

**Empowering Educational Journeys: Academic Self-Concept, Hope, and
Tertiary Education Engagement Among Emerging Adults Exposed to Varied
Childhood Experiences**

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Summary

This doctoral thesis consists of three interconnected chapters: a thematic literature review, an empirical paper, and a reflective account of the research journey. The first chapter presents a thematic literature review, which explores the relevant theories, frameworks, and empirical evidence surrounding the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). It then examines the role of Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) as potential protective and promotive factors, capable of mitigating the negative impact of ACEs. The review also explores the constructs of ASC and Hope, and their significance in enhancing individual's engagement with tertiary education. The second, empirical chapter details a two phase, sequential explanatory mixed method study. In the first quantitative phase, online questionnaires were utilised to gather data on participant's exposure to ACEs and PCES, as well as their levels of ASC and Hope. This data was then analysed using a Factorial Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to identify patterns, association, and potential underlying mechanisms. Building on these findings, the second qualitative phase employed a Reflexive Thematic Analysis to retrospectively explore the key mechanisms that enabled participants with varied childhood experiences to maintain higher levels of ASC and Hope. The aim was to inform future practice and facilitate more effective support for children and young people who may have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs. The final chapter provides a transparent, reflective account of the researchers personal and professional journey throughout the doctoral process. This section considers the researchers epistemological stance, the impact of the research on their development, and consideration for the appropriate dissemination of the findings through awareness, understanding, and action.

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Key Abbreviations

ACE – Adverse Childhood Experience
ACEs – Adverse Childhood Experiences
PCE – Positive Childhood Experience
PCE's – Positive Childhood Experiences
ASC – Academic Self-Concept
EP – Educational Psychologist
EPs – Educational Psychologists
RQs – Research Questions
SES – Socioeconomic Status
CR – Critical Realism
PTG – Post Traumatic Growth
BFLPE – Big Fish Little Pond Effect
LA – Local Authority
CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
EPS – Educational Psychology Service

Definitions

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Potentially traumatic activities and experiences that can happen in an individual's life before the age of eighteen years old.

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs): Activities and experiences that enhance a child's life, resulting in successful mental and physical health outcomes.

Academic Self Concept (ASC): How an individual perceives themselves academically.

Hope: An individual's ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal.

Tertiary Education Engagement: An individual's active participation and meaningful involvement in activities related to postsecondary learning and academic experiences. This can encompass cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and social forms of engagement.

Emerging Adulthood: The distinct developmental period which encompasses the 18-25 age range.

Varied Childhood Experiences: Both positive and negative activities and experiences that can shape a child's life trajectory.

Paper One: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

The definition of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) varies within the literature and has remained a subject of debate given the difficulty in providing a conceptualisation that is universally acceptable, clear, and unambiguous (Schurer & Trakovski, 2018). However, the most widely accepted definition, initially proposed by researchers from the Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 1998, characterises ACEs as potentially traumatic events that occur during an individual's formative years, typically before the age of eighteen years.

The original ACE study conducted by Felitti et al. (1998) focused on specific traumatic events including childhood physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as physical and emotional neglect. In addition, household dysfunction such as witnessing domestic violence; living with a substance-abusing or mentally ill household member; or having a family member incarcerated as a child are all further examples of situations that may constitute an ACE. Many researchers still use the categorisation model introduced by Felitti et al. (1998) to examine the impact of ACEs on various life outcomes. This is attributed to the associations found between the cumulative numbers of ACEs and various adverse life outcomes (Felitti et al., 1998). This model classifies individuals based on the number of ACE exposures, typically using categories of one ACE, two ACEs, three ACEs, and four or more ACEs (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018).

ACEs are prevalent in Western societies. The original ACE study, a collaboration between Permanente researchers and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reported that 12.5% of respondents had experienced four or more

ACEs, and 64% had experienced at least one ACE (Felitti et al., 1998). A further study commissioned by Public Health Wales found that 14% of respondents had experienced four or more ACEs, with 47% having experienced at least one ACE (Ashton et al., 2016). More recently, the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and "Children (ALSPAC) conducted within England, revealed that 84% of respondents had experienced at least one ACE, and 24% had experienced four or more ACEs (Houtepen et al., 2018). This highlights the widespread prevalence of ACEs and wide-reaching potential impact upon multiple domains throughout an individual's lifespan, with the need to better understand their long-term impact upon each domain.

The adverse effects and prevalence of ACEs have led to their characterisation as a "public health crisis" (Dube, 2018). Preventing early adversity is now seen as critical to ensure the healthy development of all children and young people, and enable them to reach their full health, social, educational, and economic potential (Metzler et al., 2017). Consequently, ACEs are gaining prominence on policy agendas worldwide, with a concerted effort within education and broader public health sectors to prevent ACEs and promote ACE-aware services (Hughes et al., 2017).

The potentially traumatic effects of ACEs have been associated with negative enduring effects upon multiple domains across an individual's lifespan (Boullier & Blair, 2018; Houtepen et al., 2018; Hughes et al., 2017; Schurer & Trajkovski, 2018). However, engagement in tertiary education has demonstrated a number of positive associations that may help moderate the long-term impact of ACEs on health, social, and economic potential (Hughes et al., 2017; Raghupathi & Raghupathi., 2018; Waltman et al., 2022; Wang & Conwell., 2022; Zajacova & Lawrence: 2018).

Engagement in tertiary levels of education has also been associated with reduced risk for nearly all ACE categories (Merrick et al., 2018). This suggests that engagement with tertiary education may help disrupt the intergenerational cycle of adversity associated with ACEs for some individuals.

Within the literature there is a growing body of research focused on identifying protective factors and constructs that can moderate the potential negative effects of ACEs, promoting positive adaptation for those exposed to individual or cumulative ACEs (Sameroff, 2010). Among these factors, Academic Self Concept (ASC) and Hope have emerged as crucial psychological constructs that may enhance an individual's ability to successfully transition to or engage with tertiary education, whilst benefitting from a disruption to the intergenerational cycle of ACEs, as well as the protective factors associated with health, social, and economic potential (Leeson & Ciarrochi, 2010; Michie et al., 2001; Snyder, 2000).

These two constructs have demonstrated the potential to provide alternative perspectives of an individual's environment and life within that environment (Bonelli et al., 2021), which is important in the face of adverse circumstances. Since ASC and Hope often develop through an individual's interactions and experiences within the environment of which they are a part of (Beld et al., 2019), a bi-directional relationship of influence between these two constructs appears to emerge (Feldman & Kubota, 2015). This relationship may be capable of mitigating the negative effects of ACEs and fostering positive adaptations for some individuals (Feldman & Kubota, 2015; Ramos et al., 2021; Sameroff, 2010).

ASC refers to an individual's perception of their own academic abilities and competence (Harter, 2012). This construct can have significant implications on an individual's tertiary education attendance. Longitudinal data on United Kingdom

students indicates that possessing higher ASC increases the likelihood of aspiring to, applying to, and being accepted within tertiary education (Moulton et al., 2016). Additionally, having a more positive ASC when transitioning to tertiary education can serve as a protective factor, enhancing the likelihood of completing their chosen qualification (Jansen et al., 2020).

The construct of Hope as portrayed in the literature involves the cognitive process of thinking about one's goals and the motivation to pursue those goals (Synder, 2002). This positive psychological construct can also have significant implications for tertiary education engagement. High levels of Hope enable individuals to construct a positive narrative of their future (Cabrera et al., 2009), as well as having a positive impact on their academic achievements (Gallagher et al., 2016; Snyder, 2002), which is an essential component in pursuing, applying to, and being accepted at a tertiary education institution. Furthermore, higher levels of Hope have been found to increase an individual's likelihood of not only enrolling but also successfully completing their chosen tertiary education course (Jansen et al., 2020; Synder, 2002).

Emerging adulthood is a distinct developmental period which encompasses the 18-25 age range in which most individuals, who choose to do so, engage with tertiary education. It provides a period within an individual's life of profound change and importance (Chevrier et al., 2020). Within this timeframe, many individuals pursue tertiary education to chart their preferred career paths (Chisholm & Hurrelmann., 1995). It is up to and within this distinct period that both ASC and Hope levels can fluctuate dramatically. This influences how an individual perceives themselves academically as well as their motivation to engage in goal directed behaviours (Bryce et al., 2021; Chevalier et al., 2015; Westrick et al., 2015;).

A review of current literature indicates that individuals with a higher number of ACEs tend to exhibit lower levels of ASC, reduced motivation for educational pursuits, and diminished Hope levels for their future career and overall success (Baxter et al., 2017; Marsh et al., 2005). Associatively, those who have experienced multiple ACEs in childhood often encounter lower levels of success in education, employment, and economics compared to their counterparts without ACEs (Currie & Widom, 2010; Lanier et al., 2014). This, in turn, can lead to a decreased likelihood of engaging in tertiary education (Corrales et al., 2016), and experiencing the distinct developmental period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) and all that it entails.

High Hope levels have been shown to enable individuals with ACEs to envision a positive future for themselves, providing a constructive framework to shape their future outcomes (Cabera et al., 2009). Furthermore, individuals who possess high levels of ASC tend to demonstrate enhanced academic performance (Ghazvini, 2011; Guay et al., 2004; Marsh and Martin., 2013). Research has consistently documented the bi-directional relationship between ASC and academic achievement (Feldman & Kubota, 2015; Rose & Sieban, 2017; Snyder 2002, Valentine et al., 2014). As a result, the psychological constructs of ASC and Hope emerge as promising factors that may serve as protective mechanisms against the potential adverse effects of ACEs across multiple contexts.

Given the unique position and contributions of Educational Psychologists (EPs) within various systems and contexts, they are well-positioned to understand the bi-directional relationship between ASC and Hope from both a psychological and environmental perspective. This understanding may be instrumental in supporting individuals who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs, particularly in facilitating their access to or engagement with tertiary education. Furthermore,

intervention is a core function of the EP role (Scottish Executive Department, 2002).

EPs may be best placed to employ specific interventions, techniques or approaches that have shown promise in aiding individuals with cumulative or prolonged ACEs in developing higher levels of ASC and Hope.

This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the complex interplay between ACEs, ASC, and Hope in the context of tertiary education engagement. Specifically, it will aim to synthesise theories and empirical evidence regarding the negative impacts of ACEs on educational outcomes and potential protective influences of ASC and Hope in mitigating these effects. The review will also critically explore the role of PCEs that may moderate and mitigate the potential adverse effects of ACEs and support individuals in accessing/engaging in tertiary education.

Key themes to be addressed include ACEs effects on motivation, achievement, and tertiary education engagement; conceptualisations of ASC and Hope from positive psychology; reciprocal effects of ASC, Hope, and academic attainment; and ecological factors shaping these constructs. Implications for policy, practice and involving EPs in the development of ASC and Hope will be discussed. Examining these relationships aims to provide valuable insights into supporting positive trajectories for emerging adults with ACEs as they navigate towards tertiary education during a pivotal developmental period.

1.2 Thematic Literature Review

This chapter will provide a thematic literature review, chosen to summarise existing research findings and synthesise the extensive body of knowledge related to ACEs and potential positive psychological constructs that may alleviate the adverse

impact of ACEs on individual's engagement with tertiary education. The decision to opt for a thematic review was rooted in the complexities of the subject matter, with several positive psychological constructs demonstrating potential in mitigating the effects of ACEs across various domains including education (Shudo et al., 2015; Waters, 2011). A systematic review was deemed inappropriate given that a well-defined research question could not be established prior to the review. The complexity of the topic necessitated a comprehensive exploration across multiple bodies of literature before framing well-defined research questions (Robinson & Lowe, 2015).

The primary objective of the review was to structure the existing literature around key positive psychological constructs demonstrating a possible capability in mitigating the adverse effects of ACEs in education (Collins & Fausser, 2005). This approach served to build upon the research in the wider research landscape (Snyder, 2019) and lay the foundation for the proposed research study (Onwuegbuzie, 2016), which, in turn, would inform the formulation of specific research questions (RQs). This exploration would then inform the selection of specific quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, enhancing the validity and comprehensiveness of the overall findings once an area to explore had been identified (Burrell-Craft, 2020). For a comprehensive understanding of the review's methodology, a detailed summary is provided in Table 1, providing insights into the search terms and the criteria used for inclusions and exclusion.

1.2.1 Search Strategy

It is recommended that a broad definition of key words for search terms should be utilised to gather a comprehensive coverage of the accessible literature (Bramer et

al., 2019). The literature review was carried out between August 2022 and October 2022 and again between September 2023 and November 2023. Key concepts and search terms were used to acquire literature that related to the distinct areas encompassed within the literature review. Searches included electronic data bases powered by EBSCO host, accessed through the University of East Anglia, and included APA Psycho Info, ERIC, Science Direct and the British Education Index as well as an internet search using Google Scholar.

Techniques for searching included the use of Boolean operators to narrow and widen initial searches such as 'adverse childhood experiences,: positive psychology', 'educational outcomes' (see Table 1 for comprehensive search strategy). In a similar approach to a systematic literature review process, literature titles were initially screened to determine relevance and abstracts were also reviewed where uncertainty remained. Both qualitative and mixed methods research studies were included to provide a balanced evaluation of the literature. Initial exclusion criteria were applied to the year of publication since the negative impact of ACEs across several domains were first realised within the study conducted by Felitti et al., (1998). Therefore, any publications pre-dating 1998 were disregarded. This cyclical process was repeated during each search following identification of recurring themes within the literature.

In undertaking this literature review a targeted focus was established by investigating potential positive psychological constructs that may be able to mitigate or buffer the negative impacts of ACEs. Both ASC and Hope have revealed potential to mitigate or buffer the effects of individual or cumulative ACEs, pointing to a bidirectional relationship that may have specific protective qualities (Sameroff, 2010), especially for individuals exposed to ACEs.

By identifying, understanding, and enhancing the intricate interplay between ASC, Hope and wider environmental factors, literature has demonstrated the potential positive impact in facilitating successful transitions to and engagement with tertiary education for those exposed to adversity, while disrupting the intergenerational cycle of ACEs (Leeson & Ciarrochi, 2010; Michie et al., 2001; Snyder, 2000). Since ASC and Hope often emerge through an individual's interactions within surrounding environments (Beld et al., 2019), educational contexts and systemic factors represent fitting areas for EPs to target in developing or bolstering these specific positive psychological constructs.

