

**GROWING TO KNOW: Three Case Studies Of Minority
Ethnic Boys' Constructions Of Success**

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of pupils' views of success. The views presented are primarily those of three minority ethnic boys, one of Pakistani, the second of Black African and the third of Black Caribbean heritage. It is an exploration of some of the competing discourses they experience within a boys' secondary school. Through their discourse and that of their teachers, peers and parents we find out what they believe is success and what shapes it.

The most dominant version of success adopted by schools is performance related - linked primarily to achievement. The 1980s saw the rise of neo-liberalism with its influence on education policy which assiduously defined achievement as 'exam credentials' (Archer and Francis 2007: 18). At secondary level, these credentials are a school's ability to meet its targets, which is measured by the number of A* - C grades.

Through the use of layered case studies, this research has found that there are intersecting yet divergent interpretations of success. Pupils and teachers adopt the normative view of success however the manner in which this is implemented, demonstrates a range of power relations at play within school.

This research has identified that, among other constructs, pupils view success as relational. These relationships are multifaceted, involving peers, family and teachers. Peers are needed for support, for example against the effect of stereotyping. Peer relationships inspire competition and are hierarchical as self worth is affirmed by locating one's position within the hierarchy and winning first place in tests. Parents or siblings assist by identifying strengths, urging and monitoring progress and, following negotiation, supporting the pursuit of their dreams.

Findings suggest that, regardless of definition, we as educators need to continue to 'grow to know' the needs of individual pupils or groups of learners if we truly want to help them succeed in school.

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

For my Dad

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Much love 😊

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PERSONAL STATEMENT

My learning experience and links between the units within the EdD programme

The title of my study is, '*Growing To Know: Three Case Studies Of Minority Ethnic Boys' Constructions Of Success*'. The phrase 'growing to know' was said by one of my pupils when interviewed. It reflected his progress as his mother worked *with* him to help him learn to play a musical instrument, simply because he loved it. This mirrors my own growth on the Doctorate in Education (EdD) programme and also what I feel any educator needs to do in order to help pupils succeed at school.

What drew me to the EdD programme was the opportunity to research aspects of study that were linked to my own professional interests. My initial focus was on why so many Black boys were reported to be failing in school. I was very concerned because I am of Caribbean origin and have four Godsons, three of whom attend schools in the UK. The constant media reports about the failure of Black boys, made me and their parents worry about the extent to which they would be able to thrive, particularly within secondary education.

I also work at a boys' secondary school (referred to as Grenhill within this research) which has a large minority ethnic population. Despite the fact that our pupils come from the most deprived wards in the region, Grenhill's academic results are extremely good. I wanted to examine what we offered at school to see if perhaps I could support not only pupils' learning but that of my Godsons'.

I learnt so many things during the course of the programme; one of the most important was how professional practice has evolved over time. Until the start of the EdD programme, I had not given much thought to defining what it meant to be part of a profession. When I did, vague ideas of a high standard of education and training, behaviour and sometimes even dress, sprang to mind. I was unaware of research on professionalism such as the changes that occurred as a result of new managerialism where global initiatives in education and fears that 'teachers had abused this licensed autonomy to the detriment of their pupils and society' (Whitty 2002: 66) had shaped the way in which teachers were policed. Yet here I am, at the end of years of study, being able to identify some of the extent to which this impacts on my life and those for whom I am responsible. More importantly, I have a greater understanding of how and why we as teachers have begun to define ourselves as a result of pupils' achievement of five or more A*-C grades.

I teach at a boys' school. I knew there were growing concerns about boys and their performance, however I had not realized the extent to which there was a wider, deeper body of research which not only tried to examine reasons for their performance but compared the manner in which concerns about boys' performance was being prioritized over girls'. Studies by Reed (1999) reflect many of these concerns. As a result of my increasing interest in boys and their progress, I changed my focus of study after the Institution Focused Study (IFS), preferring to examine pupils' views of success rather than their knowledge of a particular skill.

I have conducted three case studies, adopting a layered approach by first interviewing three pupils: Tony, Reggie and Abdul who are of African, Caribbean and Pakistani heritage. I then interviewed the peers they nominated and later, members of their family. Through this course of study I believe I have become more analytical, better able to identify the motives behind the views pupils espouse. I learnt how to explore issues of gender, class and race by reading studies by Burke (2006), Gillborn (1988), Carnell (2004) and Frosh *et al.* (2002). These helped me to identify how pupils' opinions can be analysed.

Although I am our school's strategy manager and I have sat on committees which have discussed many reasons for the underachievement of different groups of learners, most of the information which I had accessed was DCSF/DfES data. These resources tended to focus on

statistics which showed that more girls were obtaining 5+ A*-C grades than boys, or listed strategies that ought to be used when teaching boys. They offered many reasons for their failure, including not having male teachers, rejecting authority and being excluded (NIA 2001) or even their rejections of the content of the curriculum (Burgess *et al.* 2004).

Over the period of study, my reading broadened, encouraging me to examine influences with which I was not familiar. This included the normative view of masculinity that is embraced by the term hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1996) which, in the UK is generally associated with, 'toughness, power [and] competitiveness' (Jackson 2006: 10). It was an eye opener. Much of what I had noticed at school over the years fell into place. For example, through the research, I discovered that boys' 'unwillingness' to study and their acknowledgement of laziness could be viewed as evidence of their fear of failure. Boys were also afraid to admit they were actually studying. However my research methods lectures encouraged me to re-examine those sorts of sweeping statements. Thus, rather than say boys were afraid to study, I had to recognize that it was *some* boys who might have been afraid to do so.

The taught courses on our programme were extremely helpful for two main reasons. The first is by providing a clear schedule. When you have not studied for quite a few years, it is extremely helpful to have routines, recommended readings and short deadlines. The second is their

practicality as each unit builds on the other. Both Methods of Enquiry I and II reminded me of some older research methods that I had previously encountered for example, positivist quantitative techniques, yet also introduced newer qualitative strategies with which I was less familiar.

One such strategy was being able to listen to the views of those I was studying. I chose a constructivist approach because constructivists see reality as 'socially constructed' (Robson 2002:27) and meanings shaped 'by human beings as they engage with the world they interpret' (Crotty 1998: 43). My study focuses on pupils' perception of an issue: what is a 'successful' student. I have tried to 'understand their interpretations of the world around them' (Cohen *et al.* 2003: 23). I wanted to know how they constructed meaning within the school context simply because I believe we, as teachers, often make assumptions about what pupils want and I felt it was time pupils' views were heard or at least, clarified. The research methods courses helped me to identify and select techniques with which I felt most comfortable and more importantly, those that I believed would elicit deeper responses from students.

One such method is interviews. Through interviews I discovered the depth of some pupils' feelings. As I peeled away many ideas through the use of layered case studies, my research made me feel much more than I expected. I felt guilty, particularly while interviewing some of the Black students. They were so angry. The interviews provided a good

opportunity for me to listen to their feelings much more closely. I was able to not only empathize with them but be challenged by how they felt they were being perceived and treated by some members of staff.

One of the key aspects of ethnography is its reliance on participant observation (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998: 248). I work at Grenhill and thus am able to observe and interview pupils. Having read Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli's text *So What's a Boy?* (2003), I liked that they included their reflections of pupils prior to and during the interview. I also did this in order to record my responses and show how perhaps as a teacher/researcher, my views are being influenced as I 'grow to know' more about my pupils. The following is an excerpt taken from my observation of some of the Black pupils; others are included as part of Appendix IX.

Before the interview they are smiling happily and joking around with each other as they walk along the almost empty corridor... During the interview they are ... confident, funny yet angry ... extremely angry about how they are perceived by some staff. I become uncomfortable as I begin to wonder if I am one of those teachers.

It is perhaps stating the obvious but the interviews have encouraged me to listen more closely to students and this is not easy when examination commitments impact on our time.

Within this thesis I recount an incident based on how those Black pupils who were wearing school blazers were perceived by a few staff. I felt uncomfortable disclosing this. While as a researcher, it provides a good example of how uniforms are used to police pupils, as an Assistant Headteacher I feel a bit unhappy since it seems to reflect an aspect of our school with which I am not comfortable. Although the incident occurred five years ago and perceptions of pupils have changed, I felt it was important to examine it, especially as it forced me to become more aware of how some of the directives we implement at school can be perceived by students.

Contributions to my professional development and knowledge

Pursuing the EdD has provided the means by which I can probe a little deeply to find out pupils' views of, for example: success, credentials, assessment, identity and teachers, and it has aided my professional understanding of them. It has been insightful to identify the extent to which achieving success relies, to some extent, on the relationships pupils have with teachers, parents and peers. My findings have reinforced the need to see pupils as individuals. This was borne out greatly when I interviewed Reggie and Tony. They are Black boys, yet their views show very different ways of dealing with the manner in which they are perceived by their families and teachers.

By listening to their opinions and making links to the literature, I was able to see that pupils' views were influenced by cultural, gender and familial

expectations. What pupils did not say was equally as important as what they actually said. For example, Tony, a pupil of African origin, said nothing about feeling, "violated" when he was interviewed on his own, yet he was quite vocal in his group interview. The level of academic competition by the Pakistani boys in this study was also a lot greater than I had anticipated.

This research shows how important it is to listen to pupils and it is an opinion that I have had the opportunity to express at several forums. As a result of my research interest I was asked to sit on a committee at Leicester University. The committee examined differences between engaged and disengaged pupils. I used some of my research on Prosser (2006:2) who states that images are given meaning by those who interpret them. I suggested that they allow pupils to use photographs which conveyed their deeper ideas about the issues on which they were being questioned, in order to stimulate further discussions. This method was accepted and used successfully by their researchers. Further meetings with the committee disclosed how pupils had become more spontaneous in their comments as a result of the pictures they brought to interviews. It was encouraging to be able to contribute ideas to a group of university researchers, justify them and have them accepted.

I also had a chance to share some of my findings with my peers on our Leadership Team. Some of their responses were similar to mine e.g. they

were saddened that, in comparison with pupils, so few teachers mentioned happiness as one of their priorities for pupils' success. I disclosed that pupils expected to be supported and nurtured by teachers while the latter assumed success was waiting to be plucked from pupils. This, they felt, was disappointing given the level of social deprivation among Grenhill's pupils. However they were encouraged that pupils also wanted five or more A*-C grades and I was able to provide examples of the sort of ethos pupils thought would support them to achieve their versions of success.

On the whole, I felt this research helped me to 'grow to know' my students. It is hoped that my findings would also be of benefit to teachers, consultants, parents and curriculum organisers as we plan to support minority ethnic boys to become successful within secondary schools.

CHAPTER 1

Aim

The purpose of this thesis is to identify pupils' views of success. I recognise pupils have multiple, competing and sometimes contradictory views of success and I will attempt to unpack these. This entails examining the ways in which ideas of success are formed by pupils and interrogating the implications of school practice.

My three most important research questions are: what are pupils' views of success? To what extent do pupils and teachers share common notions of success? Are pupils' views different from or similar to those of their teachers, parents and peers?

Further questions which I aim to explore are: how do different notions of success compete in the classroom/school context? How does my sample of minority ethnic boys negotiate different views of success among themselves and in the school context? What are the implications, if any, of different notions of success in relation to the achievement of the Black and Pakistani boys in this study?

In trying to make sense of pupils' opinions, I compare them with those of their peers, parents and staff. Teachers' questionnaire responses are almost clinical, un-interrogated comments while pupils' are thoughtful and passionate, demonstrating that they are trying to understand school practice as they impact on their lives. By presenting the findings of teachers first, I reflect the power relations at play within education. In theory, pupils' needs are said to be important; however in practice, they are influenced by the needs of the school and as such, take second place. One of the underlying purposes of this thesis is to encourage readers to challenge this assumption. I have tried to promote this by presenting teachers' views first so they provide a stark contrast with those of pupils'. This, I believe, forces the reader to view pupils as individuals; individuals who, through their strong feelings and insightful comments, show that they have as much right, if not more, than any within the secondary school context, to be heard.

Rationale

After the publication of the A Level results in England a few years ago, many pupils were interviewed to find out how they felt about their achievement. Bright, bubbly, bursting with enthusiasm about their future, one pupil stood out from the rest. Having received the highest results, he was calm and reflective. When asked what he wished to do in the future,

he simply stated - a lock keeper. His response puzzled many, me included.

This A Level candidate was white; his confident use of formal English suggested he came from a middle class family. His remarks were unexpected. Not so, those made by Chief Inspector Logan, who, when commenting on Black gun crime, felt Black teenagers were 'attracted by the fast lifestyle - the nice cars and clothes' (BBC News online 2003).

Both comments made me think. Of the A Level candidate I wondered, why a lock keeper? Why not a scientist or a surgeon? And, why would I and other viewers in the room feel that those were the jobs to which he ought to aspire? The Chief Inspector's comments, similar to others being made of Black youngsters at that time, suggested Black pupils' ideas of success involved showing off their 'bling'. This made me wonder: What *are* secondary pupils' views of success? Are they the same as schools', their teachers', families' and friends'? If not, how are they different? This then became the focus of my enquiry.

The turn of the century saw a renewed interest in pupils' achievement and progression at secondary level. With this came the inevitable target setting at national, local and school level. Estelle Morris (then Minister of Education) stated:

'We need to transform the achievements of 11 to 14 year old pupils. Ambitious targets in primary schools have paid great

dividends and are crucial to delivering higher standards.’ (cited by the Bristol Education Service 2001).

In order to meet these targets, schools and local authorities were encouraged to take another look at the achievement of varied groups of pupils within their institutions. One such group is boys.

The concerns about boys and their performance are not new. Studies by: Myhill and Fisher (2005), Ofsted (1996, 2003a), Browne and Mitsos (1998) and West (2006) reflect this. Ofsted (2003a: 3), found that boys lagged behind girls at primary level and ‘except for a small number of schools, the gap does not close during the secondary years’. By the end of Key Stage 3 (KS3) the point score average for boys and girls at Level 5 in Mathematics and Science was about the same with ‘boys slightly ahead’ (ibid). Though Ofsted (2005a: 4) recognised: ‘Standards in English have continued to rise over the period 2000–05’, in 2003 they noted, ‘boys remain well behind in English’ (Ofsted 2003a: 38-39) and this continues to be an ongoing concern today.

One of my roles is that of Strategy Manager at Grenhill. Being a boys’ school, we do not have direct competition with girls. However we have striven to make certain that we are on par with or above the national performance for boys; working with a range of stakeholders, such as parents and governors, to ensure pupils’ progress.

Suggestions regarding how to improve attainment, evident in departments' self assessment, stress the identification of 'features of groups' progress' (Thornley 2006: 13). We are encouraged to examine the performance of specific groups defined by their gender, ability and ethnicity. I have worked with Curriculum Leaders (also known as Heads of Departments) to interrogate prior KS3 Statutory Attainment Test (SATs) data and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results to discover any gaps in attainment. Once identified, several strategies have been adopted to engage learners.

We have a minority ethnic population of approximately 91% (2005 Panda for Grenhill 2006: 1). The four major ethnic groups are Pakistani (50.4%), Bangladeshi (8.7%), Other Asian (17%) and Black¹ – which includes British, African-Caribbean and African – (8%). The challenge therefore has been, not only that of fostering learning among male pupils but also for those whom English is a second language.

Guided by a range of data: KS2 results, Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) scores and National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) reading test results (the merits of which will be questioned later), Grenhill has taken steps to ensure pupils are able to access an education system which is culturally and linguistically different from their own. However little time

¹ Following Rollock (2007a), the word Black will be used to refer to pupils defined as 'Black or Black British' in the 2001 Census e.g. Black Caribbean, Black African and Other Black backgrounds. All other terms are those used by the authors whose studies are discussed.

was spent asking pupils their views of success; we simply assumed they were the same as ours.

Within recent years the staff at Grenhill began to ask pupils' opinions. This is what I am also seeking to do. I recognise there are different interpretations of success however the most dominant view within secondary schools is one which is performance related (Allan 2010: 40). By performance it is meant, obtaining a minimum of five A*-C GCSE grades (QCA, 1999b: 3; Rollock, 2007b: 278).

Our pupils are from three of the most deprived wards in the county and like the elite girls' school in Allan's study (2010), success is celebrated in many ways. Photographs of pupils who have won sporting and academic competitions are displayed in corridors and classrooms. Prizes are awarded in assemblies, postcards are sent home to inform parents of progress and pupils are made class buddies or prefects. Performance, particularly in Y11, is publicised in bi-weekly progress charts displayed in form rooms. What then happens if pupils are not able to 'succeed' in any of these ways?

Recently, we became increasingly aware, of a growing number of pupils who are finding it difficult to cope within the 9 a.m. – 3.30 p.m. discipline of schooling. When discussing some of the key elements of learning, Smith (1999) quoted the psychologist Carl Rogers who made a distinction

between what someone *needed* or *wanted* to know (my emphasis). This suggests that pupils' ideas of what is relevant, may not always be compatible with that of the school's. What we as a school require them to know, in order to obtain 5+ A* - C GCSEs, might be at odds with what pupils want to know.

Pupils at Grenhill often demonstrate their rejection of what we believe they need to know in different ways; often through overtly challenging and disruptive behaviour. This has stretched teachers' patience to the limit but caused us to work with pupils to identify solutions. Discussions informed us that pupils could not see why they had to spend so much time learning from books or the relevance of study. We then offered an augmented curriculum by cooperating with Further Education (FE) colleges to provide a balance of academic and vocational skills.

Pupils seem to be happier now. They do courses which they enjoy at institutions which have a much smaller teacher - pupil ratio. However this provision highlights one of my professional dilemmas. Their efforts, though enjoyable, need to be accredited. We still have to find ways to ensure their skills count towards the school's need for 5 or more A* - C grades.

This dilemma provides evidence of the conflicting messages that serve to reinforce the notion that real curriculum development is being stifled by

curriculum implementation and assessment. How do I ensure pupils' 'success'? At the end of the day I want my pupils to do well. I want them to be successful – in the conventional sense, but also to feel as if they have grown and are able to contribute meaningfully to whatever sphere of society in which they choose to engage. However I would also like them to enjoy some of what they do at school. This is why I think it is valuable to spend time seeking pupils' views. This is the focus of my study: to identify and analyse male, minority ethnic pupils' views of success.

This study tries to make sense of their understanding of success. Pupils are the recipients, though not passive receptacles, of what takes place within the classroom. Like Archer and Francis (2007: 27), I believe pupils are:

'active agents who are involved in the constructions of their own sociality and experiences...being shaped by the discourses produced by and within their social context'.

As part of the key question I sought to identify what they think helps to shape their success. Recognising there may be many different interpretations of success, I also analysed the views of their teachers, family and peers to determine if they helped to define or influence what pupils constructed as success. Together they enhance the body of knowledge by shedding light on one key aspect of schooling: secondary, male, minority ethnic pupils' notions of success.

CHAPTER 2

Issues of Credentials, Assessment, Ethnicity, Class Gender and Identity

This chapter identifies and discusses several issues which emerged as having the potential to shape pupils' views of themselves as being successful or not within secondary school.

2.1: Credentials

Though contested, success is usually defined in terms of academic achievement within secondary education. The 1980s saw the rise of neo-liberalism, a drive towards the maintenance of a highly qualified, flexible workforce and its influence on an education policy in which:

“achievement’ is extraordinarily narrowly conceived – almost exclusively in terms of academic attainment measured by exam credentials’ (Archer and Francis 2007: 18).

This approach encapsulates the idea of schools meeting targets. Thus, for schools, policy discourse constructs success as being about: raising standards of learning (Millet 1996, cited by Mahony 1998). Setting ambitious targets is integral to delivering these high standards (Morris 2001). There was a time when education was about ‘trying and achieving’ (Peters 1966: 26); now, certainly in the way in which it is reported, the outcome (exam results) has superseded the process (of trying). It

appears only to be about the number and quality of the GCSE passes obtained, that is, at least five or more A*- C grades.

These statements imply several ideas, one of which is that pupils are unsuccessful if they are not able to achieve 5 or more A*-C grades at the end of KS4. This suggests that a particular version of success is held by those in authority, currently the Department for Education (DFE) which empowers the school's governing body. Rollock (2007a: 5) highlights this as she makes a distinction between 'exclusive' and 'inclusive' success. Her findings show that while staff espoused two versions of success, they had very fixed views about the kind of pupil considered capable of achieving in each of these terms. 'Exclusive' or 'high-status' success which applauds the attainment of A*-C grades is accessible only to those whom staff believe are able to obtain at least a C grade and are thus supported to do so; similar to the notion of educational triage reported by Gillborn and Youdell (2000).

'Inclusive' success is available to pupils who gain G-D grades however exclusive is more highly valued as it the main target against which schools are judged and regulated. It also introduces some of the tensions which exist within education as schools are named and shamed through performance tables when they are unable to meet their targets (Ball, 1999; Whitty *et al.*, 1998).

Another assumption is that educational qualifications or credentials themselves act as a measure of increasing standards of learning. What is learning? Like success, this is not a fixed construct. Is learning a sterile regurgitation of facts and figures? Is it a change in the way in which people understand and internalise ideas? There are many learning theories: Rogers and Freiberg (1993), Newman and Holzman (1997), Gagné (1985) and Piaget (1926). Regardless of one's belief in the behaviourist, social and situational, humanist or cognitivist approach to learning, the question must be asked: can the extent of individual learning be judged through several one hour exams?

The predominant view of success places the ability to succeed (as defined by those in charge of schools) in the hands of schools and also their pupils. Ironically, one of those sets of hands is mine. As an Assistant Headteacher I am empowered to promote a specific version of success i.e. five or more A*- C grades, and to initiate strategies to ensure pupils are able to pass exams. How does one then accurately gauge success when: this in itself is difficult to define, has multiple definitions, and there appears to be a mismatch between the criteria employed by schools and the tool/s used to measure learning?

This begs the need to discuss the criteria against which this form of success is judged i.e. assessment practices within schools and the school culture which supports pupils to 'succeed' or not. Since pupils are under

the age of sixteen, it also highlights at least three sources of potentially competing notions of success.

The first is parents, who make judgements about the appropriateness of schools for their children. They have their own views of what children ought to do in order to be successful. Like their children, their views are socially constructed, informed and perhaps even constrained by their experiences. At many parents' evenings within the past five years, I have hurried to get through as many key points as possible about a child's progress, during the five minutes allocated for each consultation. At the end of what I believe to be a detailed explanation of a pupil's progress, when many Asian families were asked if there were any questions, their main response has been: 'Is my son a good boy?' Even if it is followed by other questions which focus on how he can improve, they always end by asking if he has been good.

Unlike the Chinese parents in the study conducted by Archer and Francis (2007: 51) they did not seem to want to know how they could support their children and improve their academic grades. Like the Chinese parents, however, there is evidence of their high regard for good behaviour and respect as key aspects of the 'moral order' (ibid: 43), perhaps viewing behaviour as indicative of pupils' potential to learn. While a parent may or may not subscribe to the same idea of success as the school, they know that grades narrow or broaden their child's life

chances (Whitty 2002:53) when transferring schools, moving on to further education and later, employment.

Academic research highlights this link between credentials and widening choices. For example: Eggleston *et al.* (1986) examine the link between education and employment and Gewirtz and Ball (1995) discuss schools seeking pupils who were 'able', 'gifted' and 'motivated' (cited by Whitty *et al.* 1998:116). Rollock (2007b: 280) presents staff discussions of the effect, on their results, of the nearby grammar school 'cream[ing]' the 'nice girls'. Morley (2003a: 130) also quotes Pattern (1993) as stating:

'Opening the doors to all and sundry is one way of growing a higher education sector. It is however, not a good one if universities are to remain the pinnacles of excellence'.

Thus the quality of grades supports or inhibits life chances.

The second issue also sheds light on the potential influence of teachers who, belonging to varied class, ethnic and social groups, have their own constructs of success. This in turn may influence those of their pupils. In the earlier example, I am puzzled and frustrated when the only question asked is if he is a good boy. While all teachers are pleased when pupils are well behaved, my frustration serves to highlight, not only differing priorities, but the impact of performance on teachers' lives. Schools cannot afford to be at the bottom of league tables and, teachers, through rigorous surveillance (an integral aspect of the audit culture), are the ones

who implement policy - often in ways which are stricter than those outlined by exam boards (Gillborn and Youdell 2000).

There is a very real sense in which pupils' grades determine teachers' Performance Management targets and as such, salaries. Pupils are constantly urged to maintain their grades and staff believe this effort must be supported by parents; hence we question: why are you not asking me how you can support your child at home? How can you simply ask about his behaviour? While behaviour is extremely important to teachers, because of the pressures of league tables, it can also pale in significance if a pupil has the potential to gain several qualifications. Perhaps even for teachers, views of success can be adjusted like degrees on a thermostat; making them variable and inconsistent.

Third, the pupils themselves are seen as having a duty to:

'maximise the opportunities available to her or him – any failure resides in the individual rather than in the socio-economic structures such as those which privilege / discriminate on the basis of 'race', gender, sexuality, social class and so on' (Archer and Francis 2007: 19).

Blaming the individual shifts the focus from an examination of how various groups are privileged (ibid). Lave and Wenger (1999: 21) support the view that in order to learn, individuals need to be an integral part of the whole socio-cultural practice of learning. Thus, like Archer and Francis they suggest, the relationship between race, ethnicity, social class, gender and achievement in education must be examined. These issues provide

aspects of the social framework within which pupils operate as they participate in schooling.

In order to add as much clarity to the debate as possible, I will attempt to highlight core concerns about: race, ethnicity, social class, gender and achievement. A scrutiny of these issues is integral to understanding 'pupils' identities and achievement in schools' (Archer and Francis *ibid.*: 25). However one cannot discuss race, social class, ethnicity and gender without including assessment itself. If schools are suggesting pupils are successful only in terms of academic attainment, it is then imperative to examine assessment practices to understand the context within which judgements are being made about pupils' performance.

2.2: Assessment

Assessment principles pervade almost every teaching principle today. For example, the now popular Every Child Matters (ECM) policy promotes five key principles: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being (DfES 2003). Pupils' attainment, which is measured through several assessment practices, is an overt aspect of achieving. It is a key ingredient to all other elements of the ECM agenda since pupils' results guide selection opportunities in and out of school, and serves as a criterion of job selection.

Assessment, because of its seeming neutrality, appears to be unbiased; but it is not. According to Kellaghan and Greaney (2001: 17), assessment refers to:

'any procedure or activity that is designed to collect information about the knowledge, attitudes, or skills of a learner or group of learners'.

It is conventionally believed to serve several purposes as it describes students' learning; motivates pupils through the provision of goals and targets and indicates a level of competence as it is used to guide job selection (ibid.: 20).

These are apparently commonsense views accepted by most, but it is the underlying assumptions embedded in the alleged common sense, that Gillborn and Youdell (2000) and Gillborn (2002) challenge. The term assessment is value laden. It is important to schools as 'it is used to judge instructional effectiveness and curricular adequacy and to inform policy' (National Education Association 1990: 1). Yet Gillborn (2002: 3) contests the belief that pupils' performance, used synonymously with ability, is a 'relatively fixed quality [which is] measurable ... and relates to generalised academic potential'.

It is unreasonable to imagine that ability is constant and as such, unaffected by an individual's maturation or growing interest; that it can actually be measured and the measurement instructions are themselves

impartial. By doing so, we deny the impact of factors such as race inequality and social disadvantage.

Constructivists believe 'there is no neutral language' (Haralambos 1989: 508). This is a position I take. Language creates meaning; and nowhere is this more evident than in teaching. Lillis (2001) argues, assessment, like all practices, is 'socially situated'; full of culture and values as it is informed by the context within which it occurs. It is not impartial and unbiased. No test is culture free. Archer (2003:23) argues that current government advisers normalize and uphold 'particular white, middle class values in relation to schooling'. This suggests educational policies empower pupils from middle class backgrounds more than others. This is evident in IQ tests. Initially offered as objective tests of ability they were shown to be biased against those whose cultures were different from the sample against which they were initially tested (Segal 1990).

Filer (2000: 9) views assessment as manipulating 'what is taught and how it is taught, what and how students learn'. This is indeed demonstrated by the manner in which Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) preparation dominated Year 9 prior to their demise in 2008, and also at GCSE, where pupils who are judged academically less able, are put into lower ability groups and provided with a 'restricted curriculum' (Gillborn 2002:14). This, in itself, ensures they can only be entered for Foundation tier exams

and as such, confines access to higher education since the highest they are able to achieve at GCSE English is a C grade.

During assessments, judgements are made about pupils' ability and attitude, which go beyond performance in tests and these judgements are used to shape the provision offered to students. For example in English if a pupil does not achieve an E grade in the Higher tier; they will be ungraded and teachers are understandably more cautious, when making decisions about their tier of entry, than syllabus guidelines suggest. This caution was also noted by Rollock (2007a: 5) in her scrutiny of the manner in which teachers made judgements about tiers of entry. It is:

'not a straightforward case of equal opportunity for each pupil but a tense, strategic exercise of risk assessment and probability'.

