

## **Appendix A: Letters, consent forms and debriefing letters**

### **A1 - Parental consent letter**

Address

Date

Dear (insert name)

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my training I am carrying out a study looking at how students of Afro-Caribbean heritage, who have experienced behavioural difficulties in school, view difficulties in their school and their community and the resources (individual, relational, community and cultural) that help. I hope that this information will help suggest ways that schools can support their education.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to give permission for me to ask your son if he would like to take part in my research.

This will involve interviewing your son in order to find out what he finds helpful in coping and keeping healthy. This project will be supervised by Ms G Rhydderch of Cardiff University. The interview would take place at (insert school name) during normal school hours and will take between thirty minutes and, at most, two hours of your son's time. Your son's participation in this research will be treated confidentially and all information will be kept anonymously, meaning that no one will be able to work out what it is your son has said.

If you have any comments or questions about this research please could you contact my supervisor, Ms G Rhydderch, using the contact details provided overleaf.

This research has been approved by the Cardiff University Ethics Committee. If you wish you can contact the Cardiff ethics committee by telephone (029 208 70360 or by email ([psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)) if you have any complaints about this research.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you need more information. I would appreciate it if you could complete the attached permission slip and return it by post in the enclosed stamp addressed envelope.

Regards,

(researcher)  
(Trainee Educational Psychologist)

(insert name)  
(Headteacher at [insert name of school])

## A2: Parental consent form

I understand that my son's participation in this project will involve:

- Taking part in an interview with (researcher), in which he will be asked questions about his views on how he copes with challenges in his community and in his school.
- During this interview, notes will be taken and the interviews recorded for later transcription. The interview will be fully anonymised when it is transcribed. The audio files will be also then be destroyed.

I understand that my son's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that he can withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason.

I understand that his participation will be treated confidentially and all information will be stored anonymously and securely. All information appearing in the final report will be anonymous. My son will have the option of withdrawing his data from the study, up until his transcript has been anonymised.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to discuss any questions or comments I would like to make with (supervisor).

I understand that I am free to contact the Cardiff University Ethics Committee to discuss any complaints I might have.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_(NAME) consent to (researcher) proceeding with this study with the supervision of (supervisor).

Signature of Parent or Guardian: .....

Date: .....

Name of Child: .....

### **A3 - Parental debriefing letter**

Thankyou for giving permission for your son to take part in my study. I feel that it is important to talk to young people about their experiences in education and in their community to make sure schools are supporting their needs.

The aims of this study were to gather information about how students of Afro-Caribbean and African cultural heritage view difficulties in their school and their community and the resources (individual, relational, community and cultural) that help. I hope that this information will help suggest ways that schools can support their education.

The information your son gave me will be held anonymously. This means that it will be impossible for people to know what he told me.

If you think of any questions you would like to ask me please do not hesitate to contact me on the details provided.

Yours sincerely.

(researcher)

## **A4 – Participant information sheet and consent form**

### **Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form**

**Why do this study?** – I am interested in how young people view their experiences at school and in their community, in particular how they respond to difficulties. I need to collect data from students to see if there is a particular way that schools can work to help young people like yourself.

**What will participation involve?** - This research involves having a conversation with me about your experiences at school and in your community. All information will be stored anonymously, which means no body will know who said what. Of course, some people in the school will know that you have taken part in this study.

**How long will participation take?** – The entire process should take between thirty minutes and two hours of your time.

**As an informed participant of this research study, I understand that:**

1. My participation is voluntary and I may cease to take part in this research study at any time and without giving a reason.
2. During this interview, notes will be taken and the interviews recorded for later transcription. This means that Mr Upton will write up everything that I say.
3. All data will be stored anonymously once it has been collected. This means that it will be impossible to trace information back to me. As such, if I decide I want to withdraw my data from this study I will only be able to do this up until the transcript has been anonymised. If I decide to withdraw my data I should ask (insert name of staff member) to contact Mr Upton.
4. All information appearing in the final report will be anonymous. This means there will be nothing that will enable people to work out what I said.
5. This research has been approved by the Cardiff University Ethics Committee. This means it has been approved by a panel of professionals to make sure it meets high standards.
6. All my questions about the study have been satisfactorily answered and I am aware of what my participation involves.
7. (researcher) will treat my participation in this study confidentially and that anything I say in the interview will be treated confidentiality, unless it leads Mr Upton to believe that my safety is in danger. In this case he will be unable to keep this information confidential. If this happens he will inform me that he will have to share that information with my school because of his concern for my welfare.

**I have read and understood the above, and agree to take part:**

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I have explained the above and answered all questions asked by the participant:**

**Researcher's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **A5 – Participant debriefing form**

### **Participant debriefing letter**

Thankyou for taking part in my study. It is important to talk to young people about their experiences in education to make sure that they are getting what they need.

The aims of this study were to gather information about how students of African and Afro-Caribbean heritage view difficulties in their school and their community and the resources (individual, relational, community and cultural) that help. I hope that this will help suggest ways that schools can support their education.

The information you gave me will be held anonymously. This means that it will be impossible for people to know what you told me. If you want to withdraw your data from my study this can only be done up until I have transcribed and anonymised the interview.

If you think of any questions you would like to ask once I have gone then you can ask to speak to (insert name of school staff member). If you would like to withdraw your data then this can be arranged by asking (XXXXX) to contact me by (Date), which is within X days.

Regards

(researcher)

## **A6- Headteacher consent letter**

Address

Date

Dear (insert name)

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my training I am carrying out a study looking at how students of Afro-Caribbean heritage view difficulties in their school and their community, and the resources (individual, relational, community and cultural) that help. I hope that this will help suggest ways that schools can support their education.

I am writing to enquire whether you would give me permission to recruit participants from among the students currently enrolled at your school. I would need help to identify a group of students that meets my criteria. I would like to select students based on experiencing of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties at school.

I would need help to approach these students and ask them if they would be willing to take part in my study. I would also need help to send parental consent letters in order to gain parental permission to interview them. I would also need permission to complete the interview during school hours and have access to an appropriate space in which to conduct the interviews. These interviews should take at least thirty minutes and, at most, two hours.

If you have any comments or questions about this research please could you contact my supervisor, Ms G Rhydderch, using the contact details provided overleaf.

This research has been approved by the Cardiff University Ethics Committee. If you wish you can contact the Cardiff ethics committee by telephone (029 208 70360 or by email ([psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)) if you have any complaints about this research.

If you would be willing to give me permission I would appreciate it if you could sign the enclosed form and return it in the envelope provided. Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information.

Regards,

(researcher)

## **A7 - Headteacher consent form**

### **School of Psychology, Cardiff University**

#### **Consent Form**

I understand that my school's participation in this project will involve:

- Assisting Mr Jack Upton to identify a group of students to take part in his study.
- My assisting Mr Jack Upton by my sending a consent letter to the parent or guardian of young people selected in order to obtain parental consent for their child to take part in his study.
- Allowing Mr Jack Upton the use of a suitable location in which to conduct the interviews.
- Allowing Mr Jack Upton to meet with individual students in order to gain their consent to take part in his research project.
- Allowing Mr Jack Upton to conduct interviews with students during school hours. These interviews should take up between 30 minutes and, at most, 2 hours.

I understand that my school's participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I understand that the students Mr Jack Upton interviews will also be free to withdraw themselves from this study at any time and without giving a reason.

I understand that I must keep the identity of all students who participate confidential

I understand that that the identity of students will be treated confidentially by Mr Jack Upton and that all information will be stored anonymously and securely. All information appearing in the final report will be anonymous. All students will have the option of withdrawing their data from the study, up until their transcript has been anonymised.

I understand that I am free to discuss any questions or comments I might have with Ms G Rhydderch.

I understand that I am free to contact the Cardiff University Ethics Committee to discuss any complaints I might have.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_(NAME) consent to Mr Jack Upton proceeding with this study with the supervision of Ms G Rhydderch.

Signature of Headteacher: .....

Date: .....

## **A8 - LEA Consent Letter**

Address

Date

Dear (insert name)

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my training I am carrying out a study looking at how students of Afro-Caribbean heritage view difficulties in their school and their community and the resources (individual, relational, community and cultural) that help. I hope that this will help suggest ways that schools can support their education.

I am writing to enquire whether you would give me permission to recruit participants from among the students currently enrolled at **(Insert name of school)**.

The project will involve interviewing students about their experiences and perceptions of difficulties in their school and their community, and the resources (individual, relational, community and cultural) that help them.

I would need permission to approach (insert name of school) to ask them if they would like to participate in this piece of research. Their participation would include helping me to identify a suitable pool of students to take part in my study and assisting me to send out letters and consent forms to parents or guardians of students who wish to take part. This would also include allowing students for whom consent is given, and also who give consent themselves, to complete the interview during school hours. This should take between thirty minutes and two hours of a pupil's time.

If you have any comments or questions about this research please could you contact my supervisor, Ms G Rhydderch, using the contact details provided overleaf.

This research has been approved by the Cardiff University Ethics Committee. If you wish you can contact the Cardiff ethics committee by telephone (029 208 70360 or by email ([psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)) if you have any complaints about this research.

If you would be willing to give me permission I would appreciate it if you could sign the enclosed form and return it in the envelope provided. Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information.

Regards,

(researcher)



## **A9 – LEA consent form**

### **School of Psychology, Cardiff University**

#### **Consent Form**

I understand that (insert name of school) participation in this project will involve:

- Allowing Mr Jack Upton to send a consent letter to the parent or guardian of that child in order to obtain parental consent for their child to take part in his study
- Allowing Mr Jack Upton to meet with individual students in order to gain their consent to take part in his research project.
- Allowing Mr Jack Upton the use of a suitable location in which to conduct the interviews.
- Allowing Mr Jack Upton to conduct interviews with students during school hours. These interviews should take between thirty minutes and two hours of each pupil's time.

I understand that (name of school) participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I understand that the students Mr Jack Upton interviews will also be free to withdraw themselves from this study at any time and without giving a reason.

I understand that students taking part in this study will do so confidentially and that that all information will be stored anonymously and securely once it has been collected. All information appearing in the final report will be anonymous. All students will have the option of withdrawing their data from the study, up until their transcript has been anonymised.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to discuss any questions or comments I might have with Ms G Rhydderch.

I understand that I am free to contact the Cardiff University Ethics Committee to discuss any concerns I might have.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_(NAME) consent to Mr Jack Upton proceeding with this study with the supervision of Ms G Rhydderch.

Signature of LEA representative: .....

Date: .....

## **Appendix B: Ethics proposal and references**

### **B1 – Ethics proposal**

#### **Title**

A qualitative exploration of the resiliency self-constructions of Black-British students with behavioural difficulties in an urban state school

#### **Purpose of Project and Academic Rational**

The United Kingdom has become an ethnically diverse nation. This may be best illustrated by Caroline Irby's (Hoyle, 2010) recent attempt to photographically document the presence in the UK of at least one child born in each of the 192 countries of the world. She found children from 185 countries, meaning that only a handful of Pacific Islands, San Marino, the Central African Republic and North Korea are unrepresented by a child or adolescent in Britain's schools.

Census data shows that in 2001 ethnic minorities comprised 7.9% of the total population of the United Kingdom - the largest minority groups describing themselves as Asian or British Asian (50.2% of ethnic minorities, 4% of the overall population) and Black or Black British (24.8% of ethnic minorities, 2% of the overall population). In 2001 the overall figure for ethnic minorities represented an increase of 53% from the 1991 census. If this trend has continued, combined with generally lower mean ages of Asian and Black populations, then the 2011 Census will record that more than 20% of all children in British schools are of African or Asian heritage.

However, these minority groups have not settled evenly across the country (Cooper, 2006): Census data reveals that ethnic minorities have generally settled in urban commercial centres, including certain London boroughs (making up on average between 10 and 50% of each boroughs population), Leicester (25.8% of the total population of the city), Birmingham (33.3%), Bradford (21.7%), Bristol (11.2%), Leeds (10.2%), Manchester (11.09%) and Sheffield (8.8%). In other parts of the UK, notably Scotland (2%), Wales (2.9%), Northern Ireland (0.85%) and rural areas of England (0.5%), ethnic minorities are significantly under-represented (UK Census, 2001; Cooper, 2006).

The significance of this geographical distribution is that, although ethnically diverse, Britain stops short of being a 'rainbow nation' - for some educational professionals multi-cultural sensitivity is a daily necessity, for others it may be an abstraction or academic exercise. However, statistics showing that students from certain ethnic minorities, particularly young Afro-Caribbean males, are clearly overrepresented on the Special Educational Needs Register (SEN Register; DCSF, 2008a) make multi-cultural sensitivity an essential part of an educational psychologist's (EP) skills set. Being able to bridge educational, health and social services means EPs are in a unique position to disseminate culturally appropriate practice. They can also employ their collective capacity for research to remain in the vanguard of innovative, culturally appropriate special educational provision. In an era characterised by budgetary austerity and a rapidly diversifying population, the value of organisations able to supply these services will be at a premium. This makes sustaining multi-cultural competence not only an integral part of an EP's professional practice but also a bastion of their professional security into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This thesis will explore these issues, namely those related to the overrepresentation of Afro-Caribbean males on the SEN register, particularly those classified with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), through a phenomenological focus on

the voice of the student - It has recently been recognised that, although the student voice is being increasingly recognised in education, students with SEBD are perhaps those least heard (Ogg and Kaill, 2010; Cefai and Cooper, 2010).

### **The Achievement and Exclusion Gaps**

As stated above, Black-British students of Afro-Caribbean and African heritage, particularly male adolescents, are over-represented in the population of students with SEN, particularly SEBD (DCSF, 2008a, 2010a). In education SEBD is perhaps most usefully understood as an umbrella term, covering a range of problems from relatively mild emotional and behavioural difficulties, sometimes termed indiscipline, to clinically significant mental disorders (Cooper, 2006).

In addition, while 50% of white students achieve pass grades in the A\*-C range in five or more GCSE examinations, only 39.4% of Afro-Caribbean pupils achieved at this level in 2008-2009 (Strand, 2009) Afro-Caribbean students are, therefore, academically underperforming and significantly more at risk of exclusion than demographically matched white students. Of these phenomena, the national response has generally focused on academic attainment and, although remaining significant, in recent years the achievement gap has appreciably narrowed. However, students bracketed as 'Black British' remain in the lowest achieving large minority ethnic group (DCSF, 2010).

In comparison with concerns over academic attainment, students with SEBD have been relatively neglected in research and policy (Ogg and Kaill, 2010) and the known statistics for young black adolescents receiving fixed term and permanent exclusions have remained consistently high. During the 2008-2009 academic year Afro-Caribbean students were three times more likely to be excluded than the school population as a whole (DCSF, 2009), making up 0.53% of the school population, compared to excluded white boys, who make up 0.18% in the 2007-2008 school year (Weekes-Barnard, 2010).

Although this represents progress from 1985, when Black-British students were on average 6 times more likely to be excluded (German, 2010), practices are known to vary widely. German writes that in some local authorities in London there are:

*"...council wards where Black pupils are 15 times more likely to be permanently excluded than white students. Black children in care are 8 times more likely to be excluded and statemented black pupils 3-4 times more likely than non-statement pupils. A statemented Black child in care is 72-96 times more likely to be excluded than students from any other ethnic group."* (Page 13)

Vulliamy and Webb (2003) and Ogg and Kaill (2010) suggest official statistics must also be viewed as conservative estimates, as schools have commonly resorted to managing challenging behaviour through methods of internal isolation and unofficial exclusion<sup>1</sup>. These methods are not formally monitored and so will have artificially depressed the official statistics to the extent that Ogg and Kaill (2010) suggest the true size of the exclusions gap in Britain is simply not known.

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<sup>1</sup> Ogg and Kail's (2010) review of provision in London highlights the prevalence of unofficial exclusions, including internal exclusions and managed moves to be endemic. A more accurate national picture should collate figures for exclusions, managed moves and referrals.

It has long been recognised that educational and health services, both in the UK and USA, need to become more responsive to the specific needs of ethnic minority groups (e.g., Hewit, 1905; Woodson, 1933; Coard, 1971; Gilborn, 1997; Cooper, 2006; Weekes-Barnard, 2010). However, the gravity of the statistics referenced above is that they follow in the wake of a wave of initiatives intended to ameliorate the achievement gap (e.g. Ofsted, 1999; DES, 2003) and reduce exclusions (DfES, 2006). That these disparities remain, even when SEN, socioeconomic status, parental involvement, student attitudes and social class are controlled for (Strand, 2009), raises serious questions about the effectiveness of current policy, provision and practice (Cooper, 2006; Weekes-Barnard, 2010).

Research and policy have tended to approach the achievement and exclusion gaps as empirically distinct phenomena when, arguably, they should be seen as '*two sides of the same coin*' (Gregory, Skiba and Noguera, 2010; p21): As, by their nature, the experience of exclusionary practices entail a disruption of education, there are direct pathways that mediate a link between SEBD and the perpetuation of the achievement gap (Gregory et al. 2010; Ogg and Kaill, 2010). Indeed, these processes have been highlighted in recent years as schools have struggled to balance the practices of Inclusive Education with the demands of the government's Standards Agenda (Vullimay and Webb, 2000; Parsons, 1999; Skiba and Pererson, 2000). Ogg and Kaill (2010) and Watson (2005) show that punitive discipline and exclusions are the inevitable corollaries of a political rhetoric that places often contradictory demands on schools for pastoral care, zero tolerance, academic attainment and, paradoxically, the reduction of exclusions (Briggs, 2010). As such, the achievement gap may be seen as an unintended consequence of a government vision that ultimately skews school priorities away from helping those students most in need and towards protecting their position on the league table (Cooper, 2005; Weekes-Barnard, 2010; Briggs, 2010). As Berkeley (2010) points out, in the end, how schools treat those students most vulnerable to exclusion may be the most telling barometer of their character and quality.