The review provides a critical overview of the relevant research by first exploring the negative impact of ACEs on educational outcomes. Additionally, it delves into the interplay between ACEs and socioeconomic factors and their impact upon education outcomes. The review examines frameworks for exploring the impact of ACEs on educational outcomes, whilst investigating the role PCEs may have in mitigating the negative impact of ACEs on educational outcomes. Furthermore, the review explores positive psychological concepts that may demonstrate mitigating effects on the negative impact of ACEs on educational outcomes. Lastly, it delves into the concepts of ASC and Hope, exploring their potential to moderate the negative impacts of ACEs on educational outcomes and support tertiary education engagement. This comprehensive exploration aims to contribute valuable insights into the complex interplay between ACEs and educational trajectories, offering a nuanced understanding of the factors that may facilitate or hinder tertiary educational engagement.

Table 1.*Comprehensive Literature Search Strategy*

Search	Search strategy in EBSCO	Search strategy in Google Scholar
Search 1	‘(adverse childhood experiences’ OR ‘ACE*’ OR ‘adversity’)	‘(adverse childhood experiences’ OR ‘ACE*’ OR ‘adversity’)
(Possible positive psychological constructs that may moderate the negative impact of ACEs on educational outcomes)	AND (‘positive psychology construct*’ OR ‘positive psychology’ OR ‘character strength’ OR ‘resilience’) AND (‘educational outcomes’ OR ‘education’ OR ‘academic achievement’ OR school performance’ OR ‘academic success’)	AND (‘positive psychology construct*’ OR ‘positive psychology’ OR ‘character strength’ OR ‘resilience’) AND (‘educational outcomes’ OR ‘education’ OR ‘academic achievement’ OR school performance’ OR ‘academic success’)
Search 2	‘(adverse childhood experiences’ OR ‘ACE*’ OR ‘adversity’)	‘(adverse childhood experiences’ OR ‘ACE*’ OR ‘adversity’)
(Positive psychological constructs that have the ability to moderate the negative impact of ACEs on educational outcomes)	AND ‘optimism’ OR ‘hope’, OR ‘Hope Theory’ OR ‘grit’, OR ‘academic self- concept’, OR ‘ASC’, OR ‘self-concept’ OR ‘gratitude’ OR ‘self-efficacy’ AND (‘educational outcomes’ OR ‘education’ OR ‘academic achievement’ OR school performance’ OR ‘academic success’)	AND ‘optimism’ OR ‘hope’, OR ‘Hope Theory’ OR ‘grit’, OR ‘academic self- concept’, OR ‘ASC’, OR ‘self-concept’ OR ‘gratitude’ OR ‘self-efficacy’ AND (‘educational outcomes’ OR ‘education’ OR ‘academic achievement’ OR school performance’ OR ‘academic success’)

Search 3	(‘adverse childhood experiences’ OR (Academic Self- ‘ACE*’ OR ‘adversity’))	(‘adverse childhood experiences’ OR (‘ACE*’ OR ‘adversity’))
Concept and Hope to moderate the negative impact of ACEs on educational outcomes)	AND ‘academic Self-Concept’ OR (‘academic self-concept’ OR ‘ASC’) AND ‘Hope’ OR Hope Theory’ AND ‘educational outcomes’ OR (‘education’ OR ‘academic achievement’ OR school performance’ OR ‘academic success’)	AND ‘academic Self-Concept’ OR (‘academic self-concept’ OR ‘ASC’) AND ‘Hope’ OR Hope Theory’ AND ‘educational outcomes’ OR (‘education’ OR ‘academic achievement’ OR school performance’ OR ‘academic success’)
Search 4	(‘adverse childhood experiences’ OR (Academic Self- ‘ACE*’ OR ‘adversities’ AND Concept and Hope to moderate the negative impact of ACEs on tertiary education engagement)	(‘adverse childhood experiences’ OR (‘ACE*’ OR ‘adversities’ AND (‘academic self-concept’ OR (‘academic self-concept’ OR ‘ASC’) AND ‘Hope’ OR ‘Hope Theory’ AND (‘Emerging Adulthood’ OR ‘Emerging Adult*’ AND ‘Tertiary Education’ OR (‘Higher Education’ OR ‘Education’ AND ‘Protective Factors’ OR ‘Positive Child Experiences’ OR ‘PCE*’)
		(‘adverse childhood experiences’ OR (‘ACE*’ OR ‘adversities’ AND (‘academic self-concept’ OR (‘academic self-concept’ OR ‘ASC’) AND ‘Hope’ OR ‘Hope Theory’ AND (‘Emerging Adulthood’ OR ‘Emerging Adult*’ AND ‘Tertiary Education’ OR (‘Higher Education’ OR ‘Education’ AND ‘Protective Factors’ OR ‘Positive Child Experiences’ OR ‘PCE*’)

1.3 Tertiary Education Engagement

Within the existing literature, there is a lack of consensus regarding a universally agreed upon definition of tertiary education engagement (Bowden et al., 2021). However, the term “engagement” in the context of tertiary education is often used

interchangeably with terms such as “student involvement”, “student experience” or “academic engagement” (Fredericks & McColskey, 2012; Khademi Ashkzari et al., 2018; Trowler, 2010). While definitions may vary, there seems to be a general understanding that tertiary education engagement encompasses effort, persistence, concentration, attention, thoughtfulness, and a willingness to exert mental effort (Fredericks et al., 2004), and is centred around the multiple interrelated dimensions of behaviour, affective, cognitive, and social engagement (Bowden et al., 2017).

Therefore, for the purpose of this literature review, tertiary education engagement will be defined as; an individual’s active participation and meaningful involvement in activities related to postsecondary learning and academic experiences. This can encompass cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and social forms of engagement.

1.4 Adverse Childhood Experiences

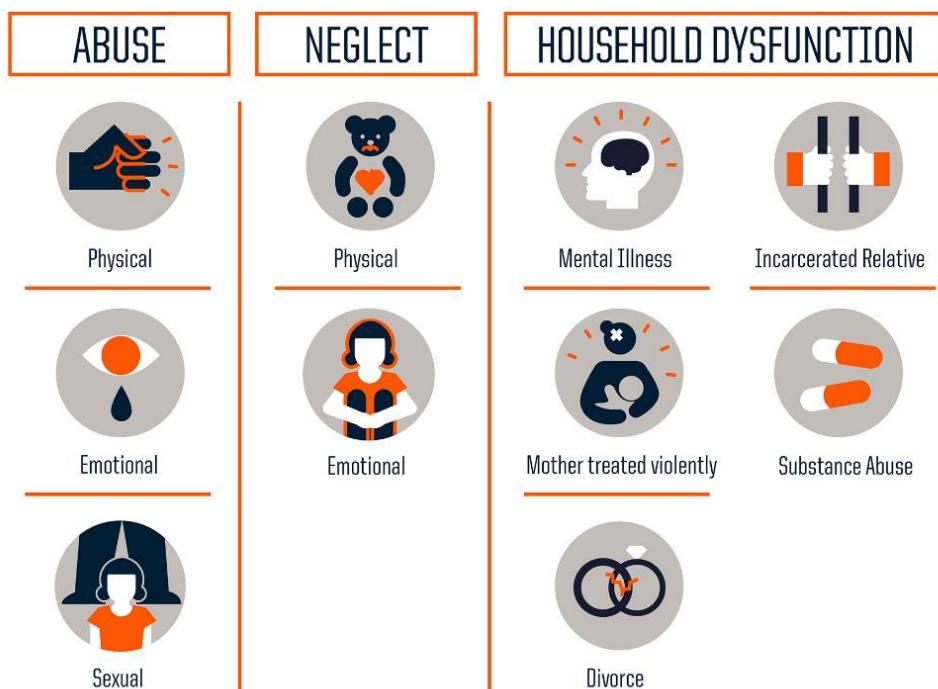
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have been consistently associated with enduring negative effects across various domains throughout an individual’s lifespan. Research indicates that childhood exposure to ACEs can significantly impact an individual’s health (Hughes et al., 2017), overall well-being (Boullier & Blair, 2018), educational achievements (Houtepen et al., 2018), economic opportunities (Schurer & Trajkovski, 2018), and subsequent opportunities across an individual’s lifespan (Metzler et al., 2017). Studies have revealed that individuals with a history of ACEs are approximately twice as likely to have lower educational qualifications (not achieved their A levels or have GCSE grades D-G) or not to be engaged in education, employment, or training at the age of 18 years old (Jaffe et al., 2018).

1.4.1 The Original ACEs Study

The original ACE study conducted by Felitti et al. (1998) focused on specific traumatic events, including childhood physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as physical and emotional neglect. This also included household dysfunction such as witnessing domestic violence, living with a substance-abusing or mentally ill household member, or having a family member incarcerated as a child (see Figure 1). Many researchers still use the categorisation model introduced by Felitti et al. (1998) to examine the impact of ACEs on various outcomes. This model classifies individuals based on the number of ACE exposures, typically using categories of one ACE, two ACEs, three ACEs, and four or more ACEs (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018).

Figure 1

Illustration showing the original 10 Adverse Childhood Experiences (Felitti., 1998).



Note. From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed via:

<https://docsfortots.org/aces/>

1.4.2 Criticality of the Original ACEs Study

While cumulative measures of ACEs have demonstrated their utility in predicting future health outcomes (Lanier et al., 2017; Merians et al., 2019; Turney, 2020), it is essential to acknowledge several critical limitations associated with the original ACEs framework. First, it is argued that the initial set of adversities is incomplete because it was not developed through a systematic process (Finkelhor et al., 2015). Furthermore, the specific events within the original ACEs study do not account for the duration or type of adversity, which can be essential factors in assessing their impact (Boullier & Blair, 2018).

Additionally, the specific events identified within the original ACEs study fail to encompass broader social determinants of adversity, such as socioeconomic factors, poverty, and systemic issues like racism (McEwen et al., 2019). It is noteworthy that the original ACEs study involved a study population consisting of predominantly white, college-educated individuals, which raises concerns about the generalisability of the findings to more diverse populations, with whom EPs may work.

Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that the original ACE study did not encompass key urban neighbourhood contextual factors or experiences linked to low income, such as food insecurity, homelessness, or overcrowded houses (Wade et al., 2016). In response to these limitations, recent ACE studies have evolved and expanded the scope of what constitutes an ACE, encompassing a wider range of adversities such as parental death, sibling and peer victimisation, property crimes, isolation, and social rejection by peers (Finkelhor et al., 2013; Finkelhor et al., 2015).

Despite these broader considerations, the link between identifiable potentially traumatic events in childhood and the aforementioned negative enduring effects has been repeatedly established within much of the literature (Kalmakis & Chandler,

2015; Metzler et al., 2017; Petrucelli et al., 2019). Of benefit to both researchers and policymakers may be the adoption of a more comprehensive and inclusive approach that encompasses a broader spectrum of adversities, not limited to those stemming solely from individual experiences, but also encompassing those rooted in broader social and structural factors. This broader perspective might enable professionals to gain a more nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between ACEs and their influence on various life outcomes (Finkelhor et al., 2015).

In the context of the United Kingdom, Edwards et al. (2017) highlighted several significant concerns related to the ACEs movement and its impact on effective early years interventions. The broader literature, as emphasised by Edwards et al., (2017) has criticised the ACEs movement for its deterministic, reductionist, and non-generalisable nature. Consequently, Edwards et al., (2017) feel that the emergence of one-dimensional, unsustainable, and inefficient solutions is at the forefront of the ACEs movement. It is argued that these solutions align more with the medical origins of the ACEs movement, diverting attention away from political, educational, and social psychology contexts, which focus on adopting an ecological systems perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Burden, 2017).

Despite its criticisms, the study completed by Felitti et al. (1998) was pioneering and holds a significant place in the field as it was the first to empirically establish what the medical field has labelled a “dose response relationship”. This term denotes the association between increased exposure to ACEs and progressively disadvantageous effects on health, well-being, economic prospects, and educational outcomes across the lifespan (Dube et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2017; Sparks et al., 2021). Subsequent research has reaffirmed these findings in diverse settings, including low-income countries (Ramiro et al., 2010), middle-income countries

(Almuneef et al., 2014), and high-income countries (Bellis et al., 2014), which has raised the profile of ACEs as a global issue of public health concern.

1.4.3 The Impact of ACEs Upon Educational Outcomes

The disadvantageous effects on educational outcomes for individuals who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs are well documented within the literature. Those who have experienced ACE exposure are more likely to face a range of educational challenges, including lower grades, increased school absenteeism and school suspensions (Stewart-Tefescu et al., 2022). Moreover, individuals with increased cumulative ACE exposure are at a higher risk of not completing their compulsory education (Duncan, 2000; Metzler et al., 2017). Additionally, these individuals tend to have reduced access to or engagement in post-secondary institutions (Mersky et al., 2013), whilst being less likely to remain in tertiary education when compared to their non-ACE counterparts (Duncan, 2000).

The impact of ACEs on educational outcomes is further evident in findings from the United Kingdom National Child Development Study. This study revealed that individuals who had experienced three or four or more ACEs showed reduced access to or engagement in university institutions (Balistreri & Alvira-Hammond, 2016). These findings align with the research conducted by Hughes et al. (2017), who found that achieving a university degree was associated with lower exposure to ACEs, more specifically, childhood abuse.

Furthermore, alarming trends emerge as individuals exposed to three or, four or more ACEs are more likely to report periods of unemployment throughout their lives (Metzler et al., 2017). These findings suggest that ACE exposure significantly influences educational outcomes throughout the lifespan, subsequently affecting an

individual's health, social, and economic opportunities, and their ability to fulfil their full potential, including participation in their communities and wider society (Metzler et al., 2017).

1.4.4 ACEs and Socioeconomic Factors

When considering the enduring negative impact of ACEs across various domains, it is important to consider the potential interactions between historical ACEs and other demographic factors that may further compound the negative outcomes, particularly concerning tertiary education engagement prior to and during emerging adulthood. Notably, individuals from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds are statistically less likely to pursue tertiary education (Boneva & Rauh, 2017; Wilks & Wilson, 2012). Even among those who do manage to access tertiary education, students from lower SES backgrounds tend to face a higher risk of not completing their degrees compared to their higher SES counterparts (Titus, 2006; Walpole, 2003). Consequently, for a comprehensive understanding of the pervasive long-term effects of ACEs, it is imperative to acknowledge the significant role that SES plays in influencing these outcomes.