This is a view supported by Gillborn and Youdell (2002). They found more Black pupils and those on free school meals (FSM) were overrepresented in lower ability groups than their white peers. They also identified pupils' behaviour as another consideration. Teachers gave better behaved pupils or those they considered more deserving (making greater effort), preference over others (ibid). Thus we see that assessment practices are not as neutral as many would have us believe.

Exam results provide evidence of an evaluation of the school system as a whole. The publication of national targets, for example, 75% of pupils to obtain Level 5 and above in English, Maths and ICT (DfES 2002b:2) lend truth to the claim that:

'assessment information may be used to reach a judgement about the adequacy of the performance of an education system or of part of it' (Kellaghan and Greaney 2001: 21).

Though there was much debate surrounding the now defunct KS3 SATs (see Davis, 1999; Mansell, 2003; Slater, 2003), this link to performativity - employing 'judgements [and] comparisons as a means of ... change' (Ball 2001: 210) - reinforces the use of assessment as a system of evaluation.

The National Strategy promotes two different forms of assessment. One is summative also known as 'assessment of learning' (DfES 2002c: 26), and takes place over a period of time. Pupils are expected to attain Level 4 at KS2 and five or more A*- C grades by the end of KS4, thus underlining the notion of staged development.

The other kind of assessment is formative assessment which is presented as a means of contributing to more effective learning (Carnell 2004: 41).

Also known as assessment for learning (AfL), it involves:

'sharing lesson goals with pupils...help[ing] pupils to know and to recognise the standards they are aiming for' ARG 1999: 7).

By actively encouraging pupils to be part of the assessment procedure, AfL is proposed as part of a climate for learning which makes it easier for teachers and pupils to work together as they have 'a clear understanding of the errors pupils make and the difficulties they experience' (DfES 2002c: 21). This suggests increased dialogue and hopefully, a respect for each other's views.

Black and Wiliam's historic research (1998: 5) noted that pupils ought to 'have a sufficiently clear picture of the targets their learning is meant to attain' and this would enhance self-esteem, along with self and peer assessment. They argue that knowledge of the curriculum enables pupils to be reflective participants in their learning as they set goals, are clear about the levels/grades they currently achieve and as such, are better equipped to lessen the gap between the two (ibid.: 6).

Adopting these strategies is quite a huge responsibility for teenagers, and requires a change of pedagogy and practice in schools. The teacher is no longer viewed as 'god', superior to the learner unto whom they pass 'worthwhile knowledge' (Edwards 1997: 67). The views of learners are sought as we enter into what Morley (2003a) calls 'changing pedagogical relations' or unequal partnership with students, to help them achieve.

In practice, AfL works on the principle that levels or grades can be broken into simplified language that pupils can access. By doing so it provides a structure for learning so stages from one level/grade to the next are clear and mechanical. This technique is believed to aid some boys to achieve and is supported by Murphy and Elwood (1998: 168) who studied gendered learning when analysing how children played. They found boys took note of 'structured details' and were more competent in their 'application of knowledge of structures' than girls who noted wider details.

This focus on formative assessment for raising achievement appears to support boys' success without paying attention to social inequalities. While Gillborn and Youdell (2000) dispute the idea of ability as relatively fixed and differentially distributed - especially by social class and/or ethnicity - AfL strategies are presented without regard for any of these influences. It appears to be a means of raising pupils' achievement regardless of assumptions of: genetic endowment; conditions in which students live e.g. resources at home and community or the manner in which teachers help students learn in formal lessons (Kellaghan and Greaney 2001: 77).

Gillborn and Youdell (2000) state that ability is not a finite quality; intelligence is socially constructed, difficult to measure and cannot be 'a fixed potential' (ibid.: 54). They argue that schools employ flawed criteria for making judgements about it, and that pupils' access to learning is influenced by vagaries of gut feelings, perceptions about ethnicity and social class. This suggests that even if AfL principles are employed, like the 'hidden tiers' noted in Gillborn's study (2002), they will continue to disadvantage socially underprivileged groups of learners who are already deprived by the system it serves since it does nothing to address pre-existing inequalities.

Gillborn and Youdell (2000: 212) urge us to question the issue of IQ tests. They contest the belief that performance in tests reflects ability. Theirs is

a view also shared by Stenberg (1996) who believes that intelligence is multi-dimensional and tests can only examine skills that are moderately important. However, for many schools, the reliance on statistical data derived from tests like NFER and CAT lends credibility to judgements about pupils. This has resulted in the emergence of many misconceptions surrounding IQ.

In order to highlight and dispel these, Gillborn and Youdell (2000:58) present Sternberg's table on 'myths, mythical countermyths and truths about intelligence'; part of which is reproduced below.

Table 1: Part of Sternberg's table on 'myths, mythical countermyths and truths about intelligence'

Myth	Mythical countermyth	Truth
Intelligence is one thing, <i>g</i> (or IQ).	Intelligence is so many things you can hardly count them.	Intelligence is multi-dimensional but scientifically tractable.
The social order is a natural outcome of the IQ pecking order.	Tests wholly create a social order.	The social order is partially but not exclusively created by tests.
We are using tests too little, losing valuable information.	We're overusing tests and should abolish them.	Tests, when properly interpreted, can serve a useful but limited function, but often they are not properly interpreted.

Source: Part of Sternberg's Table 1 (1996) cited by Gillborn and Youdell (2000:58)

Gillborn and Youdell (2000: 54) provide an example, of how the results of the CAT and NFER tests are used by schools, in their study of Clough GM.

'We have found them [the tests] helpful as indicators of GCSE performance, and in that there is some correlation between the standard tests and the GCSE outcomes' (Headteacher, Clough GM).

Though staff know predictions are not always accurate, they have great faith in these tests. Gillborn and Youdell note, that scores are standardised and norm-referenced but ask, according to whose standards and norms? Their answer is that of the white middle class, to the exclusion of pupils from working class and minority ethnic groups; a view supported by Ball (2003) and Reay (2006).

Kamin (also cited by Gillborn and Youdell 2000: 56) believes that IQ tests tend to show up the 'poor, the foreign-born and racial minorities [as] stupid ... [and] born that way'. The test itself appears as scientific proof of any such opinion (Kamin 1974: 15). Being culturally biased, they discriminate by ethnicity and class since questions are more accessible to pupils who have experience of white, middle class cultures. Gillborn and Youdell (2000: 60) quote Richards (1997: 287) who stated that it took a while for him to realise what was so very obvious.

'What the pro-difference [in race and IQ] camp were doing was indeed *testing* the intelligence of the group they identified with *against* that of an Other group.'

This shows that respondents are being tested against a standard already established as 'good' and 'normal'. Anything else, considered a deviation, inferior to that norm. This makes it difficult to accept AfL practice or

assessment in itself as credible and suggests a healthy need to be suspicious of the data produced as a result of any form of IQ or tests of ability.

2.3: Assessment, Racism and Ethnicity

The link between assessment, achievement and ethnicity cannot be ignored. In this discussion, I will focus on the effect on Black and Pakistani pupils who are the sample of this study.

Minority ethnic achievement data has varied across social class and between ethnic groups (Archer 2003: 11) but it clearly shows:

‘the performance of Black Caribbean pupils begins high, starts to decline in Key Stage 2, tails off badly in Key Stage 3 and is below that of most other ethnic groups at Key Stage 4’ (HMI 2002: 1).

It is also evident that Bangladeshi/Pakistani (ibid) and African/Caribbean boys have low rates of attainment and high rates of exclusions (Gillborn and Youdell 2000). Unlike Sewell (2000, 2008) who examines the roles of pupils and their families, Gillborn (2002: 321) urges us to consider the effects of, what the Macpherson Report (1999) recognises as the:

‘processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination ... which disadvantage minority ethnic people’.

Some of the organisational procedures Gillborn and Youdell (2000) and Gillborn (2002) scrutinize are: the ways restrictions were imposed by tiered entries at GCSE; flawed views of IQ and judgements about ability,

especially those based on sometimes erratic and inaccurate marking procedures by exam boards.

Lastly, people have stereotypes of minority ethnic groups. Recognising that many readers will raise the question: why is there a difference in performance between ethnic groups if school processes are racist? Gillborn (2002) argues that people hold different stereotypes of ethnic groups. Black pupils are stereotyped as disruptive and lazy while Asian students, Chinese in particular, are portrayed as 'industrious, passive and overambitious' (Archer 2003: 30).

The word 'Asian' can include students whose parents might have originated from different parts of the world such as China, Pakistan, India or Bangladesh. It not only hides the performance of specific groups but it homogenises a group of people who have culturally diverse backgrounds and experiences. Yet as a group, they are perceived as 'behavers and achievers' (Mac an Ghail, 1998; Archer, 2003). This stereotype compares much more favourably with Black pupils and demonstrates how people can have different expectations of different groups of learners or as Rollock (2007b: 286) has shown, hold 'different forms of success for different groups of pupils', according to ethnicity.

Further inequalities according to ethnicity can also be seen by the manner in which education needs are defined. For example, in 2003 a DfES equal

opportunities report showed that 28% Black-Caribbean along with 23% Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils, as opposed to 18% white pupils, have statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN). Gillborn and Youdell (2000) question the way in which this labelling occurs. At the very least it suggests minority ethnic pupils, as a result of identified SEN, may have problems accessing the curriculum.

Although supporting access is not straightforward, teachers and schools must try to understand the needs of pupils. This becomes more imperative when teaching cultural groups which are different from that of the teacher or school system. Pilkington (1999: 413) noted teachers were concerned about Black pupils whose 'cultural norms conformed less closely with theirs'. If the majority of teachers are white, Gillborn's findings that teachers were less critical of white boys than they were of boys from Caribbean backgrounds, are not surprising (Gillborn: 1988).

While researchers like Foster *et al.* (cited by Pilkington 1999) fiercely dispute the foundations for Gillborn's claims, others like Troyna (1995) and Tomlinson (1991) support his views. When class, is combined with ethnicity, it offers a more detailed and complicated picture of academic attainment. For example, in 1983, Scarr *et al.* found: at 5, pupils had similar pre reading scores yet by 6; middle class white pupils were ahead. By 7, both middle and white working class pupils had progressed more than Black pupils. In her review of their performance, Tomlinson (1991:

122) recognised minority groups faced greater hardships and did not 'achieve educational credentials on par with white pupils'. She focused on the competing discourses at play in school which contributed to minority ethnic pupils' poor performance. These and other compelling studies caused her to argue:

'if minority pupils, particularly black boys do less well, it is because of the way they interact with the school and teachers and not because of any problems they had on entry' (1991: 127).

In 1985 the Swann Report noted discrepancies in performance according to ethnicity. It did not however, distinguish between Asians from different origins, gender or social class and as such the stereotypes of Asians doing well and West Indian pupils underperforming, emerged. Researchers tried to explain differences in performance by suggesting internal and external factors such as: intelligence, language, social and cultural differences, family background, racial prejudice and self-esteem (Tomlinson 1991: 125-126). However Gillborn (2002) suggests the difference in performance between ethnic groups can be viewed as institutional racism since there is no intrinsic reason for inter-group differences, especially those pertaining to racial and ethnic groups (see also Gillborn 2008).

Following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, institutional racism was defined as:

'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin' (Macpherson 1999: 321).

This is evident, not only in the way in which different groups are perceived but by the structures which have an established commonsense place within institutions.

The Rampton Report (1981:12) stresses:

'Racism both intentional and unintentional has a direct and important bearing on the performance of West Indian children in our schools'.

However while it states that racism alone cannot account for their under-achievement, it states that, taken together with:

'negative teacher attitudes and inappropriate curriculum, racism plays a major part in their under-achievement'.

Some of the other organisational procedures Gillborn and Youdell (2000) and Gillborn (2002) scrutinize are the ways restrictions were imposed by tiered entries at GCSE, flawed views of IQ and judgements about ability, especially those based on stereotypes of minority ethnic groups. These have been discussed in greater depth earlier in this chapter.

Like Gillborn, Tomlinson (1991) highlights the impact of school policy on pupils' performance. She found in schools with more effective practice, Black pupils of similar ability, achieved an 'O' Level, B grade in exams as opposed to a grade 3 at CSE. This verified the views of parents who felt:

'schools have been using the social and ethnic background of pupils as an excuse for low attainment rather than focusing on school processes and policies which could raise achievement' (ibid.: 132).

There are variations in performance across ethnic groups. Evidence of this can be seen in Table 2 which shows a breakdown of GCSE results according to ethnicity (DfES 2007).

Table 2: GCSE Performance According To Ethnicity.

Boys		Total	% 5+ A* to C	% 5+ A* to C including English and Mathematics
White		256,326	55.2	41.9
	White British	248,445	55.2	41.9
Asian		19,614	56.8	42.5
	Indian	6,791	69.7	56.3
	Pakistani	7,552	47.0	32.5
	Bangladeshi	2,771	52.3	36.0
	Any other Asian background	2,500	56.6	42.4
Black		10,970	46.0	30.8
	Black Caribbean	4,016	41.5	26.5
	Black African	5,568	50.0	34.7
	Any other Black background	1,386	42.9	27.5

Source: Adapted from Statistical First Release (DCSF 2007)

While I do not believe it is right to measure learning solely by examination grades, I have included this table to indicate the sorts of results against which pupils are judged. These statistics paint a significant part of the backdrop against which national policy decisions are made. This unequal performance among and between ethnic groups causes Gillborn and Youdell (2000: 31) to ask once again, that we examine school practice.

However, the question of racism is not often about an individual teacher's perception of someone from an ethnic group different from their own, or about discrimination by another from within the same ethnic groups as Rollock (2007a) identified, but about whole-school schemes and practices. One of the key reasons why one has to question what happens within school is because of the authority and trust afforded to practice. Whether or not parents have a high regard for teachers and the education system (research by Crozier 2005b and Bhatti 2000 suggest they do not), parents value the marks gained by their children. Assessment is considered to be 'fair' (Gillborn 2008:90).

Despite the government's policy on the rights of parents to engage with pupils' learning (Directgov 2009) parents often find it difficult to question teachers. Doing so requires an understanding of the language of schooling in order to unpack ideas presented within the 'institutionalised talk' (Archer and Francis 2007: 51) during events such as parents' evening. During previous parents' evenings at Grenhill, Asian parents mainly focused on behaviour. Now they are requesting more information and are unafraid to challenge comments and question teachers' actions.

It is however quite significant that even when they do not trust teachers' comments, they rarely question the exam itself. Pupils' performance in the mock exam determines the extent to which they acquiesce to a teacher's decision to enter their son for a tier of exam with which they do

not agree. They rarely question the extent to which a teacher might have prepared that pupil for the exam or the quality of the teacher's marking. The result decides.

The mock exam result is seen as legitimate and unbiased. It is a test and this in itself makes it seem scientific and impartial. Racist practice can be subtle. Barker (2002: 83) says, 'a theory about race can be concealed inside apparently innocent language'. I am not suggesting this is what takes place within Grenhill, however if people believe pupils from one ethnic group are better achievers than others, it is evident that this perception is going to influence the decisions made, even the ways in which tests are marked and the sorts of careers advice provided. This is supported by Bowl (1994: 6) whose study of working class and minority ethnic school children found that, 'careers advice seemed to have been perfunctory and, in some cases damaging to aspirations'. This served to reinforce class positions as:

'post-school education often involved vocational education and training which led down a cul-de-sac of poorly paid work with few prospects for career advancement' (ibid).

This discussion of assessment, gender and performance, along with how minority ethnicity pupils are perceived, attempts to show that schools actively re-create inequality (Gillborn and Youdell 2000). One suspects this is the reason why many national initiatives such as the Minority Ethnic Achievement Project (MEAP) targeting the achievement of Turkish, Somalian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils commenced in 2004. This

project encouraged participating schools to re-examine their practice and engage more effectively with pupils. Projects such as *Aiming High* (DfES: 2003) along with schemes for Black Caribbean pupils (HMI: 2002) employ similar strategies.

While these schemes are good, there is still an overreliance on data which tends to focus on pupils' ability or IQ. This, Kamin suggests:

'serves as an instrument of oppression against the poor – dressed in the trappings of science, rather than politics' (Kamin 1974: 15 cited by Gillborn and Youdell 2000).

I believe however, that working with pupils, parents and the wider community are steps in the right direction. Engaging in dialogue as we listen to their views is extremely important. However much more has to be done to provide intellectual challenge and schools must recognise there are intrinsic, extrinsic, academic, social, within-school and without-school factors which influence a child's learning.

Ofsted's survey (HMI 2002) found an inclusive ethos which valued the needs of pupils and their culture, high expectations and meticulous tracking of pupils' performance, fostered success. This is a view echoed by Tomlinson (1991) who suggests that effective practice must support all pupils, regardless of ethnicity. Part of this effective practice should include the manner in which assessments are used to judge students.

2.4: Ethnicity and Social class

The history of Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi migration to the UK reflects their social positioning within society. Black people have been living in Britain for more than five hundred years (Fryer 1984). Historical records show they entertained at the court of Henry VII. During Mary Tudor's reign, Africans visited the country at the invitation of English merchants and at the time of Elizabeth I, she complained about the amount of 'blackmoors' who lived within the Empire (Jeffcoate 1984:14). By the 16th century, more Black people were brought to England through slavery and the Triangular Trade. By 1945 there were approximately ten thousand Black people living in Britain, mainly in London, Bristol and Cardiff, the larger trade ports.

Even without the pressures of skin colour; the problems of immigration are many. There is usually the suspicion of the host country, competition for scarce resources and housing, along with having to become accustomed to the unwritten codes of conduct within the host nation. The Irish, for example, who came to live in England, would have experienced similar pressures. Bagley and Verma (1975) record they were stereotyped as aggressive, lazy and untrustworthy.

When migrants are visibly different, the impact of their arrival multiplies considerably. As a result of the labour shortage around 1950 it became necessary for Britain to advertise for help by inviting migrants to assist in

the rebuilding of its economy. Many accepted, seeing it as an opportunity to improve their financial status. By 1955 there were 42,700 immigrants from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan countries (NCWP), the majority of whom were from the West Indies (Cohen and Manion 1983: 18).

Both groups are from 'societies in which emigration is perfectly acceptable as a way of achieving economic advancement' (Cropley 1983: 78). They were ethnically and racially different, with cultural traditions and physical characteristics which serve to differentiate them. One can argue that, they were in a position of disadvantage even prior to their arrival since they were recruited to low paid jobs (Jeffcoate 1984: 21). Less than 13% of West Indian men and 5% of women were unskilled workers (Eggleston *et al.* cited Fryer 1986) yet they were provided with some of the worst paid menial jobs available at that time. This in itself determined the social class to which they were relegated upon arrival in England.

Studies by Rex and Tomlinson (1979) showed they held even lower status jobs here in the UK than they did in the West Indies. Firms, reluctant to hire minorities, discriminated on the basis of skin colour. When three testers with similar experience and qualifications applied for jobs (one Hungarian, one white and the other black):

'in the 40 firms tested, the black applicant was offered a job once, the Hungarian 10 times and the white English tester 15 times' (Daniel cited in Eggleston *et al.* 1986: 5).

The same was true for Asian candidates who were also told vacancies were filled although the post was later offered to white candidates.

Though these minority ethnic groups had been living in England for over thirty years, they were socially perceived as outsiders and therefore accorded a status of powerlessness (Jeffcoate, 1984; Haralambos, 1989; Hicks 1981). Part of this powerlessness stems from the social and academic perceptions of both groups held by the white majority.

'The association of dark skin with social inferiority is deep rooted...blackness stands as a symbolic representation of things we fear or hold in contempt' (Richardson and Lambert cite Fryer 1984: 47).

The degradation of slaves from Africa, along with the subservience which came with the colonization of Asian states, served to reinforce many of the social and academic stereotypes that were formed. Prior to arrival, rumours of the primitive and ignorant natives who inhabited the islands rediscovered by British explorers, served to create a mental picture of visible minorities which was difficult to eradicate (Richardson and Lambert cite Walvin 1978).

These stereotypes were further legitimised by the use of science in the form of IQ tests, employed within schools, to set pupils (Little, 1975; Eysenck, 1971; Driver, 1977; Gillborn, 2000). IQ tests which are known to be culturally biased, served as a criterion against which pupils were judged. With this form of academic restriction, came social disadvantage.

Minority workers were recruited into the lower paid jobs, and in 1991 Tomlinson recorded parents' concerns about their children being deprived access to higher education. In 2000 Gillborn continued to question the use of IQ tests to legitimise academic decisions which disqualify particular groups of learners. Pupils found it difficult, if not impossible, to excel when placed in the bottom sets at school. If these sets are full of minority ethnic pupils, especially boys, it means that opportunities for achieving better paid jobs are lessened for groups of learners.

The influence of social status continues today. Use of IQ tests and assessment data still leads to setting; a policy supported within the Labour Manifesto (1997) which states:

'Children are not all of the same ability nor do they learn at the same speed. That means 'setting' children in classes to maximise progress, for the benefit of high flyers and slow learners alike' (cited by Gillborn and Youdell 2000:29).

Allegedly 'an individual position ... is not predetermined' (ibid), however there are more minority ethnic and working class pupils in the lower sets in school than any other ethnic group.

These views about minority ethnic pupils' performance, legitimised by IQ testing still continue today. In October 2007, James Watson, a Nobel Prize winner who contributed to the discovery of the structure of DNA, expressed his views about people of Black origin. The following is an extract of his interview with *The Times* reporter Helen Nugent:

"...all our social policies are based on the fact that their [Black people's] intelligence is the same as ours - whereas all the testing says not really". He hoped that everyone was equal, but countered that "people who have to deal with black employees find this not true" (The Times Online 2007).

These comments show the level of prejudice that can still exist among those in positions of influence and authority. Dr Watson is a scientist who leads one of America's most eminent scientific research institutions; this makes many assume there must be an element of truth to his comments (perhaps because they match their own uninterrogated stereotypes of Black people), and this is as menacing as unchallenged opinions of ability and IQ.

Research by Slavin (1996) shows the awful effect of setting and reliance on IQ on pupils' self-esteem. Academic groupings tended to become self-fulfilling prophecies as pupils became disengaged when placed in lower sets. His findings were corroborated by Gillborn and Youdell (2000: 175) who recognised that pupils demonstrated both open and hostile acts of rebellion along with increased anger and dissatisfaction as they believed they were treated and esteemed differently. Those in the top set felt more valued as they were provided with more skilled teachers while those in lower sets were angry about their placement. Resentment was not always restricted to those in the bottom set; even pupils in the second set were angry, describing themselves as, 'the 'cast-offs' from the top set' (ibid.:176).

Like Gillborn and Youdell (2000), Sparkes (1999) noted that although educational performance might have improved as a result of setting, this was not the case for all pupils.

'The gap between top and bottom achievers has widened. The proportion of young people gaining no GCSE passes has not fallen since the late 1980s ... schools were relatively powerless against the basic forces creating social disadvantage.'

It is not just about groupings within a particular school, but also the setting which occurs across schools as the distribution of wealth within and across boroughs serves to restrict opportunities. Halsey *et al.* (1980) noted social class as an obvious barrier for pupils who belong to schools where, 'inequalities born of class structures [are] institutionalized via funding and selection procedures' (Gillborn and Kirton 2000: 272).

The link between class and ethnicity and the manner in which institutional processes serve to reinforce divisions is highlighted in Gillborn's discussion of the process used to select pupils for the gifted and talented programme in schools.

'Black students are typically under-represented in the highest ranked groups (which benefit from additional resources) and over-represented in the low-ranked groups, which typically experience teaching of lower quality, cover less of the curriculum and, in the English system of "tiered" GCSE examinations, are likely to be entered for tests where the very highest grades are not available because they are restricted to a "higher" paper reserved for "more able" students' (Gillborn 2008: 240).

Again this is a view supported by Sparkes (1999) who argued that the publication of performance tables spurred competition between schools and while it might have contributed to an increase in performance, it

encouraged those schools which were in great demand 'to exclude the least advantaged' (CASE 1999:1). In brief, more working-class pupils tend to be in poorer schools and lower bands or sets than others.

Bagley (1979: 64) reported that Black underachievement according to social class and recently, the manner in which information about the performance of white groups is presented (Fitzgerald, 2005; Mongon and Chapman, 2008), hides data about minority ethnic pupils. This is evidenced by current national interest in white working-class boys, whom the media indicate, are struggling academically (Townsend and Ahmed 2003).

In 1996 Chris Woodhead, (then Chief Inspector of Schools) stated their performance was the 'most disturbing problem' in education. However Gillborn and Kirton (2000) argue racial, rather than class motives were being offered for white working-class underachievement and this hides national statistics which show white working-class boys still outperform many minority groups. Gillborn and Gipps (1996) noted that white pupils were outperforming African-Caribbean pupils in Birmingham. While it might be argued that Birmingham is only one example, it is quite significant since it has the highest minority ethnic population in Britain.

The following data from the Office for National Statistics puts the issue of ethnicity and performance in perspective. In 2006, the number of pupils

of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage gaining five or more GCSEs was 52% and 57% respectively while the performance for White pupils was 58%. However for Black pupils, it was 50% (2009: 39). Thus claims that white pupils are being outperformed by minority ethnic groups are grossly exaggerated.

On the whole it is extremely difficult to separate assessment, social class and ethnicity but I have endeavoured to highlight how each might have an impact on groups of learners. Patterns of educational achievement become even more intriguing when performance is examined according to gender and the gendered relationships/identities that are employed by boys in order to cope at school.

2.5: Gender and Identity

The two issues within gender and achievement that are pertinent to this study are: boys' attainment and the identities they adopt while at school which either aid or hinder academic performance.

Academic trends between 1995 and 2008 show that at KS4, girls are ahead of boys. In 2008, 52% of girls achieved 5 or more A*-C including English and Maths as opposed to 44% of boys (Office For National Statistics 2010:37). The interest in boys' achievement is not new. Studies by Reed (1999), Myhill and Fisher (2005), Ofsted (1996) and West (2006), reflect concerns regarding performance according to gender.

Mahony (1998: 40) believes the focus on boys' performance can be linked to the role of education in the global economy. School effectiveness and improvement movements identify education as the means by which highly skilled people can be produced so nations are better able to compete globally. Alongside this interest in efficiency and the move away from the public service ethos, key aspects of new managerialism emerged in which decisions were driven by competence rather than by conventional notions of professional practice (Gewirtz and Ball 2000). This is encapsulated in current rhetoric about schools being concerned with 'raising standards of learning' (Millet 1996, cited by Mahony 1998). Yet the debate centres, not around achievement, but boys' achievement and more specifically, on why they are *not* performing better than girls.

When the GCSE results were made available in summer 2001, the Northern Ireland Assembly published its reasons for the difference in performance according to gender. They suggested that boys might be underachieving due to the lack of male teachers; that girls show more aptitude and liking for collaborative, discussion-led lessons; and boys are more likely to reject authority ... and be excluded (2001: 1- 2). These are similar to the 'within-school factors' (such as setting, forms of assessment, peer groups and curriculum focus), discussed by Burgess *et al.* (2004: 3) which are said to affect boys' performance. Reed (1999), is sceptical of the kinds of male role models reproduced by schools, a view supported by Ofsted (2003c: 7) which noted that effective primary schools and English

departments had very few or no male teachers yet boys performed successfully.

Since mine is a boys' school, I was curious to see if pupils identified any of these 'within-school' factors as a key aspect of their ability to 'succeed' and the forms of identities they adopted in order to cope with schooling.

Identity

Masculinity, like many other forms of identity, is socially constructed (Segal 1990). The normative view of masculinity is that which is embraced within the term hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1996). In the UK it is generally associated with, 'toughness, power [and] competitiveness' (Jackson 2006: 10). In her research Jackson found a clear link between hegemonic masculinity and boys who were popular and:

'laddish... Since masculinity is constructed in opposition to femininity ... boys must avoid any activities associated with femininity' (ibid.: 11).

In order to be successful, Jackson found that boys could not admit to working hard. They had to appear to avoid academic study and work 'covertly' (ibid).

Jackson herself notes that relying solely upon theories of hegemonic masculinity to explain boys' behaviour is inadequate. Boys draw on multiple masculinities in order to develop their identity. Judith Butler

purports that identity is fluid and performance related as gender roles can be seen as a 'kind of becoming or activity' (Butler 1990: 112). Roles are shaped by the context and discourse within which people engage. For example the mere act of being declared a particular sex at birth, begins to define the ways in which people behave and are responded to by others (Butler 1993: 243).

In discussing Butler's theory, Brickell (2005:28) provides a distinction between performance, the way we behave and performativity, the effect of structures that influence our lives. Some of these influences are: race, sexual orientation, social class and other intersecting social differences. Being a boy and working hard at school can often be rewarded or penalised by other pupils. The normative view of achievement locates success as feminine. As a result of this, some boys perceive being 'committed to schoolwork ... to be inferior and effeminate' (Lingard *et al.* (2009:151) and as such, adopt many identities in order to subvert this notion of femininity as success, in order to help them succeed at school.