This highlights a pressing need to address the disproportionate representation of Black-British pupils in the population of students with SEBD if efforts to fully remediate the achievement gap are to be successful. EPs are already known to make a significant contribution to intervention and support in this area and, with up to 47% of an EP's caseload related to the management of SEBD (Farrel et al. 2006), there is a clear argument for such research. Indeed, this has long been an iconic priority for Black communities (Abbott, 2010) but one that Wekes-Barnard (2010) concludes is in danger of falling from the agenda of the Coalition government.

To summarise, there is a body of evidence suggesting that students from the Afro-Caribbean ethnic minority do less well in school and are excluded more often than would be expected (Cooper, 2006). The exclusions gap has been largely neglected in the literature and, where it has been targeted, has proven resilient to remediation. This may be related to the use of general ethnic categories, which may have obscured real and important individual, within and between group cultural differences, in terms of how people think, remember, reason and express their ideas (Keogh et al. 1997). As a result previous research and policy may have been limited by adherence to racial stereotypes and a narrow focus on the confluence of various socioeconomic variables. Whilst urban poverty is clearly a significant part of the risks faced by many ethnic groups (Washbrook, 2010), Strand (2009) has demonstrated, at least with regard to the Afro-Caribbean population, such a focus is not able to wholly explain their overrepresentation on the SEN register. Gregory, Skiba and Norguera (2010) have shown tackling the exclusion gap to be a legitimate approach

to narrowing the attainment gap and their paper must be a clarion call for a comprehensive, systematic explorative research effort.

### **Explanations for the Achievement and Exclusion Gaps**

A number of hypotheses have been proposed to explain the disparity in attainment and exclusion between Afro-Caribbean and white students, including socioeconomic factors, teacher feedback and expectations, lack of culturally relevant subjects and pedagogy, lack of appropriate role models - particularly fathers (Sewell, 2010) – and the development of alternative anti-educational cultural norms (Quirke, Potter and Conway, 2009).

### **A population at risk**

These hypotheses may help to explain why Black-British students, male and female (Osler, 2010) are a population at high risk of school failure. In order to enable cross-cultural understanding Ungar (2003, 2004; Leinberg and Ungar, 2007) calls for a paradigmatic shift away from the quantitative generation of universal truths and towards the narrative exploration of socially constructed realities by carrying out research in local communities. To date Abbott (2010) and Sewell (2009) feels this research effort has been largely tokenistic, incidental or focused on students who have already been excluded (e.g. Daniels, 2010; Briggs, 2010). Cefai and Cooper (2010) also highlight a lack of studies on students with SEBD local enough to reflect idiosyncratic aspects of culture and less still that capture the authentic voices of disaffected adolescents located in mainstream education.

Harper (2010) and Cefai and Cooper (2010) suggest the most insightful place for research to start is to identify the salutogenic factors that enable ethnic minority students to succeed in spite of the patterns of risk and adversity outlined above. Ungar and Liebenberg (2009) suggest that the narratives of students who have achieved such resilient functioning may contain the clues to culturally relevant practices and pathways for intervention.

### **Ecological Resilience**

Chronicling the list of factors that predict resilient functioning has become the *raison d'être* of an extensive explorative literature. Commonly these approaches seek to identify constellations of risk and protective variables associated with vulnerability and resiliency. However, despite this common aim, resilience has rarely been studied or conceptualised consistently (Ungar, 2004). The research body encompasses many different methodologies, designs and definitions (Cowen, 2001). For example the presence or absence of resilience has been variously defined by the attainment, or not, of five A-C GCSE's, avoidance of prison, drug use (Steca et al. 2007), alcohol abuse, socio-emotional competence (Cefai, 2004) or the progression to higher education (Shepherd, Reynolds and Moran, 2010). However, each new definition is arguably exploring a qualitatively distinct set of psychological processes that dilute the validity of a meta-construct such as 'resilience.' Indeed, Tarter and Veykov (1999) even question the validity of resilience as a useful construct. They argue that non-linear developmental pathways between risk and resilience make it a label that can only be applied on a post-hoc basis and, therefore, of little use in prediction and intervention. All that can be said with certainty is the somewhat tautological statement that:

*“...resilient young people are characterised by a set of individual, social and environmental qualities that have become associated with resilience” (Ungar, 2004, p 54).*

Indeed, resiliency studies have produced such dense lists of ecological variables that it can be argued that every child is, at least at some point in their life, ‘at risk’ (Ungar, 2004). At its simplest resilience is, therefore, conceptualised as *“...positive outcomes in spite of threats to adaptation or development”* (Ungar, 2004, p12). Within this definition are two fundamental constructs: the notion of adversity, or risk, and of positive developmental outcomes in spite of the presence of these risk factors. This has been particularly influential in education, sparking enthusiastic debates on how best to build resilient qualities in student populations. However, Ungar (2009) identifies two frequent shortcomings in resilience research, namely the arbitrariness and narrowness of selected outcome variables and the lack of attention to the social and cultural contexts within which resilience occurs – as Ungar et al. (2007) admit, psychologists are yet to understand children’s own culturally determined, socially constructed indicators of resilience.

In this vein, Ungar (2007) provides an alternative definition of resilience:

*“In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity, individually and collectively, to negotiate for these resources to be provided in culturally meaningful ways.” (p 24)*

### **The Social Construction of Resilience**

Ungar’s central thesis is that labelling young people as resilient or not entails an *“...arbitrariness that misrepresents their coping behaviour through methodologically flawed and contextually irrelevant interpretations of their worlds”* (2007; p84). Indeed in the SEBD literature there has been a chronic absence of the voices of students and how they define themselves. Instead researchers have relied on their own models of adjustment in order to draw conclusions from largely quantitative paradigms. Ungar’s definition of resilience instead supposes that resilience is the outcome of negotiations between individuals and their environment to maintain a self-definition as healthy. When the challenges that Afro-Caribbean students present in the classroom are reframed in this way it is hoped that it will highlight pathways to intervention that have been hidden by the explorative literature so far.

*“In our haste to change our children’s behaviour, we overlook how those behaviours make sense to children themselves. Try as we might as adults to guide children, they will not heed our words of advice until they are confident we understand they are already doing the best they can with what they have.”* (Ungar, 2006, p3).

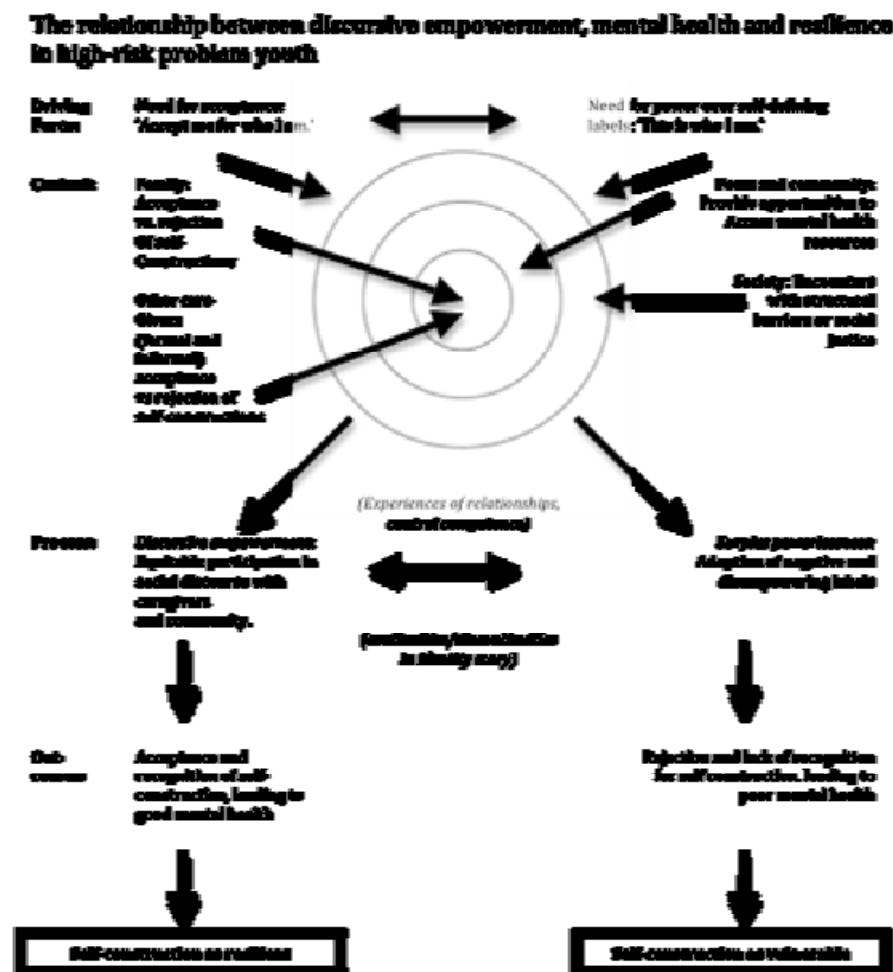
Ungar’s work builds on previous ecological models by conceptualising resilience as a social construction. He argues that it is an assumption that all children have access to the resources required to achieve the types of adaptive functioning that have become synonymous with successful coping. For example, Mrazek and Mrazek (1987) relate resilience in child abuse victims to processes that include 1) Rapid responsivity to danger, 2) Precocious maturity 3) Dissociation of affect 4) Information seeking 5) Formation and utilization of relationships for survival 6) Positive projective anticipation 7) Decisive risk taking, 8) The conviction of being loved 9) Idealisation of

an aggressor's competence 10) Cognitive restructuring of painful experiences 11) Altruism and 12) Optimism and hope. Ungar (2004) points out that how these resilience characteristics are achieved does not have to be via socially acceptable methods. To neglect this is to ignore the adaptivity of behaviours commonly framed as 'delinquent' for students who are trying to achieve a healthy sense of self and identity in constrained circumstances. Accordingly, behaviours classified in school as 'SEBD' may be more advantageously reframed as a manifestation of resilient functioning as students attempt to achieve control and discursive empowerment in an environment they experience as more threatening to their sense of self, than benign.

Ungar (2004) presents a model for a social-constructionist theory of resilience that seeks to explain the ways that young people author self-constructions as resilient (see Figure A). This identifies the process of discursive empowerment as a protective mechanism that mediates the impact of risk factors, leading to self-definitions by high-risk youth as 'Resilient.' This is the driving force behind behaviours that 'high risk youth' employ to gain control over self-constructions as both healthy and resilient. Denied access to this power they experience 'surplus powerlessness.' Lerner (1986) defines this as:

*"...conscious though misguided assessments of how much one can accomplish in any particular moment. The set of beliefs and feelings about ourselves leads us to feel that we will lose, that we will be isolated, that other people won't listen and that in turn leads us to act in ways in which these fears turn out to be true" (p13).*

Figure A



However, it is Ungar and his colleagues (2005, 2006, 2007, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009) who have developed a tool with which to investigate culturally specific pathways towards healthy development. This takes the form of a mixed method, iteratively designed resiliency scale, the Child and Youth Resiliency Measure (2009). The development of this scale has been as part of an internationally implemented project to study resiliency processes between cultures. As Afro-Caribbean and African students living in large conurbations in the UK have yet to be represented in this project it is proposed that this would be an appropriate starting point for this research. In the development of Ungar's scale he describes nine catalyst questions which have been used to elicit the stories of children and young people across cultures and circumstances. It is hoped that the narratives of these young people with SEBD can provide the contextually rich data to break down simplistic stereotypes and help EPs see and show others, the resilience in the behaviours of students more typically labelled as 'problem,' 'deviant,' or 'delinquent.'



## B2 - References

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### Appendix C: Guidelines for interviews 6-10

#### C1 – Guidelines for interviews 6, 7 and 8

These areas of focus were devised from the line-by-line and focused codes obtained from interviews 1-5.

	Question	Probes	Additional probes based on selected categories
1	If I were a young person today, what would I need to grow up well in your community	What does success look like in your community? How would you know when you have grown up/ done well for yourself? What skills/ resources/ what would help grow up well? What would be needed to do well at school? What would school be able to help with?	What role would religion play? Your church/ place of worship? How do you contribute to your community? What role do family/ friends/ school play?
2	How do you describe people who grow up well here, despite facing many difficulties?	What three words would you use? What would you call doing well? What about people who do well at school? What words describe them?	Is doing well the same for everyone?
3	What does it mean to you/ your family/ community when bad things happen?	Can you tell me what might be thought of as a bad thing? In the community? In school? What do people do to cope? What do they say about these things when they happen? Who talks about them most? The least? Who is most likely to come up with the solution to problems when they occur? Can you give me examples?	Who do you listen to in the family/ community/ school?  Can you tell me a bit that person you listen to? (teacher/ other adult)?  Can you tell me a bit about who you wouldn't listen to? (teacher/ other adult) At school? In the community?

		What do you imagine your parents might be worried about for you? For them?	
4	What kind of things are the most challenging for you growing up around here?	In the community? In school? What makes things difficult? What makes it difficult to do well in school? What kind of barriers are there to doing well in school? What happens in your community when young people get out of hand? Examples? How does it react/ cope?	Are there opportunities for work?
5	What do you do when you face difficulties in your life?	How do you cope with difficulties? How does (behaviour) help? What are the consequences of this way of coping? Who notices? Do they approve or disapprove? Does that matter?	What does being streetwise mean to you? What kind of things do you, or people you know, do to stay safe on the street? What about to stay safe at school?
6	What does being healthy mean to you and others in your family and community?	What does mental health mean? Physical health? Emotional health? Spiritual health? How would you know when you have Xhealth? How would other people know your healthy? Do your family keep track of what you're doing?	Do you have a role model/ someone you look up to? What are they like? What makes a healthy community?
7	What do you do, others you know do, to keep healthy mentally/ physically/ emotionally/ spiritually?	How does this help? How does that help you in school? How does it impact on school? Can school help with that?	
8	Can you share with me a story about another student who grew up well in the community despite facing many challenges and difficulties?	Can you tell me a bit more about that? What helped you do that?	

9.	Can you share a story about how you have managed to overcome challenges you face personally? In your family/ outside your home in the community/ school?	What helped you do that?	
10	If you were in a powerful position where you could change things or create new services in schools and communities, that could be of support and help for yourself, or other young people like you, what would you come up with? What ideas would you have?		
11	Would you like to add anything else?		

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Theoretical Sampling Questions</b>
Aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where do they come from</li> <li>- What happens to people who don't reach them/ don't have them?</li> <li>- Are there opportunities for work in the community/ social mobility?</li> <li>- In order to grow up well what kind of help will you need?</li> </ul>
Gangs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is a gang?</li> <li>- Prevalence in their local community</li> <li>- Personal experience- meaning?</li> </ul>
Masculinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What makes you a man? What makes you a boy? What are the different roles in the community</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
Punishments in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What happens to people who are excluded from school in the community?</li> <li>- Have they ever been in trouble? Have their friends? What were the consequences? What does that mean to them?</li> <li>- Can they describe a recent event – who was responsible?</li> </ul>
Authority figures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do they listen to/ don't they listen to?</li> <li>- How is authority earned?</li> <li>- What advice to they give you about school/ the streets</li> <li>- What do they think of them?</li> </ul>
Streetwise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is being streetwise? What does it mean?</li> <li>- What are the costs/ benefits?</li> </ul>
Friendship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you do at weekends with friends?</li> <li>- What makes a close friend? (three qualities)</li> <li>- Dealing with peer pressure? How to dissociate</li> </ul>
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are three lessons you enjoy?</li> <li>- What are three you don't? – unpack similarities and differences</li> <li>- Important rules – which do they respect?</li> </ul>
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When do they feel safe at school/ on the street?</li> <li>- What can they do to increase feelings of safety?</li> </ul>
Fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is most effected by fear?</li> <li>- How do the risks and the fear compare?</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role of extended family</li> </ul>
Attributions of behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unpack causes of behaviour – internal/ external</li> <li>- What limitations/ benefits will thinking in this way impose</li> <li>- What causes fighting/ conflict in school?</li> <li>- How are these resolved?</li> </ul>
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What makes a streetwise pupil?</li> <li>- What makes an academically successful pupil?</li> </ul>
Dichotic thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Benefits/ costs of seeing the world in this way</li> </ul>
Stereotyping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How does this effect aspirations/ life hopes?</li> </ul>
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you see yourself in school?</li> <li>- On the streets?</li> </ul>
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How it is earned</li> </ul>



## Appendix D – Risk assessment form



# Risk Assessment Form

**IMPORTANT:** Before carrying out the assessment, please read the Guidance Notes

### 1. General Information

<b>Department</b>	Educational Psychology	<b>Building</b>	Secondary School (as yet unidentified)	<b>Room No</b>	unknown
<b>Name of Assessor</b>	Jack Upon	<b>Date of Original Assessment</b>	08/03/2011	<b>Assessment No</b>	1

Status of Assessor: Supervisor ☐ , Postgraduate ☒ , Undergraduate ☐ , Technician ☐ , Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Specify)

### 2. Brief Description of Procedure/Activity Including Its Location and Duration

Research to be conducted with young people attending a mainstream secondary school in inner-city London. The interviews should take a maximum of two hours (range 30 minutes-2 hours). I am unable to specify a precise location until I have identified a school willing to take part and a particular room within this school in which to carry out the research. The participants shall be Year 7 students. The purpose of the research is to explore the student's views of difficulties in school and the school, community and cultural factors which they find helpful.