1.4.4.1 Socioeconomic Disadvantage as a Significant Risk Factor for ACEs

ACEs have been discovered to exhibit a strong correlation with socioeconomic disadvantage (Jaffe et al., 2018; Marryat & Frank, 2019) and are significantly associated with economic outcomes later in life (Schurer & Trajkovski, 2018). Studies have consistently revealed that individuals with lower SES tend to report a higher prevalence of ACEs when compared to those with higher SES (Slack et al., 2017). Nonetheless, despite the clear evidence of socioeconomic disadvantage as a

significant risk factor for ACEs, and the bidirectional nature of this relationship, many policy agendas have yet to fully acknowledge and address the intricate interplay between ACEs and socioeconomic conditions (Houtepen et al., 2020). This is despite the fact that the original ten identified ACEs (Felitti et al. 1998) are very clearly socially patterned (Walsh et al., 2019).

Alarmingly, individuals from lower SES backgrounds exhibit twice the prevalence of experiencing four or more ACEs compared to individuals from higher SES backgrounds (Houtepen et al., 2020). This observation is noteworthy, given that the study conducted by Felitti et al. (1998) disregarded the impact of childhood SES within their ACE study (Schurer & Trajkovski, 2018). Since the study's publication, a clear and well-established relationship between SES, ACE exposure, and educational attainment has emerged within the literature (Metzler et al., 2017; Walsh et al., 2019).

1.4.4.2 Socioeconomic Status and its Impact Upon Wider Life Outcomes

In addition, adults from low SES backgrounds reporting histories of ACEs have been shown to exhibit lower levels of ASC, lower levels of Hope, reduced educational attainment, decreased adult opportunities, and limited life prospects (Covey et al., 2013; Kudrna et al., 2010). Consequently, the cycles of ACEs, characterised by socioeconomic disadvantage and all its associated challenges, is more likely to be continued generationally. This adds to the existing pressure from an education, social, healthcare, and economic perspective (Hughes et al., 2020).

Although capturing family SES is challenging; using objective SES measures such as parental education provides a robust indicator of SES, which is arguably more established than other facets of SES (Anderson et al., 2022). Robust correlations

exist between parental education levels and the likelihood of engaging with or pursuing tertiary education (Wilks & Wilson, 2012). Within the literature, there is a general consensus that individuals with parents classified as low SES, primarily due to limited education and subsequent underemployment, are at a higher risk of experiencing poor educational outcomes, unemployment, and lower incomes (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).

1.4.4.3 Addressing ACEs and Socioeconomic Status

This highlights the potentially cyclical and intergenerational effects of early ACEs and the need for public policy agendas to recognise and address socioeconomic factors in order to moderate the continuation of the intergenerational cycle of ACEs. If addressed appropriately, the effect on individuals from lower SES backgrounds could be minimised, whilst empowering individuals to pursue higher levels of academic achievement and increase their likelihood of engaging with or accessing tertiary education.

Socioeconomic disparities can significantly impact the development of children and adolescents (Li et al., 2020). Addressing these disparities has become a global research priority (Adler et al., 1993; Cohen et al., 2006; Stephens et al., 2012). Positive psychological constructs such as ASC and Hope, offer insights into potential factors that may moderate the adverse effects of SES on academic achievement and the likelihood of empowering individuals to engage with or access tertiary education.

Higher levels of Hope, characterised by a positive outlook and motivation to achieve goals, have been found to act as a potential mediator, helping to counteract the academic challenges associated with lower SES (Dixson et al., 2018). Furthermore, fostering higher levels of ASC in children has been found to improve

their academic performance in school and help to reduce the social inequalities they face when pursuing engagement in tertiary education (Li et al., 2020). When coupled with the potential mediating impact upon multiple negative effects of ACES, both ASC and Hope hold promise as two positive psychological constructs that may serve as 'buffers' against the long-term negative effects of both ACEs and SES. These constructs have the potential to empower individuals to overcome adversity, achieve academic success, and access more positive health, social, and economic opportunities throughout their lives.

1.5 Development of Theoretical Frameworks for Exploring the Impact of ACEs of Educational Outcomes.

A concise review of the theoretical frameworks developed to understand the impact of ACEs on educational outcomes is outlined below. The review focuses on four key frameworks: the biopsychosocial framework, the ecobiodevelopmental framework, the risk and resilience framework, and the ecological systems framework, showcasing the evolution of theoretical understanding over time. By integrating biological, psychological, social, ecological, and developmental perspectives, these frameworks provide a comprehensive approach to addressing the complex effects of ACEs on educational outcomes.

1.5.1 Biopsychosocial Framework

The biopsychosocial framework, originally proposed by Engel (1980), integrates biological, psychological, and social factors to explain health and developmental outcomes (Sheffler et al., 2020). This interdisciplinary approach highlights how ACEs disrupt normal developmental processes, leading to various health challenges. Over

the past two decades, the framework has been instrumental in linking ACEs to educational outcomes (Larkin et al., 2013). The framework has showcased how disruptions in biological systems due to ACEs can impair cognitive functions critical for learning and academic success (Herzog & Schmal, 2018), as well as being associated with a wide range of physical, behavioural, and mental health challenges throughout an individual's lifespan (Ranjbar & Erb, 2019).

1.5.2 Ecobiodevelopment Framework

The ecobiodevelopmental framework, introduced by Shonkoff et al. (2012), expands upon the biopsychosocial model by emphasising the interaction between ecological, biological, and developmental processes over time (Garner et al., 2012). The framework emerged in response to advancements in our understanding of human development and the growing body of evidence regarding the disruptive effects of childhood adversity and toxic stress (Shonkoff et al., 2012). The ecobiodevelopment framework further highlights the role of genetics and environmental factors in shaping responses to ACEs. It advocates for a more comprehensive view of development, emphasising the importance of protective factors such as Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) in mitigating the adverse effects of ACEs and promoting stronger foundations for educational achievement, economic prosperity, responsible citizenship, and lifelong health (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012).

1.5.3 Risk and Resilience Framework

The risk and resilience framework, rooted in developmental psychopathology, has evolved from seminal studies exploring positive adaptation in children facing

significant adversity (Masten, 2011) and ACEs (Giovanelli et al., 2019). This conceptual framework builds upon the ecobiodevelopmental framework and accentuates the interplay between risk and protective factors, offering profound insights into how individuals navigate and respond to challenging life experiences (Jensen et al., 2012). It emphasises how early adversity can be mitigated through the accumulation of protective factors and the cultivation of resilience across three broad sets of variables encompassing child characteristics, family dynamics, and external supports (Bellis et al., 2018; Daniel et al., 2020; Garmezy, 1985; Zhu et al., 2023). Moreover, these risk and resilience factors intricately weave into the broader social ecology of childhood, incorporating Bronfenbrenner's (1979) micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono systems and the interactions between each system (Wassel & Daniel, 2002).

1.5.4 Ecological Systems Framework

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) is one of the most influential and widely cited theories in the field of human development and educational psychology (Weisner, 2008). Although originating from developmental psychology, this theory has proven remarkably useful within the field of education, offering practical applications for constructing more conducive learning environments (Tony & An, 2024), as well as providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay between ACEs and various environmental influences on child development (Lopez et al., 2021).

Ecological system theory takes a holistic approach by considering the complex interplay between individuals and the various environmental systems in which they are embedded. It acknowledges the bidirectional relationships between individuals

and these contexts, as well as the intricate interactions among the contexts themselves (Hayes et al., 2017). The theory comprises of five interacting and overlapping systems that Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualised as contributing to the understanding of a child's developmental processes (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

A diagram of the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).



Note. From Lopez et al., 2021. Accessed via

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7897233/>

1.5.4.1 Microsystem

The microsystem, as conceptualised by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, encompasses the immediate environments and interpersonal relationships that directly influence an individual's development (Hosek et al., 2008; Maxwell, 2018). This innermost system comprises the domains of home, school, and community, fostering enduring interactions and relationships that exert a profound influence on an individual's life course (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Notably, many ACEs such as abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction, as well as PCEs, like feeling safe and protected at home, or being able to discuss feelings with family members, are rooted within the microsystem (Anda et al., 2006; Bethell et al., 2019; Felitti et al., 1998).

For individuals who have been exposed to ACEs, the microsystem plays a critical role in shaping their developmental trajectories and outcomes (Lopez et al., 2021). Research suggests that exposure to any ACE within this immediate context can have reciprocal and compounding effects, posing significant risks to a child's cognitive, social, and mental health development (Liming, 2018). The quality of relationships within the microsystem, particularly within the family environment, has been emphasised as a crucial factor influencing the psychological and social functioning of those who have experienced ACEs (Felitti et al., 1998). Positive and nurturing family dynamics, characterised by PCEs such as feeling loved and supported, have demonstrated the ability to mitigate the negative impacts associated with ACE exposure by promoting advantageous personal characteristics and adaptive coping strategies (Bethell et al., 2019; Masten, 2000). Conversely, dysfunctional family dynamics, defined by the presence of ACEs like abuse, neglect,

or household dysfunction, can have lasting detrimental impacts on an individual's health, social, educational, and economic potential (Metzler et al., 2017).

1.5.4.2 Mesosystem

The mesosystem represents the interconnectedness and interrelations among the various microsystems in an individual's life (Crawford, 2020). It encompasses the linkages and processes that occur between different immediate contexts, such as the interactions between family, school, and peer groups. For individuals who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs, the mesosystem serves as a crucial bridge, facilitating the integration and influence of these distinct microsystems on their development. Research has highlighted the significant impact that positive interactions and communication between key microsystems, such as families, peers, and educational settings, can have on students' overall well-being and functioning (Merchant et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that strong, supportive connections among these microsystems can act as a protective factor, mitigating the negative effects of ACE exposure through the promotion of resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms (DeLuca et al., 2018; Negriff et al., 2015).

1.5.4.3 Exosystem

The exosystem, as defined by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), encompasses the broader social systems and contexts that indirectly influence an individual's development, despite their lack of direct involvement within these settings (Hosek et al., 2018). Although individuals may not actively participate in the contexts of the exosystem, the interactions and processes that occur within this system can profoundly impact their opportunities, resources, and experiences within

their immediate microsystems (Neal & Neal, 2013). Research suggests that socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and disadvantage, which exhibit a strong correlation with ACEs (Jaffe et al., 2018; Marryat & Frank, 2018), are significant components of an individual's exosystem that can exacerbate the effects of ACEs on overall well-being (Evans et al., 2013).

However, the exosystem also presents opportunities for fostering PCEs (Bethell et al., 2019). By promoting community cohesion, providing accessible resources, and advocating for systemic changes, initiatives within the exosystem can help mitigate the impact of ACEs and promote more positive outcomes for individuals exposed to individual or cumulative ACEs (Anda et al., 2006). This highlights the importance of examining the broader societal, cultural, and systemic factors that can perpetuate disparities across contexts for ACE-exposed individuals.

1.5.4.4 Macrosystem

The macrosystem, as conceptualized in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, encompasses the overarching cultural values, societal norms, and ideological patterns that shape and influence the various other systems (Crawford, 2020; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This system creates a framework of interaction and influences the dynamics within and across the microsystems, mesosystems, and exosystems. Cultural attitudes and societal beliefs within the macrosystem can significantly impact how ACEs are perceived, understood, and addressed within a given society (Duerden & Witt, 2010; Neal, 2013). It is within this broader context that opportunities for advocacy, policies, and initiatives aimed at influencing the microsystems of individuals affected by ACEs can be developed and implemented (Lopez et al., 2021).

Additionally, the macrosystem plays a crucial role in promoting PCEs, which research has shown to have a mitigating impact on the negative outcomes associated with ACEs (Bethell et al., 2019). By fostering societal awareness, challenging stigmas, and promoting supportive cultural norms, the macrosystem can facilitate the creation of environments that nurture resilience and promote positive development for individuals who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs (Crandall et al., 2019; Kokaturk & Cicek, 2023; Shaw et al., 2022).

1.5.4.5 Chronosystem

The chronosystem, introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1979), represents the dimension of time and its influence on human development within the ecological systems framework (Crawford, 2020). This system delves into how environmental changes and transitions across the lifespan shape an individual's developmental trajectory (Liao et al., 2007). By considering both normative (anticipated) and non-normative (unexpected) life transitions, the chronosystem sheds light on the dynamic nature of human development and the interplay between various contextual factors over time (Hosek et al., 2008). These transitions can indirectly influence development by altering the contexts in which individuals interact and grow.

Significantly, exposure to chronic stressors or toxic stress as a result of experiencing individual or cumulative ACEs over an extended period can have profound impacts on physical and psychological well-being, leading to long-term health disparities and developmental challenges (Shonkoff et al., 2012). However, the chronosystem also presents opportunities for fostering PCEs that may enhance personal characteristics, such as perseverance and resilience, enabling individuals affected by ACEs to cope more positively with adversity.

Furthermore, the chronosystem offers avenues for personal growth and development through theories such as Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), which refers to the potential positive psychological and behavioural changes experienced by some individuals who have endured trauma or adversities (Malhotra & Chebiyan, 2016). By considering the temporal dimension, the chronosystem highlights the importance of recognising and addressing the long-term impacts of ACEs while simultaneously creating opportunities for positive experiences and personal growth throughout an individual's lifespan.

1.6 Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)

It is important to note that not every child or young person who experiences ACEs will be subjected to the numerous negative long-term impacts (Bethell et al., 2016; Moore & Ramirez, 2016). Many young people are able to successfully manage and overcome adversities faced within their childhood as a result of experiencing PCEs.

PCEs encompass a spectrum of positive events, activities, or circumstances that contribute to enriching a child's life and yielding positive health and developmental outcomes (Sege & Browne, 2017). PCEs include concepts such as family-child communication, feeling supported by family, participation in community/family traditions, feeling a sense of belonging/engagement in school, support from friends, participating in organised activities and having adult role models (Baglivio et al., 2020; Bethell et al., 2019) (see Figure 3). These positive encounters play a pivotal role in mitigating the potential negative effect of adversity or ACES across an individual's life course.