Archer (2003: 40) states that it is through the dialogue and views of pupils, that researchers have been able to ascertain which 'identities are negotiated, contested, asserted and defended'. For example, boys' concepts of masculinity (Francis and Skelton, 2005; Sewell, 1998), and their sexual orientation (Archer 2003) also affect their ability to do well. Although a co-educational school will also pose multiple identities for

students, mine is an all boys' school and that in itself suggests the potential for a range of identities to be discovered.

In 1977, Willis conducted an ethnographic study of white working class boys in an industrial town, which shed light on the different constructs they adopted to help them cope within an educational environment in which they felt alienated. He identified 'lads' and 'ear'oles'. The 'lads', resisted any effort to conform to school rules as they patterned their behaviour after their fathers by smoking, drinking and adopting sexist views. They valued manual work more than academic and made fun of the 'ear'oles', because they were neat, hard working and followed school rules. The latter assumed middle class ambitions in order to succeed at school.

Willis' study challenged perceptions of failure, which often constructed it as resulting from not being diligent, yet these boys were actively determined not to follow the school's idea of success. They recognised that, given their social status, they were highly unlikely to obtain jobs that were better paid. Their best course of action was to follow their fathers to work in the factory and thus there was no need for study. Though their lack of credentials and the scarcity of jobs limited their options, this was their choice. They chose not to study. Willis' study was one of the first of its kind to recognise that pupils actively made decisions about how they engaged with educational ideals. In this instance, 'mental work ... [was]

defined by the working class Lads as effeminate' (Haywood and Mac an Ghail 1996:55).

Sewell (1998: 87) who first discussed the coping mechanisms of Black boys noted similar negative identifiers for those who were industrious. However, the names they were called took on homophobic connotations as they 'were seen as 'batty men' (gay) or 'pussies' (effeminate)' (cited by Jackson 1998: 90). Being called homosexual is the indictment for being a 'conformist'; someone who 'accepts the goals and means of schooling' (Sewell 1998: 112). Other identity constructs Sewell discovered were 'innovators', 'retreatists' and 'rebels'. Innovators are pupils who 'accept the goals and not the means of schooling', retreatists 'reject both' while the rebels 'reject both but replace them with their own agenda' (ibid).

These views are not unlike those noted by Mac an Ghail (1994: 56) who identified 'Macho Lads' representing an anti-school culture of 'domination, alienation and infantilism' (ibid.: 57). They rebelled against 'rules, routines and regulations' and subscribed to 'fighting ... and football' (ibid.: 59). They scoffed at the 'academic achievers' whom they and a number of teachers viewed as effeminate.

However, boys do not always rebel or flex their muscles, when constructing their identities at school. Jackson (1998: 88) reminds us that being strong, powerful and hard are not innate masculine qualities but

social constructions which are often encouraged by school practice. Some pupils, like the 'Real Englishmen' in Power *et al.*'s study luxuriate in effortless achievement (1998: 143). Others adopt contrasting roles. In Reay's study, Shaun, a white working class boy, developed two identities in order to succeed. Wanting to do well and make his parents proud, he was well behaved in class but tough in the playground (1999: 227). Reay outlined how difficult it was for him to hold on to these positions as Shaun struggled to maintain his own self-esteem by finding ways to resist his classmates' rebellious attitude, yet still fit in. This is similar to a fourteen year old boy in the study conducted by Frosh *et al.* (2002: 89) who 'asserted his hardness when others thought he was weak' so he could do his schoolwork.

Boys in Bleach's study (1996 cited by Jackson 1998: 89) were relaxed about their cleverness. They adopted these attitudes as a mechanism for coping with work without being the 'butt of schoolboy banter'. Like Archer's study (2003), the value of progressing was constructed in instrumental terms. They felt, for example, it would help them obtain better grades and jobs (a classed position) but also had intrinsic purposes such as making them feel good. They may not even have been afraid to engage in perceived 'feminine' activities such as writing and drama which can often be stigmatised by many boys (Mac an Ghail 1994).

Other aspects of pupils' identities which I felt might be reflected by pupils within my study were the role of religion or ethnicity. Archer's study (2003: 53) discussed Muslim identities which were a key part of pupils' ethnic and religious uniqueness, while Ofsted (2002:11) noted Black parents' (not pupils') mention of 'supportive church groups' contributing to the network which sustains learning.

Summary

I have focused on credentials, assessment, ethnicity, class, gender and identity to show that pupils' constructions of success are tied together by the network of ideas outlined in each category.

Some of these discourses are not always compatible. While pupils and teachers may have some views in common, there are several variables which impact on the manner in which pupils are able to access or engage with school. I believe, it is only as we stop thinking of pupils as a homogenous group and 'grow to know' them as we try to understand the pupils within our care, that we are able to identify the extent to which we can best serve their educational needs. By so doing we can assist them in becoming 'successful', whatever that interpretation may be.

CHAPTER 3

3.1: Methodology

Research Questions

My three most important research questions are: What are pupils' views of success? To what extent do pupils and teachers share common notions of success? Are pupils' views different from or similar to those of their teachers, parents and peers?

Further questions which I aim to explore are: how do different notions of success compete in the classroom/school context? How does my sample of minority ethnic boys negotiate different views of success among themselves and in the school context? What are the implications, if any, of different notions of success in relation to Black and Pakistani boys' achievement?

Ideology

This is a qualitative research project guided by a constructivist theoretical perspective. Constructivists view reality as 'socially constructed' (Robson 2002:27) and meanings shaped 'by human beings as they engage with the world they interpret' (Crotty 1998: 43). My study focuses on pupils' perceptions of what is a 'successful' student. This requires that I also

adopt an interpretive perspective since I am seeking to 'understand their interpretations of the world around them' (Cohen *et al.* 2003: 23).

I recognise pupils have multiple, competing and sometimes contradictory views of success and as such will attempt to unpack these. This entails examining the ways in which ideas of success are formed by pupils. To do so involves: interrogating the implications of school practice – most specifically, the practices and principles of assessment. Filer (2000: 3) states assessments 'explicitly or implicitly embody a number of social, emotional and physical characteristics of students'. These are all aspects of students' reality, that is, what they experience. This is why pupils' failure, for example, is analysed in terms of 'behavioural, attitudinal [and] socioeconomic' factors (Robson 2002:27). Identifying pupils' understanding of success fits in with constructivists' beliefs that, 'reality is socially constructed' (ibid). While issues of assessment were raised previously in Chapter 2, its impact on some pupils will be discussed further in my analysis.

Like Wood (2003) who studied pupils' perception of gender and under-achievement, I would like to get some insight into pupils' views of success. The theoretical principles behind issues of ethnicity, gendered identities and performance will also be highlighted in my analysis as their implications for students are discussed against the comments made during interview.

Ethnography

To gain even further insight into what helps mould pupils' views, I have used elements of ethnography. This stresses the importance of examining a social issue, by focusing on either a small number of cases or the detailed exploration of one case. I will be presenting three layered case studies. This allows me the opportunity to also investigate, in greater detail, the views of those who have an influence on the lives of pupils within my sample.

Those who use ethnographic research usually live in the culture being observed. I work within this environment and to some extent will rely on participant observation as it provides me with an opportunity to:

'represent social "things" as they are grasped and shaped [and] understand the way that group members interpret the flow of events in their lives' (Emmerson 2001).

I will also analyse the data I have collected by interpreting its meaning; however, while I make use of statistical data, this plays a subsidiary role in the study (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998: 248).

Historic data

Though I focus on what has been gleaned from in-depth interviews, I provide pupils' historic data – mainly statistical - simply as a source of contextual information. Used by schools, it highlights some of the competing discourses of success which guide teachers' and possibly pupils'

decisions. This includes KS2 and 3 levels, and CATs scores, which are used nationally to predict pupils' performance by the end of KS4.

Gillborn (2002) encourages us to be mistrustful of the data used by schools. For example, the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) data, which is important to schools, is acknowledged to be valid within a two grade margin of error - thus reinforcing the need for caution. However when describing the academic context, this data should not be ignored since it is an example of what *is* used at school and as such it provides the academic backdrop against which attainment is judged by pupils, parents, schools and the state. While its use has been interrogated within Chapter 2, it is now more pertinent to ascertain the extent to which pupils see test results as relevant to their ideas of success.

Interviews

Oppenheim (1992: 102) suggests that one of the main disadvantages of questionnaires is their unsuitability for respondents of 'poor literacy [or] language difficulties'. Most of my pupils are second language speakers thus it made more sense to interview them to ensure, when necessary, I was able to clarify answers.

Walker and Adelman (1976: 135) assert that innovations in education can often be managed 'as surface features in the life of the school'. These interviews have helped me to get beyond the surface and unpack some of

the deeper issues. As a 'virtually infinitely flexible tool for research' (Breakwell 1995:230), the interviewer is provided with the opportunity to understand an issue by pursuing a line of enquiry, following up answers and investigating motives. Particularly when face-to-face interviews are done, non-verbal cues 'give messages which help in understanding the verbal response' (ibid) and as such questioning can be further modified to explore deeper issues.

I started with a set of fixed questions (see Appendix I) but follow-up questions guided the overall discussion. This may seem paradoxical within constructivism since:

'research participants are helping to construct the "reality" ... and because there are multiple realities the research questions cannot be fully established in advance' (ibid.: 2002: 27).

However there were areas I wished to explore and I tried to ensure these were asked even if time was spent pursuing other strong issues which emerged. This structure helped provide some 'internal consistency', allowing me to probe deeper and check conflicting answers offered by respondents (Breakwell 1995:238).

Individual and group interviews

I chose to interview three pupils, each separately then conduct group interviews with their peers. There are advantages and disadvantages to both methods. The main problem common to both, is an interviewer is not always certain they have the skill to draw out rich and honest data. I

felt interviewing, might have become even more difficult, since I am a senior member of staff and I might 'mute feelings' (Charmaz 2003: 275). However, this did not occur. Those who volunteered, expressed pride that I had asked them, a view not unlike the mature students in Burke's research (2002: 126) who were 'honoured, to be invited' to participate. Nevertheless I provided them with opportunities to opt out if, at any time, they felt uncomfortable responding. Yet I hoped they would not.

Cohen *et al.* (2003: 287) noted that group interviews can 'generate a wider range of responses' and this was indeed true. Peers appeared to have felt comfortable being part of a group and this helped respondents remember specific events (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). Tony, one of the pupils with whom I conducted an individual interview, was the only one who opted to be part of his peer group interview, and he recalled incidents not previously mentioned.

Pictures

I used what Prosser (1998: 3) called, 'a contemporary form of structured investigation'. To allow pupils to define what *they* viewed as success, they were asked to bring a picture of something which they thought symbolised success. My primary focus was not on the meaning they brought to pictures but to use pictures as a prompt. Yet both worked. As Prosser (2006) states:

'the visual, as objects and images, exists materially in the world but gain meaning from humans' (2006:2).

This fits the constructivist ideal since as Prosser suggests, pupils were able to give meaning to their images. This, I suspect, helped them feel secure enough to share deeper feelings rather than simply repeat what they believed I wished them to say (an aspect of my influence as an Assistant Headteacher). When questioning stalled, or their answers tailed off, it was easy to refer to a picture to further the dialogue. Pupils showed they were comfortable as they smiled proudly when sharing ideas.

Reflexivity

One of its disadvantages is that interviews are time consuming; however, the interviewer can try to control this. The other element is what Breakwell (1995: 239) refers to as the 'interviewer effect'. This is where attributes of the interviewer such as 'demeanour, accent, dress, gender, age' (ibid) and institutional status, might influence respondents.

While interviewing I had to acknowledge the possible effect of my presence on the research, and as such, a reflexive constructivist approach was adopted as 'reflexivity recognises that researchers are inescapably part of the world they are researching' (Cohen *et al.* 2003: 141). This is demonstrated in several ways. I am an Assistant Headteacher whose job it is to help departments ensure pupils succeed and as such I had to recognise that my own bias/motives might have been challenged during this study. I found it helpful to record my feelings about students prior to

and provide an overall impression of them during the interview. Some of these comments are in my personal statement and Appendix IX.

Nightingale and Cromby 1999: 228 remind us that as researchers we need:

'to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research'.

This is indeed true and in conducting this research I had to recognise that as an Assistant Headteacher my role affords me high level institutional status. This had the potential to influence the power dynamics within discussions with pupils, teachers and parents. For example, it is quite possible that I was permitted to conduct this study simply because I was a member of senior management. I was allowed to ask questions at the end of a staff meeting however as a researcher I tried to demonstrate my sensitivity to the impact of my role as Assistant Headteacher by stressing that staff could choose to opt out of answering. Yet as a researcher, I hoped some would contribute.

One third of the staff decided not to participate. However I acknowledge that using a formal setting like a staff meeting (which is normally held in the Main Hall where pupils sit their exams) might have made them feel as if I was testing their ability to recall aspects of training that I have led over the years. Although I had told them that they could choose to be anonymous, I asked them to identify their roles within school; for example, to state if they were a teacher, Head of Year or trainee. I

recognise that this, along with the level of formality evident within a staff meeting, might have increased their unease when participating.

Similar power dynamics had to be considered when interviewing pupils. The individual student interviews were conducted in my office and others in the classroom. When analysing their responses later in this thesis, I suggest that using my office could have added to pupils' discomfort. Within schools, it is common practice to see pupils in an office if they are in trouble and while I had not previously done so with this group of pupils, I am a senior member of staff and being in my office might have added to their discomfort or made pupils keen to say what they believed I wanted to hear. I tried to lessen the power dynamics by thanking them for taking time off to talk to me and stressing that I was, through my research, trying to understand their perspectives and experiences.

I reminded pupils that they did not have to answer questions and asked if I had interpreted their answers correctly whenever I was uncertain of responses. I also tried to make them more at ease by chatting about some of the things they had mentioned during our conversations; for example their achievements in sports, both in and out of school. However I recognise that pupils might have found it difficult to make a distinction between my role as a teacher and that of researcher. For example in Chapter 5 when one or two of the pupils told me they were studying hard, I record that they might have been trying to reassure me

(as their teacher), that they were in fact studying; yet as a researcher, I tried to understand their comments within the wider context of the ways in which they were endeavouring to become successful students at school.

I had initially thought of doing the individual interviews during class time however I did not want pupils to feel as if they were in yet another lesson so they were conducted after school. With two to three pupils involved in all the group interviews, I allocated more time. This provided pupils with the opportunity to add comments and also gave me time to clarify answers and pursue ideas.

As with pupils, I followed the same procedure when interviewing parents, recognising that parents might have found it difficult to view me as a researcher rather than a senior member of staff. Having previously sent letters home asking permission for pupils to participate in my research, I phoned to ask if parents were willing to meet and share their views with me. The evidence of the power relationship which exists between teachers and parents was encapsulated by Abdul's father's comment: "It's the parents who visit the school". He found it interesting that I was willing to travel to their home to speak to him. Recognising that parents might have been uncomfortable, on each occasion I thanked them profusely for assisting in my research and asked for clarification when I was uncertain of responses.

It was not always easy to sustain the role of researcher. For example I was conscious that I segued into the role of teacher, when I shared with Reggie's mother how disappointed Reggie looked upon receiving his exam results. While I recognise that I might not always have been mindful of how parents, teachers, pupils and their peers viewed me, I acknowledge an awareness of this whenever it occurs during the research.

The Students

I opted for three case studies in order to collect rich data about students' views of success. Stake (1998: 88) suggests that a case can be selected simply because; 'the case itself is of interest' to the researcher. He outlines that case study research needs to be conducted in such a way that significant features of the case can be found and plausible interpretations made. I had asked several students to participate and eventually three Year 11 pupils (of African-Caribbean, African and Pakistani origin) agreed. These are *their* views and in no way stand for all pupils of similar heritages.

KS4 pupils were selected because, having experienced at least three national tests (two at KS2 and one at KS3) they are, the veterans of the school system. I felt they would have had a clearer understanding of the many wide-ranging expectations at KS4. Schools, through varied assessment practices would already have subjected them to many interviews, talks and motivational lectures about succeeding at GCSE.

They have already begun to adopt, or ignore, several different interpretations of success which I felt may or may not have been reflected by their school, parents or even peers.

To add other layers of understanding to each student's views of success, I interviewed their peers. This was done by asking them to nominate 2-4 of their friends so I could identify the extent to which they shared similar views of success. The actual interviews took place over a period of six months, one of which began at the end of Y10 but as a result of the numerous field trips, extended holidays and periodic illnesses, the other interviews were conducted in Y11.

Teachers and Parents

To deepen my understanding of pupils' discourse, parents (and in the case of one family, a sibling), were also interviewed and questionnaires administered to teachers. This allowed me to explore more thoroughly, a strategy which was permissible because of the small sample of pupils. I wanted to identify teachers' views of success since they are the foot soldiers whose judgements determine the extent to which pupils are able to access educational provision. While I note that their judgements are not always supported by valid reasons (see Gillborn, 1990; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Gillborn, 2002 for their views on the role of teachers as they ration education), they do make judgements about pupils. They

assess their groupings and career choices but more importantly, their opinions are notable because pupils themselves see them as valuable.

I have unpacked teachers' views of what makes a 'successful' student in order to identify whether or not they match those of the pupils researched. Without providing prompts, I simply asked: how would you define a successful student?

Gaining permission from the headteacher, I used ten minutes of a staff meeting to ask teachers to fill in an open questionnaire with that one question (see Appendix II). Like the pupils' interviews, I explained that this was voluntary but urged them to help me in my research. I also asked them to indicate their position at school since I felt this might reflect whether or not positions of responsibility dictated their views. No-one wanted to be interviewed. Perhaps they were suspicious of how they might have been portrayed in this study or because I am a senior manager, simply asking them to participate might have been seen as intimidating (Burke 2002).

On hindsight, I ought not to have used such a formal forum. Staff meetings are strange affairs. Teachers must attend but as time passes they become anxious about domestic arrangements made for their own children. Mine was the last agenda item. That, along with being an Assistant Headteacher made me curious about the extent to which they

gave their views careful consideration. However, all research 'should be conducted with an ethic of respect for persons' (BERA 1992) and I had to accept their responses.

A learner's initial and primary carer is usually the parent. In order to sustain pupils' engagement with learning, parents are expected to support the school on issues of concern and reinforce learning by helping their child at home (DCSF 2010). Research by Walkerdine and Lucey (1989), Epstein (1995), Crozier (2000), Archer and Francis (2007), show the varied ways in which parents are perceived when they become involved in their child's education. Though the government states that schools and families should work in partnership to support learning, in practice, the role of the parent in schools, can be mixed. Teachers ask for parents' assistance yet feel uneasy if it appears to threaten their authority within the classroom (Epstein 1986).

Regardless of positioning, a common belief is that when parents work together with schools, learners tend to stay in school longer and like school more (EPE Research Centre 2004). The assumption is that parents share the same hopes, dreams, goals and views of success as the school. Epstein's (1995) framework for parental involvement outlines some of the ways in which schools and parents can work together. They include becoming parent governors, volunteering and organising parent help.

These are all worthwhile activities but they do not always take into account the views of different groups of parents.

It is only too easy for parents to be treated like a homogenous group, a view challenged by Crozier and Reay (2005: ix) who argue that attention needs to be paid to parental responses which differ according to their social class, ethnicity or gender and their child's experiences. For example, Archer and Francis refer to:

'pushy parents' (particularly pushy mothers) may actually be demonised within schools and the media' (2007: 48).

Mirza (1992) highlights a discrepancy between the expectations schools and parents had of their children while research undertaken by Crozier (2005) shows how much time, money and emotion were employed by Black parents on behalf of their children's education.

In an attempt to identify what shapes pupils' views of success, I have interviewed the families of the three pupils studied. In the case of Abdul whose father was not available, the oldest son was nominated by his father to speak on behalf of the family. Their opinions and reactions present varied ideals. These have helped me to make sense of what has shaped the views of success presented by pupils in my sample.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting research at one's institution is fraught with ethical concerns. Although using a pseudonym to disguise Grenhill, ours is a male single-sex

school which is easy to identify if more specific details are revealed, hence I have used aliases for the borough, pupils, families and peers. Having reassured them that their views would be treated with the utmost discretion, pupils were asked to select their own names, which they enjoyed doing.

I obtained consent from parents to question their sons, as mine is a fifteen year old cohort. As Burke (2002) stated, her research was a priority for her, not the students or parents. The same is true for me. I want to achieve my EdD. To get around this I asked parents and peers to help me identify ways to help their sons/friends become more successful. This was possibly misleading since I did not define the word success.

Analysis

My research questions provide the context within which issues are scrutinised. I collated and analysed the views of teachers to identify whether or not these matched pupils'. Recognising themes, I have drawn on bodies of literature as I interrogate, in Chapter 4, different meanings behind popular and policy discourses. Some of these issues include: assessment and racism (Gillborn and Youdell 2000), masculinity (Francis and Skelton, 2005; Sewell, 1998) and conventional notions of success (Rollock 2007a). In Chapter 5 I do the same with the views presented by pupils, their peers and parents/sibling.

Although my research is based on three pupils, and the sample is not large enough to represent all minority ethnic boys, I hope that in some small way, my findings will be used by teachers and curriculum planners to guide more effective provision for minority ethnic boys as they add valuable insight into pupils' understanding of success and how they can be supported to succeed. It is anticipated that it would help me to understand my pupils better, as I work with them more effectively to resolve any conflicts they might have between school, and their personal discourses of success.

CHAPTER 4:

4.1: Notions of Success Among Staff

In this chapter I examine the staff's views of successful pupils. Guided by a review of the literature, I will use my understanding of their views in order to scrutinize the many constructs of success which emerge.

Archer and Francis (2007: 41) present studies which show how underachievement tends to be encouraged by the manner in which teachers engage with minority ethnic pupils within secondary schools. In their research into teachers' views of Chinese students, they identified constructs of successful pupils which allowed them to create a 'model trichotomy', mapping the three ways in which pupils are seen by teachers. These are as: the 'ideal, 'other/pathologised' and 'demonised' pupils in Western educational discourse' (ibid: 66). For example, the 'ideal' pupil tended to be: naturally talented, innovative, independent, masculine and a leader. The 'other/pathologised' pupils while diligent, were viewed as plodding, conformist and unquestioning and the 'demonised' were viewed as anti-social rebels, ungovernable and aggressive.

I have tried to develop a similar idea by categorising several of the emerging themes in order to make sense of the staff's views about successful pupils. Forty members of staff responded to the sixty open

questionnaires administered. They were: five Assistant Heads (AsH), fourteen teachers (T) who did not identify if they had positions of responsibility, six Curriculum Leaders (CLs), one Head of Year (HoY), seven trainees (Tr), one from the library services (LB) and six Others (O). The latter were the views of people who elected not to identify their position within our institution. All staff views are indicated by numbering their role for example T1, is Teacher 1 and like those of students, are indicated by double quotation marks.

While my research did not seek to identify what teachers felt was unsuccessful, by asking them to list/explain qualities of successful students, I was able to see emerging trends. Many of the successful virtues are akin to those identified by the teachers in the study by Archer and Francis (*ibid.*: 66). For example: "working independently and being well organised" (AsH3), while "always wanting to learn" (T7) is similar to being 'engaged' (*ibid.*).

Among staff, the core traits which emerged were grouped into four categories. These were: intrinsic, assessment/making good progress, developing social skills (distinct from academic skills), and being happy/self-esteem.

Intrinsic values

Intrinsic values embrace qualities that allow pupils to demonstrate they are accepting full responsibility for their own actions. One AsH summarises it by saying:

“Motivated – takes charge of own learning. Makes maximum effort, particularly in weaker subjects. Shows determination to improve” (AsH1).

All these qualities are to be found within the individual and suggest the pupil is doing this by himself.

Intrinsic qualities emerged in different guises twenty-seven times in the responses and were more succinctly stated among the teaching group.

For example T4 said:

“Ability to listen, ability to apply, enthusiastic, assertive, know where he is going, has realistic expectations, ambitious”.

While CL1 suggested pupils should be able to:

“Take responsibility for their own learning, asking for help (pro-active rather than reactive). Committed. Willing to take critical feedback and not personally. Looking at wider picture. Trying to contribute to life outside the classroom”.

It is clear that T4 expects successful pupils to demonstrate specific skills which they believe would help pupils gain better qualifications. It is unclear what is meant by listening effectively. Some of the speaking and listening skills from the KS4 English curriculum state that pupils should be able to: ‘listen to complex information and respond critically’ (QCA 2007: 86). However as an experienced teacher, I suspect T4’s comment about

listening effectively is related to behaviour. Teachers wish pupils to be so focused on what is being said, that they are neither distracted by nor engaged in disruptive behaviour. Behaviour is a very real concern for staff. The amount of time lost while attending to disruptive students is so great, it was reported by the BBC (2004a) that a school in Loughborough hired an expert to help 'stamp out unruly behaviour among its pupils'. Yet another school in Milton Keynes is allowing disruptive pupils to start later and finish at 5.30 so that while they are still being educated, they will not distract others (BBC 2004b).

The second expectation is their ability to apply ideas within different contexts. The word "assertive", offers one aspect of masculinity expected of pupils. Masculinity tends to be structured in terms of dominance (Mac an Ghail 2000: 98). Dominance is implied by the word assertive since one would have to use a measure of force to lead others while strongly conveying ideas.

Some of these narratives appear to match Archer and Francis' (2007: 66) model of the 'ideal pupil' which suggests boys ought not to be passive. However they were referring to how Chinese boys are perceived within the British school context. In my school context, I can only assume it refers to not being submissive or reactive. Using my own experience as a teacher, I would like to suggest that neither is it as strong as being 'hard' (Archer and Francis, 2007; Francis, 1999), 'flouting authority' nor the

'displays of threatening physical presence' (Wright 1985: 12-13) suggested of the West Indian boys in Gillborn's study (1988:378). Thus within this male secondary school, images of success include constructions of masculinity which see these pupils as "assertive", not sissies (Francis 1999) but actively working towards their goals. In this instance, the goal is learning.

One wonders if the qualities, listed by CL1 and T4, reflect (a) teachers' need to ensure pupils are working *with* them to achieve goals, (b) teachers' perceptions that the ability to succeed comes from within (paradoxically making them redundant as educators) or (c) if they stem from a deficit theory. That is: if boys do not succeed, it is *their* fault; they are simply unmotivated, have unrealistic expectations, are lazy and lack ambition.

Except for one person, staff seem to be suggesting that pupils can have all the qualities mentioned by CL1 and T4, independent of any external support for instance, without assistance from them. Within this deficit model, the onus is on the pupil to listen yet, not on staff to make the work engaging enough to captivate its audience. Staff lists imply there is something within the pupil that is there to be discovered rather than unlocked. This mirrors Rollock's (2007a: 6) findings in which those:

'who were able to achieve in high-grade exclusive terms were seen [by staff] to possess an innate or biological capacity for success'.

This in itself highlights their dichotomy

With regard to their role as contributors to success, only two members of staff suggested, "asking for help" (CL1). One was a Curriculum Leader, the other, a teacher. Perhaps this reflects the influence of their pastoral role; within which they remind pupils to ask for help and advice when needed. However there is a protective veil twinned with the comment as CL1 hastens to add, "proactive rather than reactive". This might reflect some aspect of the tensions of the relationship which exists between teachers and male students (Gillborn 1988).

Even though the research question asked for qualities of a successful student, and in terms of their time span at school, staff are looking at the 'finished' product; it is commonly believed that no person can ever become successful on their own. Libraries abound with biographies which chart how successful men and women, from every walk of life who, while working their way up, have been assisted by others who have had some impact in their lives. Yet T12 states:

"Motivated. Analytical skills well developed. Work up to date. Sophisticated language skills. Independent learner. Contributes in lessons. Willing to help less able pupils. Enthusiastic, independent and frequent reader".

There is no mention of assistance. These are all tremendous qualities for anyone, far less a fifteen-sixteen year old boy, to achieve. Some are not defined e.g. I was not certain what "well developed" meant and since there was no interview with staff I found it difficult to unpack. However as a teacher, the constant focus on exam qualifications and credentials

would have me believe that, at the very least, this means, being able to access and pass exams.

Progress and assessment

Given the national focus on AfL since Black and Wiliam's study *Inside The Black Box* emerged in 1998, it is unsurprising that progress and the use of assessment to lead and judge this, was mentioned. These issues were listed seventeen (17) times. Most of the comments are couched in the language associated with AfL. For example:

"A person who engages themselves in the learning progress ... knows their 'working at' levels and understands how/why they are at that level. They also know what they need to do to improve" (T3).

These are almost word for word, several of the core aspects of AfL (Black and Wiliam 1998). While suggesting a full engagement with key tenets of AfL it might very well be evidence of:

'ventriloquism and impersonation as academics and managers attempt to present themselves in language that quality assessors will understand and value' (Morley 2003b:70).

One of the reasons for proposing the latter is that it has been my role to lead and develop AfL strategies at Grenhill. Having presented the idea of using assessment at almost every training day, I cannot help but wonder if this was a Pavlovian response to my presence – possible evidence of the researcher effect.