### 3. Persons at Risk Are they... Notes

Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Trained <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	During the interviews I will be a visitor to the school and will be talking to students enrolled in that school's Year 7 cohort.
Students <input type="checkbox"/>	Competent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Visitor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Inexperienced <input type="checkbox"/>	
Contractor <input type="checkbox"/>	Disabled <input type="checkbox"/>	

### 4. Level of Supervision Notes

None <input type="checkbox"/> Constant <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Periodic <input type="checkbox"/>	I have access to high quality supervision from staff at Cardiff University.
Training Required <input type="checkbox"/>	

### 5. Will Protective Equipment Be Used? Please give *specific* details of PPE

Head <input type="checkbox"/> Eye <input type="checkbox"/> Ear <input type="checkbox"/>	No protective equipment will be used
Body <input type="checkbox"/> Hand <input type="checkbox"/> Foot <input type="checkbox"/>	

### 6. Is the Environment at Risk? Notes

Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The environment is not at risk
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### 7. Will Waste be generated? If 'yes' please give details of disposal

Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No waste will be generated
---	----------------------------

## 8. Hazards Involved

Work Activity / Item of Equipment / Procedure / Physical Location	Hazard	Control Measures and Consequence of Failure	Likelihood (0 to 5) ×	Severity (0 to 5) =	Level of Risk
Inside the school	Robbery, violence and or threatening behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seat students closest to the door so that their exit will be unimpeded</li> <li>- Tell students they are under no obligation to take part in the research and are free to leave at any time, without giving a reason.</li> <li>- Have received training in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention: de-escalation techniques that can be used proactively to reduce the likelihood of an aggressive/violent incident.</li> <li>- Tell the students they have the right to choose not to answer my questions.</li> <li>- If students show signs of physical/verbal aggression I will end the interview immediately by thanking them for their participation.</li> <li>- Not interviewing students that are in a state of crisis prior to the scheduled interview.</li> <li>- Arranging for a staff member to check on me by looking through the glass door panel at intervals.</li> <li>- All such incidents to be reported to senior management at the school.</li> <li>- Leaving the door ajar</li> </ul>	2	3	6
Outside the school	Robbery, violence and or threatening behaviour	Travel to and from the school grounds by car Leaving either after the bell or before the bell to minimise the risk of bumping into participants.	1	3	3
Travelling	Long hours spent travelling Risk of road traffic accident.	Take rest breaks as appropriate on the journey	1	3	3
Lone working	I will be interviewing students alone.	Taking the above precautions Not carrying out interviews if I feel unsure of my safety	2	2	4
Slips and trips during incidents or furniture being thrown	Bruising and or broken bone	Minimise furniture in the interview room. Ensure there are no spillages or environmental hazards	2	2	4

		prior to the interview.			
Inside the school	Truanting by students who have participated in my research before they return to class	Scheduling the end of interviews to correspond to the beginning of break or lunchtime.  Ensuring that students know where they are going after the interview.  Consulting with the head re regarding other possible hazzards and updating my risk assessment as appropatle.	1	5	5

### 9. Chemical Safety (COSHH Assessment)

Hazard	Control Measures	Likelihood (0 to 5) ×	Severity (0 to 5) =	Level of Risk

#### Scoring Criteria for Likelihood (chance of the hazard causing a problem)

0 – Zero to extremely unlikely, 1 – Very Unlikely, 2 – Unlikely, 3 – Likely, 4 – Very Likely, 5 – Almost certain to happen

#### Scoring Criteria for Severity of Injury (or illness) resulting from the hazard

0 – No injury, 1 – First Aid is adequate, 2 – Minor Injury, 3 – "Three day" Injury, 4 – Major Injury, 5 – Fatality or disabling Injury

### 10. Source(s) of information used to complete the above

Previous experience working with children and young people

### 11. Further Action

Highest Level of Risk Score	Action to be taken
0 to 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	No further action needed
6 to 11 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate additional control measures should be implemented

**12. Additional Control Measures – Likelihood and Severity are the values with the additional controls in place**

Work Activity / Item of Equipment / Procedure / Physical Location	Hazard and Existing Control Measures	Additional Controls needed to Reduce Risk	Likelihood (0 to 5) ×	Severity (0 to 5) =	Level of Risk

After the implementation of new control measures the procedure/activity should be re-assessed to ensure that the level of risk has been reduced as required.

**13. Action in the Event of an Accident or Emergency**

Report to supervisor / manager and ...All incidents to be reported to senior management in the school or the nearest member of staff.

**14. Arrangements for Monitoring the Effectiveness of Control**

Ad-hoc visual checks and ...conducting a pilot study, following which the risk assessment will be reviewed. Consultation with the head teacher.

**15. Review: This assessment must be reviewed by (date):**

Name of Reviewer:	Jack Upton	Date of Review:	September 2011.
Have the Control measures been effective in controlling the risk?	Yes		
Have there been any changes in the procedure or in information available which affect the estimated level of risk?	No		
What changes to the Control Measures are required?	None		

**16. Signatures for printed copies:**

Form completed by:	Date:
Approved by:	Date:
Assessor:	Date:
Reviewed by:	Date:
This copy issued to: (print name and sign)	Date:

### Appendix E: Focused codes density

	Focused Code	Interview										Frequency
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	Dichotomous Thinking	v	v	v			v	v	v	v	v	8
2	Stereotyping and racism	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v		9
3	Information Gathering/ Receiving Third Hand Information		v	v		v	v		v	v	v	7
4	Mind Reading/ Mentalisation	v	v		v					v	v	3
5	Gang Talkers	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	10
6	Consequences	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	10
7	Hypocrisy (religious and teacher)	v	v			v			v	v		5
8	Trust	v	v			v			v	v	v	6
9	The Media shapes discourses	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	10
10	Listening Builds Trust	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	10
11	Religion	v	v	v	v	v		v	v	v	v	9
12	Avoidance	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	10
13	Knife Crime	v	v		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	9
14	Fear	v	v	v	v	v	v		v	v	v	9
15	Safety	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	10
16	Aspirations (planning for the future)	v	v		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	9
17	Need for challenge (ZPD)	v			v							2
18	Crime	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v		9
19	Access to authority figures	v							v	v	v	4
20	Mercenary	v	v		v	v	v		v	v	v	8
21	Extortion	v	v				v	v	v	v		6
22	Streetwise	v	v							v	v	4
23	Chameleon – managing identity	v	v	v		v	v		v	v		7
24	School as a buffer zone			v	v	v			v	v	v	6
25	Awareness of unfair treatment	v	v		v	v		v	v	v	v	8
26	Strong Minded/ Heavy Minded	v	v			v	v	v				5
27	Inevitability of outcomes	v	v			v						3
28	Systemic thinking	v	v				v		v	v	v	6
29	Lack of parental supervision and behavioural control	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	10
30	Money and resources	v	v	v	v	v	v			v	v	8
31	Respect is an important goal	v	v	v	v		v		v	v	v	8
32	The extended family	v		v		v	v	v		v	v	7
33	Power and control	v	v	v	v	v		v	v	v	v	9
34	Externalisation of agency	v	v			v						3
35	Reputation limits options	v	v					v		v		4

<b>36</b>	Lesson accessibility	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>					<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>37</b>	Parents	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>		<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>38</b>	Social coping	<b>v</b>			<b>v</b>		<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>7</b>

39	Friendship	v	v		v	v	v		v	v	v	8
40	Self-belief	v	v		v		v			v		5
41	Utilitarianism		v	v		v				v		4
42	Behaviour in school	v		v	v	v		v	v	v		7
43	Escalation of events	v										1
44	Regulation of behaviour and emotions	v		v	v					v	v	5
45	Making choices		v							v	v	3
46	Isolation		v				v	v		v		4
47	Showing weakness can lead to victimisation		v		v	v	v			v		5
48	Individualism vs. communalism		v			v			v	v	v	5
49	Fighting over ends		v								v	2
50	Accessibility of authority figures		v	v				v		v	v	5
51	Siege mentality		v		v		v				v	4
52	Grinding		v									1
53	Philosophy of Life		v				v	v	v	v		5
54	Health		v	v	v	v			v			5
55	Discrimination		v									1
56	The Meaning of Immigration		v									1
57	Bullying		v	v			v		v	v	v	6
58	Relationships with staff		v				v	v	v	v	v	6
59	Peer Pressure		v	v		v	v		v	v		6
60	Responding to Mistakes				v					v		2
61	Freedom				v		v		v	v	v	5
62	Learning				v	v		v		v	v	5
63	Self-Efficacy				v	v		v	v	v		5
64	Disengaging				v	v						2
65	Faith in adult decision making				v					v		2
66	Value System				v					v		2
67	Mental Health				v	v				v	v	4
68	Multiculturalism as opportunity (positive reframe?)				v	v						2
69	Sense of Alliance				v			v	v	v		4
70	Masculinity				v							1
71	Socialisation				v	v			v			3
72	Love and Belonging							v	v	v		3
73	Discipline – learning hard						v		v	v		3
74	Transnationalism						v			v		2
75	Paranoia									v	v	2
76	Popularity and Status		v			v		v		v		4
77	Prompting reflection									v	v	2

78	Learned helplessness									v		1
79	Belonging									v		1
80	Classroom Management									v		1
81	The Good Life		v		v					v	v	4
Total		41	58	38	40	37	38	32	42	67	43	

## Appendix F: List of Memos

**MEMO No: 1      Word Count: 1010**

**MEMO TITLE:** **Living with Fear**

Dealing with the effects of fear means choosing from a range of coping strategies to ameliorate the subjective affective experience that accompanies the awareness that personal safety is, or may be, under threat:

**YP2:** *Some don't let themselves do it (go outside) cos they're scared of what certain people are gonna do to them. Cos they don't trust, like, they don't they don't trust certain people cos they know what's going around, they know about the stabbings in the news, they know about stuff like that so, if their sons wanna go they think twice about going to that place where they're going. Int. 2, line 285.*

Experiencing fear necessitates becoming more focused on living each day at a time and losing sight of more long-term issues, such as aspirations for employment and legitimacy, which are seen as less relevant to immediate survival. Seeking popularity can be a protective move:

**YP9:** *Popularity...I would say that popularity doesn't help you do well in School...because once you become popular you get so...worked up about it and then you think that being popular, is just being popular, so you don't have to study or...do whatever parents ask you, because you're already popular. You think that cos you're popular...you've got everything in life but...you don't have everything in life because you haven't gone to Uni, you haven't done...uhh yeah, your A Levels, you haven't got a job, you haven't got your own house or a car...and stuff like that. Int. 9, line 162.*

Achieving status and power are seen as alternative pathways to safety and security, combating the sense of unpredictability and instability that accompanies living in high-risk urban areas. This is achieved by positioning yourself more centrally in your community network. By becoming more central you become more densely interconnected, maximising opportunities to experience autonomy and validation by influencing others, as well as having greater security by increasing the number of informational channels available to you.

Accompanying a sense of status and power is the feeling that you are a 'player,' an autonomous social hub. Priorities can be altered and the young person becomes focused on achieving status and power in the here-and-now. Fear can arise when young people witness or hear about crime in the community, from peers or from the media.

Fear is an effect of a subjective appraisal of a lack of safety. It was a pervasive theme throughout the interviews and was linked with a sense of vulnerability and lack of control of victimisation. Fear can bring a person to adopt certain coping strategies to ameliorate the sensation and is particularly insidious in limiting young peoples' perceptions of social and physical mobility – students felt unable to access certain postcodes or go to certain places in the school because they felt it increased the risk of victimisation.

There was a sense of arbitrariness and unpredictability over the possibility of victimisation, meaning that students have to be on their guard at all times, although school seems to be a buffer zone, in which they feel they are safe from the



immediate constructed threat of knife crime or being targeted by gangs. The focus for fear is times of transition and movement, and so the availability of private transport is a key mediator against the perceived risk of victimisation. However, the effects of fear can lead to a 'shutting-down' of movement, as a siege mentality develops and young people become progressively more insular and inflexible in how they construct the world and their place within it. This can be both a part of and a result of using Avoidant Coping as the predominant means of staying safe.

Accompanying this process is a sense of predestination, or fatalism, stemming from a belief that your actions are being shaped by the community around you and that things can overtake you regardless of your method of coping. Students named with precision the socioeconomic factors shaping their development and the problems they would have to negotiate, and so showed where they felt the locus of responsibility for change lies. Accompanying this is a sense of helplessness and of an inability to take make choices and impose these choices on the world. This has distinct implications for the experience of free will and can also be associated with an externalisation of responsibility for actions which they carry out, such as grinding, taxing and gang affiliation (see definitions above)

Adoptive strategies develop as a consequence of the fear which young people experience, as they try to ameliorate the sensation of fear and uncertainty and enable them to achieve an element of power and control in their communities and schools. My initiative labelling of these strategies as 'being Streetwise' did not resonate with the participants. The term 'Survival Strategies' perhaps better reflects the seriousness with which they view the issue. When young people are afraid this may be related to threats to their physical, social and academic survival. As a result, the methods they use to ensure their continued existence in these spheres takes on a much more dramatic significance. As such, even such behaviours as "grinding" and fighting over territory (Ends), may become rational responses to the experience of threat, not symptoms of an underlying pathology and moral deviancy.

### **Summary**

1. A subjective appraisal of being 'under threat'
2. The response to the experience of fear is mobilising coping responses, designed to ameliorate or manage the negative sensation and enable the individual to feel that they are taking control of their lives.

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Oatley (1987) – cognitive theory of emotions
- ❖ Choice Theory

### **Links to Focused Codes**

14. Living with fear
22. Staying streetwise
- 33,, Power and control
18. Having access to authority figures
50. Retreating into a siege mentality
48. Individualism vs. communalism
49. Fighting over 'Ends'
9. The media shapes young people's discourses
3. Receiving second hand information
13. Knife crime is rampant
5. Gang talking and gangs
27. Sense of inevitability and powerlessness

**Links to Other Memos**

- ❖ Coping Dilemmas
  - ❖ Crime
  - ❖ Consequences
  - ❖ Safety
  - ❖ Making Compromises
  - ❖ Gangs and Gang Talking
-

**MEMO No: 2      Word Count: 1137**

**MEMO TITLE:                      Making Judgements About Integrity**

Making judgements about integrity reflects how young people approach categorising peers and key adults as being trustworthy, or not, who they listen to and who they choose not to. Integrity is a value judgement, defined by a close perceived fit between what people say (espoused rhetoric) and what they do (embodied practice), the consequence of which is to divide staff according to whether they are perceived to be a “Grafter” or a “Mercenary.” This rests on the following:

**Mentalisation (mind-reading)**

This outlines the tendency of young people to be vigilant to information that enables them to induce the values and motivations of key adults and peers based on observations of their actions. This is an active process and illustrates a broader focus on making sense of the world and actively developing hypotheses based on past experiences. These will inform theories about the world that will help them predict events and make existence safer and more controllable.

This suggests that young people may be better viewed as relational scientists, actively testing and making sense of relationships with key adults and basing their actions on the results. By identifying repeated themes in their experiences they extrapolate general rules that guide their expectations and predictions of behaviours.

These theories are not based on any particularly privileged information and so are susceptible to error and bias, which can skew them in positive or negative directions. Also, when general rules are applied across diverse populations, young people inadvertently engage in the stereotyping and discriminatory behaviour which they feel leads to them being treated with similar injustice. This can be regarded as an ironic manifestation of the fundamental attribution error.

**Hypocrisy**

Judgements of hypocrisy were made regarding adults and peers in two

**Religion**

This judgement reflected a disdain of young people who espoused the rhetoric of religious convictions but failed to embody these principles in their everyday life. These ‘hypocrites’ were viewed as being outside conventional morality and lacking in integrity.

**School**

Inconsistencies between what teachers said and what they did were noted and taken as evidence that undermined their future attempts at behavioural control.

Peers who promised one thing and did another were also viewed with suspicion, with several students voicing suspicions that peers could ‘play-act’ for years as their friend, before suddenly betraying them

A consequence of an individual being judged to have moral or religious integrity was the increased likelihood of trusting those adults and/or peers and deferring to their judgement and behavioural control. This faith led to noble motives being inferred for teachers who were willing to go above and beyond their duties, as opposed to staff who were viewed as being 'just in it for the money' and not bothered to go the extra mile.

The confidence with which young people described the values and motives of staff elevates this memo to the status of a cautionary note to staff: young people actively construct their experiences and are given to making inferences about the private constructions of staff, and broadly categorise them as falling on a continuum that ranges from the 'Grafter' to the 'Mercenary.' These are defined accordingly:

#### **Teacher Type: The Grafter**

This teacher is willing to go the extra mile, persevere with sanctions and punishments, which are perceived as evidence of their caring and not letting down either the transgressor or the rest of the class. The disadvantage of this is that the progress of children and young people cannot depend on the altruism of the professionals who enter their lives, as this can create an unrealistic expectation of staff and will leave them susceptible to burnout. This appraisal may be an emergent property of a sense of alliance: this is a psychotherapeutic tripartite construct, composed of factors relevant to the development of relationship, goal agreement and task agreement. The manipulation of these three components may enable staff to sculpt positive relationships with peers and enable the conditions necessary for attachment and change that stem from students feeling safe, secure and trusted in their company.

#### **Teacher Type: The Mercenary**

This is a teacher who is appraised as only being in the job for the money or the long holidays and not out of a moral or intrinsic desire to help young people and enable them to achieve. The status of the 'Mercenary' is bestowed on teachers who are seen as 'not being bothered,' observed when sanctions are not followed up on and lack the energy or skills necessary to instil discipline in their class groups.

#### **Teacher Type: Ineffectual**

This relates to teachers who are motivated to work hard – who have the best interests of their students at heart - but lack the necessary pedagogical, content, organisational or relational skills to develop collaborative partnerships and maintain appropriate boundaries and behaviours in the class.