Figure 3

Diagram showing the 7 Positive Childhood Experiences (Bethell et al., 2019).



Note. From Messosolutions Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACES).

Accessed via: <https://www.mezzosolutions.com/paces>

1.6.1 PCEs and promoting positive outcomes across the lifespan.

The traditional ACE framework (Felitti et al., 1998) is exclusively focused on negative and adverse experiences in childhood and their link to negative outcomes in later life (Anda et al., 2008; Dube, 2001; Felitti et al., 1998). However, findings from previous research point to the importance of better understanding the potential of PCEs to buffer the effects of ACEs across the life span (Bellis et al., 2018, Bethell et al., 2019; Hillis et al., 2010).

Empirical evidence suggests that PCEs play an important role in promoting healthy physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development, operating as both protective factors and promotive factors (Bethell et al., 2019; Crandall et al., 2020; Narayan et al., 2018; Zimmerman, 2013). Consequently, PCEs have been associated with changing life trajectories, enabling individuals to experience more positive outcomes across their lifespan within varying domains (Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000; Walker et al., 2011). This paradigm shift towards recognising and further understanding the dual impact of ACEs and PCEs, contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay of factors shaping individuals' life courses.

1.6.2 PCEs and their impact on positive psychological traits

Increased PCEs have been associated with more advantageous positive psychological traits (Crandall et al., 2019; Kokaturk & Cicek, 2023; Shaw et al., 2022). Children's internal assets and resources, fostered by increased PCEs, play a pivotal role in promoting competent development and serve as a robust buffer against the negative impact of ACEs (Han et al., 2023). This has prompted a call from researchers to contribute further to the ongoing discourse, delving into the impact of PCEs on key positive psychological traits, including Hope, Optimism, ASC, Grit, Self-Efficacy, and Resilience. A more comprehensive understanding of the influences of these traits in later life is essential for understanding the intricate dynamics between PCES and long-term psychological well-being and health factors (Kokaturk & Cicek, 2021; Tanhan, 2019; Tanhan et al., 2020; Yildirim & Tanriverdi., 2021).

1.6.3 Criticality of Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)

While the concept of PCEs has gained significant attention for its potential to mitigate the adverse effects of ACEs and promote positive developmental outcomes, it is not without its critiques. A primary concern relates to the methodological limitations prevalent in existing PCE research. Studies by Bethell et al. (2019), Crandall et al., (2019), Narayan et al., (2018), and Yu et al., (2022) have proposed the potential of cumulative advantageous experiences to mitigate the negative impact of ACEs. However, these studies were predominantly cross-sectional and did not specifically examine young adult health (Crandall et al., 2020). This limitation hinders the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationship between PCEs and positive outcomes, highlighting the need for more rigorous longitudinal research to establish causality and better understand the mechanisms through which PCEs exert their effects (Sege & Brown, 2017).

The measurement and conceptualisation of PCEs has also been a subject of debate. PCEs are considered more subjective and challenging to quantify consistently compared to ACEs (Yu et al., 2022). This challenge is exacerbated by the lack of a universally agreed-upon definition of PCEs, complicating cross-study comparisons and the formulation of definitive conclusions (Charite et al., 2023). Critics argue that current frameworks for assessing PCEs may be overly reductionist, failing to capture the complexity and multifaceted nature of positive childhood experiences (Hasina Samji et al., 2024). For instance, Bethell et al. (2019) utilise a set of predefined positive experiences, such as feeling safe at school or having supportive relationships with adults. While valuable, this approach may not encompass the full spectrum of experiences contributing to a child's development. This simplified approach risks overlooking the nuanced and varied ways children

experience and interpret positive interactions and environments, echoing similar concerns raised in the ACEs literature (Edwards et al., 2017).

Furthermore, specific measurements and conceptualisations of PCEs have been criticised as culturally biased, often favouring Western cultural norms (Narayan et al., 2018). Bethell et al's, (2019) study, for example, identifies positive experiences such as involvement in community traditions or the presence of supportive adult relationships, which may reflect Western cultural values. This cultural bias can marginalize or overlook positive experiences that are more relevant or significant in non-Western contexts (Crandall et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2022). Such cultural biases not only limit the generalisability of the findings across diverse populations but also risk perpetuating a narrow view of what constitutes a 'positive' childhood experience (Crouch et al., 2021).

1.7 Positive Psychological Concept of Hope.

Positive psychology came to fruition as a distinct domain in a similar period to the findings of the original ACE study (Felitti et al., 1998), with Hope theory becoming synonymous with this branch of psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Although they initially shared distinct trajectories, they have, over time, developed causality with one another. Traditional psychology has historically focused on understanding pathology and identifying weaknesses or maladaptive functioning (Pajares & Schunk, 2001), which has ultimately led to a limited understanding of the complete human condition (Sheldon & King, 2001). In contrast, positive psychology places emphasis on the exploration of human strengths and optimal functioning, recognising a more holistic understanding of human experiences within the field of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

1.7.1 Hope Theory (Snyder, 2002)

The concept of Hope and Hopelessness is one aspect of positive psychology that has been explored extensively by Snyder (2002). Since proposed to the psychological community, an increasing amount of research has indicated the importance of Hope as a psychological trait in both managing and mitigating the negative impact of ACEs over time (Baxter et al., 2017; Hellman & Gwinn, 2017; Munoz, 2022; Spark et al., 2021). McGeer (2004) proposed that Bruner's (1983) concept of scaffolding is the mechanism by which Hope is developed, through caregiver emotional support and external factors which align with several PCEs identified within the literature. Furthermore, research suggests a pivotal role for schools in nurturing essential positive psychological traits such as Hope and resilience (Kirby et al., 2021; Neville et al., 2021; Shaw et al., 2021; Ungar et al., 2017). Consequently, the interplay between Hope, PCEs and educational environments provides a rich ecological context for the involvement of EPs in fostering positive psychological development in children and adolescents as a mechanism to promote Resilience and the capability of mitigating the negative impact of ACE exposure.

1.7.2 Hope and its Potential Ability to Mitigate the Negative Impact of ACEs.

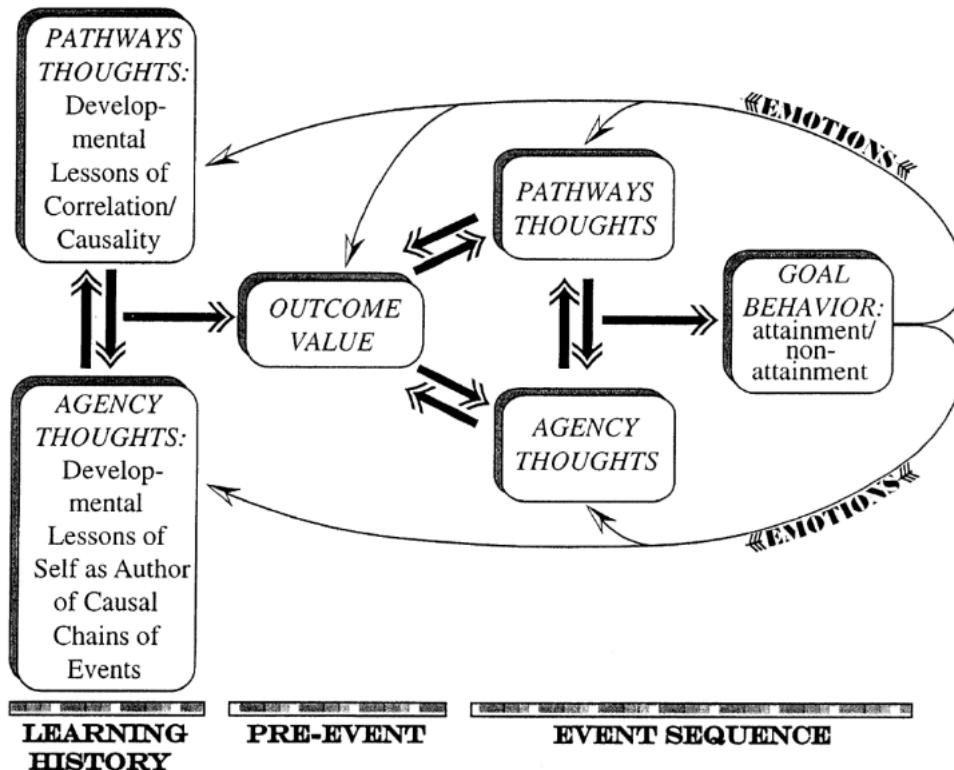
The construct of Hope has become a prominent character in the positive psychology family (Allan, 2014). Despite this, the theme of children's Hope has been given very little attention in psychological research and theory until more recent developments (Baxter et al., 2017; Hellman & Gwinn, 2017; Spark et al., 2021). This newfound focus on children's Hope holds significant potential, as Hope may have the capacity to influence various aspects of a child's life affected by adversity or ACEs,

which can have a resounding impact on the negative effects throughout adolescence, emerging adulthood, and adulthood (Spark et al., 2021). Several studies have found significant associations between ACE exposure and a negative impact on both children and adults' levels of Hope (Munoz et al., 2019; Esteves et al., 2013). Furthermore, high levels of Hope tend to enable individuals with ACEs to construct a more positive narrative of their future selves and environments, shaping a framework for approaching future outcomes (Cabrera et al., 2009).

Increasing interest in the affective dimensions of human life has led to the research around Hope becoming progressively more significant and multifaceted (Snyder, 2000). As a response, Snyder (1994) recognised the need for a more focused definition of Hope, leading to the formulation of the concept of 'Hopeful thought', which is now the predominant Hope theory extensively employed within the literature (Snyder, 2002). This conceptualisation defines Hope as a cognitive set of beliefs in one's ability to produce one of several pathways to desired goals (pathway thoughts) and the perceived capacity to employ these pathways to achieve those goals (agency) (Snyder, 2005) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Diagram showing the schematic of Feed-forward and Feed-back functions involving Agency and Pathway Goal-directed Thoughts in Hope Theory (Snyder, 2002).



Note. From the Handbook of Positive Psychology (Snyder & Lopez., 2002).

Possessing a lack of Hope can significantly shape an individual's perception of their environment and life within that environment (Bonelli et al., 2012). Within a school context, ASC is another integral positive psychological construct which often emerges from an individual's experiences and interactions with their environment (Beld et al., 2019). There exists a noteworthy bi-directional relationship between high levels of Hope and improved ASC and vice versa. Being able to determine evidence-based practices that support and improve outcomes for individuals who have experienced cumulative or prolonged ACEs is a current objective for psychologists and professionals influenced by governmental and public agendas (Finklehorn,

2018). Recognising and addressing the interplay between Hope, ASC, ACEs and PCEs lays the foundation for EPs as key contributors in developing informed interventions aimed at promoting positive psychological development and well-being for children and young people.

While there exists a recognised reciprocal relationship between ASC and Hope, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the influence of ACEs and PCEs on these constructs. Research suggests that ASC, crucial for academic achievement and resilience to adversity (Dixson et al., 2016; Synder, 2000) also plays a pivotal role in tertiary educational engagement (Michie et al., 2001). Furthermore, studies have indicated that students with higher ASC demonstrate greater efficacy in developing their pathway thinking towards their academic objectives (Shen et al., 2021), a key component of Hope theory that reiterates the interconnectedness of ASC and Hope.

1.7.3 Goals Within Hope Theory

Snyder (2002) described Hope Theory as a 'Trilogy' of components consisting of goals, pathway thoughts and agency. The goal component of Hope Theory is often described as the cognitive anchor of Hopeful thinking, defined as human actions that provide targets of mental action sequence (Snyder 1993, 1994, 2002). Within Hope Theory, goals tend to serve three functions.

Firstly, they provide a context for particular pathways and agency thoughts. Secondly, goals provide a basis of which to measure outcomes. Thirdly, the achievement or non-achievement of goals can provide essential feedback about individual goal pursuit abilities (Cheavens et al., 2019). Overtime it is the feedback element which informs individuals subsequent agency and pathway thinking, which

in turn can influence an individual's future levels of Hope, their subsequent academic achievement, and therefore their ASC within an educational context (Chen et al., 2020). These interconnected elements are pivotal components in the pursuit of engaging in or with tertiary education.

1.7.4 Pathway Thoughts Within Hope Theory

The pathway thoughts component of Hope refers to how individuals perceive the ways in which they are able to reach or attain the goal that they have set (Snyder, 2002). Pathway thoughts involve the perception of oneself as proficient in utilising numerous pathways to achieve a particular goal, as well as the perception of oneself as proficient in overcoming unanticipated events and selecting new pathways when this materialises (Dixson, 2019). This is of primary importance in the context of adversity or ACEs whereby individuals with a history of ACEs may face unexpected challenges or setbacks that necessitate adaptability in navigating new pathways towards more positive outcomes.

High Hope individuals tend to think positively about themselves, setting higher goals and more of them. In comparison, low Hope individuals tend to set easy or extremely difficult goals whilst experiencing negative emotions when pursuing their goals (Snyder, 1994). Furthermore, children who have experienced ACEs have shown remarkable perseverance and increased pathways thinking when given social support (Truebridge, 2016), further demonstrating the impact PCE exposure can have in potentially mitigating the negative impacts of ACE exposure.

1.7.5 Agency Within Hope Theory

The second component of the affective motivational constitutes of Hope theory is agency thinking (Snyder, 2002). Within this element, individuals exert the mental energy required to pursue the paths envisioned within the pathway thinking element, in order to reach their intended goals (Snyder, 2002). This component of Hope theory is significant as it plays a meaningful role when individuals encounter barriers, unanticipated events, or adversities within their life (Snyder et al., 2017).

Just like ASC, the two affective motivational constitutes of Hope are assessed and re-assessed continuously as individuals utilise feedback information from the environment in pursuit of their goals (Bailey et al., 2007). Negative events in children's environments such as those categorised by ACEs can have a negative impact upon their motivation, engagement in education, and subsequent Hopelessness related to their future career goals (Baxter et al., 2017; Marsh and Ronda., 2002).