An examination of the rest of T3's statement shows conflicting ideologies.

“They take responsibility for their own learning. A successful pupil achieves their potential. This may equal or meet the objectives set by the teacher.”

Taking responsibility matches the idea of the learner starting to develop an ‘overview of their work so that it becomes possible for them to manage and control it for themselves’ (Black *et al.* 2003: 49). This is one of the principles of AfL which makes it so distinct from other forms of assessment. It values pupils’ contributions to their own learning. However the word “potential” and the idea of meeting it, introduce several issues. Potential appears to be fixed. But is it fixed and can it be measured? If the pupil is able to meet and exceed it, does this mean the judgement of potential was flawed simply because it has been surpassed?

Can a teacher, or any person for that matter, realistically identify potential? Perhaps it simply highlights that potential cannot be measured and is in fact a flawed concept as commonly used. This reopens the issue of using different forms of IQ tests to judge pupils’ ability which is questioned by Gillborn and Youdell (2000). Their analysis of this debate and presentation of Sternberg’s ideas are discussed in Chapter 2 of this study.

The achievement of results, higher than that which was initially predicted was also mentioned by staff in Rollock’s study. They held an unquestioned belief in the reliability of the testing process and linked any degree of success or failure with the ‘extent of the input from students’

(2007a: 7), no-one else. T3 is not the only member of staff who refers to making progress, assessment or grades. Tr14 notes: "exceeding their predicted pass rate"; CL6, "exceeding [academic] expectation". Some of the phrases are a bit ambiguous. For example, "pass rate" usually reflects the average performance of a cohort when compared to national and local authority averages, mapped over time. It would be difficult for an individual to demonstrate this on their own, far less exceed it. These comments reinforce the idea of ventriloquism rather than an interrogation of ideas.

I present these not to ridicule, but simply to show how hazy the language of assessment is yet how integral testing and tests are to teachers' lives. It is for this reason that we must seek to uphold a balanced view recognising, like Sternberg (1996), that tests are useful, when we interpret the information properly. We cannot rely solely on tests and IQ as they do not measure everything that is important in school. Teachers often feel they do; unfortunately so do students. Jackson (2006:30) quotes the results of a study conducted by Reay and Williams (1999:346) in which Hannah thought an:

'accomplished writer, gifted dancer and artist and good at problem-solving [constructed] herself as a failure, an academic non-person...entirely in terms of the level to which her performance in the SATs is ascribed'.

The list reflects more about Hannah than a test result, yet this is all that mattered; certainly to her. Pupils' life chances cannot be defined solely by

credentials. This is why Sternberg derides the views of people, who, in positions of power, try to use low IQ test results as indicative of the academic potential or intelligence of pupils from minority ethnic groups.

I am not suggesting there are no tests but that efforts must be made to guarantee they are conducted fairly, marked equitably and results used as a flexible guide to developing pupils. Unfortunately this does not always happen. Schools live or die by their results. If they do well they float to the top of the league table; if not, they can sink into special measures. Results determine this; hence teachers are increasingly under pressure to ensure pupils succeed. 'There is never a break; it's continuous testing' (Jackson 2006: 50). It is this pressure which partly contributes to a flawed system of education. Nonetheless teachers are also influenced by factors such as behaviour, attitude and sometimes class, ethnicity and gender as they struggle to control classes and make what they believe to be sound decisions about pupils' learning.

Researchers like Scarr *et al.* (1983) and Tizard *et al.* (1988) show how minority ethnic pupils have not progressed as well as middle and white working class pupils in primary schools. Tomlinson (1991) recognised the problems faced by Afro-Caribbean boys not being represented in top sets at school. Pilkington (1999: 412) also presents findings which show: that 'behavioural' and not 'cognitive' criteria, determine who was allowed to access examination sets and streams. For example, when teachers

noted a disparity between verbal reasoning scores and those allocated to sets, Afro-Caribbean pupils were more likely to be placed in lower sets than any other ethnic group (Pilkington *ibid*: cited Kysel 1988, Gillborn and Youdell 2000).

T3's comment ends with; "This may equal or meet the objectives set by the teacher", indicating the unequal power relationship which exists between teachers and pupils. Good AfL practice proposes that teachers and pupils work in partnership, thus there is no reason why pupils cannot set their own targets as they are enabled to develop their understanding of how to do so, over a period of time (Black *et al.* 2003). While I am certain this is being done at my school, what makes the comment pertinent to this study is the fact that T3, like more than 50% of staff, did not mention pupils' role in this aspect of decision making.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Masculinity

Of the forty responses, social skills in their many guises are mentioned six (6) times. This included becoming "role-models to peers" (AsH1), doing well but with "modesty" (AsH5), being "respectful towards everyone regardless of their point of view" (T13), contributing to life outside of class (CL1), and being "organised and polite" (Tr1).

This is quite a wide range of expectations. Within them we can see gender roles and possible conflict generated by class differences. Edley and Wetherell (1996: 97) argue that the theory of masculinity has the 'concept of power at its centre'. While they support this idea by showing that men have always had better paid jobs and as such authority, within organisations, it is quite pertinent how positions of power were being identified and located by the teachers of my survey. They viewed pupils in a position of strength as learners however, that strength, while assisting students, is also constructed in ways which support our school's rules and ethos. It reflects the power struggle which exists between the school, teachers and students. From their summations emerge views of masculinity they believe ought to be demonstrated by successful pupils at Grenhill.

This idea of using rules and constructs to support school norms was discussed at length by Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) who examined pupils' views about schooling and masculinity within the Australian context. In their examination of the difference between the realities and rhetoric of school, they show how pupils interpret many of these rules. While this aspect of my research looks at teachers' views, it is important to tease out how pupils might perceive the ideals we have of them. For example, while we (I am also part of this positioning) applaud pupils who can be respected and admired, perhaps by being asked to be a role-

model, other pupils see this as a means of replicating and perpetuating forms of control employed by schools.

As a teacher I assume the phrase role-model means having those qualities which we see as important to leading other students in a positive manner; a manner that supports the rules of our school. To be a role-model means subscribing to those qualities in the first instance, then being strong enough to encourage others to follow. A student is not likely to be a role-model if he did not already have those qualities nor demonstrated a willingness to adopt that philosophy. This is rewarded as they are designated prefects, 'buddies' (someone who looks after younger pupils) and members of the school council. All of these are good strategies but also covert forms of control.

Similar forms of control can be found in the other phrases, "doing well with modesty" (AsH5). It's not just about performance but the *attitude* by which this is exhibited. This is indicative of a form of regulation as pupils are applauded for "being organised and polite" (Tr1) and "respectful towards everyone regardless of their point of view" (T13). These comments exemplify the sort of discourse that is employed to produce 'good' pupils. It is part of the mechanism that is used to regulate and, ultimately, control pupils while at school.

The idea of schools controlling pupils is not new. Bowles and Gintis (1976) suggested that schools reproduced the social constructs which exist within society and while this idea may be challenged (Willis 1977), it is clear that it is not only the sorts of jobs opportunities that are shaped, but attitudes and values which are encouraged through schooling and beyond. This is indicated by CL1's comment, "contributing to life outside of class". Typically, these are white, middle class values (similar to the enrichment activities in which children of middle class families are engaged in the study by Vincent and Ball, 2007). While this in itself may not be an issue, the challenge for teachers who espouse these views is: how will this be successfully transmitted to the working class, minority ethnic, Pakistani and Black boys at Grenhill? The wider power relations of class, race and gender might either support or negate the means by which it becomes embedded within school culture.

Respect

Within these social skills there was one specific comment which involved being "respectful to peers, teachers, resources and the whole-community" (AsH1). Without an opportunity to discuss this with respondents, I am not certain what is meant by community but I can offer a suggestion as to what it might be.

In discussing how identities are shaped, Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003: 10) highlight the forces of socio-political power in schools: social

ascription, personal agency and community acknowledgement. The first refers to how pupils are labelled by those in power, the second to strategies used by boys in response to ascription and the third, the:

'labels and categories affirmed or disapproved of by significant others such as teachers and peers at school, as well as parents and friends outside school' (ibid).

Based on this definition, the word "community" as used by AsH1 could mean the school community or the community within which pupils live. I suspect, given the ethnicity and social class of our pupils, it is less likely to be the white-middle class, elderly community in which Grenhill is located (even though the school feels it is important to ensure there are no complaints from them as pupils wend their way to or from school).

The focus on teachers and the resources which we provide for pupils is easier to identify. There is nothing wrong with valuing equipment and others however while declaring that teachers should be respected, there is no comment about pupils respecting themselves and there is also no reciprocity. One wonders why staff do not mention respect for pupils. Their observation about resources mirrors the same tone. Resources are prepared by teachers or purchased for the benefit of students and as such, respect ought to be shown. Perhaps it is this underlying meaning and tone that pupils recognise and respond to when they hear staff espouse these normative views.

The issue of respect also emerged in studies which examined ethnicity and gender. In his research on primary and middle schools Green (1985: 5) found that West Indian pupils often responded negatively when they were treated with little respect. They felt they received more, 'criticisms, questions and directives' than any other ethnic group, including Asian pupils. The conflicting teacher-pupil relationship between Black boys and white teachers has been well documented by researchers such as Driver (1979), Wright (1987), Gillborn (1988) and Frosh *et al.* (2002).

Gillborn (1988: 376), in his research of a multi-ethnic senior comprehensive, discovered how a 'spiral of increasing control and response' negatively affected the achievement of West Indian boys. Boys felt they were constantly being criticised by teachers who perceived a need to maintain control of groups, such as theirs, that appeared unwilling to readily conform to school standards. This made teachers quick to discipline those who tested authority. Black pupils perceived they were being challenged more than their white peers. As one child said:

'they [teachers] start picking on me. I'll just get on with my work. But if they start picking on me – say I'm talking to somebody, just pick on me. But if somebody else is talking ... they don't pick on them – that's not right (ibid.: 377).

His tone shows how distressed he feels by the lack of respect and unequal treatment received. While one might argue that this study was done in 1988 and times have changed, Black boys within the monoethnic interviews conducted by Frosh *et al.* (2002: 44) also noted similar concerns.

Examples by Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003), show that boys value being respected. They quote Simon who stated:

'Some teachers just teach and just want to get it over and done with. Some of them would be better suited in a police station than a school' (ibid.: 214).

Simon clearly recognised that rules were being applied too stringently by some teachers. Pupils did not mind rules and authority if they understood their rationale. At the very least, they want to be treated 'like a person' (ibid). Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli quoted Stephen, one of the pupils of their study, who as a result of:

'being treated with maturity and respect ... felt obliged to respond with maturity and respect to his teachers' (ibid.: 214).

Many staff will argue that they respect pupils and more often than not, they apply rules fairly. As Gillborn's research shows however, it is that interpretation of the application which results in some groups of pupils being either more disadvantaged or respected than others.

Gillborn provides an example of a Black student called Wayne who was eventually excluded after being warned several times, about his attitude and behaviour. Gillborn felt that he had not done anything which, on its own, merited exclusion however the school excluded him as a result of the 'cumulative effect of his deviancy' (Gillborn 1988: 379). The Year Head is quoted as saying:

'You name it, he's done it. Short of hitting a member of staff. Very, insulting to members of staff. Theft. Disobedience. Undermining the members' of staff authority' (ibid).

And the list goes on. What is not questioned by the school, is the extent to which staff's attitude or actions might have provoked or contributed to Wayne's responses. Perhaps, even as Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli suggest, pupils' responses can be seen in light of Friere's (1972) and Memmi's (1965) typology. Pupils are viewing themselves as the oppressed group with staff as oppressors and their actions might be indicative of their resistance to oppression.

Gillborn (1988: 379) states that behaviour must be seen in the context of 'white teacher – West Indian pupil relationship within the school as a whole'. The myth of Black pupils' challenging behaviour has to be disabused. He and other writers like Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) suggest, that one of the ways in which to do so, is to provide opportunities for pupils and teachers to engage in meaningful dialogue within a position of equality and respect.

Happiness / self-esteem

With all the other elements identified by staff, I have tried to unpack those which occurred within a significant number of responses. This category is different. Surprisingly, the word 'happy' only appeared once.

It is one aspect of a three part comment.

"Someone who makes progress. Someone who achieves.
Someone who is happy" (HoD4).

It focuses on a facet of schooling, which because of its single entry, does not appear to be a priority for staff. That, despite the ECM policy of:

'being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well being' (DfES 2003).

When the ECM directive first emerged, it seemed fairly obvious that pupils would want to enjoy as they achieve. Why did we as teachers need a directive reminding us that pupils would like to be happy, I wondered? In fact, one of the huge criticisms of the 'deluge of directives' forced upon staff in recent years (Hargreaves 2000: 166) is that we've had little time to enjoy what we teach, nor allowed pupils to enjoy learning. Have we become so crushed by the pressures of exams that we have forgotten this? The evidence of this thesis suggests that perhaps we have.

It can be argued that being happy is an integral aspect of developing one's self-esteem. However this phrase "self-esteem" (T12), is also only mentioned once by staff. The text, *Motivation and Personality*, first published by Maslow (1954) introduced his theory which purported that people had to satisfy various personal needs in order to be fulfilled. As a humanistic psychologist, he hypothesised that people needed to follow a particular sequence when attempting to meet these needs in order to achieve self-actualisation. Satisfying each stage is important before one can move on to the next level. The most basic need was physiological; this means having food, clothing and shelter. The second is safety –

feeling protected. The third, being loved and belonging, while the fourth, is self-esteem.

Whether or not needs are placed in hierarchical order or Maslow's static structure is believed, some researchers make a distinction between two types of self-esteem: state and trait (Leary 1999: 33-34). The first identifies fluctuations in an individual's self-esteem depending on their interactions with others, thus reinforcing the idea that self-esteem itself is not static. Trait exhibits:

'the person's general sense that he or she is the sort of person who is valued and accepted by other people' (ibid).

This seems somewhat akin to Portero's idea of the need to be regarded positively:

'The need to be accepted and esteemed in an unconditional way, regardless of one's behaviour or external features (colour, ethnic origin, religion, language, ideals)' (Portera 1998: 211).

The listing of external features is very helpful as it reminds us that several elements can impact on self-esteem. At secondary level, a time when pupils are experiencing many biological changes resulting from adolescence, being valued by significant others is important. Behaving in ways that protect or foster self-esteem shows that pupils hope to become socially accepted by those who are important to them. Behaviour is not fixed. It can be adjusted to reflect those whom pupils consider to be most relevant in their lives.

Boys have different ways of protecting their self-esteem. This was evident with Shaun, a white working class teenage boy in Reay's research (2002), discussed earlier in this study who, by wanting to please his parents yet fit in with friends, demonstrated he was a multi-faceted being existing within a range of social constructs. Interactions with other adults vary and can add to or diminish self-esteem. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003: 210) write about Chris who suffered low self-esteem because of the mounting pressures resulting from being in his final year at school. He felt that, to ensure he succeeded, adults were:

'Trying to change [things] in one year and [it was] physically and emotionally impossible. That's why I get so depressed every now and then and I just go way down'.

He felt tremendously anxious because he was constantly being urged by teachers and family members, to study for exams. Both groups were significant in his life and while he might have wanted to succeed according to their terms, he could not cope. He said:

'They can't understand me, it's impossible. They've only known me for a couple of periods and that's it...teachers, parents, they never listen' (ibid).

One can hear the despair in his voice as he cries for help. Self worth theory of motivation judges individuals by their ability to achieve (Jackson 2006: 29). In a society that values ability and excelling, it reflects pupils' struggle as they try to create and sustain a sense of self worth (Covington 2000). Chris felt like a failure. His words seem to suggest that adults need to listen to the views of young people. This is why Martino and

Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003: 210) proposed that there ought to be better 'pastoral pedagogies' that will support pupils, particularly at this stressful stage in their schooling.

In a society in which academic success is paramount, some pupils will not do as well as others. If self esteem and being happy are linked solely to the achievement of grades, and pupils are not obtaining good grades, what happens when they fail tests? Jackson (2006: 31) outlines some of the coping mechanisms employed by students to avoid looking dumb in front of their peers. David, one of the pupils in her survey said he wouldn't tell his friends if he received a low mark; he would lie and say it was high. Afraid of being labelled, 'thick' (ibid), he would not compare his marks with others. In both instances, self image, as evidenced by trying to save face, is important. Even though he is not acting out like Chris, in Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli's study (2003), he is using defensive strategies.

A pupil's or teacher's ethnicity can also affect pupils' self-esteem. It is only logical that if teachers are significant adults, their actions can either deliberately or unintentionally add to or diminish pupils' self-esteem. This can be exacerbated when staff and pupils are from different ethnic groups. In the instance of Wayne, the West Indian pupil cited earlier from Gillborn's study, this became evident when he and other pupils discussed the effect of different teachers' actions. For example they listed teachers

who were fair to them, 'those with whom they got on, instead of opposing their authority' (Gillborn 1988: 378). They behaved better with those adults as opposed to others whom they felt treated them unfairly.

If we examine Wayne's comment and that of the teacher provided below, you can see how Wayne's self-esteem is enhanced as he feels valued by some of his teachers' actions.

'[Good teachers] *They get on*, they talk the same language I do. They get on (...) They muck in. They do the same things [we] do. If you're quiet, they're quiet. If you shout, they shout' (ibid).

These comments indicate mutual respect, 'they talk the same language I do ... If you're quiet, they're quiet'. There does not seem to be an exploitative hierarchy, as 'they muck in' together. As a result of this or perhaps because of it, the staff also benefit, as indicated by a teacher's comment:

'I just treat them as I find them. They know how far to go with me...usually they're alright. (...) If you're straight with them, they're OK' (ibid).

This teacher has not compromised on standards of behaviour. His comment, 'they know how far to go' shows there are still boundaries. He maintains this within a school where:

'displays of ethnicity (through styles of walking, speech and dress) often led to conflict with staff and ... the clique reinforced its reputation among staff and pupils alike, as a 'hard' physically powerful unit' (ibid 374).

He treats pupils 'as he finds them'. With him, there are no ruthless interpretations of rules as a response to what Gillborn calls the myth about West Indian pupils' challenging behaviour.

Thus while, as T12 states, it is essential for pupils to have high self-esteem, it is equally important for staff to recognize that their actions may facilitate the extent to which this is developed and sustained in pupils. Yet T12's comment does not reflect this.

Happiness is commonly associated with self-esteem. The normative view is that high self-esteem produces positive effects:

'higher academic achievement, greater life satisfaction and better physical health. In turn, lower self-esteem is associated with less desirable outcomes, for example, increased depression, greater peer rejection, and delinquency' (Dusek 2000: 235).

It is for these positive reasons why, for example, parents identify the potential happiness of their children as one of the factors influencing their selection of secondary schools. For example Crozier (1999: 319) records a working class parent sending their mixed race son to Mandela school where they hoped he would feel supported and fit in (see also Crozier 2000: 34).

CL4's comment appears to suggest that happiness can be derived through stages and is linked to credentials. The sequence being, the pupil has to make academic progress and achieve some level of credential before being happy. One can argue that there is an extent to which being happy

embraces academic success. But what if the pupil needs to be happy first, before they can even begin to achieve? While I am not advocating that we schedule 'happiness lessons' onto the timetable once every week, as happened with a school in Berkshire (BBC online 2006), the idea of pupils' happiness is certainly worth considering. Discussions with pupils in the next section of my analysis will reflect some of these ideas.

Summary

In this section I have tried to examine the four key ideas that emerged after collating the responses of forty members of staff to the open questionnaire provided. The key qualities teachers identified were: intrinsic, assessment and progress, social skills, self-esteem and being happy.

On the face of it, teachers' comments appear reasonable and worthwhile. However when analysed, the manner in which pupils are located within their comments suggests that successful pupils are seen to have qualities that are simply there to be discovered rather than developed. Social skills are being fostered as a way of supporting the means by which school is controlled. While assessment directives can be regurgitated, teachers are still in the driving seat and very few prioritise happiness or self esteem as integral aspects of success.

CHAPTER 5

5.1: Boys, Their Peers and Their Parents

In this section I would like to convey the views of success presented by the three boys whose case studies are presented within this research, along with those of their peers and parents.

I interviewed each boy separately within a six month period. Pupils were asked to choose a name to protect their identities and like the pupils in Burke's study, they immediately did so, suggesting the names are closely connected to their sense of self (Burke 2006: 721).

Tony, Reggie and Abdul's historic data

The purpose of this study is to identify pupils' views of success. In doing so it explores how they construct these views and part of this narrative investigates how they might have been influenced by teachers, peers and parents. A key aspect of understanding teachers' views is recognising how they perceive students. One such manner is positioned as a result of the influence of pupils' performance during any kind of test used by the school to measure aspects of their ability. Though there are several arguments regarding the use of many different forms of IQ tests and testing itself (see Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Gillborn, 2002), one cannot

ignore the fact that results of various tests are employed to make judgements about pupils (Kellaghan and Greaney (2001: 17). Table 3 overleaf, shows some of the statistical data used to guide provision for pupils at Grenhill.

Table 3: Historic Data: Tony, Reggie and Abdul.

PUPILS	READING AGE IN Y11	CAT VERBAL	CAT QUANTITATIVE	CAT NON- VERBAL	ENGLISH KS2 level	MATHS KS2 level	SCIENCE KS2 level	ENGLISH KS3	MATHS KS3	SCIENCE KS3	Actual TOTAL A*-C
Tony	12.02	BA	A	BA	3	4	4	5	5	5	12.5
Reggie	12.02	BA	BA	A	3	3	3	4	4	5	4.0
Abdul	15.00	A	A	A	4	4	5	7	6	7	13.5

Key

CAT = Cognitive Attainment Test BA = Below Average A = Average KS = Key Stage

Table 3 includes: NfER Group Reading tests, CAT, KS2 and KS3 attainment. The NfER-Nelson test used at Grenhill is the Group Reading Test (GRT) II sentence completion test. Since its publication in 1980, it now forms a key part of the assessment of pupils of primary and secondary age. The results allow staff to see how pupils' results compare with national norms. The debate about national norms surrounds the issue of how language changes over time; for example a word like *groovy* dates the speaker as belonging to the sixties generation.

The test purports to 'reflect the language of today' (NfER-Nelson 1992: 1). The real question is: whose language today? No test is culture free. Lillis (2001) argues, assessments are 'socially situated'; full of culture and values as it is informed by the context within which it occurs. Tests tend to adopt middle class ideals and norms and this is no exception. I doubt very much if the word *phat*, which is mainly used to mean anything good or awesome (Wikipedia 2010) by working class and minority groups with street credibility in today's society, would ever be found in the test!

CAT tests three skills: verbal, quantitative and non-verbal. For example, language classification, sentence completion, equations and number series (Strand 2003:19). The non-verbal test is used to identify potentially gifted and talented pupils. Pupils are then ranked using the National Percentile Rank (NPR), the percentage of pupils in the national sample who obtain a standard age score at or below a particular score. Like the reading test,

this is done according to birth days e.g. a pupil born in September is compared with others born in September, as the month of birth determines the length of time a child is exposed to schooling. An NPR of 50 is average for an age group. A pupil with a standard age score of 108 has a NPR of 70. This means they have performed as well as or better than 70% of the pupils in their age group.

The test is based on multiple choice questions with five options in each question. However there is a 'certain level of performance that can be achieved by chance alone' (ibid: 16). With CAT there is a 20% chance of obtaining the right answer. The table below shows the possibilities.

Table 4: Chance Level for CAT

CAT battery	Number of questions in battery	Chance level number correct
Verbal	78	16
Quantitative	58	12
Non-verbal	66	14

Source: Strand (2003: 16)

This means that the final scores achieved by any pupil have the potential to be enhanced by 20% if they guessed accurately during the test. The phrase very high (VH) equates to a score of 97 and more; above average (AA) 78-96; average (A) 23-77; below average (BA) 5-22 and very low

(VL) 4 and below (Strand 2003:9). All three pupils were tested at the start of Year 7. As you can see in Table 3, both Reggie and Tony have BA scores in two areas; Reggie, in verbal and quantitative while Tony, in verbal and non-verbal. Thus Reggie would be expected to struggle in literacy and numeracy while Tony, in literacy and creative skills. Conversely, Abdul was average in all three areas.

Reggie is from a working class family of Jamaican heritage who was born in the UK. Although leaving after he was born, he returned to live permanently in the UK, with his family, when he was about six years old. I first met Reggie in Year 8. Orally, he is articulate. At home he speaks Jamaican patois but often finds it difficult to switch codes when writing. Though his reading age (as indicated after the test in Year 11) is high, he was not an avid reader. Similarly, Tony and his family, who are of African heritage, migrated to England when he was in Year 6. Both he and Reggie obtained Level 3 in English at KS3. It highlights weaker literacy skills in English, perhaps reflecting their limited exposure to the UK and tests within British schooling.

Strangely, Grenhill uses both the CAT and NFER-Reading tests in Year 7, yet it is only the reading test that is redone every year perhaps because CAT testing is time consuming and its analysis is very costly. Be that as it may, the Y7 CAT score is never updated. Any new teacher who arrives from Year 8 finds an anomaly. The reading age increases while the CAT

remains constant. The reading age in Table 3 clearly suggests that if the CAT is done yearly, their verbal scores are likely to change. One of the uses of CAT scores is to help teachers differentiate (ibid: 29). This then becomes a bit difficult if the reading score (NFER test score) is high yet the literacy, as indicated by CAT, is below average.

While these tests are still used at Grenhill, staff recognise that limited exposure to English can restrict pupils' understanding of tests and as such their performance is not always a reflection of their potential. This is why Grenhill does not allow tests to become a self fulfilling prophecy by limiting the level of challenge provided for students. Had that been so, pupils like Reggie and Tony might have been allowed to struggle on their own, with little or no support. Their eventual GCSE grades demonstrate how wrong it is to do so.

The CAT score placed Reggie as average for the non-verbal score yet he is extremely skilled and a talented musician. He played the drums and steelpans in the school band, did Expressive Arts as one of his GCSE subjects, is an excellent rapper and he designed and built a notice board and other artefacts which are still displayed and used at school. Tony who was judged BA is an enormously talented musician. During interview he recalled:

"... my Mom used to buy me toy pianos. My Mom grew to know that I loved piano. I used to play with one hand ... About two or three years ago my mom bought me a proper piano and I mastered it".

You can hear the joy and pride in his voice as he talks about his accomplishments. Determined to learn to play the piano, he started teaching himself at home. Eventually, his parents obtained tuition through their church. This reflects the importance of the church and wider community Channer (1995) identified in her study, entitled *I Am A Promise*. Tony now plays for both school and church bands. So good is he, that when I asked the music teacher for nominations for the local authority's Black History Month awards within his key stage, he was the first to be recommended during his final year of school.

Clearly their achievements suggest they are neither average nor below average in non-verbal skills and this shows why one cannot rely solely on the results of these sorts of tests. Sternberg's idea (outlined in Table 2) needs to be given serious consideration. He says:

'Tests, when properly interpreted, can serve a useful but limited function, but often they are not properly interpreted' (Sternberg (1996) cited in Gillborn and Youdell 2000: 58).

Test results need to be interpreted as accurately as possible and this is difficult given how subjective an individual's perception of a situation can be. At the very least, updated information ought to be provided so decisions are not based on five year old results.

It is difficult to say why Reggie and Tony obtained KS2 scores in English that, at Level 3, are lower than national expectations. One possible

reason, perhaps in Tony's case, could be as a result of migrating to an English speaking country late in primary school and this is only one dimension of the complexities of adjusting to a new social and academic context. Both Tony and Abdul obtained Level 4 in Maths, while Abdul, a Level 5 in Science. These results will suggest to teachers that Abdul ought to be in the highest stream while Reggie and Tony, the second. This exemplifies the idea of tests legitimising sets into which pupils are placed (Gillborn and Youdell 2000).

By the end of KS3 pupils are expected to be at least Level 5. Table 3 shows that both Reggie and Tony have made progress. Abdul's results are highest at 7, 6 and 7 while Tony's sits neatly with national norms and Reggie's is below average in English and Maths. By the end of Year 11, Reggie, Tony and Abdul left school with 4.0, 12.5 and 13.5 GCSEs respectively. At the time of interview they had not sat their GCSEs, so it was felt that their views of success might shed some light on their performances. What follows is my analysis of their comments.

5.2: TONY

In my interview with Tony, I found, like Burke (2006: 724):

'connections between...individual aspirations, wider discourses and classed, gendered and racialised identifications'.

There were also:

'many examples of contradictory aspirations, influenced by family, friends and uncertain and shifting identifications' (ibid).

One of the first questions I asked at the start of the interview is, "How's it going?" Tony's immediate response was:

"It's going OK. It's in me. I want to do well but when I get to it. I start getting bored and then I start getting lazy and I can't be bothered".

