importance of traditional gender stereotypes in relation to confidence where the perceived reduced pressure to conform (whilst in school) allow girls to make more choices. Furthermore, girls have greater confidence whilst in school when boys are not physically present, suggesting a strong argument of the benefits of single sex education for girls. In the next section I turn to the ways in which engagement with the school and a sense of belonging can also foster confidence.

7.4 Commitment and School Engagement

In this section I explore the extent to which the alumnae engaged with the school whilst attending school. Engagement with school has been measured in a number of ways. The extent to which they were happy at school as well as to what extent they felt they fitted in at school are useful measures since they give an overall impression of the extent to which each felt to be

a part of these school, in turn, this relates to how invested, or engaged they were with the school. I then apply Bernstein's classification of school engagement in considering the proportions of those Committed, Estranged, Detached and Alienated. This is measured by considering the instrumental (academic) outcomes as well as the expressive (social) outcomes, in particular participation in co-curricular activities.

7.4.1 Part of a community

As a relatively small school, it is possible the girls feel a sense of community, i.e., the school has a unique identity. This sense of community (or otherwise) could be reflected in how happy the alumnae felt whilst at school as well as their sense of fitting in. They were asked to what extent they were happy at school, and whether they fitted in:

Fig. 10. Ratings indicating the extent to which the alumnae felt happy in school

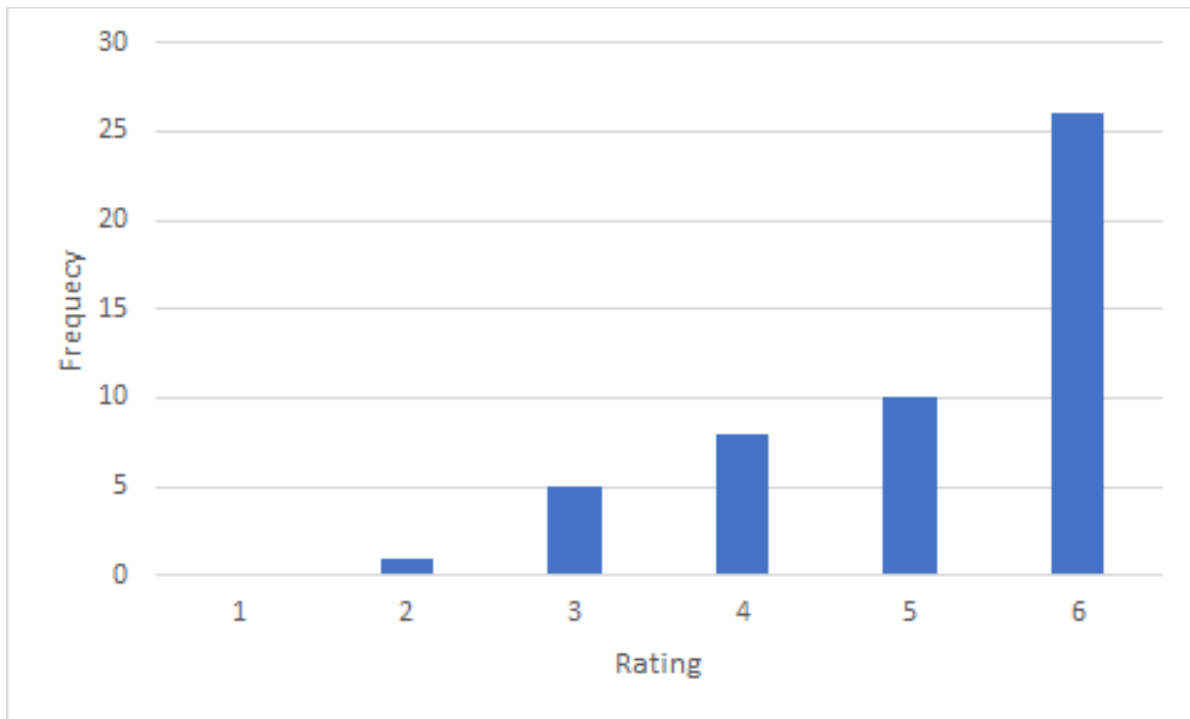
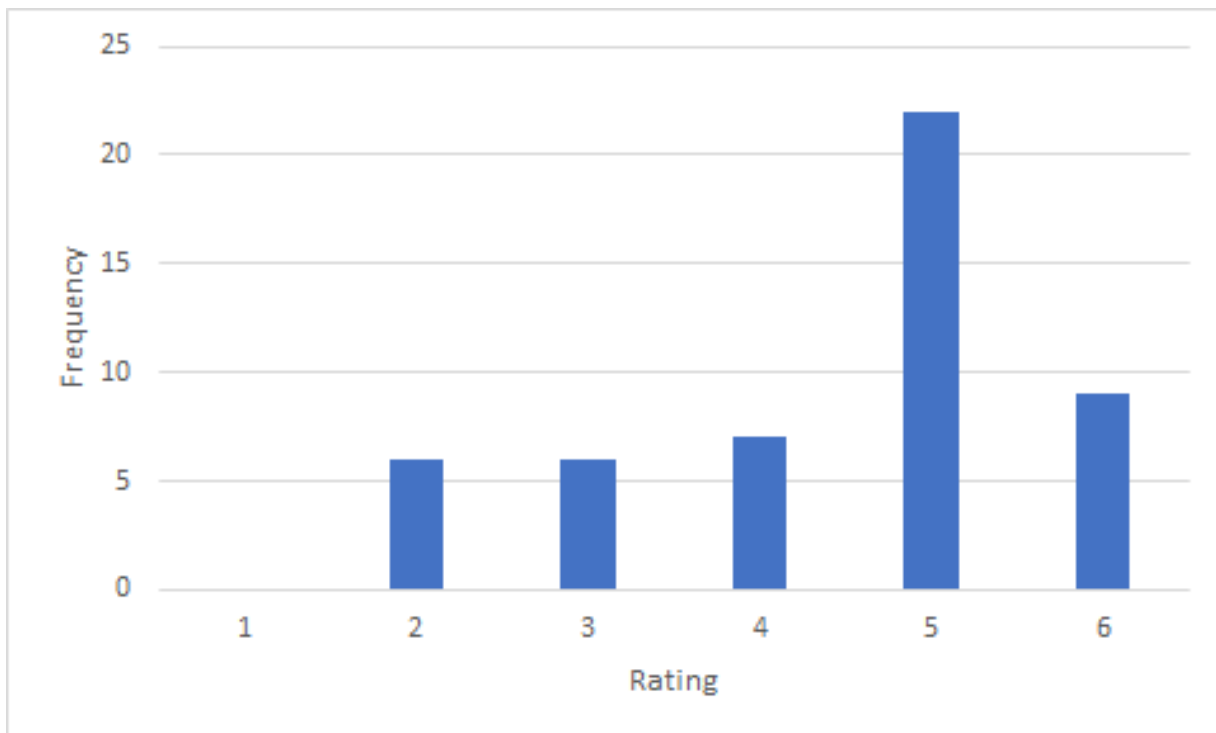


Fig 11. Ratings indicating the extent to which the alumnae felt they fitted in at school



It appears that the majority felt happy at school, and they felt they fitted in, describing their time in school in happy terms, for example, *'I had a very positive experience and think very fondly on my time in school'*. (R46)

A frequent term used was 'community' where the alumnae reported a *'sense of community and togetherness'* (R26). Gina described a strong sense of belonging:

I felt like I was a part of that community when I was in the building and when I wasn't especially if you have the uniform on because I was a representative of the school.

As a frequent theme, the sense of belonging to a community, as well as this being indicated by the school uniform fosters a sense of identity. Indeed, some suggested there is a particular 'type' of Greenfields girl, for example: *'You can always tell an [alumna] out of the crowd for an inbuilt determination and confidence!'* (R43). An emotional investment in the school came across in interviews, with strong feelings on belonging and maintaining friendships from school. The alumnae network also reflects this and is typical of similar girls' schools.

7.4.2 Committed, Estranged, Detached or Alienated?

Instrumental aims are broadly the academic aims of a school, whilst the Expressive are the social aims. Understanding refers to knowing what they are, and accepting means the realisation of these (i.e., achieving them). For the purpose of this analysis, I have simplified these. For the Instrumental aims, I classed as both understanding and accepting in terms of whether they went on to an elite (Russell Group) university or not. Whilst this is a fairly crude measure, some differentiation was necessary since all had gone on to Higher Education. For the Expressive aim I considered their level of participation in co-curricular activities. This is explained in more detail below.

The Expressive Aims – participation in school life

The best thing was lots of brilliant extracurriculars on offer [but the worst was] not being able to do everything. (R39)

The school offers a very wide range of co-curricular activities including extra and super-curricular activities, as well as numerous leadership opportunities. The school day is bookended

by activities and a long lunch break (1hr 15 minutes) allows for additional activities. Other opportunities extend beyond the school day to include weekend and residential activities both locally and internationally. This was reflected in comments such as *'enjoying the diversity of things you could get involved in, considering it was such a small school'* (R7) and *'I loved how many extra activities were on offer - that has allowed me to be skilled in a number of disciplines'*. (R39)

I measured school engagement using three metrics: in-school clubs/societies (e.g., music ensemble, sports); school organized outside school activities (e.g., The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, overseas trip; and positions of responsibility (e.g., prefect etc.). These were scored in terms of whether they recorded zero, one, two or three of these different categories. For example, hockey club + form rep = 2

Table 3. showing the number and percentage of alumnae scoring 0-3 on school engagement

0	1	2	3
1 (2%)	4 (8%)	17 (34%)	28 (56%)

These data show that engaging in school activities, of whichever type, was typical. Low, or non-existent participation was atypical. Most commonly cited were numerous sporting or musical activities, as well as a range of leadership roles, from form rep to Head Girl. In addition, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award was completed by many at Bronze level, and some at Silver.

Whilst only five reported little or none at all, the extent to which the other 45 engaged did vary. If high levels of engagement were reported this was seen as indicative of both understanding and accepting the expressive (social) role of the school.

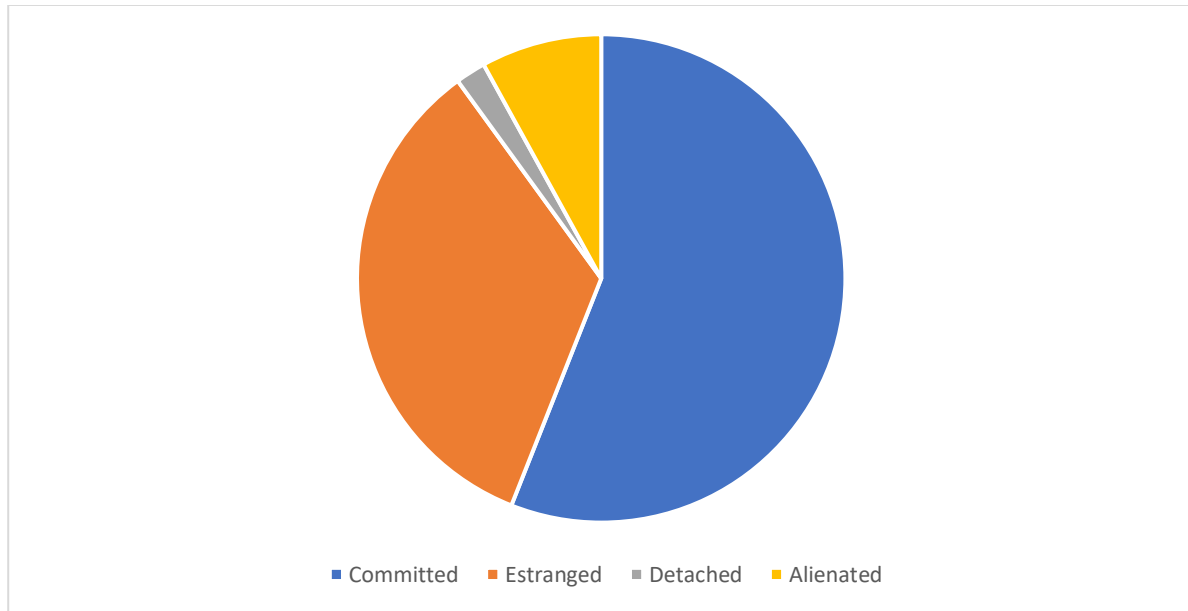
Using both measures of understanding and acceptance of the Instrumental and Expressive aims of the school I was then able to classify the alumnae as Committed, Estranged, Detached or Alienated, following Bernstein's classification. This was as follows:

Table 4. Summarising the classification of committed, estranged, detached and alienated

Classification	Instrumental aims (Russell Group or not)	Expressive aims (high/low participation)
Committed	Russell Group	High participation
Estranged	Not Russell Group	High participation
Detached	Russell Group	Low participation
Alienated	Not Russell Group	Low participation

I then counted these up to reveal the proportions of each classification in the sample.