The reciprocal relationship between agentic thinking and pathway thinking inherently influences levels of Hope (Snyder, 2002). Individuals who have experienced adversity or ACEs may often display lower levels of Hope due to challenges or disruptions in both agentic and pathway thinking. However, it is noteworthy that these individuals can still enhance their agentic thinking and subsequently increase their levels of Hope when provided with environments conducive to growth and support, particularly those enriched with PCEs (Munoz et al., 2019). Further exploration into the protective role of PCEs in fostering positive psychological constructs such as ASC and Hope holds significant promise in developing effective intervention strategies for individuals negatively affected by ACEs.

Although the exploration of Hope in the context of ACEs is relatively recent, research and theory over the last two decades suggests that the positive construct of Hope not only enables but also encourages adaptive behaviours, fosters healthy development, and contributes to both psychological and social well-being (Cotton Bronk et al., 2009). In the context of ACEs, Hope holds promise as a potential tool for understanding and mitigating the impact of ACEs overtime (Munoz et al., 2019), providing more positive outcomes and trajectories for individuals with cumulative ACE exposure.

1.7.6 Criticality of Hope Theory

While Snyder's Hope Theory (2002) has made significant contributions to the field, it has not been without criticism. A central concern revolves around the theory's foundation in a liberal individualist sociohistorical context, which results in a predominantly individual-centric approach (Colla et al., 2022). This perspective has been critiqued for oversimplifying the complex nature of Hope, which is believed to be influenced by an interplay of cognitive, emotional, and social factors (Pleeging et al., 2021). Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) further emphasise that the theory's focus on personal agency and cognitive processes fails to adequately account for the social contexts that shape perceptions and events. They further argue that an individual's level of Hope may be significantly influenced by the appraisals of others within their social environment, a factor not sufficiently addressed in Snyder's model.

The cultural universality of Snyder's Hope Theory (2002) has also been called into question. Critics argue that the theory is framed within an individualistic Western cultural paradigm, emphasising personal goal-setting and individual achievement (Du & King, 2013). This orientation may limit its applicability to more collectivist

cultures, where communal goals and support systems play a more pivotal role in fostering Hope (Chang & Banks, 2007). As a result, the universal application of Snyder's Hope Theory may fail to capture significant cultural variations in how Hope is experienced, expressed, and cultivated across different societies. This cultural bias highlights the necessity for a more nuanced and inclusive conceptualisation of Hope that incorporates diverse cultural perspectives and value systems (Colla et al., 2022).

1.8 Positive Psychology and Academic Self-Concept (ASC)

The construct of ASC refers to a combination of an individual's own cognitive and affective judgements about their academic abilities as well as their perception of how others perceive them (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Similarly, to the positive psychological construct of Hope, ASC is often formed through individual experiences and interactions within the environment which they are a part of (Beld et al. 2019). More importantly within an educational context, ASC can be influenced by judgements made in adolescence by peers, teachers, or parents which can have lasting impressions, both positive and negative, well into emerging adulthood and beyond (Gniewosz et al., 2014). It is important to note, however, that ASC is fluid and can be influenced by both past and current academic and wider experiences as well as future hopes (Dunkel et al., 2010).

1.8.1 The Formation of ASC

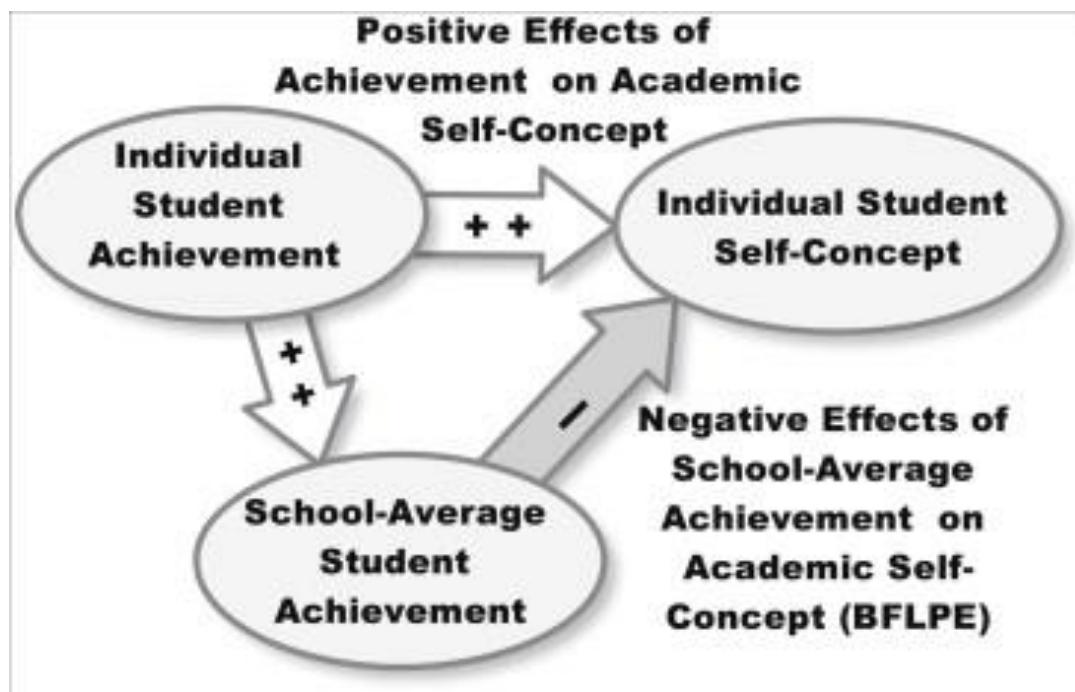
The Big Fish Little Pond Effect (BFLPE), proposed by Marsh (1984), is one of the most influential theories used within Educational Psychology to understand how individual ASC is formed within an educational context (Fang et al., 2018). ASC has

been shown to be influenced not solely by academic performance, but also by social comparisons (Marsh et al., 1995; Niepel et al., 2014; Parker et al., 2013), highlighting the multifaceted ecological nature of the formation of ASC (see Figure 5).

Furthermore, ASC has been shown to vary as students move through academic levels, with a tendency to be positively associated with academic achievement (Jacobs et al., 2002; Liu et al., 2005). Interestingly, ASC has been shown to fall dramatically between primary and secondary school, highlighting a key transition point which could be specifically targeted by EPs to develop and maintain higher levels of ASC (Postigo et al., 2022).

Figure 5

Conceptual model of the Big Fish Little Pond Effect (Marsh & Seaton, 2015).



Note: Taken from The Big-Fish–Little-Pond Effect, Competence Self-perceptions, and Relativity: Substantive Advances and Methodological Innovation (Marsh & Seaton, 2015).

The BFLPE is primarily based on the assumption that students use some form of external frame of reference to form their ASC (Dai & Rimm, 2008). The BFLPE hypothesizes that individuals compare their own academic accomplishments with that of their peers and subsequently utilise this social comparison or external frame of reference as a basis for developing their own ASC (Marsh & Hau, 2003). This has been substantiated within several studies demonstrating that individuals tend to compare their ability with the average ability of their group when developing or formulating their own ASC (Marsh, 1987; Plieninger & Dickhauser, 2015).

This is important to note as individuals who have experienced ACEs are more likely to have lower academic achievement (Bellis et al., 2018; Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018; Stewart-Tufescu et al., 2022) and compare themselves more negatively than their non-ACE counterparts (Chen et al., 2022; Oshri et al., 2015; Shatnawi & Ma'abreh, 2022). Consequently, having a negative impact upon the formation of their ASC, academic achievement and subsequent engagement or ability to engage with tertiary education through a decreased likelihood of obtaining the qualifications required (Moulton et al., 2016). Interestingly, literacy-specific ASC has been shown to be a stronger predictor of engagement with tertiary education than performance alone (Moulton et al., 2016)

Many studies support the BFLPE and have replicated the original findings (Becker & Neumann, 2016; Marsh et al., 2005; Marsh & Hau, 2003; Seaton, 2009). These studies have demonstrated the generalisability of the original findings over a wide variety of different individuals, contexts, settings, and countries, whilst employing various research designs (Marsh et al., 2008). The implications drawn from these findings are particularly significant in understanding the role of ASC as a facilitator in tertiary education engagement. A distinct connection emerges between higher ASC

and higher academic achievement which is a fundamental factor and often a prerequisite for meeting grade and course requirements necessary for tertiary education engagement.

1.8.2 ASC, Academic performance, and Engagement with Tertiary Education

Individuals with a high ASC have shown higher levels of intrinsic motivation to participate in tertiary education and therefore experience the developmental period of emerging adulthood (Michie et al., 2001). As a result, individuals with higher ASC tend to display improved academic performance in comparison to individuals with a lower ASC (Ghazvini, 2011; Guay et al., 2004; Marsh & Martin., 2013).

The reciprocal relationship between ASC and academic performance has been well documented within the literature (Valentine et al., 2004). Recognising this interplay is crucial, as low ASC can adversely affect motivation, overall academic achievement, and the pursuit of career goals throughout an individual's lifetime. This impact may lead to the early adoption of adulthood through the avoidance or non-engagement with tertiary education (Green et al., 2012; Jaiswal & Choudhuri, 2017).

Given that ACE individuals are approximately twice as likely to have lower educational qualifications (Jaffe et al., 2018), perceive themselves more negative (Oshri et al., 2015), and experience a range of negative social outcomes, it becomes evident that ACE exposure during childhood can significantly impact upon an individual's ASC. It is important to note, however, that ACEs do not happen in isolation and the impact upon their ASC may vary according to other contextual factors (Fagan & Novak, 2018; Negriff, 2020).

1.8.3 Criticality of ASC and the BFLPE Model

While ASC is widely acknowledged for its significant impact on academic achievement, motivation, and overall student well-being (Ghazvini, 2011; Guay et al., 2004; Marsh & Martin, 2013; Michie et al., 2001), critical perspectives have emerged, highlighting several limitations in its conceptualisation, measurement, and application. A primary critique centres on the characterisation of ASC as a predominantly individual construct, potentially obscuring the broader socio-cultural factors that shape academic self-perceptions. Wigfield and Eccles (2000) emphasise the crucial role of social influences, including teacher expectations, peer comparisons, and parental attitudes, in the development of ASC. They argue that the focus on ability beliefs may overshadow other vital factors influencing motivation and achievement, such as interest, values, and goals (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Furthermore, the formation of ASC through social comparison behaviours is influenced by developmental stages and cognitive maturity, aspects not fully addressed by the BFLPE model (Nicholls & Miller, 1984; Ruble & Flett, 1988). This developmental variation presents significant challenges in accurately measuring ASC, particularly in younger populations (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Further complicating this picture, studies by Butler (1992) and Regner et al. (2007) suggest that social comparison is not a passive, uniform process but rather an active, context-dependent phenomenon influenced by individual goals. This perspective further challenges the BFLPE model's assumption of situationally imposed comparison standards, suggesting a more complex interplay between individual agency and environmental factors in shaping ASC. Marsh et al. (2012) extend this critique, arguing that conventional ASC measures often fall short in capturing the dynamic and context-sensitive nature of ASC. They contend that an individual's ASC can fluctuate in response to experiences, feedback, and

environmental changes, a fluidity that static measurement approaches may overlook. This limitation can potentially lead to incomplete or misleading conclusions about an individual's self-perception and academic potential. Collectively, these critiques highlight the necessity for developing more sophisticated, context-sensitive methodologies for understanding and assessing ASC. Such approaches should account for the construct's fluidity across diverse educational settings and developmental stages, thereby providing a more comprehensive and accurate representation of students' academic self-perceptions and their potential impact on educational outcomes.

1.9 Conclusion

To summarise, this literature review has provided a comprehensive analysis of the complex interplay between ACEs, PCEs, ASC, Hope, and engagement in tertiary education. ACEs have been consistently linked to enduring negative impacts across multiple life domains, including reduced educational attainment and tertiary education engagement (Mersky et al., 2013; Metzler et al., 2017). However, PCEs have demonstrated their ability to mitigate these negative effects by promoting and nurturing positive psychological traits such as ASC and Hope (Bethell et al., 2019; Crouch et al., 2020).

ASC and Hope represent two pivotal internal assets that can be fostered through a range of PCEs and have the ability to potentially disrupt the cyclical nature of negative outcomes associated with ACEs. By cultivating motivational thought patterns, perceived competence, and positive academic self-perceptions, ASC and Hope can enable individuals to construct more optimistic visions for their future and academic/career trajectories (Guay et al., 2004; Snyder, 2002). Conversely, the constructs of ASC and Hope are yet to be explored as a combination of positive

psychological constructs that may offer a unique advantageous perspective when supporting children and young people exposed to both individual and cumulative ACEs.

This review has synthesised theories, models, frameworks, and empirical evidence demonstrating the interconnected, reciprocal nature of ASC, Hope, and tertiary educational engagement. Their emergence from social ecologies as highlighted by the biopsychosocial framework, ecobiodevelopment framework, risk and resilience framework, and ecological systems framework, renders both ASC and Hope as malleable constructs that can be targeted by individual, systemic, and strategic support, which fundamentally aligns with the role and responsibilities of an EP. Having considered several appropriate frameworks and models, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems framework (1979) will be the framework utilised to explore and organise findings within the empirical chapter due to its comprehensive approach in examining the complex interplay between multiple environmental systems and individual development.

Environmental factors play such a crucial role in the development of both ASC and Hope and a number of frameworks and models have been explored to help understand the impact of ACEs across an individual's lifespan. For individuals facing cumulative ACEs, targeted efforts to enhance ASC and Hope may empower them to overcome obstacles, boost academic achievement, and increase engagement in tertiary education. This engagement can provide individuals with expanded opportunities and improved wellbeing across their lifespans (Hughes et al., 2017; Raghupathi & Raghupathi, 2018).

As key systems-level collaborators, EPs are optimally positioned to employ contextualised, multi-tiered approaches aimed at fostering the positive psychological

constructs of ASC and Hope at individual, systemic, and strategic levels. Further efforts to understand the positive impact of ASC and Hope when faced with individual or cumulative ACEs should be of primary importance. Additional research around key individual and contextual factors within education that can influence ASC and Hope both positively and negatively will also be a vital component in arming EPs with tools and targeted interventions or programmes to help enhance PCEs and bolster ASC and Hope in a range of children and young people throughout their educational experience. Furthermore, additional research delving into the nuanced influences of ACEs, PCEs, SES, and cultural factors would further strengthen these initiatives and shed further light on how EPs would be best placed to support children and young people moving forward.