This starts neutrally with the word "OK" yet becomes defensive. It felt as if he was warding off any criticism he thought I would make about his work or effort. He uses defensive strategies (Jackson 2006: 32) in case he might be perceived as failing. "I start getting bored...lazy...can't be bothered". This could be the result of interviewing him in my office since a teacher's office can often be associated with being in trouble. However research shows, that men of all ages talk about being lazy (Burke, 2006; Jackson, 2006).

During our discussion clear narratives which revolved around: credentials, masculinity, family / personal choice and being happy emerged (a sample of his comments is presented in Appendix III). When explicit views of success are shared, what surfaces are issues of race, class and

masculinity. What follows is a discussion of his narrative according to some of these themes; however ideas do not fit exclusively into one category as many overlap.

Tony: Credentials

It is not unusual that he began by focusing on achieving his targets, "passing all [his] GCSEs. Getting at least B and above". He uses the language of AfL i.e. 'targets' and by so doing, highlights the influence of teachers and the exam culture. However one can see that he, like other students, is afraid of failing. There is a sense of risk involved in being at school and this was a recurring theme:

"...that's what I have been coming to school for really...the GCSEs. 'Cause if I failed I wouldn't feel as if I have done a good job. It will feel as if all these years of going to school have been wasted but if I pass then I can start to see some sense and see the use of me going to school. Just seeing everything I've worked hard for".

An 'important part of male identity is to have a job' (O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000: 149) and that fact is shown by Tony's comment. He sees schooling as an investment. It is further emphasised:

"If I got 4 GCSEs they wouldn't take a second look at my job application. But if I got good grades...five GCSEs it will look good on my CV".

His disregard for "4 GCSEs" reflects his knowledge of the need for five or more passes. This is articulated by school and government targets (Whitty, 2003; Mahony, 1998) and their impact on job choices (Kellaghan and Greaney 2001). However he exclaimed that he wanted "13 GCSEs". When he said this he laughed sheepishly, yet hopefully.

He did not appear to be apologising for having that dream. It seemed as if he was trying to hide the fact that he was being so ambitious. Perhaps he felt I (both as an individual present at this interview and also as someone representing other teachers), might have tried to discourage him as was the case in Gillborn and Youdell's study (2000) of Clough GM where prior test results were seen as determiners of tiers of entry and curriculum choices. Or perhaps he was hiding this feminised discourse which tends to be associated with 'being diligent and hard-working' (Burke 2006:728).

It is not unusual for boys at Grenhill to achieve thirteen or fourteen GCSEs. This is one aspect of competitive masculinity encouraged by the school as pupils are rewarded by having their photographs displayed. It has worked so well that pictures now have to be grouped as there is very little space left. There are fewer pictures of Black pupils. Statistically, this makes sense, the school is, approximately 85% Asian and has been for the last fifteen years. Tony wants to have his success celebrated in this way; so determined is he that he is keen to exceed his target and exclaims, "I am set 12.5 but I want 13 GCSEs".

Tony sets himself 'performance goals' (Jackson 2006: 26) and plans to achieve them as he aspires to be academically successful. His reference

to specific grades shows he is clearly ambitious as he pursues 'exclusive success' (Rollock 2007a).

"I've set myself passing all my GCSEs. Getting at least B grades and above. 'Cause C is like a boundary between D so if set one lot and drop I'll be getting Ds so if I aim for like As and Bs then definitely I'll pass."

Tony's comments are also indicative of the acknowledgment and acceptance of the need to adopt an aspect of middle class identity in order to succeed. Like Sharon (in the study of a junior school conducted by Reay 2006: 300) who recognised that her classmate, Stuart was destined for a 'good job and a good life' if he obtained a Level 6 in his SATs, Tony is aware of the value of having high grades which he intends to show off in a good CV. Reay (ibid) describes this as Skeggs' (2004) 'enactment of class values', demonstrating that regardless of age, gender, ethnicity and class origin, pupils recognise that class identities are tied to academic achievements.

Tony: Family and personal choice

Entwined with Tony's views of success is making his family proud by obtaining As and Bs. However he recognises they will still be proud of him if he obtained lower than B grades. He does not reflect the same sorts of pressure as Chris in Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli's study (2003: 210) who, as a result, suffered from low self-esteem. Tony is confident enough to rank his opinion higher than his parents'.

"Q So why is it so important to get Bs?

Tony So my family can be proud and so I can be proud of what I achieve.

- Q If you don't get the As and Bs don't you think they'd still be proud?
- Tony They'd still be proud. I wouldn't be happy with myself but that's the main thing I need to be happy with what I choose."

O'Donnell and Sharpe (2000) discuss at length the erosion of patriarchal families in Britain. In doing so, they recognise the role mothers have come to play in family life. His mother's role is significant in Tony's narrative. He is clear about wanting to make his parents proud. This is again similar to Dragon in Burke's study (2006). This shows influences of culture and respect in his dialogue. However although he lives with his mother and father, he does not mention his father at all in his answers. He only refers to his mother and uncle.

His mother is mentioned twice. The first is when he refers to both his mother and uncle monitoring his effort and achievements.

- "Q What would happen if you went home with 5 C grades?
- Tony (Long pause.) It depends. My mom and uncle was saying to me that if I don't come out with those grades if they knew I was very hard working they'll be very proud of me. But if I'm lazing about it as I am at the moment, then come out with bad grades of course then, of course they gonna be upset because I have been lazy. But if I have been hard working; sleepless nights, revising and all that but maybe I slipped a key grade. (Nods that it's alright.) They'll be proud of me.
- Q ...Do you think they'll be happy with you for all those sleepless nights?
- Tony Not....To a certain extent. Not for six hours revising but maybe wake up at twelve and study for an hour. One hour is not that much."

Archer and Francis refer to 'pushing' parents (2007: 48), those who encourage pupils to do well. Tony perceives his family as pushing him and being supportive but only if he is, "working hard". The phrase, "of course" shows he also accepts this. He makes a distinction between studying and relaxing, thus showing that he may not know his own learning style since he might be absorbing a lot of information by being relaxed while appearing, to the onlooker, to be lazy.

As before, his comment demonstrates how he tries to protect his self-esteem by putting in place a strategy for failure, "being lazy ... but maybe I slipped a key grade". Like the pupils of Jackson's study (2006) it is better to appear to be lazy than to look stupid. He states he is working hard but this is downplayed. What is revealing is that he wakes up at midnight to study. I believe he has been revising for six hours but does not want to admit this; thus mirroring the 'Academic Achievers' of Mac an Ghail's study (1994: 64-70). It is also a noticeable aspect of hegemonic masculinity in which boys perpetuate the myth of effortless achievement (Jackson, 2006; Frosh *et al.*, 2002). Tony is not a pupil who wants to fail and his earnest comments disrupt discourses of deficit associated with Black boys.

His introduction of his uncle as a natural part of this conversation, suggests he is accustomed to his uncle's involvement in his life, certainly in matters related to schooling. While Tony's mother seems to be the

main person responsible for dealing with the school (also evident in the study by Archer and Francis 2007: 71), the uncle reflects the role of the extended family in many minority ethnic families. It is not unusual that the extended family is involved especially when, in this instance, they all migrated to England nine years ago in order to pursue better vocational and educational opportunities.

The second mention of his mother is when he refers to a happy incident in his life. Unlike the aggressive manner in which mothers are portrayed in Archer and Francis's study where they are seen as 'pushy' (2007: 48), Tony provides a warm account of how she supported and encouraged him.

"Before, when I grew up, my Mom used to buy me toy pianos. My Mom grew to know that I loved piano. (Smiles.) I used to play with one hand. My Mom used to sing as well so I used to imitate what she'd do/sing and I played and played the melody."

In this account (which I will discuss more fully in the next section), she ignited something in him through the purchase of the piano. It is a strange phrasing "my mother grew to know" but the concept of 'growing to know' speaks of loving, careful scrutiny and attention. She encourages, and entertains by singing along with him as he struggles to play. She is a partner as well as leader as she "used to sing as well so I used to imitate ... the melody". It also shows how aspirations are relational. His dream of becoming a good musician grew out of his

relationship with his mother, who recognised, supported and encouraged his skill.

Tony: Masculinity

Although aspects of masculinity have been mentioned earlier, there is further evidence of how Tony constructs his view of success. He is the dutiful African boy who obeys his family's wishes; "First of all". The family is important as they want him to:

"do well at school as well. So I just think I can get that over and done with then do what I want to do 'cause I got my good grades and if I go to university and get my degree or diploma then I can live life and settle in".

His identification as an African comes first. An important aspect of his culture is respect for elders, regardless of his desires. He is part of the wider familial community with all its related and unrelated aunts and uncles. It is not just his parents' wishes but those of the wider family. He moves in and out of cultures and expectations as he sees himself as easily getting past their hurdle, "I can get that over and done with"; after which he will follow his own dream. In this respect, achieving the grades is a means to an end as they provide the stepping stone to better job prospects (Kellaghan and Greaney 2001).

They are middle class aspirations as he dreams of becoming a pilot. While he recognises that many of his role-models did not need degrees, he sees this as important; his means of upward mobility. To some extent this makes his views of education somewhat ambiguous and his account

resonates with the 'Real Englishmen' of Mac an Ghail's study (1994: 65 cited by O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000:47) who see higher education as contributing to their goals. In the group interview it emerged that having a house and eventually, kids were also a dream. His views are not unlike Dragon's in Burke's study (2006: 725) where he also imagined himself as a 'husband and father, able to support his family through a secure job'. These are middle class, heterosexual views of success which he articulates (Burke, 2006; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Archer and Francis, 2007). Ironically, he sees this part of his dream as being different from that of his family's. It is not. This is what they also state when interviewed.

Tony: Being happy

One of the reasons why I focused on this as a category is the extent to which being happy is mentioned by the boys interviewed, compared with the few times it is stated by teachers.

Without being prompted, pupils mentioned wanting to be happy. Tony's happiness was linked to achievement and choice but was attired differently. He first stated he wouldn't be happy with less than B grades. In this instance it was not only success as defined by school i.e. five or more A*-C grades, but the quality of those grades. He had looked beyond what was required at the local sixth form college (that accepts Cs) and made a link to the profession of his choice - being a pilot - where B+

grades were required. He was thinking long term and is positively and actively 'involved in the construction of [his] own sociality and experiences' (Archer and Francis 2007: 27). Again, this is very different from some of the negative discourses about Black pupils (see Reyna 2000).

The other time in which happiness was linked to performance, was when he expressed frustration at not getting a Level 4 in his KS2 English SATs. After arriving from Africa, his parents were pleased with his result but he was not.

"They thought I'd take quite a long to settle in and get used to the custom of living. But I had an advantage because I knew the language. I just clicked like that and I was able to get along with everyone and understand how everything worked."

Here he shows off the ease with which he was able to not only fit in, but cope with a new language. This strong narrative of adaptability also confirms how much some boys do not like to stand out. Though he achieved Level 4 for Maths and Science, he saw the 3 in English as a failure. It is proof of what so many writers (e.g. Jackson, 2006; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Archer and Francis, 2007) have stated; achievement is important to pupils and they tend to define themselves in these terms.

The other form of happiness came when he achieved something for himself. I previously introduced his account of learning to play the piano. What this thesis cannot capture is the sheer radiance on his face as he spoke of first being able to play with one hand and now playing in

different bands! This was his immediate response to being asked about a successful moment in his life. When asked about a time when he was not successful, he mentioned not getting a Level 4 in English. The successful moment was linked to an achievement outside of school while unsuccessful were linked to school. A similar pattern was repeated, to varying degrees, by other boys in this study.

Tony: Explicit views of success

I asked all the students what they would expect a successful pupil to look like. At first Tony mentioned a businessman, someone "who looked posh and nice". This shows the influence of class and aspirations and is also similar to the views of Dragon in Burke's study (2006: 725). When prompted to focus on students, he mentioned prefects. Those who were:

"on the headteacher's good list and all the teachers [implies good list]".

He clearly saw becoming a prefect, the manner in which schools rewarded success. However he recognises that pupils do not have to be well behaved at all times, "cause we have a lot of prefects who misbehave as well". He seemed to like this idea.

He is aware of how important the teacher's role is in all of this, as prefects were:

"chosen specifically by the teachers who would have thought they'd be outstanding in front of other pupils".

The words, "in front of other pupils" show the link to being a role-model; this is the opportunity cost of being a prefect. He also sees this as some sort of social responsibility which he takes seriously for the "younger generation". Perhaps there is some doubt in his mind as to the degree to which someone can misbehave and still be a prefect since he kept repeating they did not have to be perfect and he smiled at the thought of them misbehaving.

He was puzzled about why others were not selected as prefects:

"there are some who haven't been noticed but they're just like... I can't explain it, they are doing well, they don't misbehave, they don't do nothing, they are doing well in their school work but the teachers haven't noticed them. They truly deserve to be prefects. They wish they are prefects".

Through this explanation it is evident that some pupils are invisible as they, "haven't been noticed". Though "they are doing well" and "don't misbehave" they are excluded and marginalised at school. This highlights that there are other qualities involved in being successful, which are a mystery to pupils but not teachers. He mentions others who "give themselves to the teachers...the ones who are well known". He could not define what he meant by "give themselves". Perhaps this is a reflection of the assertive quality mentioned by the teachers earlier and by Archer and Francis (2007) in their research of Chinese students. While I suspect it is, in the main, good behaviour, this may not be so as, some prefects "misbehave". These words could suggest a standard of behaviour that

teachers are willing to tolerate but its criterion is not always visible to students.

Tony: Pictures of success

I had asked pupils to bring pictures of anything they considered to be symbols of success. Pictures served as a prompt for furthering dialogue, adding more depth by allowing me to see what helped pupils construct their views; as images are given meaning by those who interpret them (Prosser 2006:2).

Tony's pictures were of: Bill Gates and a white businessman; Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Mohammed Ali, Ray Charles, Michael Jordan and Pelé (see Appendix IV). They are all extremely successful and provide evidence of his aspirations. The businessman happily holds a mobile phone. This is important to Tony who, on almost every occasion spoke about the latest mobile phone and showed off one of the more expensive PDA versions. Similar to Dragon in Burke's study (2006: 725), who said of the businessman, 'yeah this is something I want', it is clear that Tony felt the same as he enviously referred to the businessman and the phone.

Perhaps he believed that having a mobile phone helped him jump onto the 'cool ladder' thus becoming more socially accepted as it did with pupils of either gender in Jackson's study (2006: 118). His constant focus on the best phones may also be indicative of class aspirations, demonstrating

how he is trying to improve himself. Referring to fashion, the girls of Jackson's study ranked clothing and accessories in social class terms. 'The more expensive you look, the more cool you look' (ibid.: 117). Within this framework it suggests that the mobile phone is a key prop necessary for Tony's social class positioning as he negotiates how to become successful.

The link between business and success was reinforced as he spoke admiringly of Bill Gates' money and influence on the world through his contributions to Information Technology (IT). It is noticeable that while he discusses Gates' business acumen, he does not refer to the others in the same way and he had no picture of a Black person who was well known as a businessman. His views of success are also racialised as all the others in his eclectic composite are well known Black men. Ray Charles was a gifted musician whose skills outclassed others despite being blind, Mohammed Ali shows physical strength and political resistance, Nelson Mandela is a socio-political leader, Michael Jordan excelled at basketball and Malcolm X chose more radical ways to present his views.

Some of the links are clear. Tony plays music and boasts about being able to play it well.

"I have only been playing for three or four years and there are people who have been playing since they are eight and they are now thirty and I can play what they are playing and its like WOW! That's really good. And I am so happy! (Huge beam.) This makes me so happy!"

Perhaps he sees himself, like Ray Charles, overcoming the adversity of initially, not knowing how to play. He also loves basketball and is excellent at it. Or perhaps he empathises with the strength of three of his role models, Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela and Mohammed Ali, who took a political stance as they tried to fight different forms of injustice.

Tony identifies determination as the main link between all his role models; success can be achieved through relentless effort and tenacity, in spite of what others may say. Like Pelé, most of his role models were born into working class families yet rose above the obscurity of poverty and excelled against the odds. Tony repeatedly states:

“Yes determination is important. You don’t listen to what others say [to discourage you] but you keep pushing and pushing. You need to enjoy what you do”.

While he mentions things people have achieved, most of his comments focus on the qualities of his role-models. I am not certain what “pushing” means. Did it mean simply not giving up, working hard or resisting negativity? Perhaps, as a Black teenager, this is how he sees himself in British society. He needs to constantly push in order to succeed.

TONY: PEERS

Being part of a social group and having friends is an important aspect of growing up. In order to identify possible influences on minority ethnic boys’ construction of success, I used group interviews which help generate more varied ideas (Cohen *et al.* 2003: 287). This was indeed the case

with Tony. I asked him to nominate his best friends and allowed him to decide if he wanted to be part of the group interview with Roger and Gary. He chose to do so.

The key themes to emerge were: happiness, girls and having a family, stereotyping and inner strength. While a few of these which surfaced in Tony's interview were replicated in this group discussion, issues of race were presented much more strongly.

Happiness

One of the first things Tony and his peers mentioned was that a successful person had to be happy.

"Because success without happiness is not success. You could have a lot of money but if you're not happy you can go off the rails."

Happiness is important because it gives meaning to success - whatever that may be. They were quite analytical when presenting their views and this was evidenced as they provided examples of celebrities who had recently been in the news because they were not coping well. This reinforced their point about success. While having a mansion was mentioned, it was only in the context of it being meaningless if there was no happiness. I asked if being happy and poor was fine. Their response was a long pause. This suggests that some degree of economic wealth was important.

Being happy is also a hegemonic discourse of success outside of school in popular culture. When linked to secondary school, this success, and as such, happiness, was seen in terms of having achieved their goals. When asked what those goals were, they were not very specific. The comment which was repeated was:

"You have achieved something. It may not be something big but you have achieved something ... that gives you that sense of happiness" (Roger).

Late into the interview they mentioned links to academic performance.

Tony stated the importance of good GCSE grades however Gary said:

"Getting the good results to get into college. Whatever the entry level is".

Unlike the staff of my study and Tony's response in his earlier interview, they did not focus on five or more A*-C grades. "Whatever the entry level is" seems a thoughtful answer that was more accepting of differently able learners however this still subscribes to normalised versions of success.

Given that Roger and Gary were on track to take 15 and 9.5 GCSEs (which they later went on to achieve with C-A* grades), their lack of focus on the 5+ A*-C grade economy would have surprised their teachers. When asked specifically about happy moments, they spoke of winning sports day, sports played both in and out of school along with an interest in girls. Sports day, being a school event, provides the only link between their happy moment and school. This might suggest their happiness is not only constructed in terms of academic, but physical prowess (Frosh *et al.* 2002). However it also shows how they are trying to negotiate different

identities as the views expressed earlier, present happiness in terms of academic achievement.

Girls and having a family

It is not that exams and obtaining the necessary credentials are not important to them but they speak quite maturely about deferring gratification until after exams.

“Social, girls, go out. With these exams it’s just been revision, revision. Even if you want to go out you still have that in the back of your mind so now after exams you have all the time to do what you want” (Tony).

These comments could have been thrown in to reassure me, their teacher, that they are studying but could also suggest how focused they are trying to remain at this last stage (May of Year 11), of their school life.

While reflecting on how much they have changed since Year 9 they present themselves as responsible men.

“You see things in different perspectives. Before we were just young but now we’re more mature really and when we look back you think, why did we do that?” (Tony).

In this respect they are not engaged in laddish behaviour and as such refute aspects of hegemonic masculinity, as they try to be responsible and mature (Frosh *et al.* 2002). Obtaining qualifications are seen as a means to an end. The goals are presented within classed and heterosexual constructs of masculinity as they want better jobs, to get married and have families.

“Roger Yes! Success for me is family and a decent house.

Gary (Joking) Ten houses with ten kids.
 Roger On a serious note. A house and family and its happiness but also the satisfaction of knowing that the family has a roof over its head and you're protecting them and keeping them safe. That is success. If you can say that you're protecting someone you have that feeling of looking after someone you feel ... good with yourself."

Roger presents traditional views of the male breadwinner as protector and provider. They also accept support from their own families as key to success.

"Basically if you have a good family they can support you. We all need someone to listen to; to help us become a successful person. Your parents. If you have good parents, you can have a good life."

Unlike teachers, they see success as relational and this is evidenced by their comments about listening to others and being helped by them. In this regard, they sound like Paul in Burke's study (2006) who viewed the role of parents as important. However they are not blaming their parents; they are showing that parents have the potential to make a significant impact on pupils' lives. The word "if" illustrates that this impact can either be negative or positive but it must be positive in order for success to be achieved.

They state that having part-time jobs has helped them become more mature and reflective, as they are now beginning to understand how much things cost. Unlike the 'retreatists' of Merton's study (1957), who reject both schooling and its goals, these boys admit that they like school.

What they dislike is the way in which they have been treated by some staff. I would not class them as the 'innovators' of Sewell's typology (1998) since they did not go so far as to reject all of the means of school, only the actions of some teachers.

Stereotyping

Pupils' discourse presents contrasting feelings for their teachers whom they see as important to their success. Unlike staff, pupils view this as a two way process. Staff need to be listened to and pupils need to show them what they are able to do. However pupils recognise that teachers can restrict their achievements. One of pupils' key constructs of success is looking "presentable". For this group of boys, being "presentable" meant wearing blazers, not jumpers, which Grenhill introduced for Years 10 and 11. The only ones to purchase these en masse were the Black students in Year 11. This might be linked to the notion of respectability evidenced by Tony's and also Dragon's admiration of the businessman (Burke 2006).

I suspect that when the Black pupils bought their blazers during the summer, they had no way of knowing that there would be such a low take-up from other ethnic groups. Soon after the start of school, their peers did the same. What emerged was a group of boys who, through the smooth, sophisticated look that was achieved by the school's initiative, came to be misread as a 'threatening physical presence' (Wright 1985: 12-13). This, overt display of ethnicity, (mainly Black boys were wearing the

blazers) is similar to the manner in which West Indian pupils were described as 'hard' in Gillborn's study (1988: 374).

That they were being seen as a threat came as quite a surprise to me. The first I heard of it was when senior members of staff began to discuss the problem of the blazers. I naively asked, 'What problem?' There was a pregnant pause before someone pointed out to me (a person of Caribbean origin), that only the Black pupils were wearing them. When I was still unable to understand the concern, I was told they looked intimidating.

Rollock (2007c: 200) in her study of Metropolitan High, provides an example of how Black boys who wore 'hoods pulled down over their heads' were positioned as threatening and unsuccessful learners by a member of staff who associated their clothing with American youth culture and crime. At Grenhill, Black pupils wear no such clothing. They conform to school regulations yet were seen as a threat because of their 'increased visibility' (Rollock 2007b: 282), resulting from the low take up of blazers by other ethnic groups.

Both examples demonstrate what Rollock (ibid: 277), through her discussion of Bourdieuan concepts, presents as the 'arbitrary values' of the dominant group which are variable 'and do not represent any degree of absoluteness'. This highlights how teachers' prejudices affect the manner in which pupils are perceived and treated. Like Rollock (ibid.:

200) they were also conspiring to make me part of arbitrary and racist decision making since being told that they look intimidating suggests that, although I am Black, I would also see pupils as threatening.

The challenge of any multi-ethnic school is to ensure policies work in practice. Black pupils were not told of concerns regarding their blazers however their comments provide recognition of being under surveillance more so than other pupils, and for a sustained period of time. They see themselves in racialised terms. Gary used the word "stereotype" when he described teachers' actions and when I pursued this by asking how teachers' stereotyping made them feel, Tony said:

"Excluded out. We've gone through a lot this past year... as a group ... in Y9 we were walking through the corridor as a group. Other boys were walking in groups that were more than us and when we walk through the corridor in groups we were told to separate; some to walk along the [X] corridor. And I was thinking why should we do that? We were not that many. We don't cause trouble. People come to us. We tell the teachers yet we get in trouble for that as well".

His mention of Year 9 shows the length of time they have felt under surveillance. During his individual interview, Tony verbalised no overt or personal racial narrative. However within the group, he acts as spokesperson, demonstrating that racist struggles can occur on an individual or collective level (O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000: 62).

Within schools, conformity is a key aspect of control. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003: 232) noted that:

'The uniform also functioned in many schools as a means by which to patrol and control student subjectivities through regulatory practices of body fashioning'.

Uniforms are meant to provide a level playing field for some who cannot afford to wear trendy clothing (if no dress code was allowed – see Daniel's account *ibid.*: 233). In this instance, the purposes for which the uniform was intended, worked for most but not the Black students. Walking together wearing blazers, was seen to present an overt display of ethnicity which provided a source of conflict with some teachers (Pilkington 1999). This is similar to the issue of hairstyles of Black boys in Sewell's study (1997: 166). However, unlike those pupils, Tony and his peers are not anti school, simply against the way in which they are treated.

Feelings of anger were not only as a result of being policed in the corridors. When asked about their worst moments, Gary angrily replied, "being suspended."

"For things you haven't done. Some teachers stereotype. Someone was making comments about my colour, I said something back but the teacher agreed with me but the other one said I was making trouble for using abusive words to him."

It is clear from this and the previous comment, that they felt picked on by other pupils. This matches the findings of Osler and Hill (1999) who examine school exclusions in Birmingham. They present Stirling's views that schools exclude Black pupils for behaviour that develops as a response to racial harassment; which is difficult to prove when it, 'has been a long series of incidents, attitudes and comments' (*ibid.*: 53). Gary found it difficult to provide evidence of what was happening. Although

one teacher agrees with him, he is more aggrieved that he is not believed by the other who is also investigating the incident. This matches the idea of 'deep-seated stereotypes held by teachers' (ibid.: 52), in this instance, it is one teacher influencing the manner in which one group, as opposed to others, is perceived. This is a view also shared by Gillborn (2000).

Grenhill has a policy of punishing both perpetrators and victims (less so) if teachers are not informed of major incidents (regardless of their nature), as soon as they occur. Both parties can be sent home and pupils asked to return with parents in order to avoid its escalation. In this instance, being sent home, as a calming measure, had been seen as a punishment. Given that Black pupils are three times more likely to be excluded than white pupils (DfES 2006b: 10), it is not unexpected that Gary would view being sent home as an exclusion. This is why O'Donnell and Sharpe state:

'In a society in which a considerable amount of racism occurs, it can be the suspicion of racism as well as the reality of it that can damage relations between members of different groups' (2000: 30)'.

This is evident from the tone of Tony's comments as he recounted the previous incident. Staff must be mindful of this.

Inner strength

In order to be successful, pupils express the need to hold on to examples set by strong role-models. They refer to the then US election candidate: Barack Obama whom they said:

"broke through ... that is a step through that black people haven't taken as yet. And the fact that he has done it shows he has been successful in what he has done ... People have tried to put him down ... but I have thought that because he came through all of that it shows he does deserve to be president..." (Roger).

Our collective understanding of the phrase, "broke through" was that of racial and social barriers. Barack Obama (now president), is presented as someone who overcame obstacles and deserves to be president because of his strength. Perhaps this is how the group sees itself - having to conquer obstacles in order to succeed. This view might be linked to being excluded (being provided with a differentiated response through the routine of institutional process, not necessarily being removed from school) or the raced power struggle they feel they need to overcome as a result of their ethnicity.

Another "something to push you forward in life", is church. This is phrased reassuringly. "Like if you are down and feel really bad about something, that religion can help strengthen you". However church is also seen as a community of people.

"Some people in church can encourage you and show you what it's like... if you are in the family of God in the church, there are lots of people, different views, who have been through lots more things so you can get a lot of knowledge from them without having to do very much" (Roger).

These are views which are reflected by the parents of Ofsted's study (2002:11) which noted 'supportive church groups' contributing to the network which sustains learning.

Many studies like Jackson (2006:115) refer to computers and learning styles which support pupils' learning yet no Grenhill student has mentioned such. They focus on qualities like being happy, the manner in which teachers see them and the attributes needed to achieve performance related goals.

TONY: FAMILY'S VIEWS OF SUCCESS

Tony's family was outwardly patriarchal as initially, the father spoke on behalf of his wife. This was reinforced as the mother, while laughing sheepishly stated; "He's my spokesman". Even though the father spoke on their behalf and some of his views have been internalised by Tony, it was the mother's 'emotional work' or 'shoring-up of children's emotions and self confidence' (to which Crozier and Reay 2005: 42-43 referred), which is repeatedly mentioned by Tony when he was interviewed. She "grew to know... sang with [him]" and asked about his work.

His father's first comment, about setting goals and having objectives, made it apparent where Tony got his ideas of having clear targets. Like him, his father outlined a classed view, being able to improve his quality of life through study. "Number 1 is education." Credentials are identified as Tony's father outlined the sequence: "BSc...then MA then on to the PhD". He thinks long term, having no problem with delaying gratification

as he states, "You have 18 to 58 years to achieve things like houses or children". Heterosexual norms are modelled through his own life.

"I wanted to be married at 30, to have my house then study more and that's what I did".