Fig 12 The proportions of alumnae classified as Committed, Detached, Estranged and Alienated



The highest proportion were classed as Committed, where they had gone on to an elite university and had participated in extra-curricular activities and/or held positions of responsibility. The next highest group were classed as Estranged, where they were just as involved in school life, but had gone on to a non-elite university. Both Detached and Alienated

represents those who had not engaged in the wider school and then gone on to an elite university (Detached) or not (Alienated).

Committed

As the most dominant group, these were the alumnae who were engaged in school life and then went on to attend a Russell Group university. Respondent 15 typifies a Committed alumna. She participated in numerous clubs and societies, music as well as sport; she went on overseas expeditions, completed the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and was House Captain. She described herself as confident in school and credits the school with the development of this. She was very happy and felt she fitted in well. She went on to study History at Southampton University, and feels successful in her career as a Senior Paralegal.

Of the interviewees, Carla would be typical in terms of being classed as Committed. Working in events management, she graduated from Durham University. She was mainly involved in school productions and music ensembles, as well as sports. She completed both the Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and went on an overseas expedition. She was also a sixth form prefect. She comments:

I genuinely loved school... I started at a mixed state secondary school in year 7 but it was huge and I was too shy to get on there, so moving to [Greenfields] put me in a quieter, safer environment which grew my confidence...by the time I got to uni and beyond I was confident in all sorts of environments.

Estranged

Those classed as Estranged were those who were involved in school life, but who did not go on to a Russell Group university. Having graduated from University, R11 is a Lead Primary Teacher and SENCO. She described her career as successful. In school, she participated in music, sport, performances, debating, lectures, overseas expedition, exchanges and tours, outdoor pursuits and was a House Captain – she could be described as 'well-rounded'. She describes herself as very confident in class and at university, she was very happy at school and fitted in. Her first degree was in Dance and Education. It may be that her choice of university reflected her relatively niche course choice, whilst she achieved three B grades in school (lower than the

average spread of grades for the school), which would have also limited her choice. She has since completed a Masters degree and a Professional Doctorate.

Detached

Those classed as detached were those who went on to a Russell Group university, but had little involvement in wider school life. Only one was classified in this way:

Respondent 6 had attended 'other clubs', and whilst she was happy at school, she felt she did not fit into the more middle-class environment. Whilst she felt the school developed her confidence, she did not feel confident in class. This may have been because she felt she did not fit in. Her low participation may have been related to her confidence, or to her sense of 'otherness'. Having moved from a Steiner School to Greenfields, she found the transition difficult and describes herself as very shy. She went on to study English Literature at Cardiff University, going on to work as a Patient Services Administrator. She explains:

I did well academically, and it gave me confidence I doubt I'd have got without going. There are a few things I remember fondly (such as Art) but I wasn't happy at school even if I was happy generally as a teenager

Alienated

Respondent 31 reported no participation and scored herself low on confidence, happiness and fitting in. Whilst describing the school as '*A safe school environment, that inspired independence and creativity*' for her the worse aspects were '*The bullying, bitchiness and cliques*'. It seems for her that the difficulties with fitting in related to difficulties with friendships (a theme explored in the next section) and in turn, this may be related to her low confidence. Finally, these aspects could underpin her lack of participation in school.

Hattie reported no participation although she was very happy at school. She described herself as introverted but did have a good group of friends. She particularly valued the academic aspects of the school, with a strong interest in History of Art and Classical Civilization, going on to study Classics at Lampeter University, despite her feeling that her more divergent thinking was not valued.

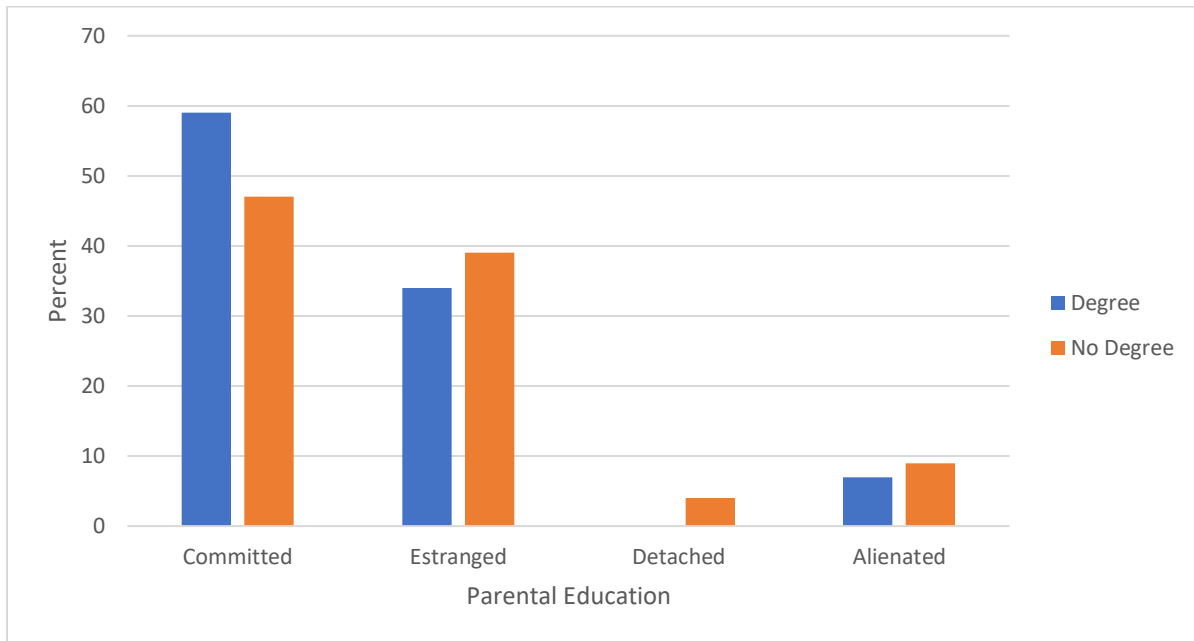
I also credit my time in [school] for any analytical skills I have. That's been a blessing. I do consider myself to be an independent thinker but I wasn't taught this at [Greenfields], that something which has always been ingrained and always something which I've struggled with in academic institutions...none of my own ideas or thoughts have been wanted - hence low grades. I will say this though, when I went to university I missed the camaraderie between teacher and student. I felt as if I was learning more at [school] than at Lampeter.

In the previous chapter I explored the relationship between participation and the development of soft skills such as resilience and hard work, to suggest a relationship between participation and confidence. Given that most alumnae reported feeling confident, and that most participated in activities, this would be a reasonable conclusion to draw. Non, or low-level participation was unusual in this sample, at the same time, low levels of confidence were unusual. For those who were Detached or Alienated, overall they reported lower levels of confidence. At the same time, of those classified as Committed or Estranged some did have lower levels of confidence.

Whilst this may just reflect this sample, it is possible that higher levels of confidence and school engagement are the norm. It appears there is a moderate relationship between participation and confidence, but it is not possible to infer causality. It is just as likely that those who were more confident engaged more *because* they were more confident.

A final consideration is whether there was any connection between classification as Committed, Estranged, Detached or Alienated and the parental background of the alumnae. Here I considered whether one or more parent was degree level educated to ascertain whether fulfilling the expressive aims of the school was related in any way to social background. Here I present a simple analysis in terms of percentages of those whose parents were/were not degree level educated and the classification of the alumnae.

Fig 13. Percentage of alumnae whose parent(s) were/were not degree level educated and their classification as Committed, Estranged, Detached or Alienated



This indicates that the 23 alumnae where neither parent was degree educated (although a sibling may be) were overall similar in terms of classification to those whose parents were. However, there was a modest difference in progression to higher education (as discussed in the previous chapter) as well as in terms of school engagement.

7.4.3 Discussion

Overall, the alumnae describe a very positive experience of school. The majority report high levels of happiness and a sense of belonging. In addition, high levels of school engagement were shown through considerable participation in co-curricular activities. There were some exceptions to this, and these were skewed towards those for whom neither parent was degree educated. This may have led to a sense of 'otherness', feeling different to the majority middle class peers. However, the majority did report positive experiences, suggesting that a sense of belonging can be felt, even with a different background. In terms of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) it seems the majority felt part of the school, and identified with it. Not all felt this as some felt they did not fit in, however, for the majority this was the case. A sense of belongingness fosters self-esteem and in turn, this is related to confidence. A sense of

community and a shared identity can help girls to feel good about themselves. Conversely, not belonging can have the opposite effect such that those who felt they did not fit in showed lower confidence levels.

In applying Bernstein's classification of school engagement, the majority were classed as Committed – realising both the instrumental and expressive aims of the school. The next proportion were classed as Estranged – realising the expressive aims, but not the instrumental aims (relatively). Only a very small number were classed as Detached or Alienated, suggesting that school engagement and realising the expressive aims of the school was a majority experience, regardless of whether or not one goes on to an elite university. In terms of parental education, this showed some effect. Those who were classed as Detached or Alienated were almost all those for whom neither parent were degree educated. Moreover, for those for whom neither parent was degree educated, they were more likely to be classed as Estranged in comparison to those with one or more parent degree educated. This reflects that they were less likely to go on to attend an elite university.

These data echo those of Power et al., (1998, 2000, 2002) where alumni classed as Committed were more typical of middle-class backgrounds, whilst Detachment was more commonly found in those of lower socio-economic status. Similarly, among those who were more disadvantaged Assisted Place holders (i.e., funded private school places) poor academic outcomes were more associated with Estranged and Alienated alumni (Power, 2010). Of those who were Committed, the majority were female, whilst males were more likely to be Detached. Both their study and this involved small samples, and so arguably are not representative. However, in Power et al., (2010) Commitment was more associated with women, and similarly, in this study the dominant form of engagement was Committed, and it could be that women (girls) are more likely to engage socially with school. This could reflect the importance of friendships and 'fitting in'. Moreover, this could accord with Lehman (2012), who, in applying Bourdieu's concept of Habitus, suggested working class children may find engagement in school more problematic since they might not fully understand the 'rules of the game'. In order to fit in to a middle-class school, one has to adapt to fit the middle-class norm. It may be that within the sample, some working-class alumnae did adapt, whilst those who did not experienced a sense of 'otherness'

and not fitting in. This might suggest that by a deliberate immersion, those who are not of middle-class backgrounds, could learn the 'rules' and go on to reap the academic and social rewards associated with private girls' schools.

The application of Bernstein's model of classification is for illustration and to understand more fully the experiences of the alumnae. However, the classification is fairly crude. A simplistic judgement of the degree of school engagement may not reflect how the alumnae themselves felt about their engagement or otherwise. Additionally, determining the realization of the instrumental aims of the school in terms of entry to elite universities may be problematic since it could be argued that progression to higher education would necessitate academic engagement in itself. However, since all of the sample went on to higher education, and they had all attended a selective school, it would be reasonable to use access to elite universities as a means of differentiating. Arguably, the instrumental purpose of a selective private school is high levels of academic achievement, and this could be demonstrated through progression to elite universities (indeed the marketing material points to the proportions who went to Russell Group universities and/or Oxbridge, which implies such an instrumental purpose). Whilst those who went to non-elite universities could not be considered 'failures' by any means, the lower entry tariffs could reflect lower A level achievement.