Overall, promoting adaptive motivational outlooks through ASC and Hope development represents a promising protective approach, with implications for policies, practice, and academic outcomes.

2.0 Empirical Chapter

2.1 Abstract

This research aimed to further understand the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs), Academic Self-Concept (ASC), and Hope, as well as to explore key mechanisms that enable individuals to maintain higher levels of ASC and Hope despite varied childhood experiences. Using a mixed methods' design, the study was conducted in two phases. In phase one, 28 participants completed an online questionnaire, identifying individuals with higher levels of ASC and Hope and varied childhood experiences. In phase two, six of these participants were interviewed in semi-structured interviews, with transcripts analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Findings revealed that cumulative exposure to ACEs influences levels of Hope but not ASC. Neither Hope nor ASC were significantly influenced by PCEs, and the interaction between the number of ACEs and PCEs significantly influenced levels of Hope but not ASC. These results suggest that the observed bidirectional relationship between ASC and Hope may be less prominent than previously anticipated. The study recommends future research to include longitudinal studies to explore the dynamic nature of these factors over time, investigating whether the nature, severity, or timing of ACEs/PCEs have differential influences. Additionally, there is a need to expand the conceptualisation of what constitutes an ACE or PCE. The findings also highlight the potential role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) in supporting children and young people across multiple systems who have experienced individual and cumulative ACEs.

2.2 Introduction

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) represent an important area of inquiry within the field of educational psychology, with profound implications for individual development and well-being (Kalmakis & Chandler, 2015; Metzler et al., 2017; Petrucelli et al., 2019). The 10 categories of ACEs as defined by Felitti et al. (1998) encompass a range of traumatic events and adverse circumstances experienced during childhood, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. The study identified these experiences as significant predictors of negative outcomes across various domains, shaping the trajectory of individuals' lives from childhood through to adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998).

Notably, research has consistently linked childhood exposure to ACEs with adverse effects of health (Boullier & Blair, 2018), well-being (Houtepen et al., 2018), educational attainment (Hughes et al., 2017), economic prospects (Metzler et al., 2017) and overall life opportunities (Schurer & Trajkovski, 2018). The seminal work of Felitti et al., (1998) lay the foundation for understanding the prevalence and consequences of ACEs, revealing what the medical field has labelled a "dose response relationship", wherein increased exposure to ACEs correlated with progressively negative outcomes across an individual's lifespan (Dube et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2017; Sparks et al., 2021).

However, while the original ACE framework provided valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations and evolving perspectives in subsequent research. Criticisms have been raised regarding the completeness of the original ACE categorisation, as well as its failure to account for the duration, type, and broader social determinants of adversity (Boullier & Blair., 2018; Finklehor et al., 2015; McEwen et al., 2019). Furthermore, concerns have been raised about the

generalisability of findings to diverse populations and the potential for deterministic and reductionist interpretations within the ACEs movement (Edwards et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, the enduring significance of ACEs in shaping life outcomes cannot be understated. Subsequent research has reaffirmed the association between ACE exposure and a myriad of negative outcomes, transcending geographical and socioeconomic boundaries (Almuneef et al., 2014; Bellis et al., 2004; Dube et al., 2003; Ramiro et al., 2010). Of particular concern are the implications of ACEs for educational outcomes, with individuals exposed to ACEs experiencing higher rates of academic challenges, lower educational attainment, and reduced tertiary education engagement (Balistreri & Alvira-Hammond, 2016; Duncan, 2000; Mersky et al., 2013; Stewart-Tefescu et al., 2022).

Within the discourse of childhood adversity, the focus has historically revolved around the detrimental impacts of ACEs on long-term outcomes. However, emerging research reveals PCEs also profoundly shape trajectories by demonstrating the ability to mitigate the negative effects of adversity and ACEs across the life span (Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000; Walker et al., 2011). These experiences encompass a spectrum of factors, including supportive family dynamics, community engagement, school connectedness, and access to adult role models (Baglivio et al., 2020; Bethell et al., 2019). Notably, PCEs operate as both protective and promotive factors, exerting a profound influence on physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development (Bethell et al., 2019; Narayan et al., 2018).

Unlike the singular adversity focus of the original ACE framework, PCEs research highlights positive experiences having a buffering effect against adversity (Bellis et al., 2018). PCEs encourage supportive contexts that protect against negative outcomes and provide assets, enabling individuals to overcome challenges (Crandall

et al., 2020; Zimmerman, 2013). Additionally, PCEs help construct positive life trajectories by building competencies that empower self-fulfilment and tertiary education engagement (Crouch et al., 2021; Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000). By facilitating skills like socio-emotional adjustment, cognitive growth, and adaptive coping, PCEs allow adversity-exposed individuals to seize educational opportunities (Bethell et al., 2019).

The recognition of PCEs as potent influences on developmental outcomes represents a paradigm shift in understanding the complexities of childhood adversity. By acknowledging the dual impact of ACEs and PCEs (varied childhood experiences), a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interplay of factors shaping individual's life trajectories comes to fruition (Bethell et al., 2019). This paradigm shift demonstrates the importance of developing environments rich in positive experiences, thereby fostering more adaptive qualities that may enable individuals to engage with tertiary education.

Whilst the concept of PCEs has provided a paradigm shift in understanding the complexities of childhood adversity, it is not without its critiques. A primary concern relates to the methodological limitations prevalent in existing research. Several studies have predominantly been cross-sectional (Bethell et al., 2019; Crandall et al., 2019; Narayan et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2022), hindering the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationship between PCEs and positive outcomes (Crandall et al., 2020). This highlights the need for more rigorous longitudinal research to establish causality and explain the mechanisms through which PCEs exert their effects (Sege & Brown, 2017).

Furthermore, the measurement and conceptualisation of PCEs have been subjects of debate with critics arguing that current frameworks for assessing PCEs

may be overly reductionist, failing to capture the complexity and multifaceted nature of PCEs (Hasina Samji et al., 2024). Specific measurements and conceptualisations have been further criticised as culturally biased, often favouring Western cultural norms (Narayan et al., 2018). This bias can often overlook positive experiences that are more relevant or significant in non-Western contexts (Crandall et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2022). Such cultural biases not only limit the generalisability of findings across diverse populations but also risk perpetuating a narrow view of what constitutes a 'positive' childhood experience (Crouch et al., 2021).

Despite these criticisms, the exploration of PCEs and their interplay with ACEs has gained significant attention within the field of educational psychology over the last decade. Central to this discourse is the recognition of PCEs as potent influences of positive psychological traits such as ASC and Hope, among others. Research indicates that increased exposure to PCEs is associated with the cultivation of advantageous positive psychological traits, which may serve as internal assets and resources for children and adolescents (Crandall et al., 2019; Kokaturk & Cicek, 2023).

These positive traits, nurtured by supportive environments and meaningful relationships, play a pivotal role in promoting competent development and mitigating the negative impact of ACEs (Han et al., 2023). Consequently, future research directions indicated in the literature, emphasise the need to explore the influences of PCEs on key positive psychological traits, recognising their potential to shape long-term well-being and health outcomes and potential to support tertiary education engagement (Tanham et al., 2020; Yildirim & Tanriverdi, 2021).

The emergence of positive psychology, coinciding with the seminal ACE study, introduced a paradigm shift in understanding human experiences (Seligman &

Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Hope theory, a key concept in positive psychology, offers insights into the role of Hope as a psychological trait in managing and mitigating the impact of ACEs overtime (Snyder, 2022). Recent research highlights the significance of Hope in fostering adaptive behaviours among individuals exposed to ACEs, demonstrating its potential as a protective and promotive factor against the negative effects of ACEs (Munoz et al., 2019; Sparks et al., 2021).

Hope theory suggests that individuals possess cognitive beliefs in their ability, which facilitate pathways towards desired goals (Snyder, 2005). In the context of ACEs, possessing high levels of Hope enables individuals to construct positive narratives of their future selves, thereby mitigating the impact of adversity on developmental trajectories (Cabrera et al., 2019). Furthermore, the reciprocal relationship between agentic thinking and pathway thinking within Hope theory, demonstrates the role of supportive environments, enriched with PCEs, in fostering adaptive coping strategies among individuals with ACE exposure (Munoz et al., 2019).

While Snyder's Hope Theory (2002) has significantly contributed to the field, it faces criticism for its foundation in a liberal individualist context, potentially oversimplifying the complex nature of Hope influenced by cognitive, emotional, and social factors (Colla et al., 2022; Pleeging et al., 2021). Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) argue that the theory's focus on personal agency fails to adequately account for social contexts and the influence of others' appraisals. Furthermore, the theory's cultural universality is questioned, as its emphasis on individual goal setting and achievement may limit applicability to more collectivist cultures where communal goals are more central (Chang & Banks, 2007; Du & King, 2013). This cultural bias highlights the potential need for a more nuanced, inclusive conceptualisation of Hope

that incorporates diverse cultural perspectives and value systems, acknowledging the varied ways Hope is experienced and cultivated across different societies (Colla et al., 2022).

ASC, another fundamental psychological construct, encompasses individuals' cognitive and affective judgements about their academic abilities (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Influenced by both academic performance and social comparisons, ASC plays a crucial role in shaping educational engagement and outcomes, particularly in relation to tertiary education engagement (Marsh, 1984; Marsh & Seaton, 2015). Importantly, ASC serves as a mediator between ACE exposure and academic achievement, highlighting its significance in demonstrating the educational trajectories of individuals affected by ACEs or wider adversity (Jaffe et al., 2018; Negriff, 2020).

While Academic Self-Concept (ASC) is widely recognised for its impact on academic achievement and student well-being (Ghazvini, 2011; Marsh & Martin, 2013), critical perspectives highlight limitations in its conceptualisation and measurement. The primary critique centres on ASC's characterisation as an individual construct, potentially overlooking broader socio-cultural influences (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). The BFLPE model has been further challenged for not fully addressing developmental variations in social comparison behaviours (Nicholls & Miller, 1984; Ruble & Flett, 1988) and assuming passive, uniform comparison processes (Butler, 1992; Regner et al., 2007). Marsh et al. (2012) argue that conventional ASC measures fail to capture its dynamic, context-sensitive nature, potentially leading to incomplete conclusions about students' self-perceptions. These critiques collectively highlight the need for more sophisticated, context-sensitive

methodologies in ASC research, accounting for its fluidity across diverse educational settings and developmental stages.

The exploration of PCEs, psychological constructs such as ASC and Hope within the context of ACEs, demonstrates the intricate interplay of factors shaping developmental outcomes and well-being. This study aims to build on current literature regarding how exposure to varied childhood experiences, both positive and negative, may interact to shape levels of ASC and Hope, and how these key traits in turn, enable or hinder educational engagement at a tertiary level in the context of prior adversity.

The results will provide greater clarity regarding the developmental environment and psychological resources that support ongoing educational challenges after ACE exposure. Findings may additionally help inform interventions aimed at developing and maintaining these psychological resources and potentially mitigating the negative effects of ACE exposure. By fostering supportive environments enriched with PCEs and bolstering ASC and Hope, EPs can cultivate pathways to more positive outcomes for children and adolescents in the context of tertiary education engagement.

2.3 Aims and Rationale of the Present Study

2.3.1 Rationale for the Current Study

The rationale for this study is deeply rooted in the need to understand the interplay between ACEs, PCEs, and their impact on psychological constructs such as ASC and Hope. These constructs are essential for educational engagement, particularly at a tertiary level. Existing literature indicates that while ACEs are known to have detrimental effects on developmental outcomes, PCEs can act as significant

promotive or protective factors. This study aims to fill the gap in understanding how these positive experiences can mitigate the negative impact of ACEs and promote improvement in educational outcomes.

This research is undertaken to address the identified gap in the literature concerning the dual impact of ACEs and PCEs on ASC and Hope and subsequent tertiary educational engagement. The study seeks to determine the extent of the impact and explore the potential interaction effects between ACEs and PCES on these psychological constructs. By doing so, it aims to provide insights into the intrinsic and extrinsic mechanisms that support higher levels of ASC and Hope, despite varied childhood experiences. The findings are expected to inform EPs in developing interventions that foster supportive environments, enriched with PCEs, to bolster ASC and Hope among students facing educational challenges due to prior adversities.

2.3.2 Key Aims and Research Questions for the Current Study

The specific aims of the study have been carefully chosen to address the identified gaps. They include assessing the direct impact of ACEs and PCEs on ASC and Hope, exploring their interaction effects, and gaining qualitative insights into the experiences of individuals with higher levels of ASC and Hope, despite varied childhood experiences. The following aims are essential for understanding the complex dynamics that contribute to engagement with tertiary education, providing a foundation for targeted interventions that may enhance both ASC and Hope within individuals.

1. To determine the extent to which exposure to ACEs and PCEs during childhood impacts levels of ASC and Hope.
2. To explore the potential interaction effect between ACEs and PCEs on levels of ASC and Hope.
3. To explore the perspectives of participants displaying elevated ASC and Hope in the context of varied childhood experiences (both ACEs and PCEs).

Obtaining participant views will be vital for understanding the intrinsic and extrinsic mechanisms that allow individuals to maintain higher ASC and Hope during childhood, supporting, if they choose, their engagement with tertiary education. The study therefore aims to build upon limited research into the positive effects of PCEs and their role in maintaining elevated ASC and Hope, despite varied childhood experiences, to facilitate engagement with tertiary education. Additionally, qualitative insights will highlight the environmental and systemic factors shaping these constructs, which EPs in the UK may be best placed to help develop and maintain across systems.

To achieve this, the following research questions will guide the study:

1. Does ACEs exposure impact upon levels of ASC and Hope?
2. Does PCEs exposure impact upon levels of ASC and Hope?
3. Is there an interaction effect between ACEs and PCEs on ASC and Hope?

4. What are the mechanisms that allow individuals to maintain high levels of ASC and Hope, in the context of experiencing a varied range of childhood experiences (both ACES and PCEs)?