How students understand the motivations of their teacher may have far-reaching consequences for the development of alliance and the ability of students to make progress academically. However, teachers classified as Mercenary are subject to the stress of poorly behaved classes and negative student feedback, which can invalidate their sense of professional competence and pose a long term health risk. This suggests a good application of this theory for EPs would be to develop the Working Alliance as a meta-theory for teachers to construct the development of their relationships with students and put in place alliance focused interventions that are not necessarily dependent on relational factors but encompass the more cognitive components of Task and Goal Agreement.

#### **Summary**

1. Young people are striving to make sense of their experiences by looking for repeated themes in the behaviours of their peers and the adults who surround them.

They use these to construct theories about their internal motivations, values and integrity.

2. A key question is whether they feel that the adult is genuine – whether they can be trusted or not – and this is based on the appraisal of their integrity. This is not just a response to the feeling that they are 'liked' but also a response to the adult's perceived ethos and ability to manage the behaviour and learning of their students in ways that validate students' need to feel cared for and feel controlled and be controlling.

#### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ PCP, particularly the sociality corollary
- ❖ Emotional literacy and the Theory of Mind
- ❖ Fundamental Attribution Error and the Self-Serving Bias
- ❖ The Therapeutic Working Alliance
- ❖ Attribution Theory – explore discrepant attributions.

#### **Links to Focused Codes**

- 4. Mindreading/ Mentalisation
- 7. Hypocrisy
- 20. Being motivated by money (Mercenary)
- 68. Sense of alliance with staff
- 57. Relationships with staff and authority figures
- 35. Reputation limits options

#### **Links to Other Memos**

- ❖ Trust vs. Betrayal and Paranoia
  - ❖ Relationships
  - ❖ Lesson Accessibility
-

Coping dilemmas involve a number of choices young people have to make about how they respond to threats and danger in the school and in the community. There are a number of options available. Transiently, these are relatively benign and outline what could be intuitively defined as “streetwise.” This constellation of strategies subsumes i) knowing who to avoid, ii) knowing what areas to avoid and iii) knowing when it is safe to be yourself. When these become more stable proclivities they have short and long term implications that can shape how a young person experiences their school and community. They can also lead to unsafe and potentially harmful behaviours. At this extreme they may be understood as ‘Survival Strategies,’ which young people feel are imperative for their continued psychological and physical well-being:

### **Avoiders vs. Chameleons**

The strategies here are presented as bi-polar constructs, separated by a continuum.

#### Avoiding

This was the predominant form of coping available to young people in response to problems in their community. Avoiding means staying away from ‘hot spots’ and people who are regarded as being ‘trouble.’ Avoidance is a way of minimising the risks of arbitrary victimisation and providing a sense of control and personal agency in the face of increasing uncertainty about the safety of young black males on the street.

Coping in this way means young people become adept at recognising and navigating away from difficulties but become more insular and self-focused as their immediate horizons become ever more truncated by self-imposed boundaries; consequently a ‘siege mentality’ can develop. This can be supportive of engaging in school, as they become focused on achieving the more distal goals of paid employment but is also associated with an insularity and sense of isolation that can impede the ability to feel part of a community or whole.

This may be framed in two ways: as an assertive response that provides a sense of control over one’s actions and by extension a sense of control over self and situation or as an expression of learned helplessness. Framed in this way avoidance may be understood as tacit acknowledgment of a powerlessness that forms part of a broader public discourse of threat that leads to autoplasic responses to dangers in the community. Such resignation also fosters a vigilance to focally relevant information as it is presented in the media, such as gang based discourses and reports of violent crime, to inform and direct their seemingly ever more precarious pathway towards safety and security.

#### Chameleon

Living as a chameleon enables young people to blend in and adopt different personas to suit different situations. This is an identity based coping strategy and magnification of the autoplasic response, wherein young people adapt to different situations by changing the facet of identity that they present. This can involve sacrificing more distal goals, such as educational opportunities, in order to ensure that more proximal goals, such as safety, power and social prestige are met.

Students who eschewed this coping style reported an inherent suspicion of chameleons, viewing them as unreliable and lacking in integrity. Coping as a chameleon means that the regulation of identity is an active and ongoing process,

wherein you calibrate yourself to those around you. This can, for example, enable young people to move from one location to the other with reduced fear but can also come with a cost, which in the extreme, may fall under the umbrella of mental health. Mental health issues occur when people lose their grip on reality and become 'lost' in identities that are no longer convincing or adaptive.

### **Peer Pressure vs. Strong Mindedness (Hardiness)**

Peer pressure exists as a post-hoc theory applied to explain self and other behaviours that involve conforming to the expectations of peers. As a result peer pressure may be thought of as a more ephemeral phenomenon than is traditionally represented, and consequently exerting far less power over the decision-making of young people. Instead young people choose to conform to the expectations of their peers as part of a strategy to enhance their sense of personal well-being and to blend in and consolidate their standing. Conversely, strong-mindedness is characterised by confidence in one's self-definition. Such individuals present themselves as they are and do not seek to adopt other strategies and identities that may lead to them being more socially accepted but entail sacrificing their own integrity. Students that show such hardiness can view chameleons with suspicion, considering people who are so willing to change as untrustworthy, unreliable and suspicious.

### **Seeking and sharing information**

Students are involved in actively seeking information that is focally relevant to their ongoing survival, scanning the news and other media for reports that inform them as to the risks they face in the community. In this way the media shapes the constructed realities that each person lives in, as few admit to direct experience of knife crime or gangs but reference the media or information shared by their peers or parents as the evidence on which they base the need for their coping behaviours. Knowledge of and affiliation with gangs is also a route to securing prestige and status, leading students to feel that they should reveal gang affiliation or knowledge in order to consolidate their own position in a social hierarchy in which this can be a route towards respect and security.

As such, the media exerts a powerful influence on the discourses of blame subscribed to by children and young people, as well as the societal expectation that young people will both know and be affiliated with gangs. These form the basis of a deviancy amplification spiral which could lead young people to construct the risks of victimisation beyond their objective probability. As such the media and social networks provide a limited and negative representation of life in the community surrounding Asbury Park. Within these informational channels lies a predominantly negative representation of the community and other young people. Whilst young people are sensitive to stereotypes and are angry when they feel limited by the general constructions drawn by adults, they also stereotype themselves in order to be able to safely navigate past groups. While focusing on these threats the achievements and positives of youth go unacknowledged or are easily lost when juxtaposed against the perceived threat of random knife attacks. A positive view of young black teenagers seems to be lacking.

### **Seeking Safety in Numbers**

As a consequence of the perceived risk of victimisation, a strategy which young people adopt is to move around in groups, which can create the illusion of gang activity. One of the constructed theories of the genesis of gangs is that they start as

such small friendship groups and evolve into fully fledged gangs. However, few students showed cogent understanding of what constituted a 'gang,' as opposed to a delinquent peer group. As well as satisfying needs for safety it was thought that these groups satisfied unmet needs for belonging, affiliation and self-efficacy.

### **Summary**

1. The high perceived risks in the community lead students to adopt a number of strategies to ensure their continued survival. This can include such autoplasic responses as chameleoid or avoidant coping, although the mode of coping is context specific and not necessarily a stable proclivity.
2. Peer pressure is a post-hoc theory applied to explain the behaviours of the self and of other people, especially when it involves the completion of anti-social acts which the person would not normally contemplate on their own.

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Sociological
- ❖ Coping theory
- ❖ Neurobiological response to stress
- ❖ Choice Theory

### **Links to Focused Codes**

1. Dichotomous thinking guides decision making
23. Chameleon coping – managing identity
12. Reliance on avoidant coping
58. Peer pressure is a constructed explanation
26. Staying strong minded/ Heavy minded
45. Choices lead to outcomes (Choice Theory)
60. Protecting freedom
23. Chameleon coping – managing identity
2. Stereotyping can be double-edged
3. Receiving second and third hand information
22. Staying streetwise
73. Paranoia
29. Behavioural control and parental supervision
4. Mindreading/ Mentalisation
21. Extorting funds
74. Social goals compete with academic goals
13. Knife crime is rampant
29. Behavioural control and parental supervision
52. Having a philosophy of life that guides behaviour
19. Having access to authority figures
38. Friendship groups are an important coping and change resource

### **Links to Memos**

- ❖ Making judgements about integrity,
- ❖ Gangs and gang talking
- ❖ Making compromises
- ❖ Bullying
- ❖ Living with fear
- ❖ Crime
- ❖ Consequences
- ❖ Safety
- ❖ Discrimination
- ❖ Hardiness
- ❖ Choice and control





**MEMO No: 4    Word Count: 1016**

**MEMO**

**TITLE:**

**Trust vs. Betrayal and Paranoia**

Trust and integrity are interlinked, as students who judge teachers to be worthy of trust have also generally made a decision regarding their integrity. Trust is integral to the development of positive relationships and is the result of:

- staff respecting students' rights for confidentiality;
- students respect for staff's integrity;
- staff listening to students; and
- staff being seen to act fairly and consistently

Trust is anchored in a social justice perspective, in which individuals perceived to be trustworthy are expected to act honourably and can be relied on. Staff listening to students is important as it is also reciprocal, and young people are more likely to listen to these staff.

**YP4:** *Maybe sometimes just take some time to ask them how to ask them how you can help. Cos I've seen that work before in my you know, school life, I've seen that work. A child who normally misbehaves, he has loads of potential, and he's just been asked by the teacher what can I do to help you during lessons and he's just said could you, ummm, ask me, if I ask for help could you, you know, go into more detail and when she did that next time he rose in grades by three sublevels on the next test. After doing that every day for a few months. I just saw that as a really good thing.*

**JU:** *What do you think that says about the teacher's values?*

**YP4:** *The teacher values her students' education... or his students' education... It also shows that they value their job as well. Int. 4, lines 78-80.*

Young people were aware of the importance of listening to staff but also felt that sometimes it could be difficult to do so, especially when staff were unable to control background noise and chat from their peers. Listening was entwined with notions of respect, with young people being particularly sensitive to being ignored and the messages that it conveyed. Listening to teachers also seemed to be a theme, with the result that listening became one of the means of expressing trust or dislike of members of staff.

**JU:** *Yeah? Where do you think they might have got the message that they're useless from?*

**YP3:** *By being ignored by everybody else. By being neglected by maybe teachers or parents. Things like that. Int. 3, lines 175-176.*

Young people were also pleased to be given the opportunity to participate in this research, several constructing it explicitly as a positive experience.

**JU:** *What do you think would be more effective in school to stop [disaffection]?*

**YP2:** *Stuff like this, more programs for kids. For have their say and talk about stuff around the community. Yeah, have more of them. Int. 2, lines 297-298*

The lack of such opportunities was also understood as communicating certain messages about the value of young people:

**YP4:** *Errr. Umm... I probably use a different word [to describe not being listened to]... You know to be... unimportant, sort of... to be unimportant and like you don't matter. Int. 4, lines 277-284.*

Trust also has a self-serving element to it, as peers who are perceived as being trustworthy can also be expected to reciprocate to caring gestures and support – they are of instrumental value. As such, having access to peers or adults that could be trusted was perceived as being a vital part of the resources available to children and young people. Having people who could be trusted was also constructed as a vital resource in resisting peer pressure, or feeling able to develop and experiment with your own identity, free from the constructed need to change or adapt in the face of threatening circumstances.

At the opposite end of the continuum, paranoia and betrayal can be a function of generalised lack of trust in the community, peers and adults. Paranoia may have implications for mental health but equally, may also be adaptive in an environment young people feel is characterised by high levels of gang activity, arbitrary and potentially lethal violence. Within this construct there is evident a high degree of suspicion of Chameleons, who it was felt could act like they were friends for years and then, when it suited them, betray the young people for personal gain. Paranoia was also evident in the allocation of god-like properties to gangs, including omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence; keeping all young people under surveillance and exerting a constant baleful influence over communities. Within a paranoid construction of the world, church and home may be the only contexts where young people can feel truly safe.

The implication of trust means that young people are more likely to submit to trusted adults for behavioural control. In terms of parenting/classroom management this indicates the propensity to allow trusted persons to dictate young people's responses to situations in which the demand to respond adaptively has outstripped the ability of the young person to do so independently. Figures vouchsafed as having behavioural control include: parents, head teacher, teacher, police, friends and religious leaders. The corollary of this was that the absence of parental behavioural control and supervision was a significant risk factor, as young people were constructed as being more likely to experiment with delinquent peer affiliation and behaviours in the vacuum left behind.

### **Summary**

1. Trust is a consequence of an appraisal of integrity. It enables the young person to submit to the behavioural control of adults or peers.
2. Paranoia is the generalised expectancy for others to be self-serving, unreliable and manipulative.
3. Betrayal occurs when relational trust is violated and can lead to a generalised sense of distrust.

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Self-efficacy theory
- ❖ Modelling
- ❖ PCP

### **Links to Focused Codes**

64. Lack of faith in adult decision making
10. Listening builds trust
4. Mindreading/mentalisaiton
7. Hypocrisy undermines relationships

- 8. Trust is at the heart of relationships
- 73. Paranoia
- 5. Gang talking and gangs
- 68. Sense of alliance with staff
- 78. Classroom management sends messages to young people
- 75. Reflective capacity

**Links to Memos**

- ❖ Mercenary Motivation,
  - ❖ Religion,
  - ❖ Making judgements about integrity
  - ❖ Gangs and Gang Talking
  - ❖ Crime
  - ❖ Safety
-

**MEMO No: 5   Word Count: 844**

**MEMO**

**TITLE:**

### **Making Compromises in Life**

The theme for this memo was that focusing on consolidating a 'reputation' and popularity could become a self-fulfilling prophecy that also reduces the options available to define the self in other ways. In this way, consolidating your position in the here-and-now can entail the sacrifice of future goals and aspirations by living one day at a time. Respect can be sought in several ways:

- through popularity and social status;
- through fear and intimidation;
- through academic and sporting success; and
- by fitting in (chameleon coping).

Young people are struggling with a bipolar paradoxical choice: they want to be clever, succeed and earn a wage to support a family but also want to be "cool" and to be popular. The tendency to frame the world dichotically means that this is viewed as an 'all-no-nothing' mutually exclusive binary choice, especially for young people whom are less able to achieve status through academic and sporting success.

The search for respect through fear and intimidation can produce a vicious cycle that creates a spiral of aggression and extortion – behaviour that effectively leads young people to disregard their education in favour of more immediately gratifying and relevant coping strategies and rewards. This reduces their options in later life as they are focused on achieving security in the here and now. They may lack the foresight, or even consider the relevance, of where their choices are leading. While this plays a role in creating a sense of security in the here-and-now it may also have the ironic effect of increasing the chance of victimisation through involvement in grinding/ fighting over ends.

The search for popularity can also distract from the more distal goals of educational success and employment. Focusing on the here-and-now and your status in that instance can lead students to become preoccupied with managing that popularity, to the detriment of their education. Conversely, focusing on your academic ability can close down other trajectories, as your peers apply negative stereotypes (e.g. Moist) that can shape your behaviour through other's expectations.

**YP9:** *Umm...well...I've seen this, people think it's good to be popular because they like get in trouble and stuff. They think that getting in trouble is, is how to be, is how to get popular...and like, to buy all the nice clothes and to stay up late...to go places without your parent's permission and to get rude to teachers. They think that's how your problems going to, to umm, just stand out amongst everyone else. Int. 9, line 146.*

**YP9:** *Popularity...I would say that popularity doesn't help you do well in School...because once you become popular you get so...worked up about it and then you think that being popular, is just being popular, so you don't have to study or...do whatever parents ask you, because you're already popular. You think that cos you're popular...you've got everything in life but...you don't have everything in life because you haven't gone to Uni, you haven't done...uhh yeah, your A Levels, you haven't got a job, you haven't got your own house or a car...and stuff like that. Int. 9, line 162.*

**YP9:** *Umm...basically you have to act like someone that's popular, act like you're...umm...a boss or yeah God or something. Yeah. You have to act act like you're...top in everything...it's hard to gain popularity.* Int. 9, line 184.

When anti-school behaviours are associated with status and respect, they become a more attractive mode of coping, as it may be intuitively easier to adopt an anti-school posture than it is to achieve a sense of belonging and validation from sporting success or academic attainment, which are not pathways open to everyone.

The main ways of achieving power and prestige include:

- the dress code;
- sporting success;
- acting cool;
- grinding;
- having money; and
- being physically strong.

Being a victim can also be seen as a sign of weakness and an invitation for others to take advantage. As a result it is preferable to present a strong front, even if this is a façade, in order to preserve personal security and control.

### **Summary**

1. Compromises made to preserve personal well-being in the here-and-now can sacrifice opportunities in later life.
2. Not everyone is able to achieve respect and validation through sporting success or academic achievement. For some, grinding and extortion may be legitimate means to a sense of power and health.

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Deferred gratification
- ❖ Motivational Interviewing, especially Developing Discrepancy

### **Links to Focused Codes**

- 9. The media shapes discourses
- 13. Knife crime is rampant
- 29. Behavioural control and parental supervision
- 5. Mindreading/mentalisation
- 31. Respect is an important social goal
- 74. Social goals compete with academic goals (e.g. popularity and status)
- 43. Events escalate rapidly
- 45. Choices lead to outcomes
- 15. Safety is a core construct
- 1. Dichotomous thinking guides decision making

### **Links to Memos**

- ❖ Crime
- ❖ Consequences
- ❖ Safety
- ❖ Discrimination
- ❖ Gangs and Gang Talking
- ❖ Bullying
- ❖ Coping Dilemmas
- ❖ Living with Fear
- ❖ Relationships

- ❖ Mercenary Motivation
  - ❖ Trust vs. Betrayal and Paranoia
  - ❖ Aspirations
  - ❖ Choice and Control
-

**MEMO No: 6    Word Count: 553**

**MEMO TITLE:**

## **Mercenary Motivation**

Here the primary motivation that prompts young people's behaviour is the securing of money and resources, irrespective of any intrinsic sense of morality. This can be focused on outcomes in the immediate or in the long term. If the focus is on immediate gratification this can also lead to a lack of planning for the future as attention becomes focused on achieving financial gain in the here-and-now.