The literature concerning the overall benefits of participation point to advantageous social (Covay and Carbonero, 2010) and academic outcomes (Behtoui, 2019). For those surveyed, this also seems to be the case with a clear relationship indicated between fitting in, happiness, and engagement. However, in terms of academic outcomes, amongst those who, relatively speaking at least, did not achieve as highly academically, there was still high degrees of engagement. This differs from the findings by those who suggest such a relationship (e.g. Behtoui, 2019). The reasons for this could be due to the correlational nature of such research. For example, there could be hidden variables such as organization and time management. In order to participate, one must be organized, which may be correlated with academic ability too. In a time-pressed state school timetable, there may be less flexibility. Or, those who find academic work more challenging need to spend more leisure time studying than those who do not. In Greenfields school (and others like it), there is considerable time built into the school day to allow

participation. Moreover, with a wide range of activities, these need not only be confined to the talented (for example in sport or music). Similarly, Lareau's view that participation is related to social class (Lareau, 2002; Weininger et al., 2015) does not seem to be borne out in this sample. Participation was the norm, irrespective of parental education. This could be seen as a way for all girls to develop cultural capital, and for it not to be confined to the privileged.

In this section, I have examined the importance of engagement with school and the way in which identifying with school can have benefits. Overall, identification and a sense of fitting in was rated high among the alumnae, and this appeared to reflect confidence. Engagement with the school was very much the norm, with high levels of participation in co-curricular activities being the norm. Investment in education, from a financial perspective, would largely be attributable to parental choice and ability. The extent to which the parents themselves invest emotionally, may vary, and may vary as a function of different factors – such as their own educational background. However, the investment by the student need not necessarily follow that of the parent. It appears that the expressive, social engagement with school, rather than the purely instrumental, is more common. The expressive investment and engagement (as it requires time) is more a matter of choice. Academic engagement will be monitored by both the school and the parents, whilst expressive engagement is managed more by individual choice. Choosing to engage in co-curricular activities could be a function of friendships, aptitude and ability (in the case of sport and music for example), confidence or pro-school attitudes, or any of these in combination. Therefore, it could be reasonable to conclude that school engagement can be related to all of these. On the other hand, engagement with co-curricular activities may go on to develop confidence, or friendships and, in turn, pro-school attitudes. This means it is impossible to infer a cause-effect relationship, but it may be reasonable to infer an association. In the next section I turn to explore the importance of friendships and how the relationships with peers are related to confidence.

7.5 Friendships and Cliques

In this final section I present data in relation to friendship, cliques, bullying and relational aggression. I explore the quality of the friendships described, and the dual experience of cliques and difficulties with friendships. I also consider the extent to which friendships are related to confidence. This is an important marker, since the quality of friendships, inclusiveness and belonging are intrinsic to self-esteem. I also consider responses to stereotypes about girls' friendships and girls' schools in relation to cliques and 'bitchiness' and suggest that such stereotypes do not appear to reflect the experiences of the alumnae, despite concerns over cliques.

7.5.1 Friendships

In the survey, whilst not specifically asked about friendships, many respondents mentioned the quality of friendships. These were mentioned either as 'the best thing about school' or in additional comments. Overall, there were 17 volunteered references to positive friendships. For example, '*building long lasting friendships*' (R26) and 80% are still in regular contact with their school friends. For example, the best thing about school was:

The sense of community and togetherness. I am still very close with a number of my school friends and am grateful for having met them. (R30)

In interviews, friendships were described in more detail, and suggest a close bond and camaraderie:

I made really good friends at school... I felt like we had a really strong friendship group and actually our whole year in general we all got on. (Anna)

Furthermore, these friendships are very close:

We're in this community in my friendships...like it's that feeling of loyalty and support and trust. The friendships built in school are still some of the most precious. (Becca)

As well as enduring:

The friends that I'm friends with now are the friends that I was with literally from day one. (Isabel)

And supportive:

I think female friendships are.. so important. They're so special. If anything bad happens to me. I don't ring my mum. I don't bring my partner. I ring my best friend from school and sob down the phone to her. (Becca)

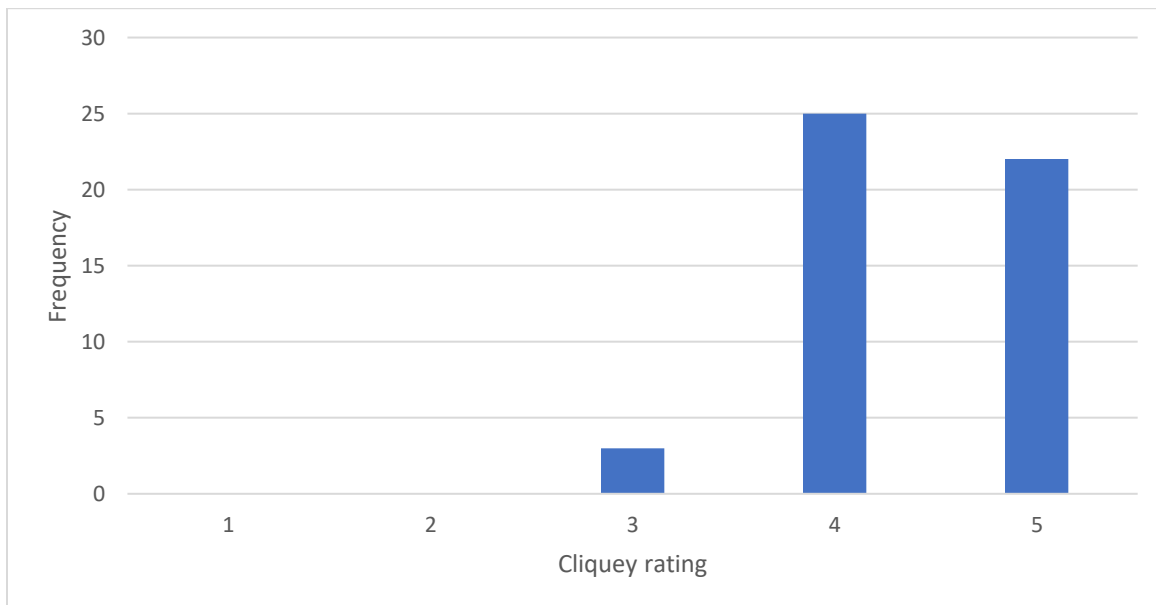
Similarly:

we stuck together and helped each other like together with family events and we've helped each other through what we were doing in life... we're still really good friends because we've been there. (Isabel)

7.5.2 The trouble with cliques

Cliques are tightly bound aggregations of friendships comprising like-minded individuals (Brown and Klute, 2003). In themselves, this does not necessarily have either positive or negative connotations. However, a further feature is the impact of clique inclusion, and conversely, exclusion. Feeling a sense of (friendship/clique) inclusion is seen as important for well-being (Pattisellano et al., 2015), with exclusion linked to loneliness and depression (Witvliet et al., 2010). The alumnae were asked to what extent they felt the school was cliquey:

Fig 14. Ratings indicating the extent to which the alumnae felt the school was cliquey



These data indicate a high agreement that the school was cliquey. This suggests a strong experience of tightly knit friendships groups, but does not give an indication of whether this

was a positive or negative aspect of school. Looking more closely at the survey and interview data helps to shed light on this.

I think that the oestrogen is very intense and I think that it's very cliquey...So that side of it is very hard and I know a lot of girls who fell foul of that and had a very negative experience because of that sort of thing...so I absolutely I've seen it first-hand. I know people have experienced that so I think that... the girls can get a bit catty and bitchy.
(Carla)

A further aspect of friendships between girls refers to Relational Aggression (Crick and Grotpeter, 1995), i.e., a form of verbal and emotional bullying (Ringrose, 2008), characterised by 'bitchiness' and ruthlessness (Holt and Bowlby, 2019).

Isabel in particular had a difficult time navigating the cliques. She described how she moved between groups, but was never really accepted by any of them. In addition, she described the feeling of being rejected, but not understanding why this had occurred. To discover that something had been said behind her back, that she was not aware of:

it was very like it was really bitchy, girls like to talk and they don't say things to your face, but most of it is behind your back and then you find out later on that everyone's talking about you. You have no way of defending yourself because it's too late for you to turn around and argue. I really struggled with that. (Isabel)

Being 'talked about' was the most cited example of difficulties with cliques, both in person and online:

It was cliquey and bitchy. Conversations in person and online could be very nasty and painful and the worst part was that the students weren't necessarily aware or caring what the impact was on others. (R37)

Exclusion was also experienced:

I was being really badly bullied by the friends I thought were my like solid friendship group to the point that they would just isolate me out and I had no one to talk to.
(Isabel)

The difficulties with cliques and friendships seemed to be a problem of early, rather than late, adolescence. A number, both in interview and in the survey, described how the issues with friendships and cliques were a feature of years 9 and 10 predominately (i.e., aged 13-15) and

that these lessened towards the end of year 11, and were not really an issue at all in sixth form (i.e., beyond age 16). This would suggest that friendships are both a vital feature of early adolescence, and problematic as one is forming an identity. When forming an identity, membership and belonging to an in-group is important in forging, and communicating that identity.

I think if you had asked me in year 9 or 10, I probably would have said [it was] quite bitchy quite like difficult... and naturally cliquey, but by the time we got to the exam years particularly in [years] 12 and 13 it got smaller. I loved sixth form. I thought it was a really good community and [a] friendly atmosphere. (Carla)

Gina described how it was in year 10 and 11:

There was always someone who was upset about what someone else has said definitely in that period like throughout year 11 and just a bit before where it was yeah, most prevalent. I think that the low light of all the bitchiness like was a real low light.

The timing of the peak of difficulties with cliques and 'bitchiness' is interesting due the correspondence with social development. Having passed puberty (in the main) and entering womanhood, it is possible bitchiness coincides with awareness of the 'male gaze' and competing for the attention of boys. Thus, from the ages of 14-16 such competition may still be felt, even within a female-only environment. On the other hand, the strength of friendships and close bonds also suggest high levels of camaraderie, despite difficulties.

7.5.3 Are girls' schools 'bitchy'?

A common representation of girls' schools (and of girls in general) is that girls' friendships include cliques and 'bitchiness', which there was an awareness of:

I think I was aware of the stereotypes of being bitchy and cliquey...mostly because I was experiencing that and I was aware that that was a thing. (Carla)

Many were keen to rebut that stereotype by acknowledging there were cliques and sometimes these were difficult to navigate, but that they did not experience it themselves:

So it really annoys me when people say girls' schools are just so bitchy...and I always say well maybe I was really lucky but that is not my experience in the slightest.. I would send my daughter to a girls' school. (Anna)

Also, there was an awareness of contradictions in how girls' schools are viewed:

On one side people say I bet there's loads of cat fights and arguments and stuff and then there's the other side that's like, oh that it was really easy and calm and like everyone really cared and you're like my sister. (Freya)

For some it seems there were both experiences of cliques, or awareness of cliques as well as the experiences of strong friendships. In the survey data, high ratings were given both for cliques as well as support. This suggests that female friendships, forged at school, both serve to include and exclude. This would explain the near equal balance of difficulty with cliques (or just acknowledging these as a negative feature of school) as well as the positive experience of friendship. By being in a friendship group, one is also in a clique. Those in the group are your friends, and other groups are viewed as cliques. This dichotomy was reported in the survey:

I am still very close with a number of my school friends and am grateful for having met them [but] there were come very strong characters/cliques. (R23)

Similarly, for R27 the best thing was 'the strong friendships I made'; and the worst 'could be very cliquey'.