2.4 Methodology

Within this section, the researcher initially presents their chosen ontological and epistemological standpoint. Subsequently, the design and analysis procedures employed to investigate the research questions are discussed, aligning with the chosen epistemological perspective. Furthermore, attention is given to ensuring the delivery of high-quality research and addressing key ethical considerations.

2.4.1 Epistemological Position

Ontology and epistemology form the philosophical bedrock, ensuring coherence and logical alignment of research methodology with the stated objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Originating in the 1970s through Bhaskar's influential work (Bhaskar, 1978), the Critical Realist (CR) paradigm combines a realist ontology (proposes there is something to find out about) with a relativist epistemology (acknowledging diverse paths to knowledge) (Stutchbury, 2021).

The research is underpinned by a CR paradigm, which characterises an objective reality as one that exists independently of personal perception, theories, and constructions (Maxwell, 2012). CR posits that although there is an objective reality, it is subject to social and contextual influences, making it only partially comprehensible through the perspectives of those engaged with it (Annan et al., 2013; Willig, 2013). This perspective implies that understanding can be enhanced by triangulating the

viewpoints of various individuals to collectively create shared meanings (Maxwell, 2012).

An underlying principle of CR is its orientation to understanding phenomena as opposed to merely describing them (Tikly, 2015). CR explanations place emphasis on the experience of individuals within their social context. This approach is congruent with an exploration of the understanding of the causal mechanisms that allow individuals to maintain elevated levels of ASC and Hope, in the context of varied childhood experiences (both negative and positive), as well as their ecological context, which may support their engagement in tertiary education.

The CR paradigm acknowledges the function that personal subjective interpretation can have in characterising reality (Bray, 2015), as the paradigm sits between a realist and constructionist paradigms. This is equally important as the researcher must acknowledge that there is a reality that exists that is independent of their knowledge, perception of reality, and experience (Stutchbury, 2021).

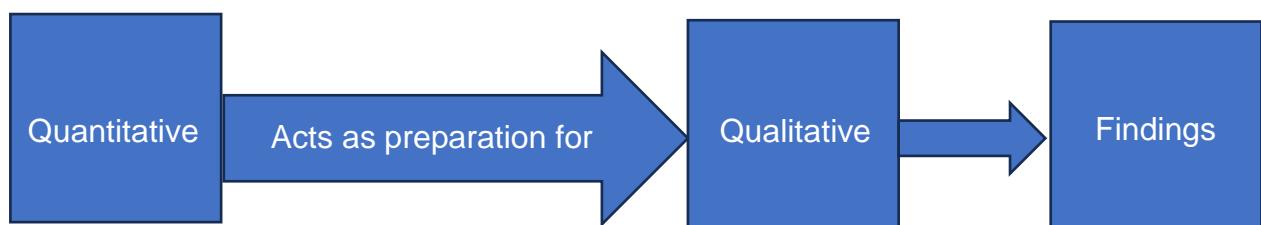
2.4.2 The Present Study

The research design was grounded in the CR paradigm, asserting that methodological choices should align with the inherent nature of the research problem (McAvoy & Richards, 2006). Consequently, a two-phase sequential explanatory mixed methods design was employed (see Figure 6). The initial quantitative phase involved the creation of categories of participants who had experienced relatively low or relatively high levels of ACEs and PCEs, so that the effect of this on ASC and Hope could be tested utilising a Factorial Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

Secondly, the qualitative phase aimed to explore patterns, associations, and potential underlying causal mechanisms (Shannon-Baker, 2016). This involved retrospectively exploring participants' childhood experiences and using a solution-orientated approach to consider the contextual and systemic factors that may have contributed to their levels of ASC and Hope over time. The solution-orientated approach involved identifying exceptions, differences, and instances where ACEs or PCEs may have either positively or negatively influenced levels of ASC and Hope (Franklin, 2010).

Figure 6

Diagram showing the explanatory sequential design employed within the study.



2.4.2.1 Phase One

In the initial phase, an online questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. This questionnaire pursued a dual purpose and provided context ahead of phase two. The questionnaire captured demographic information and quantifiable data on individual levels of ASC and Hope. It also systemically explored the spectrum of childhood experiences, encompassing ACEs and PCEs before the age of 16. The questionnaire amalgamated components from four distinct instruments, strategically selected to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced exploration. The meticulous fusion of these instruments ensured a nuanced

exploration, aligning with the tenets of the CR paradigm and enriching the quantitative phase. The data collected was analysed as per the analysis section (section 2.4.5.1)

Instrumentation Overview:

- The Centre for Youth Wellness ACE-Q (Burke Harris and Renschler, version 7/2015): Selected for its dedicated focus on the original 10 ACEs.
- Positive Childhood Questionnaire (Bethell et al., 2019): Chosen for its specificity in assessing various facets of childhood experiences.
- Academic Self-Concept Questionnaire (Reynolds, 1988): Emphasising relevance to tertiary education students, this questionnaire provided insights into participants' perceptions of their academic abilities.
- Adult Hope Scale (Snyder, 1991): Leveraged for its unique ability to offer distinct scores for agency and pathway thinking, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of overall Hope.

Building on the quantitative insights obtained from phase one, the study proceeded to identify participants exhibiting elevated levels of ASC and Hope, in the context of varied childhood experiences (both positive and negative), as evidenced by the initial questionnaire. Participants were then individually contacted to partake in the semi-structured interview process (phase two) if they met the inclusion criteria. Phase two aimed to delve deeper into their personal narratives, providing a qualitative lens to amplify and contextualise the findings unearthed from phase one.

2.4.2.2 Phase Two

Aligned with the CR paradigm, phase two sought to unravel the intricacies of participants' lived experiences. In conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher aimed to better understand the lived experience of participants and explore the potential causal mechanisms enabling the maintenance of elevated ASC and elevated Hope levels in the context of varied childhood experiences (both positive and negative). This holistic approach not only enhanced the understanding of their 'reality' but also addressed the four overarching research questions outlined above. The data collected was analysed as per the analysis section (section 2.4.5.2).

2.4.3 Participants

Participants were recruited using a homogenous purposeful sampling method often used in the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participants were recruited across two phases and were defined as individuals aged between 18-25 who were currently attending a tertiary education provider in either the county of Norfolk or the county of Merseyside.

2.4.3.1 Phase One (Online Questionnaire)

Recruitment utilised two distinct approaches. Firstly, recruitment emails and tailored posters were designed specifically for the student unions of each tertiary education provider in Norfolk and Merseyside (see Appendix 1). Additionally, a poster was shared on the researcher's personal social media outlets, including Twitter and Facebook (see Appendix 2). Student Union representatives played a key role in disseminating information about the research within their institutions, sharing the poster to increase visibility among potential participants.

A total of 29 participants responded to the questionnaire (Appendix 3). Following thorough analysis, eight participants were identified as meeting the inclusion criteria for phase two, characterised by high levels of ASC and Hope, with varied childhood experiences. Of these participants, seven had provided their contact information and were subsequently invited to participate in phase two via email (see Appendix 3). One participant had chosen to complete the questionnaire anonymously and therefore could not be contacted.

2.4.3.2 Phase Two (Semi-Structured Interviews)

The initial email (Appendix 4) was supplemented with a participant information sheet (Appendix 5) and a link to an online consent form (see Appendix 6). Upon securing consent from the seven individuals identified within Phase One who met the inclusion criteria, the researcher proceeded to organise and conduct semi-structured interviews with each participant at a mutually convenient time. One participant was excluded having provided inaccurate age information falling outside the specified range of 18-25. As a result, six participants were recruited. In the methodological literature, a minimum of six participants is recommended for conducting Thematic Analysis in research (Fugard & Potts, 2015), which aligns with the chosen research method of analysis. Demographic details for the six eligible participants are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2*Demographic information on Phase Two participants*

Participant	Gender	Age	Education	Location	Date of Interview
1 (009)	Male	18	Sixth From	Merseyside	06/09/23
2 (028)	Male	20	University	Merseyside	11/09/23
3 (015)	Male	21	University	Merseyside	08/08/23
4 (016)	Male	18	Sixth From	Merseyside	12/09/23
5 (030)	Female	23	University	Merseyside	17/08/23
6 (027)	Female	21	University	Merseyside	09/08/23

2.4.4 Data Collection

2.4.4.1 Phase One

Following review of the information sheet or poster and having given informed consent, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. Questions were presented across five sections: Demographic information relevant to the study, an ACEs questionnaire (Burke Harris and Renschler, version 7/2015), PCEs questionnaire (Bethell et al., 2019), ASC questionnaire (Reynolds, 1988), and Hope questionnaire (Synder, 1991).

Firstly, the questionnaire aimed to ensure that participants met the inclusion criteria, as described above. Secondly, the questionnaire provided quantitative data for each participant that would enable the researcher to explore research questions 1-3, as outlined above, using statistical techniques to analyse the variance across

multiple dependent variables simultaneously. Thirdly, gathering the initial data in phase one allowed the researcher to identify potential participants who met the inclusion criteria for the phase two element of the research. This would allow the researcher to explore in more depth, potential causal mechanisms of elevated levels of ASC and Hope in the context of varied childhood experiences (both positive and negative) on their individual pursuit of tertiary education engagement.

2.4.4.2 Phase Two

Open-ended questions included within the semi-structured interviews were developed with the aim of gaining further insight into participants' childhood experiences or activities that they felt contributed to their levels of ASC and Hope and potentially influencing their tertiary education engagement. This approach allowed the researcher to probe and explore various aspects of information as it emerged during the interview process (Hill et al., 2005). Additional prompt questions used within the interviews were improvisational and arising from the dialogue between the participant and the researcher (McIntosh & Morse, 2015)

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to discover, explore, and make meaning of the lived experience of the interviewees, so that the intricacy and nuance were not overlooked within the research (Galleta, 2013). This is a view that aligns itself well with the researcher's chosen ontological and epistemological position of CR. Additionally, employing open-ended questions offered an opportunity to clarify potential misunderstandings, foster rapport between the interviewer and interviewee, and create a space for unexpected or unanticipated answers to emerge (Robson, 2011).

Interviews were conducted remotely through Microsoft Teams, enabling the inclusion of participants beyond the researcher's immediate location. The interviews took place between August to September 2023, with each interview lasting between 25-35 minutes. To assist in accurate transcription, audio recordings were created with participants' consent, and these recordings were securely deleted after the verbatim transcripts were produced. None of the participants expressed a desire to review the transcripts.

2.4.5 Analysis

2.4.5.1 Phase One

Descriptive statistics were initially produced using IBM SPSS version 29 from quantitative questionnaire data (including demographic information, level of ASC and Hope, and exposure to ACEs and PCEs). The quantitative data collected within the study were then subjected to Factorial Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), a statistical technique to examine the differences across multiple dependent variables simultaneously (Stevens, 2002). A Factorial MANOVA was chosen due to its capability to assess the impact of independent variables on a set of correlated dependent variables (Grace & Iwasaki., 2009).

In this study, the dependant variables included ASC and Hope, while the independent variables were ACEs, PCEs. The choice to refrain from conducting ANOVAs for each dependent variable was made on the basis that multiple ANOVAs would not be able to determine whether independent variable(s) were related to combinations of dependant variables (Stevens, 2002). Analysis of the questionnaire data was then used to identify specific participants exhibiting elevated levels of ASC

and Hope in the context of varied childhood experiences (both positive and negative) who could participate in the phase two element of the study.

2.4.5.2 Phase Two

Interview transcripts were analysed using Braun and Clarke's 'Six Stage Thematic Analysis' (2012). Employing an inductive approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the entire data set as opposed to focusing on a particular aspect of the data set (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This allowed participant voices to be emphasised and ensured that themes were firmly rooted in the data itself (Patton, 1990). Both semantic and latent coding were applied to describe and interpret the data, fostering a critical reflection process that acknowledged the researcher's subjectivity and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The researcher's epistemological position of CR also guided the process, emphasising the influence of underlying structures, including the researcher's perceptions and broader socio-cultural contexts (Willig, 2012).

A reflexive approach was integral, highlighting the active role of the researcher in coding and theme development. This involved critical reflection throughout the analysis, addressing assumptions, and biases (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Themes were refined through a reflexive lens, aligning with the epistemological stance of CR, which posits that data interpretation is essential for a nuanced understanding of the phenomena being explored (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase model served as a guideline with the analysis completed digitally 'by hand', utilising Microsoft Word, highlighting the researcher's active engagement in the non-linear, reflexive analytical process.

Braun and Clarke (2022) emphasise the importance of researchers clarifying their approach to analysis, which is reflected in the 'researcher action' category in Table 3.

Table 3

Six Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022)

Phase of Analysis	Description	Researcher Action
Phase 1: Familiarisation with the dataset	The researcher thoroughly engages with the data, reading and re-reading the transcripts or relevant materials to develop a comprehensive understanding of the content.	The researcher immersed themselves with the dataset through reading and re-reading the transcripts several times. The researcher made several notes on individual data and whole data. Familiarisation notes were typed into Microsoft Word (See Appendix 7)
Phase 2: Coding the dataset	The researcher systematically organises the data by identifying and labelling meaningful patterns, themes, or segments.	The researcher systematically worked through the transcripts and developed descriptive and interpretive codes that captured important features of the data set that were deemed to be relevant in addressing the RQs. This was conducted through using the 'comment features' on Microsoft word (see Appendix 8). The entire data set

was coded through two rounds at two separate starting points. All codes and relevant data extracts were then collated into a table by the researcher to determine their relevance in relation to the RQs

Phase 3:	The researcher begins to explore the coded data more comprehensively to identify preliminary patterns and potential themes.	The researcher transferred all codes individually to Microsoft Excel and highlighted each code with a colour. This was to ensure flexibility and that identified codes could be freely moved around and collated together to develop broader patterns of meaning (See Appendix 7).
Phase 4:	The researcher engages in a systematic process of refining and organising the identified themes within the dataset	Microsoft Word was employed to pinpoint potential themes, which were then organised into categories for ASC and Hope by the researcher. These groupings were cross-referenced with the coded data and the complete dataset. Additional themes for both ASC and Hope were identified and compiled, along with supplementary themes for each construct (refer to Appendix 4).