This is constructed as being driven by a rampant sense of consumerism. When mercenary motivation is also the primary motivation it is associated with the suspension of autonomous morality in favour of an agentic state:

**YP2:** *Oh, they would be aiming for like... like... they would be aiming for money, they don't really care or just be doing it, they would just be doing... like if you go up to them and be like "Beat up that boy over there and I'll give you five quid" they'll just do it cos they don't really care about what job they have as long as they're getting all the money.* Int. 2, line 90.

**YP2:** *They don't care about society, they don't care about other people. They have no heart and...* Int. 2, line 96.

In this state the value of actions are determined only by their monetary utility. An associated risk factor is becoming involved with grinding and illicit activities that can make it more difficult to simultaneously engage with scholastic activities. Instead school can become an opportunity to secure further sources of income, through extorting money from younger students:

**YP6:** *Cos they want money very fast they're just, they're like they don't really want to work, they're just lazy.* Int. 6, line 274.

**YP8:** *Because if you want something and you don't get it...then like go to the younger people and take their money.* Int. 8, line 111.

However, mercenary motivation can also manifest positively in school, when young people are able to map their goals of financial gain onto the prospect of employment. However, the obverse of this is that it can also promote gang affiliation:

**YP2:** *Gangs, well, well as I said they're in it for the money as well.*

**JU:** *What kind of things do they do for the money?*

**YP2:** *Sell drugs, sell knives, sell guns, sell bullets, stab people for people to get the money, hustle. Yeah, that's it.* Int. 2, lines 182-184.

Teachers constructed as being mercenary are thought to only be teaching for the money and so not to have the best interests of their students at heart:

**JU:** *What does that [hypocrisy] tell you?*

**YP5:** *Maybe how they don't really care or they just teaching us just for the money and stuff like that.* Int. 5, lines 155-156.

### **Summary**

1. The motivation to achieve financial reward outweighs any intrinsic drive for self-fulfilment or sense of community,
2. Suspension of conventional morals and values.



**Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Lack of deferred gratification
- ❖ Societal pressure
- ❖ Consumerism/ capitalism

**Links to Focused Codes**

- 30. Having access to money and resources
- 51. Grinding
- 65. Personal value system
- 21. Extorting funds
- 41. Utilitarianism
- 20. Being motivated by money (Mercenary)
- 39. Relationships have instrumental value

**Links to Memos**

- ❖ Having access to money and resources
  - ❖ Power, Choice and Control
  - ❖ Bullying
  - ❖ Aspirations
  - ❖ Consequences, Consequentialism and Utilitarianism
  - ❖ Making judgements about integrity
-

**MEMO No: 7    Word Count: 466**

**MEMO  
TITLE:**

## **Having Access to Money and Resources**

The availability of money and resources was constructed as a key factor in determining life chances and coping behaviours, success and aspirations. The lack of them is associated with grinding, extortion and gang-based activities that are designed to secure a greater income.

However, money and resources are also an important part of helping young people achieve greater security and independence by accessing educational experiences and supporting their achievement. The securing of resources is linked to parental occupation, as many parents work long hours to secure enough money to support their son. The corollary of this is that the young person may spend long hours unsupervised or under the supervision of members of the extended family and beyond the behavioural control of the parent. This can precipitate a process by which they react to this freedom by becoming increasingly involved in illicit entrepreneurial activities, such as grinding or 'taxing' (extorting money) from other young people.

Most young people were acutely aware of the importance of money and resources, although this was also balanced against the dangers of becoming preoccupied with them, at the expense of the broader community and the physical and moral well-being of the young person. Integral to how students viewed money and resources was the extent to which they viewed education as a viable route to securing a reliable income. The ability to defer gratification in this way and remove themselves from the need to secure income in the here-and-now is, therefore, important.

Money and resources can also buffer against exposure to certain community-based risks through the availability of private transport and better housing in different areas, such as the country:

**YP2:** *Cos, if you live here, like places like here – like it's an alright place but if you live in like places like the countryside like nice and calm like, like the children are like mostly not ... ummm... unlikely err... unlikely to just get like get a knife and you know stab you up and stuff like that – cos they're like conscious like nice and calm and you know... so here is like more of the city area where there's more crime and stuff.* Int. 2, line 24.

The availability of private transport is also important in reducing exposure to street based risks.

### **Summary**

1. The availability of money and resources to support young people's education is an important asset and enables young people to feel that they are able to succeed.
2. Parental drive to provide money and resources can lead to reduced supervision and behavioural control.

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Maslow's hierarchy of needs
- ❖ Human Givens

### **Links to Focused Codes**

12. Reliance on avoidant coping
16. Having aspirations

- 33. Power and control
- 51. Grinding
- 20. Being motivated by money (Mercenary)
- 21. Extorting funds

**Links to Memos**

- ❖ Mercenary Motivation
  - ❖ Aspirations
  - ❖ Crime
  - ❖ Safety
-

**MEMO No: 8      Word Count: 999**

**MEMO  
TITLE:**

**Power, Choice and Control**

This refers to the perceived lack of control of the risk of victimisation and the concomitant sense of powerlessness in the community. There is a strong sense that victimisation can be arbitrary or/and inevitable and that being in the wrong place at the wrong time can be sufficient to become a target for violent crime:

**YP8:** *I think he [a friend] was just walking right and then something happened, like they asked him a question like "Give me your money" and he would be like "No" and they just stabbed him. Int. 8, line 420.*

**YP8:** *... I haven't done nothing and he'll blackmail with me for no reason. Int. 8, line 229.*

**YP5:** *I'm not saying if you grew up in [name removed] you're going to be in a gang but if you grew up in [name removed] you're gonna see a lot of killings and stuff like that and it may influence people to do that. Int. 5, line 414.*

Regaining a sense of autonomy necessitates a series of auto-plastic and hyper-vigilant coping responses, such as immediately conforming to the demands of a threat (e.g., giving them your phone/ joining a gang/ carrying a knife for them) as well as attending to channels of information that communicate potential threats in order that they may be pre-empted by avoidance strategies. Young people who have long-term aspirations are more likely to view these as assertive responses that preserve their ability to transcend the limited horizons of their aggressors.

Avoidant coping can be thus seen as an attempt to re-assert a sense of control, autonomy and predictability on the world, as can the hyper-vigilance to different channels of information, that can inform the risks in the community and enable young people to predict and pre-empt difficulties. Fostering a sense of respect can, therefore, be an adaptive strategy for ensuring continued safety in the community but also one that ironically can increase the risk of becoming a victim of violent crime, as a hard man reputation or gang affiliation can also bring you more frequently into conflict with other similar persons or groups than an avoidant coping style.

Prevalent in the community discourses is a sense of learned helplessness and resignation – students described a future of adult communities living under a state of perpetual siege, where soon people would be reluctant to emerge from their houses because the perceived risk of victimisation was too great:

**YP5:** *I think... I think that affects people's view of young people, like giving them a bad view, cos they might think that every group of boys and girls has a gun and they're gonna hurt them. So I think that's very sad and er that... soon people will hardly ever come outside if they see a young group of people. Int. 4, line 406.*

**YP1:** *If you grow up in a bad environment then you are going to be bad yourself. Int. 1, line 63.*

This sense was fed by the impression that legal sanctions are unable to impact on the decision making of perpetrators. Students do not perceive that there is anything

society can do to alter the trajectories of young people committed to a life of grinding and violent crime short of applying the death penalty:

**YP2:** *People have to be, umm.... Have... people, you tell them stuff, kids these days they don't listen, they just like all hyped about like all sorts of stuff, so they do their own thing. If they go to prison they come out, what's actually stopping them from doing it again? Nothing. So, I think that the government or somebody has to step in and put in place some stronger consequences.* Int. 2, line 290.

In school sanctions were viewed with more respect, although believed to be unfairly applied. Participants responded positively to participating in the research process in this study, a number describing how contributing their views had made them feel that they were:

- being listened to;
- being respected;
- helped to feel 'free,' meaning that they believed their voices were being listened to; and
- felt more autonomous and able to impact positively on their environments, rather than constantly having to avoid trouble.

**JU:** *What do you think would be more effective in school to stop things?*

**YP2:** *Stuff like this, more programs for kids. For have their say and talk about stuff around the community. Yeah, have more of them.* Int. 2, lines 295-299.

As such, listening to teachers and staff in lessons may be a primary means of re-asserting a sense of control and autonomy, especially in an environment which young people may experience as constantly invalidating. The crux of this is that focused and effortful cognition is voluntary and cannot be imposed by an external force. Staff may facilitate control through a variety of techniques but for a young person to invest effort and focused perception is essentially an investment made by them in the relationship and reflects perceived level of trust.

### **Summary**

1. Behaviour and listening are an expression of control
2. Young people feel their behaviours are directly shaped by their environment, to the extent where certain outcomes are pre-determined. This undermines their sense of agency and control
3. Status and social prestige are routes to power and control

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Choice Theory
- ❖ Lack of perceived control
- ❖ Attribution theory
- ❖ Deviance amplification
- ❖ Coping responses

### **Links to Focused Codes**

58. Peer pressure is a construction
45. Choices lead to outcomes
27. Sense of inevitability and powerlessness
1. Dichotomous thinking guides decision making
54. Experiencing discrimination
2. Stereotyping can be double-edged

- 9. The media shapes discourses
- 28. Systemic thinking

**Links to Memos**

- ❖ Making Compromises
  - ❖ Money and Resources
  - ❖ Hardiness
  - ❖ Gangs and Gang Talking
  - ❖ Discrimination
  - ❖ Living with Fear
  - ❖ Coping Dilemmas
  - ❖ Discrimination
  - ❖ Making judgements about Integrity
  - ❖ Perceived Adequacy of Staff Professional Skills
  - ❖ Consequences
-

Relationships with the figures who constitute formal and informal support networks are the conduit through which important messages can be disseminated most effectively. Students described these networks as consisting of the Head teacher, teachers, parents, friends, religious leaders and the police. As such, there was a general sense that students were disposed to respect teachers and trust the police, with them playing significant roles in their ability to cope and adapt to difficulties:

*YP9: Cos for young children it's, some of them found it hard to...tell their parents about stuff like this what's going on in School...that's a form of being alone cos you can't tell your parents and you can't tell...like mentors in School about what's happening then you're on your own, because you know that, that friend that acted as your friend all those years is not going to be there for you anymore, so you've got no one to talk to. Int. 9, line 126.*

Evidently a secure adult relationship is a student's most important resiliency resource. Consequently adults featured prominently on the list of people whose authority over them the students felt willing to accept in terms of behavioural control. However, the police and teachers were also perceived to apply sanctions unfairly and often ineffectually.

### **Teachers and the Head Teacher**

Teachers were allocated a prominent role in students' descriptions of how they responded to difficulties at school, home and in the community. An important factor in moderating their effectiveness is the extent that students felt that they were accessible and approachable. This is largely a product of the extent that students feel listened to and understood by staff and willing to trust their authority and decision making. This is partly the result of a feeling of relatedness but also of an understanding that the goals of the teacher and of the young person are congruent and that the teacher has the skills to provide meaningful learning experiences to facilitate progress towards them and a safe learning environment.

This could be moderated by the belief that staff were out of touch and or unwilling to communicate with young people with respect. Being listened to was largely defined in reference to adults consulting with young people about their options and choices, rather than just assuming that they knew best. This consultation does not necessarily have to be a lengthy or strenuous process but is dependent on young people feeling that their views have been heard and taken into account in decision making processes. This may be equal to the Goal Agreement component of the Working Alliance construct.

When enforcing behavioural control students reflected that teachers sometimes relied too heavily on the Christian ethos of the school:

*YP7: Teachers always say "Aw it's a Christian School" and stuff like that. Well, I'm a Christian but like...they, they think that if you, if you, every bad thing you do always turn and they say "Aw Christian, Christian" and stuff like "You're a Christian you should, it's a Christian School" yeah...Umm sometimes it gets annoying like I'm, I'm like not saying...umm Christian like we have to be bad all the time, I'm saying like sometimes, no one knows how to have fun sometimes*

*like in class, yeah. Int. 7, line 164.*

A key psychological construct that resonated with much that the young people said in their interviews was that of the therapeutic working alliance. This encompasses both the relational aspect of dyads as well as the goal orientated and directional nature of education.

### **Parents**

Parental behavioural control was a prominent feature of most young people's coping responses. This perhaps in part reflects the high expectations and ambitions they felt that their parents held for their futures, particularly when immigration to the UK was undertaken to improve the life chances of families, young people and future generations. Parents play an important role in keeping young people focused on their studies and advising them on how to navigate the streets safely. However, this can lead indirectly to parents being absent and unable to impose behavioural control, support and supervision as they are working hard to secure the money and resources needed to support their children's education and meet their basic needs. Under these conditions the extended family play a more important role in the development of the young person, sometimes fulfilling the role of a second or third parent.

Parental advice and support was also rated above that of school staff:

**YP8:** *Yeah cos my, I know my parents would be like "stay away from them" and stuff like that, the Head Teacher, would say that as well...but it's either my parents say something that I will listen and is the words that she said is better than the Head Teachers words that I should stay away from them. So basically if my mum says...stay away from them it's good, my Dad told me that not to do this and the Head Teacher says don't go to them it's not good and that's it. I'd rather go and do what my Mum says cos her words are more like, yeah. Int. 8, line 360.*

This highlights the importance of coordinating the messages delivered from the school with those from home in order for them to be truly effective. This was underscored with regards to the experience of racism. Although the student said that he had never experienced racism himself:

**JU:** *Ok, have you experienced any, any racism yourself?*

**YP6:** *Umm, no... But my, my Grandad.... Cos he's very older and after he got abused. Int. 6, lines 247-248.*

This suggests that the expectancy of discrimination may be mediated by the experiences of adults, highlighting the need for transparent and open decision making, that involves the family and school collaboratively.

### **Police**

Participants seemed generally positively disposed to the police and to understand and appreciate their role in controlling and deterring the influence, extent and frequency of violent crime and gang based activities. However, they also viewed the police as being the chief instruments of institutional discrimination, although it was unclear if this was a function of their status as young people or Black-British young people:



**YP5:** *Umm... something that happens to a lot of people that I know, is like, when there's a big group of people on a bus. You know how some bus stops, now they have police there? Sometimes when they have that they have the police stopping them and taking people off busses and sometimes calling home or writing a letter home and, sometimes that can be unfair cos you might not be doing anything but cos you're there and you come from the same school you're... you're one of the people that get caught. Int. 5, line 236.*

The presence of the police was also more likely to lead people into making negative judgements about the people they were talking to. Consequences are generally viewed as being ineffective, with few career criminals being likely to change as a result of prison.

### Friendships

The influence of peers on decision-making and coping may be constructed as being a double edged sword. Peers can exert a negative influence on decision making by demanding that students conform to group based expectations, or face the threat of violence. Conversely, positive influence can be placed on students to behave more constructively. As such, having an alternative peer group was considered to be a necessary resource for students who were experiencing difficulties. However, being able to transfer one's allegiance from one group to another was a far from simple process:

**YP8:** *Umm I don't really know much but...there was some guy...who was, he was bad and then one of his friends, he was a good friend, and then he was "Like why are you doing this stuff" and he was like, "Umm but it's cool being a bad person"...and then he was like but you're not going to succeed or I mean you're not going to get nowhere in life, you're just going to be bad and go Prison...and he was like "(Kissed teeth\*) But still man it's still good" and then he was like "So you don't want to be rich, you don't want to have a good job, you don't want to have a wife, you don't want to have a big house?" And he was like "But I do" and then he's like "If you do then you need to learn hard and study not do stuff and going and robbing people" and he was like "I'll think about it" and then that's all I heard. Int. 8, line 538.*

\*Kissing your teeth is a colloquial method of expressing scorn, disapproval or irritation, referring to the act of sucking air in through your teeth..

For students that do not have access to an alternative peer group, or who feel unable to achieve a positive sense of self through conventional pathways (sporting or academic participation and success), aligning themselves with deviant groups may be a more adaptive and useful strategy for making themselves feel powerful and in control. This is a major buffer against facilitating change, as interventions that frame such behaviours as evidence of maladjustment or faulty cognition are fundamentally misaligned with the needs of that young person and may provoke powerful counter-motivations to change. As such, young people are faced with a choice:

"I suggest that this struggle derives from two distinct forms of belonging to identifiable groups: that which is claimed and desired, or 'chosen'; and the 'unchosen' identity, which is ascribed by others and defined by social position. Young people's struggles to be, and be seen as, who they are, may be seen as struggles for chosen, and against unchosen, social identities." (Bottrell, 2007, p. 607).

It is a function of the relationships available to the young people whether they have the agency to navigate towards chosen identities and not see conformity as the only route to attaining power and acceptance.

### **Summary**

1. Peers have a formal and informal support network available to them when making decisions about how to deal with threats and difficulties.
2. Although parental advice is the most persuasive, underscoring the need of closely aligning the messages from home and school, the advice from peers is the most dynamic.