In a similar way, some respondents believed things might have been easier in a mixed context:

I remember it as a happy time though found that being amongst so many girls was sometimes difficult and upsetting as girls have a tendency to be mean to each other, more mean perhaps than boys. (R48)

Finally, for some, cliques did not seem to be problematic:

I wasn't any part of any clique. I was one of those people that float around all the cliques. (Juliette)

I didn't think it was bitchy. I mean everyone's going to gravitate towards certain kind of people but I know you could drift from group to group. (Hattie)

7.5.4 Discussion

Many of the alumnae commented on the quality of the friendships they made in school, with the importance of these clearly articulated. This accords with the literature discussed in Chapter Four, on the importance of friendships as mitigating against negative experiences, particularly for girls (Ojanen et al., 2010; Closson and Wantanabe, 2016; Ging and O'Higgins, 2016) and friendships being vital in ensuring well-being (DeGoede et al., 2009). The high value placed on friendships reflects findings that girls' friendships are more powerful than for boys and:

depend on close, intimate friendships to get them through life. The trust and support of these friendships provide girls with emotional and psychological safety nets (Brown 2003: 4)

Girls are seen to have a vested interest in maintaining friendships beyond school (Ging and O'Higgin-Norman, 2016) and this was certainly reflected in the comments made by the alumnae, who spoke of lasting and firm friendships. Friends from school still provided an important friendship network of support.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1971) suggests that identifying with, and being part of a group, develops positive self-esteem. Identifying with an in-group, with whom we share similarities create a sense of belonging. The 'othering' of an outgroup can also boost self-esteem. By extension, belonging to a friendship group can develop confidence. Conversely, cliques are viewed as negative. Rivalry, exclusion and power are all weapons that can be used against other non-members. Thus, friendships can also have a 'dark side' (Bouchard et al., 2018) as, whilst offering sanctuary, there is the threat of rejection.

These alumnae have reported the quality of friendships and problems with cliques in approximately equal measure. This could reflect a duplicitous nature to friendships, that also seems to be more a feature of early, rather than late, adolescence. With maturity, clique membership and exclusion appear to be less of a problem, whilst friendships appear strengthened and enduring. The question of whether this is a 'girl thing' or a 'girls' school thing' remains. There are certainly very clear assumptions about girls' friendships. Clique membership

and inclusion has been viewed as an important aspect of girlhood, and inclusion in high status (i.e., popular) cliques demands conformity to heteronormative expectations of femininity (Warrington and Younger, 2011). Such stereotypes reflect an essentialised natural meanness of girls, that they are bitchy and competing for male attention (Brown, 2003; Ringrose, 2003). There is a pathologized view of middle-class girls in particular where meanness is the norm. This is set against the need to be seen as a 'nice girl', where aggression can only be expressed relationally, rather than physically (Ringrose, 2006). Exclusion and verbal aggression are seen as part of being girls (Ringrose and Renold, 2010). However, many of the alumnae were keen to reject such stereotypes as not at all reflective of their school experience. Whilst there were cliques, and there was 'bitchiness', these were seen by some to be less of an issue, and the overwhelming positive reflections on school would suggest this to be the case.

It is unclear whether the difficulties with friendships are a feature of a girls' school (or this one in particular), or a feature of early adolescence. Since cliques tend to be single sex, it is not clear whether or not the same issues arise, or indeed to a greater or lesser extent in a mixed context. Due to the paucity of research on friendships in single sex compared to mixed sex contexts, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions.

Drawing any firm conclusions on the impact of cliques and friendships is challenging since the experiences seem to be both varied and dichotomous. It would be reasonable however to synthesize the data to reflect exactly that – friendships are both a source of identity, belonging and well-being, as well as a source of conflict and difficulty. Perhaps it is the valency of friendships, and the powerful effect of them, both positive and negative, that is important. On balance, with so many comments on both the quality of friendships and the problems with cliques, it may be that both are felt more keenly. In addition, with comments that are keen to contradict the 'Mean Girls' trope, it may be that difficulties with cliques are felt, but that the friendships were stronger, with a net positive effect.

In this section I have considered the importance of friendships in terms of belongingness and identification, exploring the dichotomy of secure friendships, but difficulties with cliques. The stereotype about the 'bitchiness' of girls seems to be recognized, and experienced. However,

with many keen to dispute that their school, as a girls' school, was more problematic than a mixed school suggests that whilst girls may well have a tendency towards cliquey behaviour, the converse of this, strong friendships, may be more a feature of girls' schools than mixed schools. Thus, the strength of friendships mitigates against the problems with cliques. In the next chapter, I set out to show how the features of a girls' school coalesce in terms of the development of confidence. That is, friendships, school engagement and the mitigation of traditional gender stereotypes can all contribute to the development of confidence. I go on to suggest that confidence is an important quality that can develop in a girls' school. Finally, I consider how this confidence enables girls to make aspirational choices, which, in turn, lead to higher academic and career outcomes.

Chapter Eight: Synthesis, Conclusions and Discussion

8.1 Synthesis and Conclusions

Through the survey data and through interviews I have established that (with a few exceptions) the alumnae look back on their time in school as very happy. In general, they described a supportive environment, in terms of both teachers and friends. Good quality, enduring friendships were reported, alongside a sense of community. They described a sense of freedom, where the physical absence of boys, meant they could be themselves without fear of judgement. They invested themselves in the school, taking advantage of the many opportunities available to them beyond the academic curriculum. Finally, they went on to university, and into careers, feeling secure in their choices. Underpinning all of this, and the concept most frequently mentioned, is confidence. Whether it is described as self-esteem, assuredness, or self-efficacy, confidence drives aspirational choices. But this confidence has been developed, it is not a given. Girls' schools can develop confidence through three key mechanisms:

First, the perception that there is less pressure to conform to traditional gender stereotypes in the school context, allows girls to make choices and to succeed in traditionally male dominated domains. This is most keenly felt in STEM subjects, but also more widely in terms of speaking up and having one's voice heard. The alumnae reported frequently that they were often the only women talking in university seminars because they had never learned not to. Thus, whilst most literature relates to girls' participation and confidence in STEM, there is a wider consideration in terms of empowerment. Simply put, without boys around, girls develop greater confidence. Stereotype Threat (Aronson and Steele, 1995) can help shed light on this as in contexts where only females are present, anxiety about performance in male-dominated domains is diminished. Hence, greater confidence is felt in performance in physical sciences and maths. Numerous accounts, as shown in the previous chapter, pointed to feeling confident in class, as well as confidence in maths and physics. As a theory, Stereotype Threat can be used to understand the underlying mechanisms that may explain why girls in girls' schools participate in STEM fields in higher numbers in comparison to their mixed school peers, taking understanding

of this trend beyond a description of patterns, to a more fundamental level. Whilst only a few of the alumnae entered into STEM professions, the consistent message was that they felt able to make choices. Those who did go on to study/work in STEM, did not really consider that this might be an unusual choice. This suggests that, at school at least, they may not have been fully aware of such stereotypes, and as such were not inhibited by them. Whilst a single-sex space may not necessarily introduce such stereotypes, these do exist in the wider world and hence, it would be impossible not to be/come aware of them. The school context may have offered an alternative narrative, i.e., one where girls belong in STEM, allowing the girls to make that choice without concern of not belonging. Stereotype Threat theory would predict underperformance when traditional gender stereotypes are made salient. When they are not, the effect is not shown. Thus in a context where gender stereotypes in terms of STEM are not promoted, then there should be little threat.

Second, engaging with the school and participating in co-curricular activities develops friendships, interests and skills. Moreover, participation both encourages and reflects a sense of belongingness, of being part of a community. Belongingness and fitting in foster self-esteem, and therefore are important in terms of confidence. As the data in the previous chapter shows, high degrees of participation were the norm among the alumnae, as was a sense of belonging and, importantly, high levels of confidence. Whilst these factors may be bi-directional, it is clear that girls' schools, with a wide range of co-curricular opportunities, where girls lead and succeed, can further develop confidence.

Finally, the quality of friendships is important, this is particularly so for girls. The narrative accounts presented in the previous chapter showed that alumnae reflected in particular on the strong friendships and their enduring quality. Conversely the difficulties with cliques were also reported in the data. It seems however that the valency of friendships within a girls' school acts to increase confidence as well as having the potential to undermine it. However, the competitiveness of cliques may be lessened through the physical absence of boys whilst in school.

In the preceding chapters, I considered each of these in relation to existing literature and will not therefore repeat this here. I will however consider the theoretical frameworks I have used which on first glance may appear disparate, and I will attempt to show how each are interlinked.

As the over-arching finding relates to confidence, Bandura's theory in relation to self-efficacy is also an over-arching framework. To re-cap, Bandura proposed that self-efficacy is built through four mechanisms.

First, Mastery Experiences – these are times when goals are achieved, and this fosters a sense that other goals in the future might also be achieved. In a girls' school, girls have more opportunities to achieve their goals. This does not imply that girls in mixed contexts do not, rather that girls, in the absence of boys who tend to dominate, have more opportunities. The reason for this relates to traditional gender stereotypes. In a girls' school, it is self-evidently always the girls who are achieving accolades, whatever they may be and, moreover, in traditionally male dominated domains it is girls who are achieving. Therefore, each girl will have more opportunities to achieve her goals. In relation to this, because Stereotype Threat (Aronson and Steele, 1997) may be reduced, girls may be more likely to engage in opportunities and subjects that may be viewed as more traditionally stereotypically the preserve of boys/men, since they will experience lesser concern about their own performance in relation to boys/men. In turn, this may afford them more mastery experiences where they will have experienced success in such fields and as a result will lead to greater confidence and sense of belonging in what would be considered traditionally male fields. This may then have important economic implications as careers in STEM tend to attract higher incomes. This means that Stereotype Threat, or its reduction can be seen to have a considerable impact on girls' sense of belonging as well as possibilities for achievement. Achievement of goals is self-perpetuating, as through achievement, self-efficacy is strengthened and this gives the girls courage to try more things. In turn, this fosters aspiration and could explain why girls in girls' schools may make more aspirational choices.

Second, Vicarious Experiences – witnessing others, with whom we identify, achieving goals. In a girls' school, girls will experience other girls achieving goals. Similarly, they will witness other girls speaking up and having a voice. Again, in the physical absence of boys, girls will only witness other girls, thus any goals achieved, will be achieved by girls. This is a powerful message for all girls, particularly for those looking up to older girls. Conversely, in a mixed context, girls may witness other girls being quiet in the presence of boys or being more likely to conform to gendered expectations of femininity. These vicarious experiences could have the opposite effect of reducing confidence. Stereotype Threat can be a useful means of understanding this. The experiences of other girls achieving in male dominated domains can serve to challenge traditional gender stereotypes or offer an alternative narrative, such that the impact of such stereotypes on performance is reduced. The valency of these experiences relate to two other factors: the extent to which one identifies with the school itself, and second, the extent to which one identifies with the other girls. These both can be explained in terms of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) where identifying with a group, and feeling a sense of belonging are important for self-esteem as we are naturally inclined to want to feel part of a group. If a girl identifies strongly with other girls in her school, and with her friendship group, the vicarious experiences will have a more positive impact. Furthermore, identifying with the school itself, and feeling a sense of belonging could also encourage further engagement with the school. Such an emotional investment can foster wider participation and Commitment (Bernstein, 1997) to the school. Wider participation can also foster a sense of belongingness. The alumnae reflected clearly on the sense of fitting in, and belonging. The word 'community' was used by many to describe the school, with clear accounts relating to a sense of belonging.

Third, Verbal Persuasion – the support and encouragement from others. This comes from two sources in school: teachers and peers. In the narrative accounts presented in the previous chapter, the alumnae spoke at length about the strong, supportive friendships in school as well as the support and encouragement they had from their teachers. The strength of female friendships may be a particular feature of a girls only context, where the competition for the immediate attention of boys is diminished. Furthermore, without having to compete with more dominant boys, the girls have more attention than they might not otherwise have had from

their teachers. Overall, a girls' school can be well placed to offer more support and encouragement to girls.