His wife nods in agreement, confirming that he has stuck to this plan. In his view, a child who does not remain "focused" will struggle to succeed. By doing so he positions the ability to succeed in the hands of the pupil. Reassuringly, he reinforces the need for resilience. "Failing does not mean he won't pass next time".

Their aspirations are evident when he repeats:

"You want a car, house, and savings. It's not just education. It's getting married, having children and preparing their future".

There is a sense of longevity along with gendered and cultural expectations which are reinforced by the words, "preparing their future" and in the mother's statement when she refers to the role of:

"the extended family. Seeing what others in your family have achieved".

Like Dragon in Burke's study (2006), within his culture, Tony is expected to follow examples set by members of his family and significant others. This presupposes he will continue the tradition and support this within his own family when he later has one.

The role of staff

Staff includes teachers and guidance officers. Both parents state that teachers are with their children for at least five hours a day and as such may know more about their child than they do. However they do not abdicate responsibility. They treat advice with caution, and are willing to listen, "as long as it is someone who is talking sense" and "it fits what is being described about [their] son" (Father). Someone cited as having good advice is the career guidance worker who knew which career paths to follow. This locates success in terms of credentials, thereby supporting Kellaghan and Greaney (2000) in their view of assessment determining the career path to which pupils will be guided.

The advice, which matched the parents' judgement, is a comment made by teachers, which cautioned them about Tony's friends and their potential to restrict his progress. The fact that the mother joined in to stress the need to "stop playing with those groups [who were fooling around]", showed the extent to which they agreed with teachers. It demonstrates the power of peers, feared by both teachers and parents, and highlights Tony's parents' apprehension about the wrong influences.

During the group interview, Tony was suspicious of teachers and his parents also show they do not always accept teachers' opinions. When asked what happens if they did not like the teacher's advice, they proposed considering the "pattern". This implies a careful scrutiny of their

son's actions, judged against what they already know of him; not a wholesale acceptance of what is suggested by staff. Tony's father stated that they spoke to Tony about concerns, however his tone sounds like directives:

“We ... asked him to choose wisely. Study now and focus on education. Choose those friends who were doing the same”.

He sounds similar to the Muslim fathers in Archer's study (2003: 101-102) who were seen as hardworking yet feared. Mothers often provide the more nurturing role. This is the same for Tony. It is his mother who presents Tony as an active and positive participant in addressing any concern. She is willing to “provide the advantages and disadvantages” so he can see the difference and decide for himself, the course of action he ought to take.

The fact that they are cautious, evidenced by the need to see a “pattern”, suggests that previous dealings with schools have not always been successful. His mother recounts a time in junior school when he was given several ticks in his exercise book; “even when their ideas were incorrect”. When asked if she checked Tony's work she exclaimed:

“Yes! And it was wrong but you could see they were doing this to encourage them but this was misleading”.

This shows that they did not always trust teachers' judgements even if teachers felt they were being encouraging. Though suspicious, she was keen to support her son and the school; asserting her authority by checking both his school and homework daily. This matches the findings

of research by Kirkpatrick (2000) cited by McCarthy and Kirkpatrick (2005: 77).

Influence of church

With Tony, the influence of Christianity did not feature strongly however, as with the group interview it emerged in discussion with his parents. At the start his father mentioned the need to be obedient. It is only later that he revealed part of the reason for obedience was linked to their Christian beliefs. This is a view stressed by his mother.

“Obedience is important. We are Christians. We are asked to obey and this is what holds us together – parent and child; but if children disobey they lose touch [and the child cannot be supported to achieve well].”

Their role in supporting success is defined by religion.

“The Bible says, ‘Jesus increased in stature and in favour with God and man’. And this is what has to happen. We listen, obey and learn from parents.”

They provide guidance. The child listens and this act is rewarded as he is happy and blessed. The church is also seen as an extension of their family. They smile as they recount Tony’s growing awareness and love of music and how they supported this.

“When we realised he was interested in music we asked [musician] to help him ... and Tony is progressing nicely.”

They, like Tony, discuss his love of music as evidence of a successful moment. There is genuine warmth as they smile comfortably while narrating this.

His father makes comparisons between pop stars who have it all, yet appear not to be happy.

“The world is full of evil so we are trying to draw our child away from being gangsters, drug addicts and murderers so they will grow up being better people. Look at Amy Winehouse, Britney Spears. They have success but are not happy. Maybe their parents weren't there for them. Some kids think parents are too old and not modern so they don't want to listen. They can't have a blessing if they start cursing their parents.”

It is not unusual that any parent, including Tony's, would want to protect their son. They see their job as that of supporting their child to achieve his best and the potential hazards of this are captured in the statement, “some kids ... don't want to listen.” These comments highlight how Tony's parents are negotiating boundaries and the conflict that might emerge. These are the boundaries they perceive as being established by the school, their home, the child himself as he is getting older and in this instance, by God.

McCarthy and Kirkpatrick (2005: 64) discuss how boundaries are navigated as they are, 'likely to raise issues about power *between* people on each side of the boundary' (their emphasis). The school provides the bureaucratic structure which seeks to juggle the needs of hundreds and also individual children. His parents' comments suggest Tony thinks they are too old, not modern enough. Then there is God who, as their belief suggests, expects children to listen to their parents. This is quite a power struggle and it is one which Tony's parents seem determined to win.

5.3: REGGIE

Of the three students, Reggie's is the shortest interview, not because we ran out of time but he is extremely quiet and appeared to be depressed. He begins by revealing the increasing pressure he feels now that he is in Year 11. His tone and mood are reminiscent of Chris who felt burdened by the mounting pressures of Year 11 (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2003: 210). Reggie admits he is:

"struggling 'cause it's a drastic change from 9 to 11. There's a lot put on you in Year 11".

The "lot" to which he refers is coursework and deadlines. What is striking is the tone of his comments. Usually very bubbly, he sounds disheartened (see extract of interview in Appendix V). The main issues which emerged from his account were those of: credentials, self-esteem and family.

Reggie: Credentials

His initial ideas showed he constructed success in terms of credentials, that is, gaining "five A-C grades". He then referred to success as being 'inclusive' (Rollock 2007a) or 'boundless, multiple and open' (Allan 2010:43). Using a mountain climber as an example, he said:

"You achieve what you want. He put his eye on something that he wants and he got there in the end".

He saw achievement in tangible terms and used losing weight as an example of a successful student who had "put his eye on something". Reggie's earlier mention of A*-C grades shows the extent to which he

values 'exclusive success' (Rollock 2007a) although he spends most of his week at a vocational institution, doing carpentry and plastering which are not assessed in similar terms. The latter are valuable skills (about which he boasts) yet like Hannah in Reay and Williams' study (1999:346) he only seems to measure himself in terms of the A*-C grades.

Several of his answers were ambivalent. When asked what he thought a successful student looked like, he said:

"Not smart but not stupid. Maybe in the middle ... he knows things ... basically. He is good in his subjects but he's not too smart. He's normal".

However, he admiringly named two other pupils from the previous year, who gained at least twelve GCSEs, as being successful. When mentioning a family friend by whom he was being tutored, Reggie readily emphasised his Masters degree in accounting. This shows that exclusive success was more highly valued; thus demonstrating that as a working class Black boy, he recognised that this was the manner in which pupils were being judged (Archer and Francis 2007).

Reggie: Self-esteem

As the interview unfolded I wondered at his reticence. Did he think he was not successful? Perhaps in terms of A-C grades? If this was the case, was he worried about my opinion of him? The following extract which outlines what he said when asked if he would describe himself as successful, suggests that some of my suspicions were correct.

- "Reggie Miss my sports and my carpentry. Cause I am good at it.
- Q What makes you successful at it?
- Reggie Like the ... castle. I wanted to make something and I made it ... of good quality.
- Q Wanted to make it?
- Reggie Yes I wanted to make it of good quality and I made it, but it was rubbish. (Sounds self depreciating.)
- Q (I protest strongly) Why do you say rubbish!?
- Reggie No I mean if it was rubbish but I made it and I made it nicely. And the school likes it and I like it as well."

He was awaiting my approval. When he said, "it was rubbish" it felt as if he was waiting to see if I agreed with him. When I protested, he used the word "if" to qualify his statement. He sounded very proud, almost pleased that I had protested against his use of the word "rubbish". Was he so afraid of failing that he was happy to belittle his own work because he was uncertain if I would?

His demeanour suggests that his self esteem has taken a battering. Both his successful and unsuccessful moments are linked to performances in tests at school. With the former, he mentioned everyone's surprise, even his, when he obtained a Level 5 in Science in Year 9. His unsuccessful moment was getting an F grade in his English coursework. His moments of self worth are when his actions have been validated by the school. "The school likes it as well" and this in turn validated him; "no-one expected this and I surprised myself".

His comments suggest that he has low expectations of himself and he feels this is a view also shared by his teachers. Jackson (2006: 123) reminds us that:

'many pupils fear failing academically and being regarded as academically deficient'.

This was evident when Reggie stated that a successful student was, "maybe in the middle" it was anyone who could; "achieve anything they want to achieve". Yet he was eager to tell me about the items he had constructed. After twenty painful minutes trying to draw answers out of him he finally admitted why he was so subdued. His HoY wanted to send him home because he was in conflict with another pupil.

This is an instance in which Reggie is being regulated. He was accused of instigating a fight and though protesting his innocence, was not believed by his HoY. In examining how class and race ensure the success of middle-class students, Youdell (2006: 29) suggests that a just education system should mean not only 'equality of opportunity but experience and outcomes alike'. She recognises that 'to be meaningful as a person is at the same time to be subjected to relations of power' (ibid.: 96). Youdell sees this as both 'formative' and 'regulative' with the 'processes that make the subject [regulating] her/him in the terms of prevailing discourse' (ibid).

Youdell's (ibid) idea of the 'formative' student sounds similar to the effect of the self fulfilling prophecy in that teachers' perceptions of a child help

shape that child's behaviour. Given Reggie has been in trouble many times before, one can thus see why it might be easy to believe he is at fault once again. However, following an interview in which the headteacher took time to listen to all sides of the argument, including the views of other pupils who were present, they realised Reggie had done nothing wrong and was in fact trying to stop a fight. Though cleared, Reggie was extremely upset, aggrieved that he was perceived and treated as guilty until proven innocent, by a HoY he trusted. This and his attempt to deflect answers show the impact of teachers' judgements on the lives of students.

Reggie: Picture of success

Reggie brought a comic version of a boy, who, after having climbed a mountain, had proudly placed a flag on its summit (see Appendix VI). He explained that he had recently viewed *Touching The Void* in his English lesson and provided the example of rock climbers being successful. He said:

“And even though he did not reach the top he was successful. Rock climbers are very daring, they are very dedicated and once they reach where they want to this makes them feel it's a big achievement”.

Having interviewed Tony and seen images of real people, Reggie's comic, one-dimensional character felt impersonal but as Prosser (2006:2) states, pictures 'gain meaning from humans'. Reggie's comments show this. He identifies masculinised views of success as he stresses how “daring [and] dedicated” the climbers were.

Reggie positions success as a visibly identifiable accomplishment. His image suggests that for him to be successful, the end product and the means by which to achieve it have to be clear to him. Reaching the top of the mountain is tangible, similar to actually achieving his Level 5. He does not seem to be able to visualize a long term strategy; he achieved something that was not initially visible, hence his surprise that he had done so. Expressing uncertainty, unsure whether or not he has the commitment to succeed within the academic domain he says: "Hmm. Sort of. In some of my subjects". However he demonstrates some of it socially as he plays basketball and is captain of the school team.

Even this is not without battle, as he shows in this response:

"I used to play for [Team X] but I can't now since I live too far now. I've moved away. (Proudly.) I am the captain of the school team. (He beams.) Sir said he was not going to choose me but he decided to give me a chance. I played well and the team chose me as captain". (Beams.)

The first measure of success, though tentative, was being selected for the team. It is clear that the teacher was at first unwilling to choose him. The second was getting along with his teammates to the extent that they valued and rewarded his contributions by making him captain. This is one of the few moments in the interview where he really comes alive.

There are so many ways in which belonging to the team validates him. Reggie is on the school's SEN register because he suffers from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Having to concentrate for

prolonged periods of time, he is often unsettled in class. Both teachers and pupils have often found it difficult to cope with Reggie. Though Reggie did not specify the context in which he was selected, opening the door to ensure he was part of the team (in a sport at which he already excelled outside of school), was a major step towards enhancing his self-esteem.

School sport can have a 'normalizing function in many affluent and/or religious single-sex schools' (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2003: 253) and while Grenhill is neither affluent nor religious, this is exactly what happened to Reggie. Being allowed to play on the team was ideal for 'fitness, fun and friendship' (ibid.: 252). It was an opportunity for Reggie to share, talk and, in this instance, lead others. Not only was he respected, he excelled as they won several games.

Playing basketball reinforced his masculinised construct as it is indicative of an element of popular masculinity involving 'sporting prowess' and 'coolness' (Frosh *et al.* 2002: 10). He found it difficult to admit that he wanted to do well and this matches what Hey *et al.* (1998: 134) stated about the difficulty of seeking help when one had a learning difficulty. Admitting this would have placed him in; 'a position associated with a pro-school (feminine) position of weakness'. At the very least, Reggie achieved what Jackson (2006: 2) describes as a social goal. Being made captain was a demonstrable sign of popularity.

Reggie: Family

The idea of success being tangible was borne out by Reggie's comments about his family. His father's job stability and mother's ability to generate her own income were proudly shared.

- "Reggie My dad has been successful since he has kept a job for 10 years now at the airport. My mom is very successful since she has her own business as a hairdresser in her own shop.
- Q How would they feel about you?
- Reggie If I haven't succeeded in some of the stuff I should have done they would feel depressed because they know I can do it. It was just down to me."

These comments demonstrate the achievement of tangible goals. The family started off with little when they arrived in England but have improved their status by becoming self sufficient (his mother has her own business), maintaining their jobs and paying off their mortgage. What is also pertinent is how he positions himself. He "can do it". He appears to accept this as his sole responsibility.

Reggie: Happiness

Like Tony, Reggie believes happiness is important though he only mentions it once during interview.

- "Q How would you define success?
- Reggie Achievement. A sense of happiness in doing what you wanted to do."

He states that achievement means "five or more GCSEs and getting into college". This is the normative view of success espoused by schools which he associates with being happy. However his capacity to achieve this has him discouraged; he seems to lack the confidence needed to attain this

academic goal. His demeanour suggests he sees it as an impossible task, similar to the 'Low Can-do' working class boys in Katz and Buchanan's study (1999).

REGGIE: PEERS

I interviewed two of Reggie's peers; Kevin (African) and John (mixed race). They were initially reticent. Kevin's comments were monosyllabic. John, who has been in my tutor group for two years, began more candidly while Kevin who had only met me in the school corridors was cautious. This might have been evidence of the researcher effect.

The interview began with Kevin admitting his fears about forthcoming exams. He wasn't too certain if he was going to do well. John, on the other hand, was quick to reassure me that everything was fine and he was revising. Perhaps because I was his form tutor he was simply trying to allay my fears. Kevin was uneasy and John's description of a successful pupil might have offered a suggestion as to why Kevin was nervous.

"Someone who always gets their homework in time, teachers are never talking to them for the wrong reason, always giving them praise and coming out with the maximum GCSEs they can get" (John).

John's comments, with which Kevin agreed, offered aspects of their construct of success. The first attitude refers to hard work as they do "homework on time" in order to obtain the "maximum" subjects. The second identifies the role of the teacher. The third, the manner in which

pupils are encouraged, that is, through praise and the fourth is credentials.

While doing homework is seen as important, the phrase, "on time" seems linked to the sorts of regulatory aspects of schooling to which Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) referred. It also appears to be part of what teachers do i.e. collect homework and communicate with pupils for different reasons. Two are shown when John says:

"the right reason is like the teacher only comes to you if you ask or if they're helping you. Not talking to you 'cause you're not concentrating".

The issue of concentration occurs twice. Kevin sees this as a sign of being good. This links performance with conduct and is not dissimilar to Youdell's discussion of the 'ideal client' at school (2006: 97). Again the problem of regulation arises and one wonders, if, like the Black boys of Gillborn's study (1990) these boys had experienced more surveillance and directives than others.

This discourse of success implied that failure to achieve lies with pupils because they were not focusing enough; while the source of this blame, yet praise, was teachers. Their comments neither suggest nor identify deep engagement with staff. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003:223) mention that 'a good teacher is someone who showed a genuine interest and concern for students'. The level of engagement pupils recount, does

not reflect this; it is limited. Interaction only occurs when requested, if a teacher is helping or if the pupil is being told off. There is no warmth.

Mention of GCSEs fits acceptance of the school's normative view of success. Later in the interview this is reinforced as they convey their aspirations.

"Kevin	Five or more GCSEs... because that's what you need for college.
John	Less than 5 I'd feel as if I failed because I personally know that I could do a lot of work."

This view fits Jackson's (2006) idea of achieving academic goals and is a view similar to Reggie's view of success. Like the other Black pupils interviewed, failure is linked to school.

John provides similar defensive strategies to pupils in Jackson's study, protecting him from the most 'damaging implications of academic failure...lack of ability' (ibid.: 123).

"When we do small tests and I don't do well; I know I can do well but I don't show it. Or when we got the Maths results in the mocks and I didn't do as well as I could have done. That was due to not revising or listening to teachers."

Success however is linked to sports. Kevin's most successful moment is playing football. He sees himself as part of a team working towards a victorious outcome, "when I have scored a goal or when I have passed to someone who has scored a goal". Like Kevin, John examines his shared contribution, recounting this as his most triumphant moment.

"When my football team won the league. It was the way we won it. We went the whole season without losing a match. We lost a game after we won the league but that didn't matter. I scored after we won the league."

This is a very masculine view of success linked to prowess in football and is similar to those expressed by all the other Black boys interviewed. This certainly is an important aspect of their heterosexual, masculine identity. There is status in victory. Not only did they win but they dominated all the games thus becoming champions in the league and the added bonus is that John, whom pupils tried to tease because he had a mild stutter, scored a goal. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003:249-262) discuss the many ways in which boys are treated if they were physically different from the dominant males in the sports. Within such a hierarchically, masculinised environment as sports, it is understandable that John is pleased that he helped his team to win.

The only time Kevin initiates a comment is when he speaks about parents. His views are somewhat ambivalent as he defines parents as policing and monitoring his study.

"They see you sitting down to watch TV and they tell you when to go and revise and do something because I can be a bit lazy."

However he seems to suggest there might be some need for their reprimand as he also uses an avoidance strategy (Jackson 2006) by being, "a bit lazy".

John recognises that parents should allow their children opportunities to decide what they want to do but adds:

“... it’s only natural to feel your mom and dad are against you but when you finish your exams you realise its all for your best”.

By best he means, “they should always be behind you making sure you’re not slipping and push you to achieve what you should achieve”. In this instance, achievement is linked to credentials, five or more A*-C grades and these are similar to Reggie’s views.

REGGIE: FAMILY’S VIEW OF SUCCESS

There has been much debate in recent years about the performance of boys in school and this debate has surrounded why boys are not performing as well as girls. Mac an Ghail (1994), Archer (2003) and Epstein *et al.* (1998) provide comprehensive discussions of this ‘problem’. This issue was also reflected in much of my discussion with Reggie’s parents as his mother spoke at length about the difference between him and his sister.

Gender

From the onset it was clear that success was being defined in gendered terms as Reggie’s standard of success was being measured against the achievements of his sister.

“To me if you got the determination, know what you want in life; you may not reach your goal but you could reach half way and I think you’ll be successful” (Reggie’s mother).

They outlined that hard work, determination and perseverance were all features of what made a student successful. These were not being demonstrated by Reggie as he was too "lazy".

"He's the only child and he thinks he'll get everything ... so he can always go into the account and get what he wants".

The phrase "only child" refers to Reggie being a product of her marriage to Reggie's father; her daughter is from a previous relationship.

Vincent and Martin (2005: 114) state that parental engagement with school is both 'classed and gendered'. There are elements of this as Reggie's mother refers to the times when she worked with his sister to ensure she understood how to read. She admitted to initially feeling powerless as she did not believe she could ask the school why her daughter was falling behind, "where I come from you don't ask". This trust in the teacher has been demonstrated by working class parents (Crozier 1999: 320-321). Unlike them however, she decided to do something about it.

"I came home with her and thought, no you not going to be a dunce. And every day, as she came home from school, I'd give her two hours of my time 'cause I wasn't working. No TV, have her stomach full and it was just working ... You read, the book, go through it bit by bit into syllables. Once she could read that. We move on."

At first she felt helpless but, determined to have her daughter succeed, she took the time and effort to drill her in reading.

Superior/Inferior

When asked about a successful student, Reggie's mother replied:

"I'd say my daughter. Because I know where she came from and she has been successful".

It is as if by applauding what her daughter has achieved she is validating herself as an individual. Perhaps this is a symbol of achievement after having migrated from Jamaica. Though she measures success in terms of credentials, she is protective of her daughter and shows this when she says, "she tries her best" when she gained B grades. This shows that she values her willingness to make an effort but it also suggests she has some innate ability despite the mother outlining how hard she worked with her when she was in junior school.

There appears to be no such protection of Reggie, neither is there any praise. His mother continues by saying:

"With Reggie ... I'm not one of the parents who says they need A*s you need to do your best and once you feel as a person, you have done your best then there's nothing more you can do. I feel he didn't do his best... I know Reggie didn't give it his best shot. Just like Maths and English, knowing what he wants, he should have got a better result. I'm not pushing him to do the same as my daughter, you have to be realistic".

Within this family, Reggie is positioned as inferior to his sister. He did not work hard, "didn't give it his best shot ... he should have got a better result". There is no reference to what he might have found difficult or how they have tried to help him. Reggie seems to have to work, on his own, at becoming successful.

Initially, I felt the data suggested Reggie's mother held no such anxiety about their son however Crozier's study (1999: 315) provides evidence of working class parents' commitment to their children's success. This makes it seem unlikely that she would simply give up on her son. Perhaps her persistent discussion of her daughter and blaming of her son hides her own fears about Reggie's performance.

Covert values

Though not as strident as his wife, Reggie's father is not passive in this discussion. He stated that the teachers worked hard to assist his son but agrees with his wife that, "Reggie could have done better". While this might indeed have been true, what makes the statement pertinent is the fact that they do not acknowledge any of Reggie's efforts. The father has strong masculinised views of success evidenced by having a house and a steady income as a result of having stayed in a job for over ten years.

However there are mixed signals being given. He boasts about giving his boss (a university graduate), advice and suggests that he did not need to attend university. This is because he (Reggie's father), is making more money than his step-daughter who, although having a degree, has a lower paid job. He rates his efforts higher than anyone with a degree yet he cannot understand why his son does not want to study hard, go on to higher education and possibly obtain a degree.

His overt statement is that Reggie needs to work hard yet the covert message suggests it is fine to not have credentials because one can still become successful in many ways. Some of these include: having a wife and steady income, being able to pay off a mortgage and advising those who have more credentials than him. His statements also mirror Reggie's who boasted about his father's long term employment and his mother's self sufficiency.

Self-esteem

The tone of Reggie's parents' remarks was strident and there were few positive comments about Reggie. I was saddened by this. Stepping out of my role as researcher, I said, "I saw him on results day and he looked discouraged". To which his mother replied, "He did. He was discouraged. He wanted me to say, well done!" She did not complete the comment but it was clear she had not been willing to do so. It seemed as if Reggie had not earned her praise.

Like Tony's home, the extended family was also important. During my interview, Reggie's grandfather visited and was invited to give his comments about a successful student. This is his summation.

"They need the support of the teachers and parents even the neighbours. They need the support of anyone who will help them as they go along. The LTC (loving, tender care) [They all laugh; old joke?] of the parents and family. They need to know the friends and family will say well done and encourage them to do well."

"LTC" is demonstrated differently by Reggie's parents. Perhaps they encourage Reggie at home but during interview, little of this was shown by either parent. My data suggests that their comments, the actions of some staff and school practice (as evidenced by the manner in which he was blamed for something for which he was not responsible), have done little to support Reggie's self-esteem.

5.4: ABDUL

As Table 3 indicates, Abdul is doing 13.5 GCSEs, which he eventually achieved. He is a Muslim pupil of Pakistani heritage and is viewed by several teachers as a successful student. Findings from staff questionnaire showed they valued resilient pupils and having continued to attend school despite numerous absences resulting from illness, Abdul certainly demonstrates this.

Initially his views reflect constructs of success in terms of credentials; he immediately began the interview by stating that, in spite of being ill, he is still on track to achieve his GCSEs (see Appendix VII for an excerpt of his interview). Like Tony's friend Gary, he appears to appreciate different learners and recognises that while A*-C grades are important, Ds and Cs are acceptable if you are "not so clever". This comment though seeming tolerant of others, demonstrates an acceptance of the normative view of success and deficit in others. His ideas are quite fluid however as he presents credentials, maturity, entrepreneurship and religion as key facets of his construct of success.

Abdul: Varied constructs

Like Tony he mentions sharing the ideals of significant others.

"Successful student, I reckon it's someone who is close to their teachers, close to their peers. Doing good in school, achieving all their targets, achieving all their homework tasks, giving it in on

time. Staying up to date with all their work or even ahead. I reckon that is success."

He sees success as relational since teachers and peers can support him as he submits work on time; a view also expressed by John in this study. He presents a masculinised and heterosexual view (Frosh 2003: 85), which also shows the influence of his culture.

"... if you have money, a wife and kids then you are very successful. To me success is whatever you have ... unless you have nothing."

Like Dragon in Burke's study (2006: 725), he dreams of being married and having a "wife and kids". These hopes are 'careful and safe [not rocking] the boundaries of his community and family' (ibid). Though he repeatedly states he is not materialistic, he frequently mentions money. He also shows that he has 'tried out different versions of manhood' (ibid.: 224) as he adds that someone who is successful "is mature, punctual, well dressed and [has] a big wallet".

Abdul: Being mature

Abdul positions himself differently in terms of hegemonic masculinity, for example by repeating how mature he is. He defines it as, "knowing what you're going to do in life". He sees school as contributing to an individual's acquisition of "the maturity you attain in the five years of high school". The route to maturity is linked to credentials and therefore job selection, a view shared by Kellaghan and Greaney (2001: 20). He states that students need this:

“cause if you don’t know what you’re going to be like you won’t know the right subjects to take ... If you do know what you’re going to do in life, you’d know (for example) that you would need to work hard to attain Maths or Science GCSE if you want to go to college or to do an apprenticeship you can focus on the more vocational subjects that the school provides”.

Within this discourse he ranks subjects. Maths and Science are considered more important than others (also evident in Reay and Williams, 1999: 345). With a reading age of 15 and a KS3 average score of 7, staff would not expect Abdul to consider vocational studies, yet he mentions this often enough to show that he has given it serious thought.

His notion of maturity extends to the way in which he believes he ought to be treated by his family. He expects his family to care and encourage him to do his best. This includes guidance on friendship choices and getting on with school work but he draws a line at curfews. “Get on with school life but not stopping you from going out.”

He positions himself as mature yet seems hesitant about admitting this. In interview he refers to himself in the third person. When asked to name students he considered successful, he said, “Abdul”. Asked which one, he pointed to himself. It is curious that he presents himself in this way. When I asked him to nominate his closest friends he mentioned that he had many but that I would not want to interview some because they get into trouble. Even though I reassured him, he refused to offer their names, insisting that I interview those he viewed as “clever ... funny as

well and have good attributes". This shows how he positions himself; it is a view he values, wishes to convey and protect.

Abdul: Images of success

Abdul has carefully constructed ideas. My feeling is that, having spent months in the hospital as a result of illness, he has had a lot of time to reflect on his life. Everything he does is measured and this is shown in his images of success. Like Tony, he brings pictures of people who have achieved fame and wealth however he includes two women, Mary Kay and C. J. Walker, along with Muslim heroes. See Appendix VIII for his pictures and synopses.

He values people who have succeeded despite not having academic qualifications.

"Like Stelliios, Sir Alan Sugar, Bill Gates who I think they didn't come out with the best of GCSEs but they still succeeded in life."

He shared one of his favourite quotes from Victor Kiam, an American entrepreneur.

"Entrepreneurs are risk takers, willing to roll the dice with their money or reputation...to support an idea.' ... To succeed in life you obviously, if you haven't got much or qualifications, you have to take risks."

I wondered if he saw qualifications as a safety net. If you had these, there was no need for risks and vice versa.

His view of success embraces being able to stand up for what you believe, take risks and being committed to one's religion. These values are shown as he spoke about Mohammed Ali, Amir Khan and Danny Williams.

"Amir Khan is ... a Muslim I personally believe it is hard for him to get on the scene being a British Muslim. Mohammed Ali and Danny Williams converted to Islam. I reckon they converted whilst they were in the limelight ... and it's quite an ask to convert especially during this time it was not looked upon very dearly by other religions ... I think that has cemented the Muslim status within the community of stardom."