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Community Psychology/ Community Focused Interventions
- ❖ Therapeutic Alliance
- ❖ Network theory
- ❖ Ripple effects and systemic change

### **Links to Focused Codes**

- 38. Friendship groups are an important coping and change resource
- 57. Relationships with staff and authority figures
- 68. Sense of alliance with staff
- 19. Having access to authority figures
- 10. Listening builds trust
- 8. Trust is at the heart of relationships
- 7. Hypocrisy undermines relationships
- 39. Relationships have instrumental value
- 32. The extended family play an important role
- 37. Parents support pupil's education
- 19. Having access to authority figures
- 38. Friendship groups are an important coping and change resource

### **Links to Memos**

- ❖ Aspirations
  - ❖ Perceived Adequacy of Staff Professional Skills
  - ❖ Making Judgements about Integrity
  - ❖ Religion
  - ❖ Value Systems
  - ❖ Power, Choice and Control
-

MEMO  
TITLE:

Hardiness

Hardiness is a macro-construct that subsumes a number of health and dispositional variables. As students did not seem to understand or relate to the idea of resilience, this seemed a more congruent word to substitute to describe their daily experiences of healthy and resilient functioning:

Hardiness

Identity Control and Self-efficacy

This encompasses a commitment to control how you are defined and resist identities that are ascribed by other people, as well as more cognitive aspects related to socio-academic confidence, motivation and agency. When identities are imposed by others, young people occupy a subservient status and lack control over how they are seen and interpreted. It may be preferable to occupy a lower social position, such as a nerd (signified by dressing 'moist'), if it is a position that you have chosen and allows you to resist being put into categories over which students feel they have no control or conversely embrace and redefine them as a source of positive esteem:

**YP5:** *Well, if you've grown up with people for a long time and then you see them change so quickly, that might influence you to change quickly to fit in with the crowd. Like you might have to pretend to be someone else.* Int. 5, line 353.

**YP2:** *Yeah... it depends how you look. For example, if you look, if you look like, I'll say a slang word 'moist' like, like, you have jack-ups, like your trousers are all the way down here, your tie's all done properly like mine, but like, like but really really worse like tight like that and then you're walking like with glasses looking all geeky and... they'd see that you're moist and moist means that you look like a idiot and stuff like that yeah... and then they'll come and bully you tha'as if you have a short tie, just like that, wha'll you're not meant to be, all puffed up like that yeah, with no blazer and with drop down's trousers that come up to here and then you just walk in like that yeah, thinking you're like some bad guy or some sort of thing, and people won't touch you. But however, you can also be yourself and just get on with your life.* Int. 2, line 66.

A related issue is that of self-efficacy. This encompasses the subjective appraisal of mastery in a particular domain of competence. At the heart of this is the self-belief that stems from positive self-talk, as Bandura (1997) writes, "*Insidious self-doubts can easily overrule the best of skills (p35)*" and this resonates particularly strongly with the beliefs of several participants:

**YP4:** *Cos if you think that you can't reach it then you won't reach it. But if you.... If you aspire towards something then you'll try your best to make your way there.* Int. 4, lines 17-18.

As such self-efficacy is a construct relevant to social and academic competencies and the mediation of it is one of the main tasks of a teacher. To do this they need to provide work for students that falls within their zone of proximal development and so for them to feel that they can self-determine and control their learning. This is

integral to students perceiving school as being a source of positive challenge, stimulation and development (below).

In schools the feeling of self-efficacy can apply to a small minority of gifted and talented students. Those who are not as academically successful may feel the need to self-protect from expected failure and retreat from academic aspirations, embracing other methods of developing a sense of being powerful and self-reinforcing, such as taxing or grinding that are easier and equally, or more, rewarding.

This highlights an important role for teachers in mediating the confidence that precipitates success. This is achieved through scaffolding and the gradual withdrawal of support. The ideal role for teachers is to mediate a strong sense of belief without fostering dependence – a delicate balancing act!

### **Challenge**

Challenge is a construct that dovetails with self-efficacy. This corresponds to the belief that change is a normal part of everyday life and necessary for growth. It reflects an openness to new experiences and a cognitive flexibility and tolerance for ambiguity.

**YP4:** *The most challenging things are... tests. I like tests. I enjoy them, yeah. Because normally there are a few questions that we haven't actually learnt about in the class and because I study at home it's not like, a sort of studying thing where you buy a book and you just read it about that certain subject. It's because the things I do in life, like I play a card game that involves math, and those sorts of things. Int. 4, line 125.*

**YP4:** *And then when you're doing a fun lesson it's like you just started and then it ends. Ummm... normally when it's a fun lesson it's, it's fun because I don't know what they're doing. Int. 4, line 121.*

This also reflects a positive attitude towards making mistakes and embracing them as a natural part of the learning process, rather than as intrinsically threatening and to be avoided.

### **Health (physical and mental)**

This is an ecological variable, encompassing the health of the individual (physical, emotional, spiritual), the groups they affiliate with the institutions they patronise and the community in which the institutions and groups are based. All participants were cognisant of systemic factors which shaped and impacted on their lives and aware that their destinies can be shaped by forces that are beyond their control and impose certain limitations:

**YP1:** *If you grow up in a bad environment then you are going to be bad yourself. Int. 1, line 63.*

**YP2:** *Cos, if you live here, like places like here – like it's an alright place but if you live in like places like the countryside like nice and calm like, like the children are like mostly not ... ummm... unlikely err... unlikely to just get like get a knife and you know stab you up and stuff like that – cos they're like conscious like nice and calm and you know... so here is like more of the city area where there's more crime and stuff. Int. 2, line 24.*

This sense of fatalism fed an idea that it is difficult to change your allotted trajectory and a tendency towards a lack of power, agency and control.

#### *Physical Health*

Individual factors that incorporate physical health. This includes having basic physiological needs met and sustained (diet, sleep, nurturance) as well as the importance of exercise.

#### *Mental Health*

Mental health is mostly understood as a factor that can be actively regulated, drawing analogies of the brain as a muscle. It is recognised as being a community-wide issue, although individuals with poor mental health are viewed with varying degrees of compassion and/or suspicion. Young people are compassionate to adults diagnosed with organic disorders, such as Alzheimer's but are more suspicious of individuals who act inconsistently, oscillating between displaying poor and good mental health.

#### *Emotional Health*

The ability to regulate emotions and not give in to hedonistic or destructive and unregulated affective responses to loss, fear, challenge or failure. This encompasses a discipline or hardiness and entails the use of cognitive strategies to self-regulate, such as blocking, self-calming and the use of cathartic and self-allocated rewards.

#### *Spiritual Health*

This is inferred through the frequency of church visits and has a strong cultural element. See 'Religion.'

#### *Community Health*

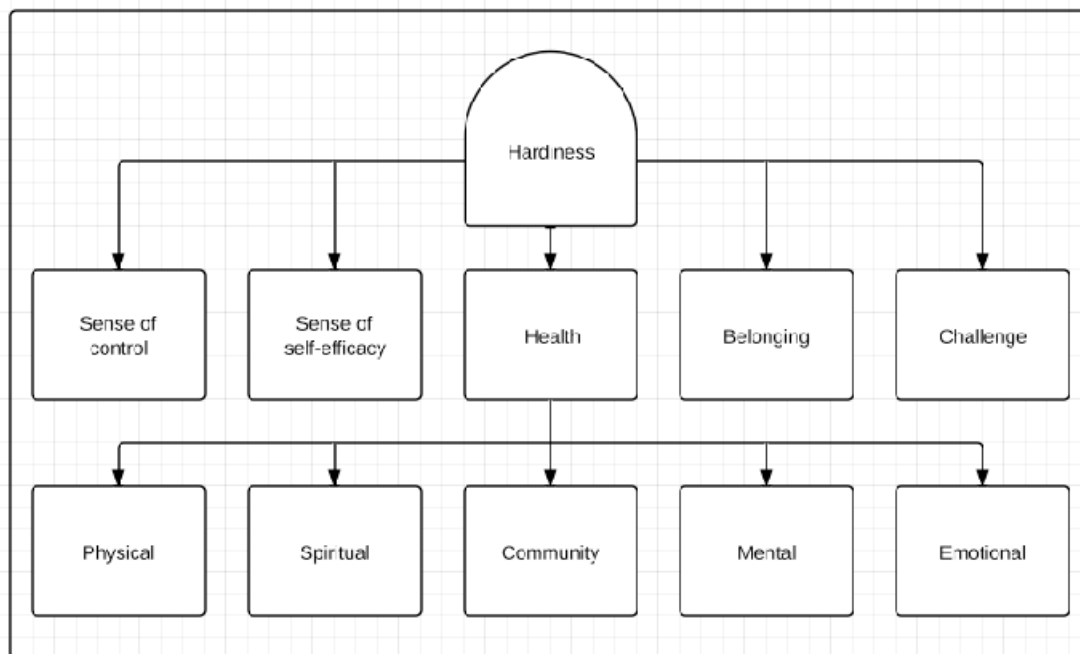
At the heart of this is the sense that the environment and those inhabiting it are essentially trustworthy and can be relied on to act in an honourable and trustworthy fashion. A direct barometer of community health is how individuals with poor health (physical and mental) are viewed and treated. Individuals with poor mental health are viewed suspiciously, as their behaviour is often inconsistent and unpredictable. Young people who lack understanding of the nature of these illnesses feel that people may be 'pretending' or 'putting it on' and are inherently discomforted by the implications this has for the underlying motives of the ill person. How racially diverse communities are perceived is also a sign/symptom of community health, with a number of young people describing exposure to multiculturalism as an opportunity for personal growth and education, rather than as the genesis of discrimination and racism.

#### **Belonging**

The sense of belonging, through claiming and being owned by one's group, provides self-esteem, status and solidarity. As a result, deviant groups, such as gangs, may become an important source of security by helping to fulfil this need when it is unmet through other sources, such as school, home and positive peer groups. Peers are viewed as one of the most potent socialising groups, and a sense of belonging is a powerful conduit through which this is achieved, with its concomitant desire for acceptance through conformity. Conformity is a choice made by young people to maximise their acceptance and reduce the chances of rejection and isolation. Again, this makes a great deal of sense in communities and streets where the primary means of traversing them safely may be through safety in numbers.

#### **Summary**

1. Hardiness is a multi-part factor, encompassing positive challenge orientation, self-efficacy and agency, physical, mental and community based health.
2. The narratives of young people reflect a stoic fatalism and acceptance of their everyday realities.



### Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories

- ❖ Hardiness,
- ❖ Self-Efficacy,
- ❖ Control Theory,
- ❖ Dweck's Mindsets
- ❖ Social Trust
- ❖ Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky)

### Links to Focused Codes

- 26. Staying strong minded/heavy minded.
- 73. Paranoia
- 44. Regulating behaviour and emotions is a sign of strong-mindedness
- 53. Having good health
- 71, , Discipline 'learning hard'
- 38. Friendship groups are an important coping and change resource
- 23. Chameleon coping – managing identity
- 67. Framing multiculturalism as opportunity
- 29. Behavioural control and parental supervision
- 62, Self-efficacy shapes belief
- 16. Having aspirations
- 17. Need for challenge
- 36. Perceived content and pedagogical knowledge is important in cognitively engaging students
- 22. Staying streetwise

### Links to Memos

- ❖ Power, Choice and Control
- ❖ Value Systems

- ❖ Making Compromises
  - ❖ Value Systems
  - ❖ Gangs and Gang talking.
-

According to Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1954), core constructs lie at the peak of a complex hierarchy of constructs, organised according to principles of superordination and subordination. Core constructs are those few that are least amenable to change and which young people use to make sense of the world around them and guide their decision making. As such, they underpin all behaviours at a low level of awareness, and so are not readily accessible to reflection and change.

Young people were fundamentally orientated towards extrapolating meaning from their everyday interactions, inferring much about the personal values and constructs of staff, peers and communities from their observations of their physical environment and social behaviour.

Many participants described an ethic code of morality that guided their behaviours and corresponded to the core-construct concept. The most frequently encountered construct was a sense that it was important to treat others as you would like to be treated. At the heart of this was the expectation of reciprocity, outlining a definition of relationships in terms of their instrumental utility but also a fundamental orientation towards social justice. However, such core values could also be suspended to facilitate entry into a particular group. There was also a sense that the need for money could supplant such moralistic constructs and lead to the advisability of actions becoming defined solely by their monetary utility. This was a common way of understanding the behaviours of young people and teachers who appeared mercenary in their behaviours and decisions.

The ability to impose order and stay faithful to these constructs is a fundamental source of a sense of agency and empowerment.

The core values which young people referred to, some of which are represented as continua, included:

- Injustice vs. Social justice: Need for Social Justice
- Personal freedom vs. Deprivation: Need for freedom and control.
- Safety vs. Danger: Need to feel safe
- Trust vs. Betrayal: need for significant figures whom can be trusted
- Individualism vs. communalism: Community orientated thinking is important.  
Individualistic thinking occurs when community breaks down.
- Adaptation vs. Integrity: Young people who stay true to themselves and refuse to conform or change their identity are mentally tougher than those who do.

## **Summary**



1. Young people have core constructs which guide their decision making.
2. Determining young people's core values is a key component of successful intervention
3. Young people often referred to a sense of social justice, need for personal freedom, hope, staying safe, community and belonging and integrity.

#### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Personal Construct Psychology – Core Constructs
- ❖ Elicitation exercises – laddering
- ❖ Consistency
- ❖ Search for meaning – Frankl.

#### **Links to Focused Codes**

- 60. Protecting freedom
- 70. Socialisation
- 41. Utilitarianism
- 77. Belonging
- 20. Being motivated by money (Mercenary)
- 33. Power and control
- 65. Personal philosophy
- 25. Awareness of unfair treatment (just world and social justice)

#### **Links to Memos**

- ❖ Power, Choice and Control
  - ❖ Making Compromises
  - ❖ Hardiness
  - ❖ Coping Dilemmas
  - ❖ Safety
  - ❖ Significant Relationships
  - ❖ Making Judgements About Integrity
  - ❖ Trust vs. Betrayal and Paranoia
-

Being bullied means being exposed to a relatively common adverse set of intimidatory experiences, which are collectively labelled as 'bullying.' In school this is unlikely to include excessive violence or knife crime because of the increased likelihood of surveillance and opportunities for finding safety in peer groups. As a result, school is viewed as being something of a buffer zone, against exposure to the risk of the more severe types of violence (e.g., assaults, stabbings).

However, a common source of stress was the experience of being robbed of money by extortive practices by older students (in-vivo term 'taxing'). This is one of the most commonly referred to manifestations of bullying, and involves the coercion of money from 'younger' by older students through blackmail or threat. In understanding the motivations for such a practice, extortion may reflect an entrepreneurial spirit, as young people seek to maximise access to money and resources that they would not be able to achieve legitimately and so may be understood by them as an adaptive strategy to enable access to money and resources that are driven by consumerism. Indeed, the entrepreneurial spirit is also inferred by the label colloquially attached to the practice: "Taxing." This infers that the practice has a quasi-legitimate status in the school, perhaps as a 'rite of passage' or initiation that all young people experience but have the opportunity to practice in their turn. Taxing confers strength and power on the extorter, which may in itself be the primary goal, as the sums involved are not necessarily large. However, carrying luxury goods (phones, I-Pods, etc) can also exacerbate the risk of victimisation in the community, as one student described:

*YP1: Umm.. yeah. There was a boy who got err about a few weeks ago who got stabbed in [name removed]. He was just trying to protect his brother's phone. Int. 1, line 336.*

Although the ability to navigate safely through the streets is aided by a sense of perspective, stemming from being able to see the 'bigger picture:'

*YP2: Just just be yourself like, don't worry about gangs and if a gang did try and approach me and say give me your phone just give it to them – don't, don't say anything, just walk away cos at the end of the day you know you have it in mind that you're gonna get far far further than them in your life – that one little phone you can replace it but that one little second that has gone you can't so... Int. 2, line 188.*

However, consumer goods have also become irrevocably synonymous with power and status, meaning that the owning of such items is also source of validation and legitimate method for securing status and power:

*YP9: Umm...basically you have to act like someone that's popular, act like you're...umm...a boss or yeah God or something. Yeah. You have to act act like you're...top in everything...it's hard to gain popularity. Int. 9, line 184.*

*YP9: They [popular children] would be walking around and usually have like...crowds of people, not crowds, but say about 3 to 4 people just walking around with them and they have like nice phones, nice bags...nice shoes and stuff like that. Int. 9, line 196.*

Avoiding bullying requires students to project an identity of strength, which can itself be built and maintained by bullying other students. Showing weakness can lead to opportunistic bullying. Students described a hidden curriculum which they feel is largely invisible to teachers and other adults.

**YP2:** *People just take you as an idiot... and [you] get bullied.* Int. 2, lines 61-62.

**YP2:** *Umm... nobody take them for fools, so that they don't respect them.* Int. 2, line 265.

**YP2:** *Umm... Cos they wanna they wanna kinda look big, cos someone asks them where they're from "Yeah, I'm from [name removed], I'm for I'm for, yeah, yeah." They're like that cos they don't wanna look like, scuse my language, as they say, a pus... pussy hole. That means you're chicken, you're like scared. Yeah, cos, cos, [unclear].* Int. 2, line 407.

The importance of not conveying weakness is also applied to teachers:

**JU:** *What happens if people see that you're weak?*

**YP2:** *They... they take advantage of you... alright, cos you're like, it's like... it's like having a supply teacher. It's like having a supply teacher in your school and cos they're not your normal teacher you think you can mess about. And take advantage of the teacher. And think the teacher's not alright. Sorry. Think the teacher's not wise, they think the teacher's not got like the rules. Yeah.* Int. 2, line 331-332.

As a result, status is an important goal for young people in enabling them to safely navigate potential road blocks. This 'hidden-curriculum' describes language, expectations and values which students feel are largely hidden from teachers and adults but which determined whether an individual student is accepted or rejected.