Finally, Emotional and Physiological States – how one is feeling. Well-being or otherwise will impact on confidence. The alumnae reported being happy at school and from this I can infer that, in the main, their emotional states were relatively sound. It is difficult to comment on this specifically since I do not have the data to support any claims and could be an area for further exploration.

The application of an inter-disciplinary approach has allowed the understanding and analysis of the findings in a novel way. The blend of sociological (Bernstein), social psychological (Tajfel and Turner; Aronson and Steele) and psychological (Bandura) has allowed for different levels of analysis, from the interpersonal to the psycho-social, shedding light on some of the elements of a girls' school that may contribute to the development of confidence.

Thus, girls' schools are environments that can develop the confidence of girls. This is fostered through the promulgation of alternatives to traditional gender stereotypes, the strength of friendships and through a sense of belonging to a community.

8.2 Contribution to the field

For much of my professional career I have been concerned with developing girls' academic abilities and helping them gain entry into higher education. Through this study I have attempted to understand the experiences of former pupils at an all-girls school. This thesis adds to the existing literature in a number of important ways. First, the majority of literature pertains to highly elite schools, I wanted to explore the experiences of attending a school that is less elite, and in turn to contribute to the exiting literature in order to understand the private sector more fully. Green et al., (2018) describe schools that are more elite than others as 'Tatler Schools'. These are the top private schools in the UK according to The Tatler magazine, that charge higher than average fees. They tend to be boarding, are more academically selective, and include the old 'public schools', often known as the Clarendon Schools, such as Harrow, Elton College and Rugby (Worth et al., 2022) as well as other more 'exclusive' schools. Of the current top 30 Tatler Girls' Schools (www.Tatler.com), the vast majority are located in London

and the Home Counties, and are boarding or mixed day-boarding. Typical day fees are £24,000 - £30,000 per annum, whilst boarding fees are in the region of £45,000 per annum (www.isc.co.uk), with only six of these former Direct Grant schools. In addition, Worth et al., (2022) have described 12 elite girls' schools, forming an exclusive network, of which two were former Direct Grant schools. From my reading, and reflections on the different tiers of private schools, this study contributes an important understanding in the diverse private sector. As discussed in the introduction, the subject school, as a former Direct Grant school, represents an arguably hidden strata of private schools. Since much of the existing literature appears to reflect schools at the more elite end of a spectrum of private schools, there is an argument for exploring those at the less elite end of that spectrum. With a different history to the most elite schools, such schools tend to be located within cities or larger provincial towns, and tend to be day schools as opposed to boarding or mixed day/boarding. With lower fees, such schools are (financially) accessible to a wider range of economic backgrounds, and whilst the ability to pay is still a factor, the student body is more middle class than upper middle class. Nationally, there are many similar schools, and hence this study could represent this portion of the sector reasonably well. This study then contributes to the existing literature on elite, selective education. Moreover, studying schools like this adds to the literature, and also raises important questions about what we mean by 'elite'. There is much rhetoric both in the media and politics about the future of private schools. Some call for the outright abolition, on the basis that elite schools are only for the wealthy, and as such create inequality. It is possible that this comes without a full understanding of the sector – assuming homogeneity, and hence it is important to understand the sector as a whole, and to understand the nuances of it. As with the state sector, there are many different types of school, serving many different students and their families. It would be wrong to assume they are all the same.

This study also contributes to the literature by focussing less on privilege and the reproduction of privilege. Whilst this is an important issue, much has already been written on this and there are important debates concerning the future of private schools on the UK. Instead, I sought to understand what important elements, or 'x-factor' make up the private girls school experience, with a view to capturing the essence, beyond privilege, that might be emulated elsewhere,

allowing girls of many persuasions to flourish. I was interested to 'get into the heads' of the alumnae, as a different area of exploration of the psycho-social understandings of the experience of attending a private girls' school and, as such, I have applied a range of theoretical positions, drawn from social psychology and sociology. I believe this offers a different perspective, drawing these disciplines together, allowing for interdisciplinary dialogue that might be used in future to inform other, similar research. The application of Stereotype Threat. (Steele and Aronson, 1996) as a lens to understand the impact of a range of gender stereotypes in a school context, is not entirely unique, as there are a range of experimental studies exploring the direct impact of ST on the maths performance of girls and boys (e.g., Huguet and Regner, 2007; 2009) suggesting that ST can operate in the classroom. As a theory this invites a critical examination of how gender is constructed and how it shapes practices. This study has attempted to broaden understandings of ST in terms of how students who had been in single sex classrooms had conceptualised gender stereotypes, and whether they had felt inhibited in relation of academic performance. It is possible that even though boys are not physically present that their presence is still felt, that girls feel under the watchful gaze 'in their heads', or from other girls. However, this is not something the alumnae had suggested. Whilst there were reports of cliquey and 'bitchy' behaviour this related mainly to gossiping and backbiting rather than deriding other girls for academic success, or being good at maths. From the accounts of the alumnae, they felt clear that the impact of traditional gender stereotypes was reduced, particularly in relation to STEM. As a sample, they were dissimilar from typical alumnae where a higher proportion go on the STEM subjects, and careers. However, not choosing something does not necessarily mean one felt inhibited whilst learning at GCSE and A level. It is certainly the case more generally that girls in girls schools are more likely to opt for STEM subjects at A level and beyond. Choosing STEM subjects beyond school, i.e., when entering a mixed context, suggests a greater confidence in STEM that might be otherwise experienced. My suggestion, and this could be the focus of future work, is that whilst girls in girls' schools may be well aware of traditional gender stereotypes, and perhaps equally likely as those in mixed schools to reject such stereotypes, they are less impacted by them. This is because it is in a mixed context that the impact on performance is most acutely observed, thus the repeated experiences of 'doing

well at STEM', as well as the reduced concern over performing in relation to boys (as they are not physically there) can work to engender greater confidence than may otherwise be developed. There remains a question over the extent to which traditional gender stereotypes are internalised, and whether this is lessened through counter-stereotypical messages and experiences. This study has contributed to understandings of these issues, although there is room for further inquiry.

Whilst the number of girls' schools is in decline, there is still a place for single-sex spaces. For those like me, who teach in a girls' school this study holds a mirror up to our experience as teachers and our working assumptions. In reflecting on my own professional practice, I can easily see how the experiences in school, both academic and co-curricular, are mechanisms through which girls find their confidence and learn to make their voices heard. To have this reflected through the accounts of the alumnae who acted as informants for this study confirms, for me, the continued role of single sex schools for girls. There are also messages to take back to my own school not just in terms of findings, but to promote discussion and reflection about the environment we work in. This may be important in considering our provision in terms of the co-curriculum, as well as wider community engagement. Although this is a study of a single school, there is an audience too across the wider community of girls' schools, and there are valuable insights for dissemination and discussion.

There is also a discussion to be had about the affordances of single sex experiences in mixed schools. For example, mixed schools could consider introducing, or expanding single sex classes. These could have particular impact in traditional male dominated domains where Stereotype Threat may undermine the performance of girls. Schools might also consider offering opportunities specifically for girls, such as girls-only science clubs, for example. These spaces could allow girls to develop their confidence and other skills, which may then extend into other spheres. Engagement with the school itself can also have positive impacts. Offering a wide variety of co-curricular opportunities such as leadership and enterprise programmes, either single-sex, or mixed, can encourage participation. Schools may consider opportunities for girls only, to allow the development of confidence and skills. Girls should have opportunities for leadership, and equal celebration of achievements. For example, schools could place equal

value on sports played by girls. Vicarious experiences of seeing other girls achieving, and being celebrated can be very powerful, and increase the confidence of girls. The visibility of role models could also be considered, this could include placing equal emphasis on the celebration of women's achievements, as well as those in school. Again, such experiences will foster a greater sense of self-efficacy, encouraging girls to consider that, they too, could achieve in a similar way. Schools should ensure they are challenging traditional gender stereotypes wherever they exist, and to ensure teachers are aware of their own biases. Boys could also be encouraged to understand, and challenge such gender stereotypes. Overall, encouraging the participation of girls, and challenging the domination of boys are important steps that all schools could take. As confidence is key, all schools should be ensuring that girls have the opportunities and encouragement to develop their confidence.

8.3 Limitations of the research

8.3.1 Design

This research was retrospective, in that alumnae were asked to reflect on their experience of school, up to eight years after leaving. Whilst this was a deliberate attempt to capture reflections, this also allowed me to gain insight as to the trajectories of the alumnae. The alternative was to conduct a longitudinal study, tracking alumnae from the point of leaving school through to their early career. This was not possible due to the limitations of the professional doctorate and hence a retrospective approach was taken. Naturally, this has problems both in terms of accuracy and biases in recall. Memory is fluid and subject to revision through the process of recall. Our biases and expectations (in the form of schemas and scripts) distort both processing and recall of information, and as such cannot be relied upon to generate an objective 'truth'. As such, the only 'truth' lies in the subjective realities and accounts of those who have experienced something. A full acknowledgement of the subjective nature of the alumnae's accounts was very much in the design of this study. Therefore, whilst the subjective and retrospective nature of the accounts could be viewed as problematic, on the other hand, these accounts are valid indications of the experience of these women. There is the possibility that the reflections offered by the alumnae were, either by intention or otherwise,

just a reflection of the narratives offered by parents and the school itself in their rationale for choosing for their daughters to attend such a school (for example, the belief that girls' schools develop confidence). Whilst acknowledging this possibility, I feel confident that the rich and detailed accounts given both in the survey and in interview would not have been given if they were simply rehearsing familiar justifications for girls' schools. Therefore, I feel the accounts given are a good reflection of their experiences. A further consideration concerns the conceptualisation of 'confidence'. Whilst for me, confidence was understood in terms of self-efficacy, this may not necessarily have been the case for the alumnae. There are a number of ways in which confidence may be defined. As explained in Chapter Three, I have adopted Bandura's (1994), definition of confidence as self-efficacy, a self-belief, or a 'can-do' attitude, but there are, of course, differing ways in which the term confidence may be understood or felt. Confidence could be understood in terms of feeling able to speak up (e.g., in seminars or class) and have one's voice heard, and this could be termed self-confidence. Many of the alumnae made reference to feeling confident, or otherwise, in this respect. Such confidence could be understood as confidence to contribute because one knows the answer, thus confidence in terms of knowledge – a different type of confidence to self-confidence. However, this would not be reflective of the ways in which the alumnae were expressing themselves – no reference was made to confidence in terms of knowledge. Thus, it would be reasonable to conclude that, in terms of self-confidence, we were 'on the same page' in terms of a shared meaning. In addition, some alumnae referred to confidence in terms of feeling they could do anything; a concept most closely akin to self-efficacy. Whilst I took self-efficacy as an overall definition of confidence, with the intention of capturing a number of different constructions of confidence, I believe this definition also captured the experience of the alumnae as reported to me. Related to this was the way alumnae described being confident to 'be themselves', i.e., to express their own interests and not fearing judgement or derision. Again, this could be viewed as a different form of confidence from the one I had chosen as a definition. On the other hand, this is still a form of self-confidence or indeed, self efficacy. On reflection, it would have been better to have included a clearer definition of confidence, or perhaps given clearer indication of the different forms of confidence that may be experienced or felt. However, without this, I can

only assume that the ways in which confidence might be understood has been reflected in the way the alumnae described it, or revealed by the context. In terms of applying the findings in relation to confidence, it would be prudent in this case to be specific regarding the context in which confidence may be felt (or not) and in turn, which aspect of confidence is in question. Thus, in describing how a girls' only context can develop confidence, this means specifically that it may nurture confidence to speak up, and/or the confidence to try and do new things, and/or the confidence to be oneself.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the sample was limited, both in size and representation due to the way in which the alumnae were recruited, and the findings can only be considered with these limitations in mind. It is possible that the sample may have been skewed towards those with positive experiences of school, but not all of those surveyed reported such positive reflections, and it would be reasonable to consider the sample as broadly reflective of alumnae.