Since 9/11 and 7/7 there has been an increase in Islamophobia. In such a hostile climate, Abdul views being a prominent Muslim, particularly converting during a climate of suspicion, as courageous. He is proud to be associated with any celebrity who "cements the Muslim status". This appears to be a form of hierarchical masculinity, where certain tough actions are rated more highly than others. In Lingard *et al's* study (2009: 162) of Australian single sex schools, it was the footballers who were regarded as; 'distinctive ... in establishing [their] position and status within a hierarchy of peer-group relationships'.

The men Abdul respects are not his peers but he sees their stance as a strong sacrifice and it is admired above all else. This places religion at the top of what he constructs as important. It also indicates an identity which is resistant to prejudice, in this instance, religious prejudice.

People like Amir Khan have talent which is nurtured and they succeeded despite the odds; this is the sort of achievement reflecting his own values.

When asked about his successful moment, he recounted:

“When I got my SATs results. From my KS2 when I got 4, 4, 5 (English, Maths and Science) to 7, 7, 6 (English, Science and Maths). I was absent from school after being in hospital for three and a half months”.

He continued:

“I didn’t feel successful ... when I was 2nd or 3rd in class. I am usually number 1 but when you hit number 1 that’s good but when you hit number 2 or 3, or get like a C, that’s quite a hit and you have to take it on the chin”. (He smiles; we laugh.)

In these instances, his successes are performance/credentials related and linked to succeeding in adversity; being in hospital for “three and a half months”. He likes being number one and allows himself no leeway; it’s not good enough being second or third. This comment highlights a competitive discourse.

He is the only boy of my study to suggest women, for example Mary Kay Ash, as his role-models. Unsurprisingly, her determination and entrepreneurial skills impress him. He passionately quotes her.

“When you reach an obstacle, turn it into an opportunity. You have the choice, you can overcome and be a winner or you can allow it to overcome you and be a loser ... It is better to be exhausted from success than to be rested from failure.’ ... This tells me I should strive to do my best in all aspects of life, religion ... the phrase exhausted from success suggests you will get a buzz out of it, the money that you earn or the family that you have or the religion. And I reckon that is success.”

He recognises that he has to work hard and is not afraid to admit to it.

Working hard is an aspect of the normative feminised view of success

which girls are often unafraid to admit to doing while boys are keen to hide (Mac an Ghail 1994). If as Frosh *et al.* (2002) argue, 'masculinity only exists in relation to femininity' yet Grenhill is single-sex and no homosexual references were being made (as in Sewell's study in 1997), Abdul's comments are not feminised. He is simply sharing how he negotiates success within our single-sex school, feeling confident enough to say that he wants to be "exhausted by success". By doing so, he is better than others who, "ain't going to do much".

For Abdul, being in "the right frame of mind" is important. Determined like his family, who initially worked in factories in order to succeed, being educated but "more educated in Islam" and not losing sight of one's goals, help to shape that frame. Like Majid in Archer's study (2003: 99), he appreciated some of the hardships his family had gone through in order to provide better opportunities. Similar to boys in Din's study (2006: 68), he will emulate his family by working hard to achieve his aspiration. His comments encapsulate his religious, family and masculine identities.

ABDUL: PEERS

Like pupils at City Road (Gillborn 1990:73), the friends Abdul nominated were within his religious and ethnic group. They chose the names David, Zain and Saif; and identify issues of credentials, publicity, assessment, family, community and being happy as essential to success.

Credentials and publicity

All three immediately listed credentials. Five or more A* - C grades and the public acknowledgement of having gained these were important.

“You get that sort of buzz and the teacher says well done and you think right! You feel like you want to get that buzz again” (David).

This matches Kellaghan and Greaney who see assessment as a public recognition of performance (2001: 17-20). Zain also agreed with this idea.

“No it’s about being recognised. Taking part is good but being asked to go on trips and being singled out [is great].”

The idea of being singled out fits the findings of research on gifted and talented pupils who, it is claimed thrive on this level of publicity.

Abdul’s peers are high academic achievers, each being predicted 12 - 14 A*-C grades which they later gained. They indicated no shame in being seen in this way and offered no excuses for not achieving. Although David admits that he “didn’t quite do [his] best”, they referred to specific marks and for the first time among pupils, there is a hint of suspicion about the marking itself.

Assessment

Like the staff, they spent a lot of time focusing on grades, to the extent that they recalled most of the marks from their mock exams which had taken place two to three months ago. When questioned if they thought the marking was fair, they all agreed. However the manner in which they

looked at each other suggested discomfort. Their comments, though providing a rationale for their teachers' actions, showed they were not truly happy with the marking.

"Yes...in the mocks, I was one and a half marks off an A and the teacher said to me, 'I purposefully didn't give you that mark because I know you can achieve that. But you need to try that little bit harder in the real exam to ensure you get the mark'" (David).

This is somewhat ironic since the A grade would have been achieved if the teacher had not withheld the mark in order to motivate him.

When asked if he thought this was fair he replied:

"Yes. Now that I've seen it in a different light I think it's fair. Now I got the A the next time I did it".

David continued by rationalising why he needed the deduction.

"Yes now I got the A in the real exam. That little one and a half mark made me think. It made me go that little extra... It does not help you if they say... its one and a half mark so have it. Obviously it might motivate you but you might find it hard to maintain the A and the next time you might get a B."

His words match those of the KS2 pupils in a study of academic achievement, conducted by Reay and Williams (1999). Saif had earlier mentioned not obtaining 100% in his coursework. It is clear that he and his peers appear to be judging themselves on the basis of their test scores, not dissimilar to the girls of Allan's study (2010: 46). In this instance, it has the power to motivate them to achieve higher marks. That it is able to do so, underpins the extent to which they value inclusive success. Yet no-one examines the assessment in terms of accuracy or the punitive manner in which the half mark is withheld. To do so may mean

discovering that the teachers, whom they trust, are flawed and assessments shaped by other variables, the like of which are described by Gillborn and Youdell (2002).

Motivation

Motivation plays an important role in their achievement; its source is multidimensional with parents and teachers being integral to this.

“[A student] can get some sort of inspiration from home and that way he can get to know the world outside. Parents might inspire him if they have top of the range jobs. Satisfactory pay so they can pay for all the things he needs e.g. car, house, marriage” (Saif).

Like Abdul, they wish to obtain good jobs and it is clear their ideas are classed, aspirational and traditional (Din, 2006; Burke, 2002).

They view competition, a key aspect of hegemonic masculinity (Frosh *et al.*, 2002; Jackson, 2006) as a feature of being motivated. Zain introduces two notions: one is competing with self, and the next, with others.

“Competition is a major thing. Being competitive to others so you can push yourself ... either way. It’s against your own sort of target. Even if you lose you can be happy for the other guy. But the person who competes with you has to be similar. So almost the same level. So you can say you beat them.”

When speaking of self motivation, David refers to not getting a B in French while Saif outlined an incident in RE.

“... at first I got 100% which was the highest in the year (laugh) but the second one wasn’t 100%. It was high - a low A* (all laugh). Most people ... would be happy with that but not for me though. I wanted two 100%. It was 99%.”

Parental expectations or fear of their reactions also generate some of the reason for this motivation as David exclaimed; "Tell that to your parents they'd be ... phew!" Saif reassures him this would be fine but when asked what's wrong with 99% Saif added; "It wasn't 100... there's something special in that".

They gauge their success against the performance of others. Like the girls of Allan's study (2010: 46) they 'use their test scores to openly compete with one another'. Zain adopts a submissive tone and role when he says, "I never get those grades. I got a D in statistics. David beat me by two marks". Outperforming others is seen as a means to 'aggrandise' one's own status (Covington 2000: 174). This is evident as David and Saif smile sheepishly ... yet nod, suggesting that they all know their place within this hierarchy. They are on top and Zain is below. When asked which hurts more, the D or being beaten, Zain replied; "Both actually". He then protected his feelings by rationalising it the same way in which they did when not given full marks by the teacher:

"But you need to get knocked back sometimes to go that extra mile. I look back at the B and see myself motivated so I take the bad and make it good".

Friends and family

Like Abdul, they view friends as part of their support network, however their friendship reflects a 'performance-approach goals' discourse (Jackson 2006: 26). They are motivated by demonstrating high ability and want to

be top of the class. This type of success becomes more meaningful if they outperform pupils who are, "almost the same level" (Zain). This provides evidence of their adoption of a competitive discourse. Their friends are like minded; they do not:

"sit back and let everything slip away. Not a group that will not take notice of teachers. That's the bad one. The good one is people who want to work" (David).

Research on masculinity (Mac an Ghail, 1996; Sewell, 1997; Frosh *et al.*, 2002) record hegemonic masculinity as one in which boys belittle hard work. Working hard to achieve success is a position usually thought to be inhabited by girls. However, like Abdul, his peers are unafraid to openly admit that they want to and do work hard. David distinguishes between successful and unsuccessful pupils. The former "want to work" and the latter "let everything slip away [and] will not take notice of teachers".

These successful qualities are similar to the feminine discourse of success outlined by an eleven year old boy in the study by Frosh *et al.* (2002: 224) 'girls listen more and get down to work and don't give backchat to teachers'. The Pakistani working class boys of my study show that while they are keen to do this, they thrive within an environment in which their success is measured against the performance of others and they strengthen this position by avoiding peers who "will not listen to the teachers". They state that their peers are similar competitors and appear

to support each other, however like the girls of Allan's study (2010: 47), exclusive 'success could only be achieved ... through individual competition'. This makes losing painful, but less so because they view those beating them as worthy opponents. Perhaps this is why Abdul recommended that I interview this group of peers. They validate his opinion of himself as a successful student yet highlight the extent to which he is afraid of failing; his peers are part of his coping strategy.

Family is also important. Like Tony, they believe that parents would be happy once they tried their best:

"if they find you are not motivated they might go that extra bit to ensure you get the help to do your best" (David).

That 'extra bit' might be helping with homework or providing a tutor. These are some of the ways parents support their children and is linked to what Crozier and Davies (2006: 678) refer to as parents' 'competitiveness for success' as parents do whatever they can, to ensure their children progress. David views his family a bit fearfully. This was evident when he expressed anxiety in response to Saif's 99%. However unlike Chris (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2003: 210), he does not engage in avoidance or defensive strategies but continues to try.

During his interview Abdul spoke of "having caring parents that want you to do the best". This is a view shared by Dragon in Burke's study (2006) and is also reinforced by David who spoke about his parents getting someone to help him learn if he is not progressing at school. Again

parents are constructed as acting responsibly; striving to provide the right kinds of support for their children (Burke, 2006; Crozier, 2000; Vincent 1996). This, they believe, helps them become successful.

Images of success

This group brought images of success which, apart from Sir Alan Sugar, and a comic like family, did not contain actual people. Zain demonstrated a heterosexual view of success which embraced family influences. Like Youssef in Archer's study (2003: 101) his picture indicates that family relations are important to him.

"I want to make my parents happy, myself happy and the people around me happy. That motivates me to try my best and do everything to my potential, as well as other factors such as good job, good money. I try my best, that's success to me."

Abdul does not articulate these views. The only time he mentions his family is when he warns about not being punished. However it is clear by their nods that these boys agree with Zain. He is aspirational and it is an attitude that is common to this group. Perhaps this is the reason why Abdul nominated this group of friends; they model an aspect of success which he does not articulate.

Zain also shows a picture of an ordinary lock that can be found in any garden centre, which sparkled in the sunlight. This, he explains, was symbolic of sustaining progress; it is evidence of maintaining first place. It meant: "Security. Trying to maintain your position. If you are getting A*s and As you want to keep that position". Perhaps this also

demonstrates a deep-seated desire not to be beaten into second place by his peers; a quiet confirmation that he will not stay within a position to which he has been ascribed. He values academic work. This is shown when he trivializes David Beckham's ability to "kick a ball around" stating he "hasn't gained much". He suggests that Beckham does not deserve to be in that position. Accordingly, Beckham's actions are not viewed as work, primarily because he does not rate him academically. This shows he values academic achievement more than sporting prowess.

Saif, like Abdul, brought an image of Sir Alan Sugar whose money and drive, he felt, epitomised success. David on the other hand showed two pictures. One was of someone holding a trophy and the other containing lots of swirls. The trophy represented visible signs of success such as when teachers say, "Well done". This is balm to one's self-esteem and provides public acclaim as everyone else becomes aware that you are successful. This reflects the achievement of a performance goal as his success is judged by 'measurable achievements' (Jackson 2006: 29). The swirls represent his happiness when he feels successful, thus showing how much success contributes to his self worth.

They brought no images of Asian role-models. The discussion which emerges as a result of my questioning this reflects influences of the school, religion and the wider community. David says:

"this school is mainly Asian anyway and last year's Y11 walked out of here gaining 77% with A*-C and that's a good success for all the

boys that are in that group. You don't need to have a picture to represent Asians being successful. As long as the Asian knows that they have been successful, that's fine".

Here he subscribes to and applauds the normative view of success held by the school; the 5 or more A*-C grades. He also refers to Asians "knowing" they are successful. Influences within the wider community are also valued.

"Also there are some Asian people within our community that we look up to. They have a good house and you see in their old age they are kind of relaxed and that's a role model" (Saif).

There are classed signs of success e.g. the "good house" and being able to relax as they age. Religion and community are intertwined.

"That's quite important since you don't want to do anything against your religion. But then again religion also motivates you it tells you that your education is important. You have to keep up your education as well" (David).

Happiness

As suggested in some of the previous discussions, happiness is important to this group of pupils.

"I think even if he got good grades and he wasn't happy with that I don't think that's success. He needs to be happy himself for success to be good. ... It's not all about grades. It's if he's happy with himself and the way he is. You can see that in people by their body language and the way they present themselves. If they are happy that tells us they are successful" (Saif).

Saif's account appears to indicate aspects of Judith Butler's idea of gender being 'performative' (Butler 1997). By this she means it is only real if it is demonstrated. Essentially, we are what we act or behave and this is encapsulated in Saif's words, "present themselves". Zain recounts successfully persuading his dad to purchase a laptop for him. Saif refers

to obtaining his purple belt in karate and kick boxing. David's happiest moment was when he learned how to ride a bike. The cuts and bruises, he believed, were part of the learning process; suggesting he expects to have bad moments en route to success.

While Zain is the one who talks the most about happiness, the others nod in agreement as he outlined that he would try his best to make himself, parents, then friends, happy. Some of what makes him happy is also shared by his parents e.g. "getting the A*s and As". He, like his peers, has a shared identity as Pakistani Muslims, believing as David stated; "as long as you have God on your side you can do anything. Anything is possible".

This discourse also reflects their religious identity and its link to their understanding of success. Their views echo the boys in Archer's study (2003: 48) who had a strong ethnic and religious identity. Earlier comments showed no need for pictures of Asians since there are so many successful individuals within their community. Similarly, the 'Muslim identity [is viewed as] a unifying force' (Archer 2003: 49), strong, supportive and resistant to pressures. Abdul referred to this when he spoke of his own response to the public conversion of men like Mohammed Ali. This and the emotional support of having "God on your side" (Saif), reinforce the notion of solidarity as a result of their shared Muslim beliefs.

ABDUL: FAMILY'S VIEWS OF SUCCESS

My intention was to interview Abdul's parents but his father was at work and though his mother was at home, she did not participate. The older brother, Meraj (who had recently graduated from university), presented his views on behalf of the father. This demonstrates primogeniture where, though the father is alive, 'authority, vested in the father...is passed on to the eldest son' (Din 2006: 32). It is also evidence of 'how the practice of respect (at home) is stratified hierarchically by age between siblings' (Archer 2003: 100). Both practices are mirrored in the study of Pakistani and Bangladeshi families undertaken by Crozier and Davies (2006: 683). The views of success that emerged reflect influences of family and culture, credentials and religion.

Family and culture

Meraj's most immediate response regarding what constitutes a successful pupil was his ability to make parents happy. It "comes first and foremost" thus suggesting the influence of family and culture. This he believed was a form of affluence as one became wealthy through the effort of pleasing parents. There is however a link to money as the child has to be able to provide an income. This idea echoes the views of the Muslim boys in Archer's study (2003: 130) where 'they framed the value of education in primarily financial terms'. Pleasing parents works both ways as the happiness of their children also means a lot to parents. This happiness is located in a normative classed, heterosexual discourse as it includes

acquiring a better lifestyle, having a family and being able to watch “them grow up”.

Meraj stressed the need to please his parents yet when asked how they would respond if Abdul did not follow their suggestions, he outlined some of the conflict that had emerged as a result of Abdul’s keenness to attend a vocational institution, rather than the local sixth form, which was more prestigious. He shows how important status and class aspirations are to success.

“My parents want him to go to sixth form but he wants to learn quantity surveying and do the national diploma. This has restricted him in one sense but they don’t like it. I would encourage him. If he wants to become something he should strive for it but they are not happy.”

Abdul’s father thinks it lacks status however his brother is willing to support him and maybe this is why Abdul, the second son, is allowed some leeway. Unlike older brothers in the study by Crozier and Davies (2006: 683), Meraj does not serve as the mediator between home and school but between father and sibling. Abdul is being permitted to pursue his dream; perhaps this has been made possible because Meraj has already upheld some of the family’s hopes by graduating from a well known university.

Credentials

It also emerged that the academic achievement, of five or more A* - C grades, was important. However, these credentials were seen as a means

to an end; the opportunity to obtain a better job and as such, a “better quality of life” (Meraj). Of greater importance was a teacher’s ability, to see the potential in different pupils and their willingness to push pupils to achieve more. In this respect Meraj, praised my efforts and used me as an example of a teacher who wanted his brother to gain an A grade. (This interview took place after results were published and Abdul, who was in my teaching group, had obtained an A grade in Literature and in Language.) This suggests the teacher is the gate keeper, allowing pupils entry (or not) to higher or lower grades, a view akin to how education is rationed (Gillborn and Youdell 2000).

An important attitude necessary for achieving credentials was “trying one’s best” (Meraj). Having a “good frame of mind” (ibid) was seen as an innate quality which demonstrates a determination to succeed. If that fails, having targets helps. In the context of the interview I assumed this to mean academic targets. The pupil’s effort has to be visible. It is this visibility which provided the shield when one was not able to obtain an A grade. Meraj felt that once parents were able to see that you were trying, this was fine.

“Then you try your best, within your capabilities to do your best. I am not saying you have to get a first or get straight As but your parents need to know that you tried your best.”

Having finished the interview with Meraj, Abdul’s father popped in to say hello before returning to his shift as a taxi driver. Knowing that he did not have much time, I simply thanked him for allowing the interview to take

place. He focused on two things. One was that I was visiting his home. Normally, he said, "It's the parents who visit school". This highlights the relationship between home and school, placing the teacher in the position of power and control (Crozier 1999: 322). The second was his bewilderment that, having had, "all these subjects yet [Abdul] wants to go and do quantity surveying".

Having achieved 13.5 GCSEs with A* - C grades, his father believes he ought to pursue other jobs like that of a doctor or lawyer. Quantity surveying did not fulfil his father's aspirations yet, despite the need to please parents (previously stressed by Meraj), it is clear that the father is willing to try to please him ... at least for a while as he waits to "see what he does". This dialogue and the conversation with Meraj do not fit what is presented as the normative view of Pakistani parents noted by Crozier (2009: 290), not being interested in their child's education; a view which Crozier and Davies challenge. In fact this interview supports their finding which:

'demonstrates that parental involvement ... resides not simply in the hands of the parents but within the wider family and community' (ibid 2006: 679).

Religion

Like Tony's parents, religion is also important. Meraj's views echo those outlined by Abdul's peers. "Religion guides you to success". This is an idea expressed by a Bangladeshi parent in Crozier's study who said, "We are Muslims. Without education there is no progress' (2009: 294). Meraj

refers to religious beliefs helping to overcome challenges. The sorts of challenges were not outlined however he believes that the Koran "has answers for any problems that exist" and this is in itself reassuring, if one wanted to become successful.

Yet another view that is shared by Abdul is that of any experience contributing to one's knowledge. Meraj states, "Worldly experience is important. Any experience that gets through to you can mould you". Meraj cites tenacity along with aspects of Sir Alan Sugar's profile as evidence of a successful individual. That Abdul, his family and peers hold this view, provides evidence of yet another aspect of shared beliefs, which contributes to a frame of mind which helps to shape a successful individual.

CHAPTER 6

Through this study I have attempted to identify working class, minority, ethnic boys' views of success at Grenhill, a single sex school. By adopting a layered approach within each of the case studies, I have sought to discover the ways in which their views intersect with other discourses of success that are evident among staff, peers and families. The size of the sample means that the views presented do not stand for all minority ethnic pupils. This study simply provides some pupils with an opportunity to speak for themselves and they have done so in many ways. Frequently, they have been clear but at times their views have been contradictory and uncertain.

What has emerged reflects the power struggles within which pupils are engaged as diverse notions of success compete in the school context, thereby demonstrating the multiple ways in which they negotiate different views of success.

6.1: Pupils' Overall Views of Success

Credentials and employment

Willis (1997) records white working class boys actively choosing to drop out of school because they knew they would be following their fathers, to

work in the factory. The sample of my study comprises working class, minority ethnic boys of African, Caribbean and Pakistani heritages. Unlike the boys of Willis' study, they try to work hard, subscribe to exclusive success (Rollock 2007) i.e. achieving five or more A*-C grades and are aspirational. Like the middle class boys in the study done by Laberge and Albert (1999) in Quebec, they seek 'upward mobility through qualifications' (cited by Frosh *et al.*, 2002: 90). Tony wants to be a pilot and Abdul a quantity surveyor.

Frosh *et al.* (ibid.: 91-92) detailed how working class boys articulated aspirations that were linked to relationships with girlfriends. However the boys of my study did not provide girls as a motive for studying. While wanting to eventually get married, they were more concerned about credentials and being happy. Their focus on credentials, matched the aspirations of middle class pupils of Frosh's study who were willing to work hard.

This, by no means suggests, that in order to become successful one has to be middle class. Lucey and Walkerdine (2000: 43) state that for working class children, being diligent at school is to be different from those in their family and social group and this is 'intertwined with the pain of difference, separation and loss'. There was no evidence of these feelings between pupils and their families in my study. Among other

things, what supported pupils' aspirations were the expectations of career success shared with their parents and peers.

Historically, working class pupils of any ethnicity struggle to do well at school, so how are these pupils, for the most part, able to negotiate academic success, and more specifically, exclusive success which provides them with easier access to employment and higher education?

Except for Reggie's uncertainty about career success, pressures from peers and parents are also evident among each pupil. Pupils' opinions often match the normative views of success outlined by staff - the acquisition of the 5 or more A*- C grades. This is evident as pupils focus heavily, but not exclusively, on credentials. They discussed grades, using phrases such as "meeting targets" (Tony and Abdul) and "achievements" (Reggie), thus reflecting the influence of the language of assessment for learning. The *quality* of these credentials is significant (they stress A*- C grades), as is the *quantity*. Tony wants 13 GCSEs, Abdul added that he was, "still on track" to get 13.5 A*- C grades. Reggie, although having lower self-esteem than the others, mentioned the pursuit of "5 A*-C grades"; adding the phrase "in the end", signifies the importance of trying to achieve this.

These grades reflect an acceptance of the normative view of 'exclusive' success (Rollock 2007a) which is shared with the school. Mahony

describes education policy in the UK as being fixated on 'academic achievement' (1998: 39) evidenced by government's publication of league tables. Thus it is not unusual that this message has permeated to students and is the yardstick, against which they are judged and also used to critique themselves. This finding echoes that of Archer and Francis (2007: 18) who examine the effect of neo-liberalism and its influence in maintaining a highly qualified workforce. Whitty (2002: 53-54) also recognises that grades influence a child's life chances as credentials afford pupils access to further education or employment. The pupils of my study make this link, noting the need to have high grades in order to obtain good jobs.

Pictures of success

Asking pupils to provide pictures which demonstrate their view of success added greater depth to discussions. Their pictures seemed to express the notion of struggling to succeed, and were presented in classed, racial, religious and gendered terms. A researcher's presence (especially if the researcher is a senior manager at school), can sometimes influence what is said (Archer 2003: 42). Using pictures permitted greater access to pupils' deeper feelings than mere questions might have allowed. Paradoxically, pupils relaxed yet hid behind the pictures as they did so; this allowed them to express themselves more freely. This was evident when Reggie, who though subdued, became enthusiastic while explaining his picture.

Except for Reggie's comic character, all the pictures suggested a desire to improve their status. Pupils brought pictures of celebrities e.g. Lord Sugar and Nelson Mandela, who had started off poor, yet became millionaires or internationally recognised for their achievements. Tony's reference to the businessman, who is happy when wearing a suit, shows his increasing aspirations. Reggie identifies with the idea of improving one's status by obtaining five or more GCSEs and getting into college and Abdul shared his ideal of being "well dressed" and having "a big wallet".

Their pictures encapsulated the idea of fighting to succeed. A racial discourse was evidenced by Tony's pictures of successful Black men like Ray Charles, Michael Jordan and Nelson Mandela who struggled, not only with racism but medical constraints (as was the case of Ray Charles) in order to succeed. The religious discourse was seen when Abdul identified with celebrities who were Muslims, either from birth or through conversion, willing to declare their religious beliefs even while Islamophobia is on the increase. Reggie's views, while not falling into either of these categories, celebrate anyone who is willing to struggle, like his mountain climber, to reach the top.

All their role-models, except for Mary Kay Ash and C. J. Walker, were male. Regardless of gender, the boys were aware that their role-models worked extremely hard, ignoring lots of abuse, setbacks and often

discrimination, in order to climb to the top of their field. Although this serious work ethic seems at odds with research findings which examine boys' aversion to working hard in schools, according to O'Donnell and Sharpe (2000:3) it is clear that 'ethnic identification ... plays a powerful part in the way youthful masculinities are expressed'. The attitudes of their role-models, be they as a result of gender, class, ethnic or religious struggles, are those that pupils of my case study emulate.

Masculinity

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, there were different forms of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Sewell, 1997; Mac an Ghail, 1996). Pupils draw on multiple masculinities in order to develop their identity. In-depth case studies, such as this research, provide an opportunity for us to identify the ways in which minority ethnic boys behave and the effect of structures that influence their lives (Brickell 2005:28).

Pupils are aspirational and this is similar to the men in Burke's study (2006). Tony and Abdul are willing to work hard. This, on its own, might be construed as a feminine discourse which can sometimes invite ridicule (Sewell, 1995; Willis, 1977). Research has shown that 'working hard' as a student is often associated with forms of femininity rather than masculinity (Epstein *et al.* 1998). However none of the pupils interviewed expressed concern about ostracism or name calling as a result of working hard (as those who were seen as 'pussies' or 'gay' in Sewell, 1995;

Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). This suggests that working hard is not construed as feminine behaviour in this particular school context. It is simply what the boys of Grenhill want to do.

What Grenhill boys express is purely their positioning of masculine identities as they strive towards success. Frosh *et al.* (2002: 3) states that boys show how they construct masculinity through their 'everyday discourses, in various 'versions' or *masculinities*' (their emphasis). For these boys, what is demonstrated is therefore not feminised (even if they match the normative constructs of feminine views of success). Their hard work and the ways in which they work e.g. competition and ignoring stereotyping is what they do and how they cope as they respond to the challenges which arise as they deal with issues of class, gender and ethnicity.

This goal to become successful is not without its challenges however. The fear of failure is evident in their accounts. It is my belief that in order to succeed they hide their fears in many ways. While our school also celebrates inclusive success, like the Real Englishmen of the study by Power *et al.* (1998: 143), some pupils subscribe to the idea of effortless achievement. Tony tries to hide the fact that he stays up to study and justifies any poor performance by stating he is "being lazy". This is similar to research which shows that men of all ages talk about being lazy because they are afraid of failure (Burke, 2006; Jackson, 2006). Reggie

blames the amount of work “put on” him in Year 11 and Abdul refers to his illness as a reason for not always achieving the highest grades. While it is easy to trivialize these as excuses, I argue that, as we seek to identify ways in which we can help them succeed, it is important to look beyond what pupils say or how they act and recognise their comments as part of their defence mechanism for coping with the fear of failure.

Similar to the men in Burke’s study (2006) a heterosexual discourse is also shared as they want to get married, own houses and provide for their own families. This also reflects their families’ hopes as they attempt to live up to cultural expectations and try to make their families proud.

Forms of competitive and hierarchical masculinity were evident. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) discuss how competition in sports affected boys’ self-esteem. In this study the importance of competition was noted in both ethnic groups however while sporting prowess was important (but not exclusively so) to the Black pupils, being academic was often the primary focus for Pakistani pupils.

Tony’s and Reggie’s peers revealed sports as their most successful moments. Kevin discussed scoring the winning goal while Reggie proudly mentioned being captain of the basketball team, and helping them to victory. Like the West Indian pupils at City Road Comprehensive, they were key players in many sporting teams and shared this aspect of their

friendship outside of school (Gillborn 1990: 29). The easy manner in which they discussed their victories show how unencumbered they feel in the sporting arena. This is in stark contrast to the anger and hostility Tony's peers conveyed when they outlined how they were being policed and stereotyped at school. The only one who hinted at some degree of conflict within the sporting arena was Reggie who appears to have been offered a place on condition that he behaved. This response is similar to the teachers of Gillborn's (ibid) study who used access to sporting activities as a means of controlling pupils.