### **Summary**

1. There is a hidden curriculum, which students feel is largely beyond the ken of members of staff
2. Extorting money from other students may be seen as a quasi-legitimate strategy to enforce respect and secure material goods.
3. Showing weakness can increase the risk of victimisation, both for teachers and for students.

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Bullying as a source of resilience
- ❖ Power and Control
- ❖ Learned Helplessness

### **Links to Focused Codes**

- 56. Experiencing bullying
- 21. Extorting funds
- 76. Learned helplessness
- 49. Individualism vs. Communalism
- 51. Grinding
- 25. Awareness of unfair treatment (just world and social justice)
- 23. Chameleon coping – managing identity
- 22. Staying streetwise
- 20. Being motivated by money
- 18. Crime is prevalent in the community

63. Disengaging (not caring)

74. Social goals compete with academic goals

**Links to Memos**

- ❖ Living with Fear
  - ❖ Coping Dilemmas
  - ❖ Crime
  - ❖ Consequences
  - ❖ Safety
  - ❖ Discrimination
  - ❖ Trust vs. Betrayal and Paranoia
  - ❖ Aspirations
  - ❖ Mercenary Motivation
  - ❖ Power, Choice and Control
-

This is a core construct for young people, the violation of which can provoke the experience of fear, which motivates the adoption of coping strategies to regain a sense of control and ameliorate the sensation. The violation of the safety construct can be triggered by the sensation of losing control or the subjective appraisal that the odds of violent victimisation are unacceptably high. The subjective experience of safety can be liberating and free up cognitive, social and physical resources to focus on pursuing other goals, rather than maintaining this construct, such as academic and vocational aspirations.

**JU:** *You mention the word 'safer' – how does that help?*

**YP5:** *If you feel unsafe you do a lot of avoid that situation and by feeling safer it means that you can, you're more comfortable and you participate in stuff more.*  
Int. 5, lines 268-269.

School is commonly perceived as being safe but young people recognise that they are at risk during transitions between different destinations. Whilst bullying and extortion can be experienced at school the risk of victimisation is moderated during the time they are inside the school gates.

**JU:** *What makes (gangs) challenging to young people?*

**YP3:** *When being afraid to go outside. Not wanting to bring things... expensive things like phones outside cos they might be stolen or... that's it. Like, going out at night... cos gangs might be hanging around the area.* Int. 3, lines 90-91.

Staying safe may involve behaviours which ironically increase the risk of victimisation, e.g., carrying a knife for another student, joining a gang or acting aggressively or adopting an anti-school stance in order to cultivate a reputation and respect.

**YP1:** *No, say like. If they say umm... carry something for you, like a knife, they will always say yes cos they don't want to get hurt in any way.* Int. 1, line 140.

Young people appreciate the role of the police in protecting the community from the risks of violent victimisation but some feel that extreme measures are now necessary:

**YP8:** *Yeah basically if that thing beeps it, it's like a tag if that beeps...then the Police will know it's been beeping, so they might come over and the check, stop and search if they find the person that went out of the house, took it, took a weapon... It'll be better because...the there's more likely that if you take a knife out and you go out your house, Police will know that something's happened so they'll go over to their house and do something.* Int. 8, lines 586-590.

### **Summary**

1. A core construct that informs young people's coping behaviours
2. Staying safe frees up cognitive resources to focus on academic and vocational aspirations

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Coping
- ❖ Appraisal/ Attribution theory
- ❖ Frustration-Aggression
- ❖ Working Memory

### **Links to Focused Codes**

- 31. Respect is an important social goal
- 24. School is a buffer zone
- 14. Living with fear
- 13. Knife crime is felt to be rampant
- 2. Stereotyping can be double-edged
- 18. Crime is prevalent in the community
- 15. Need to feel safe
- 1. Dichotomous thinking guides decision making
- 3. Decisions are based on second and third hand information
- 6. Consequences are felt to be ineffective
- 5. Gang talking and gangs
- 9. The media shapes discourses
- 12. Reliance on avoidant coping
- 16. Having aspirations (planning for the future)
- 28. Systemic thinking
- 30. Having access to money and resources
- 43. Events escalate rapidly out of control
- 50. Retreating into a siege mentality
- 49. Fighting over ends

### **Links to Memos**

- ❖ Crime
  - ❖ Consequences
  - ❖ Coping Dilemmas
  - ❖ Bullying
  - ❖ Making Compromises
  - ❖ Gangs and Gang Talking
  - ❖ Trust vs. Betrayal and Paranoia
  - ❖ Aspirations
  - ❖ Perceived Adequacy of Staff Professional Skills
  - ❖ Significant Relationships
  - ❖ Religion
  - ❖ Hardiness
  - ❖ Power, Choice and Control
  - ❖ Money and Resources
-

**MEMO No: 14    Word Count 1617**

**MEMO**

**TITLE:**

**Aspirations (planning for the future)**

Aspirations are defined as hoped-for future goals. These may be future educational or vocational goals or non-academic goals, such as money, respect or safety. They can be long-term or short-term but also dictate how young people engage with their education – if they see the point of school:

**YP2:** ... *certain children don't really care about school. They just think it's a place that they just go to. Finish at 3:15, 4:00 latest and just go home. That's what they think school is, they don't really get the aim of school.* Int. 2, line 346.

**YP4:** *Umm... some people it will make them view school as a sort of starting point to their career and some people will view it as a place you're sent just because you have to.*

**JU:** *How do you think that affects how they behave in school?*

**YP4:** *Well, if they think it's a place they've been sent just because they have to and not because they have a choice they'll probably act... act badly and misbehave... but if... if they think they're sent there so that they can start off a good career and a good life then they will try their best in everything they do.* Int. 4, lines 17-24.

Young people are able to articulate the importance of school but often lack the knowledge of how certain subject areas are relevant to career pathways. In these situations more direct routes to financial gain, such as grinding, blackmail or extortion may seem to be preferable, or initiate a cycle of disaffection.

Participants' aspirations largely appeared to be unsullied by anticipated barriers, varying mainly according to their individual motivations and those of their parents, who they report are also ambitious for them to succeed. Young people described the experience of a large amount of behavioural control (parents regulating behaviour of their young people through advice, boundaries and expectations) intended to help them stay safe and achieve:

**JU:** *What does it mean to your family when bad things happen in the community?*

**YP5:** *To my family it means that, like, that they don't like me joining in that, so they try and push me away from it and tell me to focus on my studies and my life and don't worry about what other people are doing. And that helps me a lot cos if I'm focusing about me and what I want to do it means I won't let other people stop me from doing it.*

**JU:** *You think that is a good way of coping?*

**YP5:** *Yeah, avoiding people.* Int. 5, lines 229-232.

Some young people are more focused on achieving financial gain and this may impede their ability to engage meaningfully with their education when it is combined with the difficulties of deferring financial gratification until a job and source of employment can be found. Juxtaposed against this is the prospect of an immediate source of money from "taxing" other young people, grinding or hustling, or mercenary activities.

Although young people were critical of elements of school (relationships, teachers, peers) that constitute the process of education this was underlined by an understanding and acknowledgement of the importance and value of education in

order to achieve higher education, employment and financial independence, as well as of escaping chaotic and deprived communities and fulfilling parental and personal ambitions. As such the legitimacy of teachers' authority was dictated by the perceived adequacy of their professional skills – their ability to mediate and enable young people to work towards educational goals. This sense of legitimacy was a key part in young people developing relationships and trusting staff.

The perception of holding congruent goals with staff underlies an emergent sense of alliance, or connection, where staff are constructed as allies rather than as coercive authority figures. However, the need to self-protect against threats (victimisation, as well as academic failure) can lead to a retreat from aspirations as goals become progressively more truncated to the here-and-now and financial gain through any means (ie., mercenary motivation) or those which they have more self-belief in their ability to achieve:

### **The Good Life**

This is the antithesis to being motivated by money and entails an appreciation of family and community values, as well as integrity.

**YP2:** *They come to this country basically to get a better life cos back at home in Africa there's not much stuff, facilities like, they have to like pay for education here you get it for free. So they bring their sons and kids here for more facilities so they will work like night, evening, day to provide for their kids... so their kids have a better life in England.* Int. 2, line 233.

**YP1:** *Not really cos like some people some people some of them are that's what they want to be and most of the others just want to be good people. Yeah they just want to enjoy their life. So yeah.* Int. 1, line 344.

**YP9:** *Umm...living the good life that involves...like in the future if you have a child or something, that involves looking after that child and raising that child properly...also means working hard for a living.* Int. 9, line 696.

A key factor in shaping this ambition is in the parental training delivered to help their young people overcome disadvantage and internalize high educational ambitions.

### **Money**

Money provides a valid motive for young people and this extrinsic motivation can result in engaging in school when young people are able to connect this credentialing process with better vocational prospects. However, the pressures of consumerism and an inability to defer gratification sufficiently can lead to a mercenary motivation, where the focus is on attaining money irrespective of the method.

**YP8:** *Because if you want something and you don't get it...then like go to the younger people and take their money.* Int. 8, line 111.

**YP2:** *Oh, they would be aiming for like... like... they would be aiming for money, they don't really care or just be doing it (?) they would just be doing... like if you go up to them and be like "Beat up that boy over there and I'll give you five quid" they'll just do it cos they don't really care about what job they have as long as they're getting all the money.* Int. 2, line 90



## Status and Respect

Opportunities are only seen as being wasted when young people make reference to the future self. With reference to the current self the need to navigate rigid social hierarchies, as well as a perceived potentially lethal community, takes priority. A way of achieving this is to focus on consolidating status and respect

**YP9:** *Popularity...I would say that popularity doesn't help you do well in School...because once you become popular you get so...worked up about it and then you think that being popular, is just being popular, so you don't have to study or...do whatever Parents ask you, because you're already popular. You think that cos you're popular...you've got everything in life but...you don't have everything in life because you haven't gone to Uni, you haven't done...uhh yeah, your A Levels, you haven't got a job, you haven't got your own house or a car...and stuff like that.* Int. 9, line 162.

**YP9:** *Umm...basically you have to act like someone that's popular, act like you're...umm...a boss or yeah God or something. Yeah. You have to act act like you're...top in everything...it's hard to gain popularity.* Int. 9, line 184.

The corollary of this is that in order to raise educational aspirations staff need to mediate the ability of young people to look beyond living each day at a time and negotiate appropriate long-term goals, broken into achievable short term goals, that are relevant and understandable by the young person in question.

## Coping (Staying safe)

**YP2:** *Just just be yourself like, don't worry about gangs and if a gang did try and approach me and say give me your phone just give it to them – don't, don't say anything, just walk away cos at the end of the day you know you have it in mind that you're gonna get far, far further than them in your life.* Int. 2, line 188.

This illustrates how aspirations interact with the chosen coping modality, enabling young people to respond to environmental threats without compromising their personal safety or ability to work towards desired goals. Aspirations are, therefore, a crucial part of fostering an academic resilience, or ability to sustain effort in school in spite of contradictory pressures.

## Summary

1. Aspirations are hoped for goals. They can be any goals, not just academic or vocational, as long as they are important to the young person in question.
2. Aspirations shape how young people engage with and persevere with school, as well as respond to threats and pressures in their community.
3. Raising aspirations is a key part of shaping academic resiliency, as well as the coping adaptations of young people at other times and places.

## Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories

- ❖ Hope Theory
- ❖ Attitude Theory
- ❖ Resilience

## Links to Focused Codes

- 79. Aspiring to the Good Life
- 21. Extorting funds
- 68. Sense of alliance with staff

- 17. Need for challenge
- 19. Having access to authority figures
- 78. Classroom management sends messages to young people
- 30. Having access to money and resources
- 31. Respect is an important social goal
- 32. The extended family play an important role
- 74. Social goals compete with academic goals
- 37. Parents play an active role in pupil's education

**Links to Memos**

- ❖ Perceived adequacy of Staff Professional Skills
  - ❖ Making Judgements about Integrity
  - ❖ Trust vs. Betrayal and Paranoia
  - ❖ Money and Resources
  - ❖ Making Compromises
  - ❖ Living with Fear
  - ❖ Mercenary Motivation
  - ❖ Coping Dilemmas
-

**Word Count 1004**

**MEMO TITLE:**

## Gangs and Gang Talking

The tough talking rhetoric of the ‘war on gangs’ that has dominated headlines in recent years is reflected in the fears and constructed realities of the children and young people living in inner city communities. Indeed gangs are a key referent they use to explain patterns of observed and recorded crime and deviancy. Young people are particularly vigilant to the activities of gangs, as they have implications for their ability to safely navigate streets and communities, as well as being a means of attaining status and security. This paradox is evident below:

**YP1:** *Umm... some of them dress up in bandanas some dress in all black. Some, say if they killed someone, they all umm put a bandana where they killed them or the area around where they killed them. Umm... umm... yeah, so... Int. 1, line 326.*

**YP9:** *Umm...it affects you quite a lot because you, sometimes you have friends that keep boasting about how they know gangs and gang members and then they ask you if you know any gang members and you say "No", they'll start to maybe...make jest of you just because you don't know any gang members. That's how it affects you in the community, inside and outside School. Int. 9, line 48.*

As such, gangs are at once a source of fear and intimidation, a source of revenue and security, a means to a powerful sense of identity and agency, a source of family and belonging. They are not all things to all young people but some of these things to some young people.

Young people are aware of the symbolism embodied in different colours and styles of dress and the risks of traversing different post-codes, resulting in risk of becoming embroiled in gang based conflicts, regardless of any real affiliation. The prevalence of gangs in their communities is accorded the status of empirical truth, in spite of a common lack of any real first-hand experience. Young people and their parents are engaged with scanning multi-media channels for information to confirm or inform their theories. As these headlines are all too available in the media their discourses are irrefutably 'evidence-based,' although grinding and extortion are not necessarily the preserve of gangs.

Some young people view gang membership or gang awareness as legitimate pathways to status and financial resources, while others want to circumvent this pathway and focus on living the 'Good Life,' which entails working hard and having a family. However, young people do not always feel they will have a choice in the trajectory they follow, feeling that they can be blackmailed or threatened into joining a gang, or even feeling they have to do so in order to stay 'safe' and survive. This can also be driven by an unmet need for affiliation and belonging, particularly stemming from absent parents or from a lack of behavioural control and access to a supportive network.

Of particular concern is the almost mythological status attributed to ‘gangs,’ which are collectively viewed as holding the powers of omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience, constantly holding young people under surveillance and having the power to strike them down unexpectedly and often arbitrarily:

**YP9:** *Umm because...these days things go round the street, umm...talking about*

*different people, different things and nowadays we have gangs and stuff like that and you don't know who's in a gang, you'd just be walking down the street and they'd be talking about something that might...get the gang member...umm...like angry because you might not know it's him...but...it, at the same time it could be him or it could be someone working...for him. Nowadays if someone tells you something...about that gang or certain member...and uhh, tell you...the best thing to do is not mention it and try and get it out of your head. Int. 9, line 34.*

**YP9:** *Umm...by just sticking to your own business and if someone tells you something about gang you think just go on the street shouting it out or keep on mentioning it as your walking down the street. That would get you in trouble with...some gang members and people that know gang members would get you in trouble with them as well because they obviously want to keep it a secret what they told you. Int. 9, line 62.*

Whilst this paranoia is evident, it may be that such suspicion is viewed as being highly adaptive in a community where sudden and violent crime is established as a statistical reality and so outsiders should be reluctant to label behaviours which may make a great deal of sense to the young people who perform them.

### **Summary**

1. Gangs serve many purposes but are a constant source of fear and paranoia
2. Realities are socially constructed, with the media shaping the expectancies of young people and those adults who shape their attribution systems.
3. Gangs are seen as being exciting and dangerous. To break the allure of gang culture this needs to be negated and young people need to be given something else to talk about.

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Maslow's hierarchy
- ❖ Belonging
- ❖ Social Identity
- ❖ Deviance Amplification

### **Links to Focused Codes**

- 51. Grinding
- 21. Extorting funds
- 22. Staying streetwise
- 27. Sense of inevitability and powerlessness
- 24. School is a buffer zone
- 47. Showing weakness leads to victimisation
- 49. Fighting over Ends.
- 73. Paranoia
- 76. Learned helplessness
- 77. Belonging
- 9. Media shapes discourse
- 64. Social goals compete with academic goals
- 2. Stereotyping can be double edged
- 29. Behavioural control and parental supervision
- 33. Power and control
- 14. Living with fear
- 13. Knife crime is rampant
- 18. Crime is prevalent in the community
- 6. Consequences are felt to be ineffective.