From the outset, this was designed as a small-scale study of one school, and so whilst I cannot make claims about wider representation, I do feel reasonably confident that this does provide some insight as to the experiences of those who chose to respond. Furthermore, this study adds to the existing literature on private girls' schools, since much of it, in the UK, concerns elite schools. As discussed in Chapter Five, this study is intended to represent private girls' schools that would not be described 'Tatler Schools' (Green et al., 2018) i.e., the more selective, elite, predominantly boarding schools that charge higher than average fees. Since the existing literature tends to concern itself with such schools, this thesis can contribute a different perspective on the existing literature. This study concerned a suburban day school, located in a city with a number of private schools, and as such represents a different type of establishment, compared to boarding schools in rural locations.

8.3.2 Survey

The survey yielded 50 cases (two more were excluded) but I had originally hoped for a higher response rate. With this in mind I had included many closed questions that yielded quantitative data, suitable for inferential analysis but given the reduced number, this was not possible. However, the survey data facilitated descriptive analysis and free text comments provided an

additional source of information. The open-ended questions proved invaluable in providing further insights from the survey respondents. As a result, I was able to draw on more qualitative data than anticipated and this data provided a very useful confirmation of the interviewees data.

On reflection, there were questions that provided data that I did not use in the end as the focus of the research shifted slightly in response to the data obtained. In addition, there were questions that I feel I should have included. The question of socio-economic background was framed in terms of parental employment and whether or not they were degree educated. I chose not to ask about social class directly as I was not certain about how to frame this for consistency in responses since, designating oneself, one's parents and one's background can be subjective. With hindsight, this would have been a useful addition. The use of parental education and occupation was a good indication, but it is not necessarily reliable since a non-degree educated, clerical worker could just as equally be of a middle class or working-class background. Therefore, the social class of the alumnae's parents is not clear. However, asking about education and occupation, gave an indication of the background of the alumnae themselves. As such I felt this was a good indication of the social and academic context, although not necessarily social class.

8.3.3 The place of the researcher

This research was conducted within my own professional context, gathering data from young women, some who I may well have taught, or known better than others. This could be viewed as problematic since the alumnae may have responded differently to someone unknown. It is possible that for some, they may have felt an obligation to present their experiences in a positive light. Similarly, some may have chosen to complete the survey, and be interviewed as a result of my role in their school experience, although the presentation of my research being undertaken by the school might equally have provided some distance. My own expectations and biases could also have affected how I have interpreted data. I was acutely aware of this, and sought less to offer interpretive insights, but to present the data, that is, the accounts of the alumnae. To this end, the qualitative interview data turned out to compliment the

quantitative survey data, with the former offering elaboration and insight. I cannot claim to be free of bias, nor indeed would that be possible, however, in my acknowledgement of it I hope to mitigate against it. To this end, my six-year journey through my professional doctorate, both the taught and research stages, has provided a basis for questioning, rather than accepting at face value. Arguably all research has inherent biases, and even if I were not a member of staff in the school I was focusing on, I could not claim an absence of bias since my own expectation will still colour my interpretation.

For both of these issues, the question concerning my place in the research has implications for the validity of the data, and how I have presented it. Were it the case that I obtained wholly positive accounts of the school, with little or no negative comments, or that all of the respondents were highly successful (by their own account), having attended elite universities, it would be fair to question the validity of the data in revealing insights into experiences of a private girls' school. However, the accounts were mixed, interviewees who I had known reasonably well during their time in school were candid about the difficulties they experienced, alumnae who were unhappy at school chose to respond to the survey and therefore whilst I could be accused of bias, the data obtained may not have been skewed by my own role as much as could be suggested. Similarly, I believe I have presented the data as objectively as I could.

8.4 Future research

As I have no comparative data, I cannot draw definitive conclusions in terms of the effects of academic selection and/or sex. Whilst comparison with existing research is in part possible, the outcomes and processes I have identified may, or may not be attributable to the school and instead be an effect of being female (rather than male) and or, the effect of academic selection. Within the private sector, class sizes are generally smaller and have greater resources. These factors, as well as family background could also be important. However, the purpose of this study was not to control for these factors, since all of this is part of the 'package' of a private girls' school. Rather, I was interested in the accounts of the young women themselves and what

they believe were important factors in their experience of school. No mention was made by them (voluntarily) of academic selection, resources, or small classes.

It would be interesting to draw comparisons with a mixed school, with similar profiles. This would reveal any differences between single sex and mixed contexts for girls. A number of respondents believed they would have experienced more difficulties with competition and cliques in a mixed school, or experienced more sexism. Others thought the opposite would have been the case. Therefore, a direct comparison would be illuminating.

Ideally, this research would have been longitudinal, rather than retrospective, as this would rely less on the accuracy of recall. It would be very interesting to track girls as they enter year 7, through to age 25, to understand how they fared in navigating adolescence and young adulthood in a single sex context, and ideally compared to a mixed context. Such a study would enable more accurate insight into the socio-economic background of the participants and allow for control of this important variable.

8.4 Closing comments

Undertaking this research has been a rewarding and illuminating process, and the impact on my professional practice has been considerable. I have a much better insight into the features of school life that can be important for the students within it and, as such, place much greater value on participation in co-curricular activities as opportunities for personal development. As such, I am hoping to promote these, not just as participation for the sake of participation, but that through this, confidence can be developed. I also see more clearly the value of a single-sex space. Whilst in current political climates, this may be contentious, I am still an advocate for such spaces to enable the development of young women through adolescence. A further impact has been in terms of research. I am very keen to establish an Action Research group with my colleagues in order to conduct small-scale projects concerning the evaluation of the efficacy of different teaching and learning interventions. On a wider scale I hope to share this with colleagues in other schools. From a professional development perspective, the doctorate has potential impact in terms of my career development, indeed I have promoted it to various colleagues.

The professional doctorate by its nature is located within the context of my profession and as such I have sought to understand the confidence I see every day in the young women I work with. I now understand that the very nature of a girls' school, by being a girls-only space, serves to develop this confidence. Girls' schools can develop confidence, and this is achieved through challenging, and offering alternatives to traditional gender stereotypes, the sense of community and belonging, and the strong friendships forged. Whilst these may not be true for all girls, from the alumnae who have contributed to this thesis, this speaks for the majority. This study might suggest that the confidence observed is not just the preserve of the privileged through a middle-class background, but is something all girls can develop in a girls' school.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Survey Questions (edited)

Q1 Dear Alumna As a former student of Greenfields School I am hoping that you would be interested in participating in the research I am undertaking for my Professional Doctorate thesis through Cardiff University. I am primarily interested in your reflections on attending an independent girls' school as well as your career development to date. This survey is designed to be completely anonymous. At the end of the survey, you will have the option of providing an email contact should you be interested in being interviewed to explore your experiences further. If you choose to do this, your data will be anonymized and remain confidential. Please note that you have the right to withdraw your data should you change your mind, you can do this by emailing me at Cardiff University, using the address below. If you have any questions about the survey and research please do email me. jephcotel@Cardiff.ac.uk

Thank you in advance

Lisa Jephcote

By clicking 'next' you confirm that you understand and accept the conditions of the research and have read the information above

Q2 Thinking back to your time at senior school, how would you describe your experience?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	
Happy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unhappy
Isolated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Fitted in
Positive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Negative
Hard	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Easy

Q3 What year (i.e. Y7-12) did you enter senior school?

Q4 Which year (e.g. 2009) did you leave school?

Q5 Where did you go after you completed your GCSEs?

Q6 With the benefit of hindsight, would you make the same decision now?

Q7 Why did you stay at RHS/RMS Sixth Form?

Q8 Why did you leave School? Where did you go?

Q11 What did you do in your gap Year(s)? Choose all that apply

Q12 Where did you go next?

Q15 How would you describe the all girls environment of school?

	Strongly agree (6)	Somewhat agree (7)	Neither agree not disagree (8)	Somewhat disagree (9)	Strongly disagree (13)
Supportive (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cliquey (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Competitive (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safe (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Closeted (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16 To what extent do you believe that attending a girls' school has... use the star rating to indicate your agreement

Developed my confidence (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made it difficult to enter a mixed educational environment (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made me competitive (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made me assertive (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sheltered me (5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made me conform to gender stereotypes (6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harmed me (7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Held me back (8)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraged me to take risks (9)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q17 These are a number of qualities that are seen to be important for women in their professional lives. Do you feel these were developed in you specifically through school? Drag each statement to the appropriate box

Definitely yes	Definitely not	Neither yes or no
<input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork (1)
<input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration (2)
<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership (3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership (3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership (3)
<input type="checkbox"/> Creativity (4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Creativity (4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Creativity (4)
<input type="checkbox"/> Open-mindedness (5)	<input type="checkbox"/> Open-mindedness (5)	<input type="checkbox"/> Open-mindedness (5)
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication (6)	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication (6)	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication (6)
<input type="checkbox"/> Determination (7)	<input type="checkbox"/> Determination (7)	<input type="checkbox"/> Determination (7)
<input type="checkbox"/> Resilience (8)	<input type="checkbox"/> Resilience (8)	<input type="checkbox"/> Resilience (8)

_____ Empathy (9)
_____ Multi-tasking (10)
_____ Ambition (11)
_____ Independence (12)
_____ Competition (14)
_____ Confidence (15)
_____ Global awareness (16)

_____ Empathy (9)
_____ Multi-tasking (10)
_____ Ambition (11)
_____ Independence (12)
_____ Competition (14)
_____ Confidence (15)
_____ Global awareness (16)

_____ Empathy (9)
_____ Multi-tasking (10)
_____ Ambition (11)
_____ Independence (12)
_____ Competition (14)
_____ Confidence (15)
_____ Global awareness (16)

Q18 Which of the following school-based extra-curricular activities did you regularly participate in whilst in school? Choose all that apply

Team sport (1)

Other sport (11)

Clubs/societies linked to academic subjects (2)

Music ensembles/choirs (3)

Drama/dance performance (4)

Debating (5)

Talks/lectures in school (6)

Talks/lectures outside, organised by school (7)

Joint activities with boys' school (8)

Other clubs (9)

None (12)

Q19 Which of the following school activities did you participate in? Choose all that apply

Overseas language trip (1)

Overseas expedition e.g. Iceland (2)

Duke of Edinburgh's Award Bronze (3)

Duke of Edinburgh's Award Silver (4)

Duke of Edinburgh's Award Gold (5)

Other outdoor pursuits (6)

Music tour (7)

Sports tour (8)

Other overseas educational trip (9)

Overseas exchange (10)

None (11)

Q20 Did you have any positions of responsibility at school? What were they?

Q21 What was the best thing about attending school?

Q22 What was the worst thing about attending school?

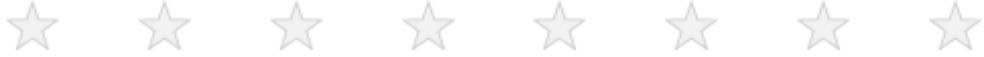
Q23 If you had the choice, would you send your daughter to a school like yours? Please explain your choice

Q24 If you were choosing a school for your daughter, to what extent would the following be important to you?

	Very (3)	Somewhat (4)	Not a great deal (8)	Not at all (9)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local reputation (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> League table position (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Opportunities for leadership (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Networking opportunities (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extra curricular activities and enrichment (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School ethos (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Single sex (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q25 Whilst at school, to what extent were you confident in offering your opinion in class?

Confidence
(18)



Q26 In your Post 16 mixed course, to what extent did you feel confident in offering your opinion in class discussion?

Confidence (18)



Q27 Are you still in regular contact with? Choose all that apply

Secondary school friends (1)

University friends who attended schools similar to yours (2)

University friends who attended state school (3)

None (4)

Q28 Whilst at school, did you complete work experience?

Q29 How did you get it? Choose all that apply

Family connection (2)

School friend connection (3)

School organised (4)

Organised by me independently (5)

Other (8) _____

Q30 Where did you begin your undergraduate degree?