Contrary to national discourse about Black boys' underachievement (Davey 2003; Bagley 1997), academic success is extremely important to the Black boys of this study. All, except Reggie, proudly remind me that they are on target to obtain from 9 – 13.5 GCSEs with A*-C grades but it is their easy discussion of sports which reflects this is what makes them happier. Unlike the boys in Frosh *et al.* (2002: 207) they do not use sports and competition in opposition to academic work. Perhaps, like Saif who studied judo in the middle of his GCSE exams, sports provide a break from the stress of the surveillance of school and hard work needed to succeed.

The Pakistani pupils of this study demonstrate academic competitiveness. Their comments and tone reflect their need to improve on past performances and excel against others. Zain mentioned surpassing his

targets while Saif discussed obtaining 100% in RE, the highest coursework grade in the year. However he wanted another 100%. Part of their happiness is the validation of that achievement. This is a view which is supported at Grenhill as results are made very public at KS4. Everyone has to know that they have been successful and celebrated accordingly. This was evident through the display of hierarchical masculinity as Zain accepted his role of having scored the lowest of the three during discussion yet displayed a quiet determination to change his rank.

This link between happiness and achievement can be summed up by Roger's comments when he says:

"You have achieved something. It may not be something big but you have achieved something ... that gives you that sense of happiness".

For all these boys, this feeling appears to be even more acute when they have victory over others, be it in the sporting or academic realm.

6.2: Competing Notions of Success

Several of the ideals of success Tony, Reggie and Abdul mention are shared with teachers, parents and peers. These include the A*-C grades, working hard and eventually being able to provide for oneself. However the issue of happiness highlights conflicting priorities between pupils and staff. The ways in which they believe these can be achieved are also very different.

Pupil v school

While five A*- C grades are important to pupils, it is not their only ideal. Pupils expressed a desire to be happy, treated fairly, supported and valued. There was only one teacher, CL4, who mentioned the issue of happiness and self esteem yet almost each pupil stated that happiness was an important aspect of being successful. Many elements contribute to their happiness; achieving good grades was only one of them. Roger reflects this in his comment about, "getting the good results to get into college". This shows the importance of being able to access higher education, a view acknowledged by Whitty (2002). The quantity and quality of GCSE passes was also mentioned as they focused on five grades which were between A* and C. Achieving first place in test, excelling in sports and being praised, all contribute to their happiness.

One aspect of happiness is the joy that comes from a feeling of self worth. Most boys cheerfully mentioned successful achievements that were *not* linked to school. These included: playing football, learning to play the piano, riding a bike and winning sports day. This in itself is not unusual. What makes it pertinent is that although Grenhill celebrates academic and all different kinds of success, labelled 'inclusive success' (Rollock 2007a), academic success was not immediately revealed by pupils and their peers. Only Abdul and Reggie mentioned such an achievement as their most successful moment (the latter because of the shock of having gained a Level 5 in Year 9) but Reggie also included playing basketball outside of

school. It is striking that their least successful moments are all related to school. Self worth theory supposes that 'individuals are ... as worthy as their ability to achieve' Jackson (2006: 29). Despite the celebration of achievements, pupils' examples of successful moments show the extent to which they see themselves as failures if five or more A*-C grades is the only criterion used.

Pupils of my study also view success as relational. One characteristic of that relationship involves the role of the teacher in supporting or restricting progress; it is an important aspect of fostering happiness and pupils' self esteem. Gary said:

"You gain a little from the teachers. If you show them respect you also gain some respect from them and that's basically a good thing. They have a say in your future".

John felt the relationship teachers had with pupils, as indicated by the way in which teachers spoke to them, was important; "never talking to them for the wrong reason, always giving them praise". This relationship is also reflected in the allocation of rewards e.g. by being made prefects.

Within Tony's group interview a racialised discourse was stated as they queried being stereotyped, policed and judged by some staff which Gary states, makes them feel "violated". In their discussion of how pupils cope in particular contexts, Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003: 11) note that they compete for a 'slice of power allocated to the marginal by the central

dominant group'. Pupils reject or accept others or practices in order to cope in the categories to which they have been assigned. I would like to extrapolate even further, suggesting the dominant group can be anyone, peers, teachers, schools and their practice. Power can be demonstrated by both control and the allocation of space/roles thus suggesting that pupils exist in spaces to which they have been assigned. I wonder if the Black pupils at Grenhill felt more comfortable about sports because this is the 'space' to which they have been intentionally or unintentionally assigned. Their sporting skills (like music Gillborn, 2006; Rollock, 2007a), match staff's uncontested views of those skills at which they believe, Black boys are accomplished. As such, pupils are happier simply because staff see no need to scrutinise their participation in such activities, in the same manner in which they dissect and control their academic and social engagements within school.

The Pakistani pupils stated no racialised concern. This does not mean they had no apprehensions about racism but theirs is the largest ethnic group within school and as such not as conspicuous as the Black cohort. Both Abdul and Tony, along with their peers were on track to achieve 9 - 13.5 A*- C GCSE grades yet their accounts show different perceptions of how they are treated by staff. This can be as a result of the varied prejudices which exist about different groups of learners (Gillborn, 2008; Gillborn, 2002). Black pupils felt more policed than others, their

assertions match the findings of research by Gillborn and Youdell (2002), Sewell (1997) and Jackson (2006).

Their visibility when wearing blazers and Black pupils' comments about stereotyping remind us of the randomness of values that are 'socially imposed and do not represent any degree of absoluteness' (Rollock 2007b). The blazer is part of the school uniform yet Black pupils were perceived as problematic when wearing it. It reinforces the concerns of Black parents, who felt their sons:

'no matter how hard they try 'to do the right thing' in school, repeatedly find themselves in trouble' (Crozier 2005b: 586).

Black pupils at Grenhill stated that others went around in groups but were not asked to split up. This is similar to the study of a West London school (O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000: 56-57) in which it was a 'common view that African-Caribbean boys went around threateningly in groups'. Some white boys behaved in the same way, yet the extent to which either group was seen as more of a threat depended on the observer. These incidents confirm Gillborn's argument (2002) that people have different stereotypes of ethnic groups and are more inclined to judge Black pupils harshly.

This by no means meant that Pakistani pupils fully trusted their teachers. With regard to assessment, they do not strenuously question the allocation of marks, but the data suggests they are not always in agreement with the manner in which their efforts are rewarded.

Another facet of success is evidenced by those relationships involving pupils and their peers. Tony and his peers shared similar views, supporting each other through the difficulty of being stereotyped. Abdul, and the peers he nominated, supported aspirations through competition.

Pupil v parents

At sixteen we recognise that teenagers are trying to carve their own way in life while still being guided by their parents. It is a difficult balancing act as Abdul surmised:

“Having caring parents that want you to do the best but parents who won’t punish you but keep you within your boundaries”.

All pupils show they regard the views of their parents. Tony is keen to follow his parents’ wishes but this is only so he can eventually do what he wants. My interviews with Abdul, Tony and their parents show that they all want the same goals i.e. exclusive success and credentials which allow their sons to be socially mobile; however they do not always recognise this, nor agree the routes devised by either party. Preferring one that is more academic, Abdul’s father is not overly confident about Abdul’s choice of college. However he acquiesces because he wants Abdul to be happy and feels reassured by Meraj’s support because Meraj has a better knowledge of the education system than him.

Tony's parents are concerned about the friends he keeps and the extent to which they can derail this dream. Yet Tony's friends are also working to obtain his parents' ideal. The boys of my study recognise and applaud the support that parents and their religious community provide – views also expressed by Tony's parents. Perhaps parents, sons and peers need to sit and talk together in order to allay some of the fears parents articulated in the interviews.

David offers a hint as to what might be the problem when engaging with parents. It is the manner in which they believe parents perceive concerns about their progress. When Saif mentioned gaining 99%, David exclaimed, "tell that to your parents...phew!" This shows that he couldn't tell his father that he had not obtained full marks. Thus parental expectations, while important, can also be perceived as intimidating.

The only parent-child relationship which appears to present more obvious conflict is Reggie's. The research data suggests that his parents assume that Reggie can do everything on his own, a view that is similar to those of the teachers at Grenhill who appeared to see success as something to be plucked from the pupil, not nurtured.

The data logs their criticism of Reggie for not working hard enough. However Reggie was not present at this interview and I had no way of confirming whether or not the comments they made to me were also

conveyed to him. It is quite possible that, given my role as teacher rather than researcher, they chose to provide me with reasons which justify Reggie's academic performance. Like the boys in Jackson's study they might wittingly or unwittingly have been colluding with their son by using defensive strategies which position him as lazy, unwilling to work or disruptive (2006: 32-34). While these might indeed be true, they could also be part of their defence mechanism for explaining why he is not succeeding.

Unlike Tony's parents who provided a more balanced view by outlining their examination of the pattern of their son's behaviour, gauging teachers' judgements and scrutinising the marking of homework; Reggie's made no such statements. Reggie is unfavourably compared with his sister. This serves as a reminder of where the negotiation is not always successful if the outcome is going to be 5 or more A*-C grades, something he, his parents and the school desire. His father states:

"Reggie could have done better... The teachers put in a lot of work. (Mom interrupts, 'The teachers are brilliant!') But what he got is not what I wanted for him".

Their tone is full of disappointment when they speak about Reggie yet the mother's is full of praise for his sister. His parents stress exclusive success yet appear to present an effective non-academic, inclusive model via their own example. No one stops to compare age and experience. His parents would not have been earning their current level of pay when they were

the sister's age. Willis' study of how white working class boys followed their fathers to work in the factory (1977) seems to be echoed here. This is what Reggie might be doing; he seems to be following in his parents' footsteps and adopting avoidance strategies to explain why he is not achieving exclusive success.

On hindsight, I wondered if this was one of the occasions in which Reggie's parents saw me as a teacher representing the school rather than as a researcher wanting to understand their perspectives and experiences. It would be all too easy to accept an interviewee's comments at face value. However when the wider picture is scrutinised, one recognises that there might be other influences at play, some of which are highlighted by the above comments.

Their comments were full of praise for the school: "The teachers put in a lot of work" [Dad]. (Mom interrupts, 'The teachers are brilliant)'). They stressed this even in the midst of outlining the extent to which Reggie was underachieving. His mother states that Reggie did not get what she wanted for him. While her tone is full of disappointment, they do not blame the school. Although she does not outline how she and her husband try to help Reggie (and my field notes show that I did not ask this question), her silence makes me wonder if this is a repeat of her response when, years ago, she had been told that her daughter was failing at junior school. When I had earlier questioned her response to the

teacher's comments, she said, "Where I come from you don't ask". She did not feel she could ask the school why her daughter was falling behind. Perhaps, the same was true on this occasion; because of my role as Assistant Headteacher it was easier for her to blame her son rather than question me about our school's practice.

My field notes show that Reggie's participation at school has not been trouble free nor does it provide evidence of his achievement of exclusive success. In Chapter 5 I mentioned an incident in which Reggie was not initially given the benefit of the doubt, as he was accused of starting a fight, but eventually cleared by the Headteacher. Although he describes gaining a Level 5 in Maths when he was in Year 9, this is the only academic triumph that he recalls. Socially, even his sporting attempts were being monitored as he was hesitantly given a chance to play on the school's basketball team. He excelled at this and his achievement was validated by being made captain. It appears to be one of the few occasions in which he gains status and legitimacy within school.

This accumulation of incidents shows how important it is to conduct layered case studies such as mine. On their own, the parents' comments feed into the blame culture which epitomises aspects of the culturalist perspective yet when Reggie's views are examined, the combined accounts show how school practice might also be implicated within the production of achievement or underachievement within schools.

6.3: Negotiating Different Views of Success and Their Implications

This thesis highlights the many ways in which some minority ethnic boys negotiate different views of success within and among themselves in the school context. Their comments show aspects of what they believe to be their struggle to succeed at school. Negotiations involve issues which emerge from within the structuralist and culturalist perspectives. The former examines 'the influence of educational policy on teacher practice' while the latter, the role of the individual and family responsibility (Rollock 2007b).

Within the structuralist framework has emerged, institutional racism as evidenced by the underlying assumptions behind teachers' judgements of Black pupils' actions which they assess to be a challenge to authority. Youdell (2003: 15-16) suggests these 'sedemented discourses' have no racist objective but are simply uninterrogated opinions of Black learners which present them as troublesome even when pupils of other ethnic groups might be equally worrying. However my research data suggests those teachers' actions have been perceived as racist or "stereotyping" by Gary and the other Black pupils.

Black pupils are not always seen to have 'desirable learner identities' (ibid.: 16) and this leads to increased surveillance and being 'othered', treated differently by staff (Sewell 1997). Since these views are shaped

by no consistent judgement, there is very little pupils can do to alter the negative perceptions some staff have of them. The impact of labelling was also evident when Reggie was initially blamed for the fight. However it is the premise of this thesis that everyone (and every incident) has to be treated individually. For opinions to change actions must be highlighted and interrogated; it is hoped that in some small way, this research provides the spotlight with which to do so.

Grenhill celebrates both inclusive and exclusive success. The former recognises that all pupils can at least obtain D – G and participate in activities which afford pupils some level of success (hence photographs on the walls and assemblies that praise all and varied achievements). Pupils know this, however they, like teachers, subscribe to 'exclusive success' which targets A*- C grades (Rollock 2007a). The conflict arises when access to this becomes difficult e.g. through increased policing (as perceived by Black boys) or pupils' ability (suggested by Reggie's lower SATs and CATs scores) and staff, along with parents are unaware of the defensive strategies that are employed to disguise their fear of failure.

Within the exclusive success, my study identifies at least two hierarchies. For the higher achievers like Tony and Abdul, it is not just the A*- C grades but the ability to gain 5 or more GCSEs at those grades while for the Pakistani pupils, it is also about the A-A* grade, how to obtain these and how to sustain being at the top of the pedestal.

Another aspect of the structuralist framework is the use of assessment and the implicit, unquestioned trust which it commands. Queried by the Pakistani pupils, it reinforces Gillborn and Youdell's questioning of the vagaries of marking (2002). It is therefore important for the criteria to be made clear to pupils and consistently followed by all staff. If, as my research data suggests, the Pakistani pupils of my study rationalise the withholding of marks as an incentive for doing better, is this principle being used in the same manner for others; or not? Boys of any ethnicity and class are not homogenous. We therefore cannot assume that it provides a similar incentive for all. Others, like Reggie, might be demoralised by this strategy.

Within the culturalist framework which examines the 'role of individual pupil and family responsibility in determining educational prospects' (Rollock 2007b), it would be all too easy to simply blame individual pupils for their lack of progress. This culpability creates a deficit model, giving place to issues like laziness, pupils' ability, social class, ethnicity, gender and family as reasons for failure. What then becomes of pupils like Tony who want to do well yet are hesitant to admit that they study hard? Boys wish to do well but do not often want to be seen to study. Research, for example Mac an Ghail (1994), Frosh *et al.* (2002) and Sewell (1997) discuss the invisibility of study by boys of all class backgrounds.

What this research has shown, is some of the coping mechanisms used by some working class, minority ethnic boys in order to resolve this conflict. Phrases like being "lazy" (Tony) and leaving it too late, match the defence strategies found in the study by Jackson (2006). Teachers need to become more aware of coping strategies and not accept such comments at face value. Sewell (2008) argues that one of the problems he has noted with Black boys is their 'inability or unwillingness ... to break away from an anti - education peer group that loves the street more than the classroom'. Contrary to this, the boys of my study have peers who support their learning and so do their families. If Sewell's theory is to be believed, half the battle has already been won and this is a premise on which our school can build as we continue to support pupils' quest to become successful.

So what are some of the other implications of the notions of success outlined by the boys of this study? We need to be clear about our role as teachers. Pupils see us as filters allowing or denying access – to higher grades, fostering or damaging self esteem and self worth. The question is: how does a minority ethnic boy achieve success if he does not always recognise that teachers or parents are on his side? Perhaps one way is to regularly record how pupils see school practice and continue to engage in the type of dialogue that allows us to do so. This is particularly important since, the views expressed by the boys of this case study may not always reflect those of other groups of learners within Grenhill.

Pupils view teachers as contributing to their success, while teachers' questionnaire responses position pupils as independent of this. Pupils need teachers to value their achievements yet their discourse shows how teachers limit the climate within which they ought to flourish. Pupils immediately outline successful moments which are, in the main, linked to achievements outside of school, while their unsuccessful events are school based. All their successful achievements involve some form of learning, making it clear that pupils want to and can learn! The challenge for us as educators is: how do we tap into the *manner* in which pupils learn outside of the constructs of school so we can harness this?

I argue that we need to 'grow to know' our pupils. Tony's mother ignites something. She took time to know him and stimulated something in him through the purchase of the piano and the support structures she put in place to ensure his skill developed, and was enjoyed. While the size of my sample makes it difficult to generalize about the themes that have emerged, my findings show that success is multifaceted and that, issues of gender, culture, and ethnicity are key aspects of its construction. I propose that like Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003: 287) we listen to male minority ethnic boys' voices. This will allow us to move towards a better understanding of the power relations in their lives and thus identify ways in which these can be harnessed in order to support their views of success.

6.4: Contributions of My Work

There are several aspects of this work which I believe are important to educators and anyone interested in the ways in which minority ethnic boys negotiate success at secondary level. The first is the indication that teachers, pupils, parents and peers all want 5 or more A*- C grades. The second is an awareness of the difference between pupils and teachers in the means by which they view success being fostered through school and the power relations within which they emerge. For example, pupils anticipate that teachers will tease this out while teachers seem to expect it to exist within pupils, waiting to be demonstrated.

The third and perhaps most striking aspect of my research is that pupils want to be happy. The meanings of the word happy are fluid and multi-faceted in the boys' accounts, just as the meanings of 'success' are. Their use of the word happiness demonstrates the influence of gender, class, religion, community and race on their perspectives of success. Conversely, the extent to which happiness is not prioritised by staff is disturbing. Small scale projects such as mine are valuable. They engage teachers with their students in thinking about the meanings they bring to issues such as 'success', within their local school context. However the small sample of my study makes it difficult to generalise findings and as such, there is scope for a similar study on a much larger scale to determine the extent to which the issues which emerge are relevant to other groups of learners and staff within similar or different contexts.

The fourth issue is that of gender and what it means to be a minority ethnic boy within a single-sex school. This study has helped to identify some of the mechanisms boys employ in order to become successful. Some of these are: competition, avoidance strategies, along with empathising with the entrepreneurial skills or determination of role-models. Pupils recognise and understand the need for hard work. Within this single-sex school, pupils were not afraid to openly admire these qualities. Lindgard *et al.* (2009: 115) found; 'Boys were more secure when they did not have to deal with the surveillance of girls'. Ours is a boys' school however they still demonstrate varied ways in which they cope with the pressure to succeed.

I have had the opportunity to share some aspects of my findings at a deputy headteachers' conference where I challenged attendees to stop thinking of boys as a homogenous group and try to look at specific boys or groups of learners in order to identify and meet their particular needs. Taking time to get to know their pupils is more preferable than using a one size fits all approach.

Some of my data and findings were also presented at one of our school's leadership meetings where I was able to focus on our pupils' views of success and the different strategies used to cope with the pressure this brings. I reinforced that staff, pupils and parents agreed the same

purpose. This is important to know, since a common purpose may provide the means by which we can work together to help our pupils succeed. Finally, I was able to 'spotlight' the manner in which pupils feel they have been treated by staff. This was done, not to blame but to create awareness of pupils' feelings and help begin to interrogate some of our school policies and the ways in which they are enforced.

This research has reinforced how important it is to find out the many different ways in which pupils believe success can be achieved. To some extent it has validated some of what we present e.g. pupils also want good grades. However it will also help us to refine our practice as we try to hear, from their words and actions, what they tell us about the means by which policies and practices are implemented.

The fifth proposal is that I would also like to foster further contact with parents. Our school, through the dialogue we already encourage, can help build a more effective bridge between parents and pupils; perhaps this can include opportunities for both to share their hopes and dreams. The purpose is for them to realise that their dreams may not be as diverse as they think.

At the very least, this research has shown that we need to continue to 'grow to know' how to support pupils in their pursuit of success.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Interview questions

This is a list of some of the questions I used however they were adapted in response to the answers pupils gave as the interview unfolded.

1. How are you?
2. How's it going in Y11?
3. I am trying to find out your views about success. What do you think is success?
4. In what ways do you see yourself as successful?
5. If a successful student walked through the door, what would you expect to see?
6. What qualities would they have?
7. Give me an example of your most successful moment.
8. What about your least successful moment?
9. What do you think helps/hinders you from being successful?
10. Do teachers/family/friends play a part in this?
11. Tell me about the pictures you have brought with you?
12. How do they/these represent success?

APPENDIX II**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE A SUCCESSFUL PUPIL?**

The information you provide is extremely confidential and must be returned to me as soon as it is completed.

Please help me by ticking the appropriate box and listing your ideas in the space provided below.

Teacher	TA	NQT	Trainee
HOD	HoY	Assistant Headteacher	Other

How would you describe a successful pupil?

If you wish to discuss any of your comments please let me know.
Thanks

APPENDIX III**EXTRACT FROM INTERVIEW WITH TONY**

- Q So how is it going this year?
- T It's going ok. It's in me. I want to...I want to do well but when I get to it I start being bored and then I start getting lazy and I can't be bothered.
- Q You want to do well?
- T Yes definitely. SMILE
- Q What does that mean? You want to do well?
- T Doing well is just accomplishing what you want to achieve. You set your targets and trying to achieve that then you've done well.
- Q What sort of targets have you set yourself?
- T I've set myself passing all my GCSEs. Getting at least B grades and above. 'Cause C is like a boundary between D so if set one lot and drop I'll be getting Ds so if I aim for like As and Bs then definitely I'll pass.
- Q So why is it so important to get Bs?
- T So my family can be proud and so I can be proud of what I achieve.
- Q If you don't get the As and Bs don't you think they'd still be proud?
- T They'd still be proud. I wouldn't be happy with myself but that's the main thing I need to be happy with what I choose.
- Q Why wouldn't you be happy?
- T I just wouldn't be happy. That would be five years I've wasted. I should have just stayed at home during these five years so me achieving this would show how much I have accomplished.

APPENDIX IV

Tony's pictures representing images of success

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APPENDIX V**EXTRACT FROM REGGIE INTERVIEW**

- Q So how's it going in Y11?
- R Alright. A bit.
- Q What does a bit mean?
- R It's a bit struggling 'cause it's a drastic change from 9 and 11. There's a lot put on you in Y11.
- Q What do you mean by 'put on you?'
- R Like there's more it just changes, it's not gradually so you get used to it. It just comes.
- Q What does the 'it' mean?
- R Coursework and the deadline. HE SOUNDS VERY SAD AND MORE QUIET THAN USUAL
- Q So are you coping?
- R A little bit.
- Q A little bit? Do you think you are more successful in some areas than others.
- R Maths and Music. Not so good in English
- Q When you here the words 'successful student', what comes into your head?
- R You achieve what you want. He put his eye on something that he wants and he got there in the end.
- Q Give me an example of something that he put his eye on.
- R Probably he said he wanted to get 5 A-C and he achieved this, got there in the end.
- Q Is that all you think?
- R Miss it can be like anything, it can be being on a diet. When you get to that weight that you want this is success.

APPENDIX VI

REGGIE'S PICTURE

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APPENDIX VII**EXTRACT FROM ABDUL'S INTERVIEW**

Q How's it going in Y11?

A I reckon its going alright. I am doing well in my subjects but I reckon my absence is has affected my school work, ever so slightly, (HE HASTENS TO ADD) but I reckon I am still on track to get 13.5 GCSEs.

Q Is that good or bad?

A Its good but it could be better if I was here but then I don't blame myself if you know what I mean. It's not my fault I am ill.

Q I don't think anyone blames you if you are ill... How would you define the word success? If I said to you, through that door comes a successful student; what would you expect to see?

A Someone who is mature, punctual, well dressed and a big wallet.

Q A big wallet? Lots of money?

A I see success differently. I am not very materialistic myself. I see it as having a wife and kids or it could be having loada money. I believe so but if you have money, a wife and kids then you are very successful. To me success is whatever you have PAUSE unless you have nothing. You know what I mean.

Q When you mention wife and kids, that's obviously a different age group from someone who is at school...so how would you describe a successful student?

A Successful student, I reckon it's someone who is close to their teachers, close to their peers. Doing good in school, achieving all their targets, achieving all their homework tasks, giving it in on time. Staying up to date with all their work or even ahead. I reckon that is success.

APPENDIX VIII

ABDUL'S PICTURES AND NOTES

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APPENDIX IX

MY REFLECTIONS OF STUDENTS AS I INTERVIEWED THEM

One of the key aspects of ethnography is its reliance on participant observation (Atkinson and Hammersley (1998: 248). Having read Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli's text *What's a Boy?* (2003), I liked that they included their reflections of pupils prior to and during the interview. I have done the same, as indicated by the words in italics at the start of my interviews with pupils. This was done in order to record my responses, add greater depth to the study and show how perhaps as a teacher, my views are being influenced as I grow to know more about my pupils.

Tony

Before the interview

Fun loving, people person, prefect. A lovely boy who is respected by teachers and pupils. His uniform is impeccable and he has even begun to wear the black blazer that is optional to KS4 pupils. Always quick to smile. Tenacious. Quiet, yet he stands out because of his personality and love of music. He plays in a small band which has girls from the other school and beams proudly as he accompanies their singing. Conspicuous in his black glasses with distinctive handles, he walks purposefully and unchallenged around school. Occasionally his hand slips into his pocket and he poses, like a relaxed businessman about to make a call on his mobile phone. Always smiling.

During the interview

Uncomfortable at first. Relaxed as time goes on but also uncertain.

Happy and eager to explain his ideas. Determined.

Tony's peers

Before the interview.

They are smiling happily and joking around with each other as they walk along the almost empty corridor. Dressed alike in school uniform, trousers hung a little lower than others, shirts tucked in; they have chosen to wear blazers instead of jumpers. They look like young executives: neat, confident, slick, bright and different from all the others they encounter.

Two of them are prefects, chosen to represent the school during important visits. Three tall (one of whom is at least 6'5), confident young men walk purposefully towards my office.

During the interview.

Tense then relaxed after I again explain why they are here. Confident and funny; yet angry ... extremely angry about how they believe they are perceived by some staff. I become uncomfortable as I begin to wonder if I am one of those teachers.

Reggie

Before the interview.

Here comes Marmite. You either love him or are irritated by him. Boisterous, larger than life, he is lovely to chat with one to one but often loud and obnoxious in the classroom. Swaggering around the corridor, assuming a forced familiarity that allows him to beat a loud tattoo on pupils' backs yet smiling apologetically and claiming it is a joke, only when threatened with retaliation or when reprimanded by a teacher. Loudly he shows off his work, demanding that you listen. Angry for no identified reason yet after a bewildered pause, the teacher recognises that it is because he has not been given sufficient enough attention.

Educated off site at a vocational institution three days a week, everyone knows when he is back as he shouts out answers before anyone has a chance to recognise the question has even ended. And after telling him off for not putting his hand up, you realise it is an extremely good response, more creative and original than any of the others in the room.

After he takes his Ritalin, he is calm ... much easier to talk to. We are bathed with his wide open smiles. We can chat about anything yet he is subdued. Classes are easier to teach but some of the spark has gone. He is often eager to show off his work. Sheepish when praised.

During the interview.

Dejected, uncertain, apologetic, quiet. Too quiet.

Reggie's peers

Before interview

One bounding, the other slouching they walk along the corridor, wending their way towards me. One wears a blazer with his shirt hanging outside his trousers; the other, his jumper, shirt also escaping beneath the uncomfortable acrylic fabric. One smiles pleasantly as he approaches while the other looks somewhat suspicious.

During interview

Silence. The one who has the broad open smile provides longer answers, while the other who is suspicious yet curious, mutters shorter monosyllabic responses. One makes eye contact, the other does not. Discomfort.

Abdul

Before interview.

He is a quiet, mature and reflective young man. He can be mistaken for being humourless since you seldom see him smile yet when he does, a mischievous smirk flashes across his face. He has frequent absences because of the numerous hospital appointments.

During interview.

Driven. Reflective. Competitive. Religious.

Abdul's peers

Before interview

These are the boys who represent the school on almost every level. If HMI was visiting, they'd be first pick to talk to the inspectors. They are senior prefects and known to be studious. Not overtly athletic (one of them certainly isn't), they play cricket, the sport of choice, after school, on the playground. The school's elite? They are among the first to be chosen by pupils when they engage in group work and projects.

Confidently they walk through school, wearing blazers. Not perceived to be threatening.

During interview

Thoughtful. Competitive. Wanting to be happy.