- 39. Relationships have instrumental value.
- 58. Peer pressure is a constructed explanation
- 63. Disengaged (not caring)
- 3. Receiving second hand information

**Links to Memos**

- ❖ Coping Dilemmas
  - ❖ Making Compromises
  - ❖ Crime
  - ❖ Consequences
  - Safety
  - ❖ Living with Fear
  - ❖ Aspirations
  - ❖ Mercenary Motivation
  - ❖ Significant Relationships
  - ❖ Money and Resources
  - ❖ Power, Choice and Control
  - ❖ Money and Resources
  - ❖ Trust vs. Betrayal and Paranoia
-

Discrimination – the tendency to experience prejudicial treatment as a result of membership of a particular ethnic group – did not appear to be central to how young people constructed their interactions with staff members. Although, as the school has a black ethnic majority, it may be that these mechanisms are merely invisible to the young people, without a salient point of reference against which their experiences may be compared. There was, however, an awareness of racism from other students;

**YP2:** *Umm... err. People... people that bully you cos you're black. Int. 2, line 253.*

Students also felt that they are more at risk of being stabbed in the community because of their colour – a theory they had constructed in part from the frequent reports in the media and in part from the shared experiences and constructions of other students;

**YP6:** *Just...because...cos one person died, it's not really it's just one person not really a group and it's always happening to black people.*

**JU:** *Yeah. What kinds of things are always happening to them?*

**YP6:** *Like killing, killing dem. Int. 6, lines 240-241.*

This risk was contrasted against those faced by white people;

**YP2:** *People... people see you, like cos you're black you... most likely to kill somebody... knife somebody. Cos your white, no offence, you're most likely to grow up, get a good job. That's what everyone says but it's mostly the blacks who are doing that cos... I'm not saying this country is a racist – it could be though, I could sometimes but it's not... um... yeah... pretty much but it depends what your parents' jobs jobs are. If your Dad is like a building constructor has to work in just building houses with your know (unclear) and your Dad's a doctor and your mum's a nurse your parent's the nurses and doctors are more likely to earn more salary then what the builder are working and then that affects their kids – it lowers their self-esteem cos they know that their Dad don't, or their Mum don't, have a good job so it loses self-esteem and it often motivates them to go and grind. Int. 2, line 251.*

**YP2:** *It says that not safe for certain people... well... the thing is .... Right.. how I see it is... if your... if .... If ... excuse me to say... if you're if you're black, black.... You're most likely to get stabbed cos on the news it's mostly black people who come up who's either stabbed someone or they what stabbed by them... sorry... yeah.... Yeah and that's it really. Int. 2, line 25.*

There was a sense that other people's stereotyped expectancies of their behaviour could shape and limit their freedom to move freely around the city and pursue their aspirations.

Of interest was that young people were ambiguous as to whether it was their identity as young people or as black young people that led to people responding more negatively. However, while young people were sensitive to the experience of being stereotyped, they also admitted to basing their own judgements of others on similar

heuristics, citing it as adaptive to avoid other young people who wear hoods or baggy trousers and, therefore, may have gang affiliation.

**YP2:** *People... people see you, like cos your black you... most likely to kill somebody... knife somebody.* Int. 2, line 251.

**YP5:** *Well, there's sometimes two ways. Like, if you see black people, like, I know this is kinda of a stereotype, but if you see a lot of people in a group with their hoods up and they're in just standing in one place, can be deserted or something, you might think they're in a gang or... or where police are and they're just a big group and the police are talking to them, you might think that area has those people in it.* Int. 5, line 388.

### **Summary**

1. Young people were more aware of racist treatment from other students and in the community than they were in the school,
2. Whilst being aware of the dangers of stereotyping young people often relied on this mechanism as a form of heuristic based avoidance.

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Stereotyping
- ❖ Avoidance
- ❖ Coping
- ❖ Choice theory
- ❖ Just World
- ❖ Social Identity

### **Links to Focused Codes**

2. Stereotyping can be double edged (protective and a source of discrimination)
25. Awareness of unfair treatment
4. Mindreading/ Mentalisation
54. Experiencing discrimination
56. Experiencing bullying

### **Links to Memos**

- ❖ Power, Choice and Control
  - ❖ Making Compromises
  - ❖ Value Systems
  - ❖ Safety
  - ❖ Making Judgements About integrity
  - ❖ Aspirations
-

**MEMO No: 17    Word Count 930**

**MEMO  
TITLE:**

**Consequences, Consequentialism and Utilitarianism**

Although encompassing the perceived inadequacy of the range of sanctions available to society today, this goes beyond the application of reward or punishment contingencies to what Frankl (1959) alludes to as the sense of Learned Meaninglessness.

**JU:** *Why do you think they are so important?*

**YP1:** *Because if you don't they could be excluded or even worse...*

**JU:** *Oh...?*

**YP1:** *Permanent exclusion. Int. 1, lines 50-53.*

**YP2:** *They don't care about society, they don't care about other people. They have no heart... Int. 2, line 96.*

Nihilistic thinking is where intrinsic values are lost, and things are seen as having value only in terms of their monetary utility or the probability of punishment, i.e., the meaning of the act is determined by the consequence that follows it and not by any intrinsic property or sense of morality.

There are two types of consequences: intentional and iatrogenic. The former relates to the class of consequences which can be brought against young people in schools (exclusion and internal isolation) and in the community (imprisonment). These are the unintended repercussions of intervening or coping in a particular way.

**Punitive**

Young people view sanctions as being inadequate to force transgressors to change, with far more stringent consequences being needed. Young people are aware the ultimate consequences of transgression in school may be permanent exclusion, against which possibility they evaluate the advisability of particular actions. This may be viewed in a number of different (non-exclusive) ways:

- in light of their emphasis on social networks in coping responses;
- being excluded is to deny young people access to the social support which they view as being integral to their continued safety and well-being;
- loss of aspirations;
- labelling; and
- impact on parental aspirations.

However, it was also noticed that young people did not tend to reference any intrinsic sense of right and wrong in their decision making, rather referring to the outcome as being the chief determinant of a behaviour's advisability. This consequentialism is consistent with the growing awareness some young people espoused of peers who were willing to commit delinquent acts in exchange for money, indicating that the monetary utility of an action dictates its advisability:

**YP2:** *Oh, they would be aiming for like... like... they would be aiming for money, they don't really care or just be doing it (?) they would just be doing... like if you go up to them and be like "Beat up that boy over there and I'll give you five quid" they'll just do it cos they don't really care about what job they have as long as they're getting all the money. Int. 2, line 90.*



A result of such decision making is that the moral worth of any action can only be weighed retrospectively. In addition, models of deterrence are founded on assumptions that people who are subject to them engage in a particular manner. These assumptions are, unsurprisingly, faulty, not least because short term gain generally outweighs the prospect of a long-term cost (consequence).

### **Iatrogenic**

A tendency to utilitarianism or other classes of consequential thinking may in itself be an unintended consequence of a society that overly relies on coercion, punishment and consumerism to produce conformity. Within this, notions of 'community' or moral thinking become lost, especially within the broader consequence of commercialism, when the emphasis is placed on short-term gains and living one day at a time.

The main observed negative effect was of the over-reliance on avoidant coping. As young people progressively avoid more and more places, their horizons become increasingly truncated, the ultimate expression of which is to retreat into a siege-mentality, where setting foot outside is enough to trigger the expectation of the need for fight or flight.

Evident in a number of young people was a growing disillusionment as long-standing beliefs were challenged, such as the need for social justice. Frankl (1959) alludes to a fellow therapist who coined the term "Learned Meaninglessness" to describe the slippage into a nihilistic society. With this in mind, the author echoes Frankl's response, arguing that EPs may see a major opportunity in his Logotherapeutic approaches, where their task is to immunise students against nihilism and mediate a level of meaning. Otherwise young people will disengage with education as they 'live each day at a time' and fail to see its relevance in their dangerous and unstable lives. Whilst arguably, living each day at a time is a characteristic of the happier times of childhood, in the presence of threat and stress this leads to coping practices which can lead to the sacrifice of future opportunities in an effort to achieve maximum utility in the here and now – a loss of the ability to defer gratification.

**YP8:** *Like your friends that wait for you and they don't really want to wait for you, like, they have their own detention just waiting for you just to come out.* Int. 6, line 340.

**JU:** *Umm...ok. What might be thought of a bad thing to happen in School?*

**YP9:** *Umm maybe getting permanently excluded.* Int. 9, lines 375-376.

### **Summary**

1. Mercenary motivation can lead to utilitarianism
2. Loss of a sense of community
3. Intervention may be necessary to mediate a sense of meaning in the lives of young people

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Restorative Justice
- ❖ Logotherapy
- ❖ PCP
- ❖ Conditioning

### **Links to Focused Codes**

76. Learned helplessness

- 47. Showing weakness leads to victimisation
- 50. Retreating into a siege mentality
- 46. Isolation can limit coping
- 48. Individualism vs. Communalism
- 60. Protecting freedom
- 31. Respect is an important goal
- 63. Disengaging (not caring)

**Links to Memos**

- ❖ Safety
  - ❖ Living with Fear
  - ❖ Coping Dilemmas
  - ❖ Crime
  - ❖ Value Systems
  - ❖ Money and Resources
  - ❖ Mercenary Motivation
-

**MEMO No: 18    Word Count 640**

**MEMO  
TITLE:**

## **Religion**

The importance of religion to young people may be summarised through the character Ivan Karamazov's contention that if there is no God, everything is permitted (Dostoyevsky, 1880). For young people who regularly attend church, religion mediates a code of ethical and moral conduct, which they try to carry over into their everyday lives. These are evident in such Christian credos as:

**YP8:** *Cos if you treat them bad they'll treat you back bad but you want them to treat you good so you'll treat them good.* Int. 8, line 189.

In this is an expectation of reciprocity and evaluation of relationships in terms of their instrumental utility, i.e., maximising coping resources but also the basic tenet that you should treat others as you would like to be treated.

Religion can also have a calming influence, helping young people stay calm and behave well, with several describing a link between their attendance of church and ability to sustain behaviour in other systems and contexts. The perceived failure to carry over beliefs stemming from church to school highlights an inconsistency which young people feel identifies 'fake' from 'true' Christians. Young people who show such inconsistencies are viewed disparagingly by those who feel they are able to be more consistent with their religious principles, although failure to do so is not necessarily evidence of a lack of faith:

**YP1:** *It's helpful in many ways because like when, when I pray for forgiveness, say I've done something bad umm and like umm it's irreversible like, say I've hurt someone then like I would um when I get home I just recap and then say sorry for my sins and all that.* Int. 2, line 85.

Additionally, young people who feel compelled to attend and behave in church may view school as an opportunity to escape from strict rules and regulations:

**YP2:** *Cos in church, obviously no one's gonna... talk when the preacher's talking cos it's a holy place and no one will obviously dare to. But um. School, school don't really gi... certain children don't really care about school. They just think it's a place that they just go to. Finish at 3:15, 4:00 latest and just go home. That's what they think school is, they don't really get the aim of school.* Int. 2, line 344.

In addition, attempts by staff to regulate students' behaviour by appealing to their religious upbringing are not always received positively:

**YP7:** *Umm sometimes it gets annoying like I'm, I'm like not saying...umm Christian like we have to be bad all the time, I'm saying like sometimes, no one knows how to have fun sometimes like in class, yeah.* Int. 7, line 170.

**YP7:** *Teachers always say "Aw It's a Christian School" and stuff like that. Well, I'm a Christian but like...they, they think that if you, if you, every bad thing you do always turn and they say "Aw Christian, Christian" and stuff like "You're a*

*Christian you should, it's a Christian School" yeah...Umm sometimes it gets annoying like I'm, I'm like not saying...umm Christian like we have to be bad all the time, I'm saying like sometimes, no one knows how to have fun sometimes like in class, yeah. Int. 7, line 164.*

Church is thus a source of comfort, faith, respect and sense of community and a source of discipline and constriction which leads some young people to view school as being an opportunity for escape. The challenge for teachers is to harness their evident high moral values in ways that do not patronise, alienate or suffocate them.

Church is also appraised as a hub in the community, offering opportunities for social support, structure and comfort through rituals and routines.

### **Summary**

1. Church mediates a religious code of conduct
2. Young people who fail to live up to this code in school may be viewed disparagingly
3. Church is also a source of social support.

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Logotherapy
- ❖ PCP

### **Links to Focused Codes**

- 65. Having a personal philosophy that guides behaviour
- 11. Religion influences behaviour
- 19. Having access to authority figures
- 29. Behavioural control and parental supervision
- 46. Isolation can limit coping
- 48. Individualism vs. communalism
- 75. Reflective capacity
- 79. Aspiring to the good life

### **Links to Memos**

- ❖ Significant Relationships
  - ❖ Money and Resources
  - ❖ Aspirations
  - ❖ Hardiness
  - ❖ Coping Dilemmas
-

The ability of young people to engage cognitively with the curriculum is directly related to the relationship they form with their teacher and, as such, young people view teachers as being their most potent academic resource. The ability of the teacher to make the curriculum relevant and interesting, however, goes beyond 'liking' and encompasses their pedagogical and content knowledge, skills in behaviour management and encompasses their ability to mediate student's ability to work within their zone of proximal development.

These have implications for the legitimacy of the teacher to exercise power over their students – young people are located in a power hierarchy, and, if they feel that their teacher is not able to control them, this may lead to poor behaviour. The key to this is how adequate they perceive their teacher's 'expertise' in teaching and controlling them.

*YP9: Well, discipline is the main thing...if the Teachers don't have discipline...then the child could just keep...stepping all over them cos they know that the teacher can't do anything. Int. 9, line 864.*

### **Teacher**

At the centre of this is the ability of the teacher to mediate the lesson content in a manner which is accessible and within the zone of proximal development, while balancing high-order discussion and focused learning with a playful, relational orientated approach. The perception of the legitimacy of teacher authority is also important, with it being seen as earned, rather than given. Young people's behaviour may so be perceived as a social commentary on the nature of the power relations of the classroom. This is not to say that the teacher must be perfect but that they are seen as 'good enough' to enable their students to succeed and have confidence in them and themselves.

*YP9: They'll keep pushing you and pushing you to do...to keep on going further cos they know that you can go further. Int. 9, line 748.*

### **Extended Family**

Parents and extended family are often involved in supplementing their child's educational experiences, suggesting that an important focus for intervention would be to recruit parental and extended family figures into a collaborative and coordinated teaching 'partnership.' This would also help create a sense of parental alliance and develop their skill set to support the teachers.

### **Learning Preferences**

Beyond advocating a general preference for active and communal learning styles, young people struggle to describe specific strategies, both by the teacher and by themselves, which are beneficial to their learning. Young people like it when teachers are able to make lessons fun and engaging and provide practical and interesting example of the applications of their subject. However, it is unclear if this is a result of encultured learning preferences or just a general tendency for teenagers to prefer learning that is fun.

This suggests that interventions must start with the teacher, as, ultimately, they are the ones who must find the means to effectively engage young people, given the

surrounding circumstances. This moves the focus from resilient young people to resilient classrooms, in which the resilience of the teacher is as much a focus for EP efforts as the young person. Providing teachers with the knowledge and skills to engage with young people and meet their needs is an important application of EP time and effort.

Educational goals must be supported by adequate teacher skills to provide the pathways and intent to achieve them. This is not to suggest that young people's success depends on the altruism of the teaching profession: over-reliance on this is certain to increase the risk of teacher burnout. However, if EPs can help teachers stay connected to their idealistic roots and remain models of hope and encouragement for their students, then that will help consolidate EPs position in the school:

**YP2:** *Yeah, learning. Subjects, specially math... maths. My Dad told me it's not difficult, you've just got to think outside the box and logically. And I couldn't really get my head around it but now I'm like really good at it – I'm not brilliant but I'm good, I'm alright and I'm starting to get higher levels now. First I was like a two, in maths in year 6, in primary school, was actually bad. Umm... now I'm like 5C. Int. 2, line 394.*

## **Behaviour Management**

Staff who become too focused on regulating behaviour can get drawn into reactive fire-fighting and develop a 'tunnel-vision' which distracts them from those students who remain engaged and wanting to learn. It could be interpreted that this returns the emphasis to the collaborative and positive working environment that the teachers are able to create with their students – how they create boundaries, expectations and uphold them, while following up on the transgressions of those young people who break them, communicating that "I would be letting you down if I did not do this," i.e., using any crisis as an opening to instil change and develop as learning opportunities.

**YP9:** *Umm...when you have children messing around in class...and you have people on chairs and shouting...and the Teachers so...like mesmerized about trying to stop...what's going on, that you don't, like he doesn't notice that there's children in the class that want to learn. Int. 9, line 568.*

**YP9:** *They feel...I think neglected by...the Teacher...cos they're so worked up about getting...children to just sit down and do work that they've forgotten about the children who want to do well in their exams when they get to Year 11. That wanna...get good grades and wanna have a good job. Int. 9, line 574.*

**YP9:** *Umm...some teachers when the child does something bad they just...leave it and...umm...with the teacher that does have discipline, if someone does something bad they'll jump straight on to it, they'll straight away jump on to it and...give them warnings and punishments and stuff. Int. 9, line 870.*

**JU:** *Ok, whilst the teacher that doesn't have discipline?*

**YP9:** *They'll give a detention but then they won't follow it. Like, if the child doesn't come they won't, like follow it through. With teachers that do have discipline they'll probably like go to the classroom where where that student is at the end of the day and make them, collect them from the Teacher...or if they don't come they'll follow it through keep on doing, giving more severe punishments. Int. 9, lines 877-878.*

### **Summary**

1. How young people perceive their teachers' pedagogical and content knowledge and behaviour management skills fosters trust and a positive working environment
2. Following up on consequences
3. Developing independent learning and cognitive engagement strategies
4. Matching the learning modality to the content, rather than the individual young person.

### **Possible Psychological Interpretations/Theories**

- ❖ Bronfenbrenner (1979)
- ❖ Working Alliance
- ❖ Hope Theory
- ❖ Guy Claxton –Learning to Learn
- ❖ Frustration-aggression theory
- ❖ Zone of Proximal Development

### **Links to Focused Codes**

36. Perceived content and pedagogical knowledge is important in engaging students
78. Classroom management sends messages to young people
57. Relationships with staff and authority figures
64. Lack of faith in adult decision making
68. Sense of alliance with staff
8. Trust is at the heart of relationships
4. Mindreading / Mentalisation
33. Power, control and choice
59. Responding to mistakes positively
17. Need for challenge
25. Awareness of unfair treatment
26. Staying strong minded/Heavy minded

### **Links to Memos**

- ❖ Aspirations
  - ❖ Making Judgements About Integrity
  - ❖ Trust vs. Betrayal and Paranoia
  - ❖ Mercenary Motivation
  - ❖ Hardiness
  - ❖ Significant Relationships
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