Q31 Did you enter your first choice for HE?

Q33 Aside from entry criteria, why did you choose this institution? Tick all that apply

Q34 How did you feel about entering a mixed educational environment?

Q35 At university, to what extent were you confident in expressing your opinions in seminar/discussion groups?

Confidence (18)



Q36 Whilst at university, did you complete work experience or an internship?

Q37 How did you get it?

Q38 After graduating, did you complete work experience or an internship?

Q40 Have any of the following been helpful in the development of your career? For example, networking. Choose all that apply

School friends (RHS/RMS) (1)

Other school friends (2)

University contacts (3)

Family contacts (4)

Family of school friends (5)

RHS/RMS teachers (6)

Other (7) _____

None (8)

Q42 What is your current or most recent job title?

Q44 Do you consider yourself successful in your career to date?

Q45 Do you feel that your current or most recent job reflects your qualifications?

Q46 Please rate your career progression to date

	Far exceeds expectations (12)	Exceeds expectations (13)	Equals expectations (14)	Short of expectations (15)	Far short of expectations (16)
Salary (25)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility (26)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leadership (27)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prospects (28)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q47 What factors are important for professional success. Rank these in order of importance

- _____ Hard work (1)
- _____ Family connections (2)
- _____ Qualifications (3)
- _____ Competitiveness (4)
- _____ Networking (5)

Q48 How did you feel about entering a mixed sex working environment?

Q49 In your current or most recent place of work, to what extent are/were you confident in expressing your opinions in meetings or similar contexts?

Confidence (15) 

Q51 What is your current or most recent income, Gross pro rata, excluding bonuses (average if Self-Employed)

- 0-10K (1)
- 10-20K (2)
- 20-30K (3)
- 30-40K (4)
- 40-50K (5)
- 50-60K (6)
- 60-70K (7)
- 70-80K (8)
- 80-90K (9)
- 90-100K (10)
- 100K+ (11)

Q52 As far as you are aware, are/were you paid the same salary as your male colleagues who have the same job title as you?

Q53 If you were in a position where you felt you deserved a pay rise, how would you go about asking for it?

Q54 What was the main subject of your degree?

Q55 Did you complete your degree?

Q57 Are you working towards any further qualifications?

Q58 Did you change your degree?

Q59 What is the classification of your degree?

Q60 Do you hold any Post Graduate qualifications?

Q61 Are you working towards any Post Graduate Qualifications?

Q65 Please list your GCSE results - just the number and grades (e.g 6Bs and 3Cs)

Q66 Please enter your Post-16 qualifications (e.g. A levels BTEC IB etc.) Enter subjects and grades/points

Q67 Whilst you were at school, how would you describe your parents/guardians job(s)?

	Parent 1 (1)	Parent 2 (2)
Self Employed (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managerial (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clerical (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Skilled (5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Semi Skilled (6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unskilled (7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not employed (8)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q68 In your close family, who is educated to degree level?

Q69 Do you have a spouse/partner?

Q71 Did your spouse/partner attend.... for most of their Secondary Education?

Q72 Did your parents attend? Choose all that apply

Independent Girls' School (1)

Independent Boys' School (3)

Independent Mixed School (4)

Mixed Grammar School (5)

Single Sex Grammar School (8)

Mixed Comprehensive School (6)

Single Sex Comprehensive School (7)

Q73 Do you have children? if so, what is/are their ages?

Q74 Are you currently on maternity leave?

Q75 How would you describe your ethnicity?

Q82 What were your parents' country of birth?

Q84 How old were you when you moved to the UK?

Q85 What would you consider to be your first language?

Q86 Whilst you were at school, what was/were the main language/s spoken at home ?

Q88 I am interested in your reflections on your time in school (negative as well as positive). Is there anything that you would like to contribute?

Q89 If you would be willing to be interviewed to explore your experience of school in more detail, please provide a contact email. If you do not, please be assured that your survey responses are anonymous

Q107 Thank you for completing this survey. You have the option of returning back to amend or remove any responses. By clicking next you agree for your data to be used in this research. If you do not click next your responses will be deleted one week after beginning the survey

Appendix B Interview Schedule

Hello, thanks etc

Could you tell me a little more about your current employment; roles and responsibilities;

What direction do you see yourself going next?

Do you expect to be successful?

Is this the route you expected when graduating?

How was university? Did you enjoy your course? What aspects did you enjoy?

How was the academic work?

How was the experience of seminars? Or tutorials? Were you confident in offering opinions or questioning others/lecturers?

Did you fit in? What were your peers like? What sorts of schools had they attended?

How was the transition from school to university? Were you prepared? How different was it to school?

How do you feel having attended a private girls' school?

What do you think was more influential? School or home?

What were your favourite subjects at school?

Which subjects did you perform well in?

What were your subject choices at A level/GCSE based on?

How do you feel about the all-girls context? Do you feel there are disadvantages of this context?

What do you think your school's ethos was/is?

When at school, what were your aspirations? What about your peers?

What were your parents' expectations in terms of your success – academic/professional?

What were your schools' expectations?

Did you work hard to get where you are?

Do you think there is still a place for single sex education (for girls)?

Did you expect to be successful?

How would you describe your family background?

Were you in receipt of a scholarship or bursary? What were the conditions?

To what extent was the school your choice or your parents'? Why do you think your parents' chose a girls' school?

Did you feel under pressure to succeed? What was the source of this?

Did you compare yourself to others?

Who were/are your role models?

Appendix C Interviewee information

Anna is currently working as a Brand Consultant, having graduated from Warwick university with a degree in French and Italian. In describing her career so far, she feels she has been successful and has worked reasonably hard to get where she is. Having secured an internship in PR, she has developed her career from his point. Her experience of university was very positive, she had good friendships and she felt that she fitted in well. Her friends were from similar middle class backgrounds to herself. The transition from school to university was easy and she felt that she was fully settled within the first six weeks. Overall, her reflections on school are very positive

Becca is currently working in the finance sector, delivering training. She graduated with a degree in Classics from Exeter university. She describes university seminars as being much like being in school, with small classes. This made her feel confident in contributing. Her friendships were mainly with people on her course, who had mainly attended girls schools themselves – this is probably a reflection of private schools teaching Classics, Latin and Ancient Greek. Her own background she describes as working class. Neither parent had attended university and had built the family business themselves – securing the finance to send Becca to a private school. Becca was the first in her family to attend university, her brother followed shortly after her. Attending a girls school was a very deliberate decision, Becca was much more drawn to girls schools when moving for year 7 having attended a large mixed state primary. Her experience of school was very positive.

Carla is working in Events Management having graduated from Durham University with a degree in Geography. Since graduating she has built her career confidently and has been assertive in gaining responsibility and promotion. She was not always so self-confident. She describes herself as shy and lacking confidence when she moved from her large mixed state school to joining Greenfields in year 8. As she progressed through the school her confidence grew. She developed secure and lasting friendships and enjoyed good relationships with teachers. Whilst at Durham, she was confident socially, but lacked academic confidence, often feeling inferior to others. Despite this she found her way and felt that she had achieved very well.

Dayna graduated from Durham University with a degree in Anthropology. She is currently working in customer service for a design company. She moved from a mixed private school and recounts an incident of being teased by boys in a drama lesson. This led to a lack of confidence in drama and public speaking. After the move, she grew in confidence and performed on many occasions. She uses this as an

example of how the school allowed her to develop. Whilst at Durham, she described all her friends as being privately educated and she felt very confident in a mixed educational context.

Ellie is a university administrator. She initially graduated from Exeter University with a degree in History and French. She then went on to complete a Masters at Oxford, followed by a PhD at Cambridge University. She found the transition from school to university to be challenging academically. Whilst she was used to writing essays with clear assessment guidelines at A level, now she found she was floundering. She was told she needed to 'write like a man' by which it was meant that she should write with conviction in her arguments, rather than just present evidence to support the arguments of others. On the other hand, she was very confident in voicing her opinions, unlike other women in seminars, and she attributes this to the experience of school. She is very much an advocate for single sex schools, despite recognising that they might not always be best for everyone

Freya teaches level three Business (i.e. A level and BTEC) at an FE college. She graduated from Aston University with a degree in Business and Management. She completed her PGCE via the Teach First initiative meaning she was placed in more challenging schools for her training. She describes feeling different at school as her mother was a single parent, working full time, whereas her peers were middle class, with mother who worked part time, if at all. Despite this, she felt she fitted in and had developed enduring good friendships at school. In addition, she felt under pressure to perform well as she was in receipt of a 50% scholarship. As a teacher she particularly notes how in mixed classes girls are much less likely to put their hands up to contribute, and therefore would like her daughter to attend a single sex school.

Gina is also a teacher. She graduated from Manchester University with a degree in Music. She describes feeling nervous when moving from school to university and found herself less assured of her ability. She found working with men initially 'strange' as she was very unaccustomed to interacting with boys. She describes this as transient and soon felt confident in seminars. School was a very positive experience although she recognises it was a rarefied environment, as well as sheltered. She has worked in both single sex and mixed schools. Overall she feels mixed schools give a better overall experience for both boys and girls.

Hattie is trying to develop a Face Reading business with limited success so far. Having graduated from Loughborough University with a degree in Classics, she went on to start a Masters at Bristol University. This was not a success and she developed some mental health difficulties. She describes school both

positively and negatively. On one hand she valued the academic engagements and the rapport with her teachers, whilst on the other found the prescriptive assessment criteria stifling and at odds with the own opinions and thoughts. Whilst she did have friends at school, she was more introverted. She has good friendships from her time at school.

Isabel is training as a manager in hospitality. She initially completed an Art Foundation course, followed by a degree in Photography at Arts University Bournemouth. Whilst she enjoyed school and has long-lasting friendships from her time there, she does describe some difficulties with cliques and trying to fit in. She found she was trying to fit a mould in order to be accepted by different cliques and was rarely herself. Since leaving school she had a very good college and university experience, developing her self confidence and working hard.

Juliette is a physics teacher. She graduated from Warwick university with a degree in physics, completing her PGCE directly afterwards. She had very positive recollections of school as a place where she had the freedom to be herself and 'mess around', not under pressure to grow up too quickly. Her love of physics and maths was never thought of as unusual, and she did not experience gendered views of subject choice until she was at university. She initially noticed the gender balance skewed towards men, although this did not concern her. As a teacher she is keen to encourage girls to enjoy physics.

Appendix D Ethical Approval

School of Social Sciences
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol
Head of School, Pennaeth yr Ysgol
Dr Tom Hall

SREC Ref No:

STAFF, MPhil/PhD and PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE RESEARCH PROJECTS Ethical Approval Application Form

*Must be submitted by the due deadline to:
The SOCSI Research Office*

Email: socsi-ethics@cardiff.ac.uk / Room 0.24 Glamorgan Building

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please tick relevant project type:	Staff Project Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	PhD Project Yes X
Title of Project:	Mapping the Career Trajectories of Privately Educated Women: the Legacy of a Private Education	
Project Start Date:	June 2017	Project End Date: June 2020
Project Funder:	None	

Name of Researcher(s) / Student:	Lisa Jephcote	
Signature of Lead Researcher / Student:	Lisa Jephcote	
Student Number:	1474086	
Student's Email Address:	Jephcotel@cardiff.ac.uk	
Supervisors:	1 Professor Sally Power	2
Supervisors' Signatures:	1	2
Before completing, please now read the Application Guidance Notes at the end of this form		
SECTION B: PROJECT SUMMARY		
1.	<p>Below, please provide a concise general description of your dissertation project</p> <p>To examine the career trajectories of alumnae, 8-10 years after leaving school (post 18)</p> <p>To compare the trajectories of alumnae of different socio-economic backgrounds</p> <p>To consider whether the school type has contributed to the comparative success of less advantaged students</p> <p>To determine the factors within an independent education that contribute to the development of 'soft skills'. Specifically, to examine which skills may have been developed whilst at school and/or</p>	

	<p>through school activities. These may include communication skills, social and emotional intelligence, assertiveness, teamwork and leadership. This is in part to challenge the criticism that a private school advantage (if it exists) is due to 'old school tie' privileges and access to elite networks rather than something that the school itself provides</p>
2.	<p>What are the research questions ?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What proportion of the young women entered elite universities? (defined as Russell Group universities) 2. What proportion graduated with degrees classed 2(i) or 1st? 3. What proportion entered 'graduate level' occupations? 4. What are the incomes of the alumnae? 5. What were the young women's experiences of school that shed light on their success or otherwise? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 extra-curricular activities e.g. Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Debating, Model United Nations etc. 5.2 pastoral support available 5.3 careers advice available 5.4 wider activities offered (and used) e.g. attending lectures, seminars, productions etc. 5.5 skills training e.g. interview support, study skills, networking opportunities 5.6 positions of responsibility e.g. prefecture, Head Girl, House Captains, Sports Captain etc. 6 What perceptions do the young women have of the way their educational background gave them access to particular universities?

	<p>7 What perceptions do the young women have of the way their educational background gave them access to their careers?</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Who are the participants ?</p> <p>Alumnae of two independent girls' schools located in Bristol</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>How will the participants be recruited ?</p> <p>Use will be made of the contact details provided by the alumnae to the schools for the alumnae networks. Each will be contacted by letter which will detail the project, there will be an information sheet included. Participants will be invited to complete an anonymous survey online. At the end of the survey they may opt to be contacted for further interview, at which point they will be asked to provide an email address.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>What sort of data will be collected and what methods will you use to do this?</p> <p>Survey data – a mixture of open and closed questions, using Qualtrics, online, anonymous</p> <p>Interviews with 12 participants, semi-structured, face to face or Skype/FaceTime</p> <p>The data will therefore be a mix of quantitative and qualitative</p>

6.	<p>How and where (venue) are you undertaking your research?</p> <p>Postal and online survey. Interviews will take place in the interviewees place of work or via Skype/FaceTime.</p> <p>What is the reason(s) for using this particular location ?</p> <p>For convenience and for researcher protection</p>
7.	<p>(a) Will you be analysing secondary data (that is, data collected by others for research purposes) ?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>If YES, does approval already exist for its use in further projects such as yours ?</p> <p>Yes</p>
	<p>(b) Will you be using administrative data (that is, data collected by others for registration, transaction or record keeping purposes) ?</p>

If YES, how will you be using these data (e.g. sifting for suitable research participants or analysing the data) ?

SECTION C: RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

8.	<p>(a) Does your project involve children or young people under the age of 18?</p> <p>If No, go to 10</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No x <input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>(b) If so, have you consulted the University's guidance on child protection procedures, and do you know how to respond if you have concerns?</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
9.	<p>(a) Does your project involve one-to-one or other <i>unsupervised</i> research with children and young people under the age of 18 ?</p> <p>If No, go to 9(b) If Yes, go to 9(c)</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>(b) If your project involves only <i>supervised</i> contact with children and young people under the age of 18, have you consulted the head of the institution where you are undertaking your research to establish if you need a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check?</p> <p>If Yes, and you do need a DBS check, then go to 9(c); if you do not need a DBS check, then go to Question 10.</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>(c) Do you have an up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check ? (Please give details below if you have a pending application)</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
10.	<p>Does your project include people with learning or communication difficulties?</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No x <input type="checkbox"/>
11.	<p>Does your project include people in custody?</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No x <input type="checkbox"/>

12.	Is your project likely to include people involved in illegal activities?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13.	Does your project involve people belonging to a vulnerable group, other than those listed above?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14.	Does your project include people who are, or are likely to become your clients or clients of the department in which you work?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
SECTION D: CONSENT PROCEDURES			
15.	Will you obtain written consent for participation ?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
16.	<p>What procedures will you use to obtain informed consent from participants ?</p> <p>Potential participants will be contacted by letter, together with an information sheet detailing the purpose and procedure, including details of the survey and interviews. They will be told that if they wish to participate they will complete an anonymous online survey. They will have a further opt in where they can choose to provide an email address for further follow-up interviews.</p>		
17.	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed ?	N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
18.	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
19.	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reasons ?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

20.	Will you give potential participants appropriate time to consider participation ?	Yes x <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
21.	Does your project provide for people for whom English / Welsh is not their first language?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No x <input type="checkbox"/>
SECTION E: POTENTIAL HARMS ARISING FROM THE PROJECT			
22.	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No x <input type="checkbox"/>
23.	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing a detriment to their interests as a result of participation?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No x <input type="checkbox"/>
24.	<p>Below, please identify any potential for harm (to yourself or participants) that might arise from the way the research is conducted</p> <p><u>PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE BOX BLANK</u></p>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a risk that respondents might feel the survey and interview questions too personal and a threat to self-esteem. 2. There is a risk that participants might feel under additional pressure to offer information given my role: this is a particular problem for the alumnae of the school in which I have taught. This can only be addressed through assurance that there is no expectation of cooperation and that their data will remain confidential. 3. There is a risk that as a researcher conducting interviews I might be at persona risk 			

25. Below, please set out the measures you will put in place to control possible harms to yourself or participants

PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE BOX BLANK

1. To address this, all questions will include an 'opt out' where the information does not require disclosure. Similarly, assurance of anonymity and confidentiality will reduce the risk of individuals feeling exposed.

2. This can only be addressed through assurance that there is no expectation of cooperation and that their data will remain confidential.
3. To address this all interviews will be conducted at the interviewees place of work, or via Skype or FaceTime

SECTION F: THE 'PREVENT DUTY'

This question is in response to HEFCW operating a monitoring framework, which is intended to satisfy the UK government that 'relevant higher education bodies' in Wales are fulfilling their duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism (the 'Prevent duty').

26.	<p>Has due regard be given to the 'Prevent duty', in particular to prevent anyone being drawn into terrorism?</p> <p>For further guidance, see:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445916/Prevent_Duty_Guidance_For_Higher_Education__England__Wales_.pdf</p> <p>and</p> <p>http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/freedom-of-speech</p>	<p>Yes x <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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SECTION G: RESEARCH SAFETY

Before completing this section, you should consult the document 'Guidance for Applicants' – and the information in this under 'Managing the risks associated with SOCSI research'.

27.	Are there any realistic safety risks associated with your fieldwork?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No x <input type="checkbox"/>
28.	Have you taken into account the Cardiff University guidance on safety in fieldwork / for lone workers ?	Yes x <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION H: DATA COLLECTION

The SREC appreciates that these questions will not in general relate to research undertaken in SOCSI. However, for further University guidance and information please see the links below.

29.	Does the study involve the collection or use of human tissue (including, but not limited to, blood, saliva and bodily waste fluids)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No x <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>If Yes, a copy of the submitted application form and any supporting documentation must be emailed to the Human Tissue Act Compliance Team (https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/research-support/integrity-and-governance/human-tissue-research). A decision will only be made once these documents have been received.</p> <p>For guidance on the Human Tissue Act: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/govrn/cocom/humantissueact/index.html</p>			
30.	Does the study include the use of a drug ?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No x <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>If Yes, you will need to contact Research Governance before submission (resgov@cardiff.ac.uk)</p>			

SECTION I: DATA PROTECTION

31.	(a) Are you collecting sensitive data? [Defined as: the racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs (or similar), trade union membership, physical or mental health, sexual life, the commission or alleged commission	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No x <input type="checkbox"/>
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	<p>any offence, or any proceedings for any offence committed or alleged to have been committed the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings.]</p>		
<p>If Yes, how will you employ a more rigorous consent procedure ?</p>			
	<p>(b) Are you collecting identifiable data ? [Please note, this includes recordings of interviews/focus groups etc.]</p>	<p>Yes x <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>If Yes, how you will anonymise this data ?</p> <p>Survey data will be anonymous unless the participant opts for interview. If a participant opts for interview, a pseudonym will be generated.</p> <p>All interview transcripts will include only pseudonyms</p> <p>The identity of the schools will not be revealed and pseudonyms used</p>			
	<p>(c) Will any non-anonymised and/or personalised data be retained ?</p>	<p>Yes x <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>If No, what are the reasons for this ?</p>			
	<p>(d) Data (i.e. actual interview recordings, not just transcripts) should be retained for no less than 5 years or at least 2 years post-publication and then destroyed in</p>	<p>Yes x <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>

	<p>accordance with the Data Protection Act. Have you noted and included this information in your Information Sheet(s) ?</p>		
32.	<p>Below, please detail how you will deal with data security. Please note, personal laptops (even password protected) stored in personal accommodation are not acceptable. Storage on University network, or use of encrypted laptops is required.</p>		
<p>Storage on the university network only. Transcripts and survey data will be uploaded to the university sever. The university server will be used to analyse data.</p>			
<p>If there are any other potential ethical issues that you think the Committee should consider please explain them on a separate sheet. It is your obligation to bring to the attention of the Committee any ethical issues not covered on this form.</p>			

Application Guidance Notes

Making an application to the School Research Ethics Committee if you are a member of staff or an MPhil / PhD / Professional Doctorate student

Please Note: the SOCSI SREC web page links highlighted below are currently unavailable – please instead refer to the SOCSI Shared Drive Folder: S:\ SREC proformas and resources

There are five stages in preparing an application to the Research Ethics Committee. These are:

1. Consider the guidance provided in the SOCSI Shared Drive Folder: **S:\ SREC proformas and resources**.
2. Discuss any ethical issues you have about the conduct of your research with your co-investigators or supervisor(s).
3. Complete this Staff/MPhil/PhD/Professional Doctorate Student application form.
4. Sign and date the form, and if applicable ask your supervisor(s) also to sign.
5. Submit one copy of your application to the secretary of the School Research Ethics Committee – see contact details on Page 1.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING BEFORE COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION:

1. Illegible handwritten applications will not be processed so please type.
2. Some NHS-related projects will need NHS REC approval. The SREC reviews NHS-related projects that do not require NHS REC approval. See guidance provided in the SOCSI Shared Drive Folder: **S:\ SREC proformas and resources**.
3. You should not submit an application to the SREC if your research involves adults who do not have capacity to consent. Such projects have to be submitted to the NRES system.
4. Staff undertaking minor projects as part of a course of study (e.g. PCUTL) do not need SREC approval unless the project involves sensitive issues. This exemption does not apply to Masters dissertations and Doctoral research.

5. Research with children and young people under the age of 18.

- i) *One-to one research or other unsupervised research with this age group requires an up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check (formerly called Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Check).*
- ii) *If your research is in an institution or setting such as a school or Youth Club and all contact with the children and young people is supervised you will still need to check with the person in charge about whether you need a DBS check; many such organisations do require DBS checks for all those carrying out research on their premises, whether this includes unsupervised contact or not.*
- iii) *You will need to have an awareness of how to respond if you have concerns about a child/young person in order that the child/young person is safeguarded.*
- iv) *You will also need:*
 - a) *permission from the relevant institution*
 - b) *consent from the parent or guardian for children under 16*
 - c) *consent from the child/young person, after being provided with age-appropriate information.*

See guidance provided in the SOCSI Shared Drive Folder: **S:\ SREC proformas and resources.**

6. Information on data management, collecting personal data: data protection act requirements, can be accessed via: <https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/research-support/integrity-and-governance>

7. Information on Research Ethics (including Ethical Issues in Research – informed consent etc.) can be accessed: <https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/research-support/integrity-and-governance>

8. The collection or use of human tissue (including, but not limited to, blood, saliva and bodily waste fluids):
The Committee appreciates that the question relating to this in this application form will not in general relate to research undertaken in SOCSI. However, for further University guidance and information on the Human Tissue Act, please see: <https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/research-support/integrity-and-governance>

9. For interesting examples of information sheets and consent forms, please see the SOCSI Shared Drive Folder: **S:\ SREC proformas and resources.**