Phase 5:	The researcher engages in a meticulous process of honing the clarity and specificity of each theme within the data set.	Informative names for each theme were identified by the researcher before the semantics of each theme being reviewed. This ultimately led to the re-wording of some themes.
Phase 6:	The researcher transitions from the intricacies of data analysis to the comprehensive articulation of findings and how they contribute to the overall research questions.	The findings of the analysis were documented by intricately integrating the analytical narrative with data excerpts extracted from the transcripts by the researcher. Relevant data extracts associated with each theme were thoughtfully chosen, ensuring representation across all participants. These combined components—analytic narrative and data extracts—were then organised under each theme within the findings and discussion section.

2.4.6 Ensuring Rigorous Qualitative Analysis

Within qualitative research, the assessment of quality extends beyond traditional quantitative criteria, embracing attributes such as relevance, timeliness, significance, and the capacity to evoke interest (Tracy, 2010). The research landscape recognises

the need for qualitative studies to establish their quality on their own terms, distinct from the metrics applied to quantitative methodologies (Tracy, 2010). Given the diverse philosophical positions inherent in qualitative research (Walsh & Downe, 2006), addressing quality becomes a nuanced endeavour, distinct from the approaches prevalent in quantitative research (Chowdhury, 2015).

What constitutes quality in qualitative research defies a one-size-fits-all method, instead necessitating evaluation from multiple criteria (Chowdury, 2015). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed five such criteria—credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity—to assess the trustworthiness of qualitative research. While these criteria are lauded for their inclusivity and acknowledgment of the interpretive nature of qualitative research, they also face criticism for their complexity and practical applicability challenges (Niroj, 2023). Despite these critiques, Lincoln and Guba's criteria offer a conceptual framework to consider various facets of qualitative research quality, guiding researchers in producing more robust and credible qualitative reports (Niroj, 2023).

Moreover, the researcher's active involvement and subjectivity play integral roles in reflexive TA, emphasising their participation in, rather than detachment from, the research process. Ensuring the quality of the study requires an ongoing commitment to self-reflection, enabling the continuous monitoring of personal biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), something the researcher was continuously conscious of. Further discussion of self-reflexivity is provided in the researcher's reflective chapter, where it is elucidated that a dedicated period and space were allocated for the meticulous data analysis and interpretation. This commitment to quality is demonstrated through the maintenance of a comprehensive audit trail, showcasing the systematic approach to data analysis and theme generation (see Appendix 7). Additionally, the

researcher consistently reflected on their subjectivity, including assumptions, choices, and actions, utilising a research diary, and engaging in research supervision discussions, as advocated by Braun and Clarke (2022).

To enhance rigor and uphold quality in the qualitative phase of the research, the researcher adhered to Braun and Clarke's (2022) guidelines for conducting 'good thematic analysis.' Simultaneously, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria for trustworthiness (see Table 4) were employed. The adoption of a mixed methods approach further contributed to the study's rigor by facilitating triangulation of findings and the incorporation of quantitative data. This comprehensive approach, informed by established guidelines and criteria, fortified the overall robustness and credibility of the study.

Table 4

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) Evaluative Criteria to establish trustworthiness.

Lincoln and Guba's (1985)	How the researcher addressed this
Criteria	
Credibility: The extent to which the research findings are considered trustworthy and believable. It involves establishing that the study accurately represents the perspectives and experiences of the participants.	The researcher took measures to facilitate substantial immersion and engagement with the data, aligning with the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2022). Additionally, the incorporation of quantitative data in the Phase One component contributes to the overall robustness of the study. While the utilisation of member checking or peer debriefing could have potentially bolstered the credibility of the research, logistical constraints

within the doctoral course timeframe rendered these practices unfeasible. Despite these limitations, the study adhered to established guidelines for qualitative research and employed a mixed methods approach to enhance its methodological strength.

Transferability: The extent to which the findings and interpretations of the study can be applied or generalised to other settings or contexts. It assesses the degree to which the results are relevant and meaningful beyond the specific conditions of the original study.

The researcher prioritised transparency by providing comprehensive and clear descriptions of the study context, encompassing details such as locations, time frames, participants, and conditions. Similarly, explicit explanations were given regarding the employed data collection methods and data analysis procedures. This deliberate approach aims to empower readers to evaluate the relevance of the study's findings to diverse situations or groups, fostering an understanding of the potential applicability of the results in various contexts.

Dependability: The stability and consistency of the study's findings over time and under different conditions. It emphasizes the reliability and repeatability of the research process and outcomes.

The researcher consistently recognised and managed the potential influence of their perspectives, biases, and decisions on the research process. This was accomplished through maintaining a transparent reflective diary, seeking supervision, and employing reflexive TA. The incorporation of a mixed methods approach and

the creation of a detailed audit trail for the research further contribute to the dependability of the overall study by ensuring triangulation.

Confirmability: The objectivity and neutrality of the study's findings. It emphasizes the degree to which the research process and outcomes are shaped by the participants and the context, rather than the biases or preconceptions of the researcher.

The researcher maintained an ongoing reflexive process throughout the project, a detailed exploration of which is provided in the reflective chapter. The researcher's thorough immersion and engagement with transcripts, as well as the identification of codes and themes, exemplify a commitment to objectivity, ensuring that emerging patterns and themes genuinely reflect the participants' experiences. While member checking processes could have further strengthened this objectivity, the time constraints of the doctoral course made this impractical.

Authenticity: The genuineness and faithfulness of the study's findings to the participants' experiences and perspectives.

The researcher made deliberate efforts to convey authenticity through the inclusion of verbatim quotes and excerpts, aiming to faithfully represent participants' expressions. The immersive approach adopted from the project's onset contributes to a more genuine portrayal of participants' views and experiences, minimising the risk of data misrepresentation. The ongoing reflexivity and transparent acknowledgment of the researcher's role further reinforce the authenticity of the

research. While credibility checks, such as member checking, could have increased authenticity, the practical constraints imposed by the time-intensive doctoral course prevented their implementation.

2.4.7 Ethical considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines set out by the School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee at the University of East Anglia (see Appendix 13 for ethical proposal and approval). The ethical proposal was further informed by the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2021) and the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (Oates et al., 2021). Data were collected and analysed in line with the General Data Protection Regulation Act (2018) and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2019). Participant data were handled and stored on a laptop that is password-protected and in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA, 2018) and UK General Data protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy.

The participant information sheet provided a comprehensive overview of the study's objectives, the nature of participation, and the expectations for individuals opting to engage in the research. It explicitly communicated that participation was entirely voluntary and could be undertaken anonymously if preferred. Participants were assured that their decision to partake in the study would have no impact on their existing or future relationships with the researcher or any personnel associated with the University of East Anglia. Additionally, participants were explicitly informed

of their right to withdraw themselves or their data from the phase one component until the analysis stage, at which point the data would become non-identifiable.

Participant data, including contact details, served solely for the intended research purpose and would be deleted upon the completion of the doctoral course.

Given the remote nature of the study, meticulous attention was dedicated to securing informed consent, upholding confidentiality, and minimising the potential for harm or distress. The final page of the phase one questionnaire not only emphasised the availability of support through specified channels but also extended an invitation for participants to reach out to the researcher with any queries or concerns. To safeguard confidentiality, all data within the phase one component underwent anonymisation measures.

Participants who met the criteria for the phase two element were contacted and provided with detailed information sheets outlining the interview process and its components. Before scheduling interview dates and times, each participant was required to complete an additional consent form online. While participants were given the option to review their transcripts and the generated information, none expressed a desire to do so, though two individuals sought updates on the study's results. Ahead of any recordings, explicit verbal consent was obtained regarding the use of audio recording and transcription software through Microsoft Teams. Throughout the phase two component, data underwent pseudonymisation, with participants being assigned specific 3-digit codes. Moreover, all identifiable features were meticulously removed from the transcripts.

It was anticipated that there was a minimal risk of distress for participants taking part in the interview process due to the sensitive nature and variation of childhood experiences. At the conclusion of the interview process, participants were reminded

that the participant information sheet contained contact details for the researcher and the research supervisor, offering a debrief or assistance if needed. Additionally, participants were provided with information on various charities and organisations, as outlined in the questionnaire phase, should they require additional support. These resources included the Mix, Body & Soul Charity, Kooth, Bernardo's, We Are With You, and Young Minds

2.5 Findings

2.5.1 Phase One

This section outlines findings from the questionnaires employed during phase one (n=28). Participants were asked to complete four separate validated scales to measure their levels of ACEs, PCEs, ASC, and Hope. The descriptive statistics from each scale are present in Tables 5-10 below.

2.5.1.1 Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Participants were asked to complete The Centre for Youth Wellness ACE-Q Questionnaire (Burke Harris and Renschler, version 7/2015). to determine their number of ACE exposures during childhood. Following analysis of the questionnaires, 10.71% of participants indicated that they had experienced 0 ACES, 29.28% indicated that they had experienced 1 ACE, 7.14% of participants indicated that they had experienced 2 ACEs, 7.14% of participants indicated that they had experienced 3 ACEs, and 35.71% had indicated that they had experienced 4 or more ACEs during their childhood (see Table 5).

Table 5

Number of ACE exposure for each participant as indicated by the ACE-Q questionnaire.

Adverse Childhood Experience(s)	% of participants
0	10.70% (n=3)
1	39.30% (n=11)
2	7.10% (n=2)
3	7.10% (n=2)
4+	35.70% (n=10)

Based on the frequency data above, two groups were created for the MANOVA. For the purpose of the MANOVA participants were grouped into relatively low levels of ACES (2 and below) and relatively high levels of ACEs (3 or more). 64.29% were categorised into Group 1 (experienced 2 or less ACEs) and 35.71% were categorised in Group 2 (experienced 3 or more ACEs (see Table 6).

Table 6

ACE groups for the purpose of the MANOVA

Adverse Childhood Experience(s)	% of participants
Group 1 (2 or less)	64.29% (n=18)
Group 2 (3 or more)	35.71% (n=10)

2.5.1.2 Exposure to Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)

Participants were asked to complete the Positive Childhood Questionnaire (Bethell et al 2019) to determine their number of PCE exposures during their

childhood. Following analysis of the questionnaires, 7.14% of participants indicated that they had experienced 1 PCE, 17.85% of participants indicated that they had experiences 2 PCEs, 10.71% of participants indicated that they had experiences 3 PCEs and 64.28% of participants indicated that they had experienced 4 or more PCEs during their childhood (see Table 7).

Table 7

Number of PCE exposure for each participant as indicated by the PCE Questionnaire (Bethell et al., 2019)

Positive Childhood Experience(s)	% of participants
0	0.00% (n=0)
1	7.10% (n=2)
2	17.90% (n=5)
3	10.70% (n=3)
4+	64.30% (n=18)

Based on the frequency data above, two groups were created for the MANOVA. For the purpose of the MANOVA, participants were grouped into relatively low levels of PCEs (3 and below) and relatively high levels of PCEs (4 or more) (see Table 8).

Table 8

PCE groups for the purpose of the MANOVA

Positive Childhood Experience(s)	% of participants
Group 1 (3 or less)	35.71% (n=10)
Group 2 (4 or more)	64.29% (n=18)

2.5.1.3 Levels of Academic Self-Concept (ASC)

Participants were asked to complete the ASC Questionnaire (Reynolds, 1988) to determine their levels of ASC whilst attending tertiary education. Following analysis of the questionnaires, 10.71% of participants indicated that they had low levels of ASC, 64.28% of participants indicated that they had moderate levels of ASC, and 25% of participants indicated that they had high levels of ASC whilst attending tertiary education at present (see Table 9).

Table 9

Levels of ASC for each participant as indicated by the Academic Self-Concept Questionnaire (Reynolds, 1988).

ASC Categorisation	% of participants
Low ASC (80 or below)	10.71% (n=3)
Moderate ASC (81-120)	64.28% (n=18)
High ASC (121-160)	25% (n=7)

Note: Raw scores were used for levels of ASC within the MANOVA

2.5.1.4 Levels of Hope

Participants were asked to complete the Adult Hope Scale Questionnaire (Snyder, 1991) to determine their levels of Hope whilst attending tertiary education. Following analysis of the questionnaires, 10.71% of participants indicated that they had low levels of Hope whilst attending tertiary education. 46.42% of participants indicated that they had hopeful levels of Hope whilst attending tertiary education. 25% of participants indicated that they had moderate levels of Hope whilst attending tertiary

education and 17.85% of participants indicated that they had high levels of Hope whilst attending tertiary education at present (see Table 10).

Table 10

Levels of Hope for each participant as indicated by the Adult Hope Scale (Snyder, 1991)

Hope Categorisation	% of participants
Low Hope (Below 40)	10.71% (n=3)
Hopeful (41-48)	46.42% (n=13)
Moderate Hope (49-55)	21.40% (n=6)
High Hope (56+)	21.40% (n=6)

Note: Raw scores were used for levels of Hope within the MANOVA

2.5.1.5 Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) Assumption Testing.

Before performing the MANOVA within SPSS, preliminary assumption testing was conducted on all variables to ensure the appropriateness of the analysis (Longford, 2010). To assess multivariate normality, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (ASC: $p = .200$; Hope: $p = .187$) and the Shapiro-Wilk test (ASC: $p = .719$; Hope: $p = .152$) were employed, with the significance level set at $\alpha = 0.001$ (see Table 11). As the tests statistics were not statistically significant ($| > .001$), the assumption of multivariate normality was met for both ASC and Hope variables, indicating that both ASC and Hope are normally distributed.

Table 11*Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test of normality*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Levels of ASC	.111	28	.200*	.975	28	.719
Levels of Hope	.138	28	.187	.946	28	.153

Note: *. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Additionally, the researcher utilised a linear regression function to calculate the Mahalanobis distance which assesses multivariate outliers (see Table 12). Since the maximum Mahalanobis distance value (10.75) is less than the critical value (13.82), there is no evidence of significant multivariate outliers within the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). While the normality assumption cannot be tested directly for multivariate data, the absence of significant multivariate outliers, as indicated by the Mahalanobis distance calculation, provides support for the assumption of multivariate normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Therefore, the researcher can reasonably assume that assumption of multivariate normality has been met.

Table 12

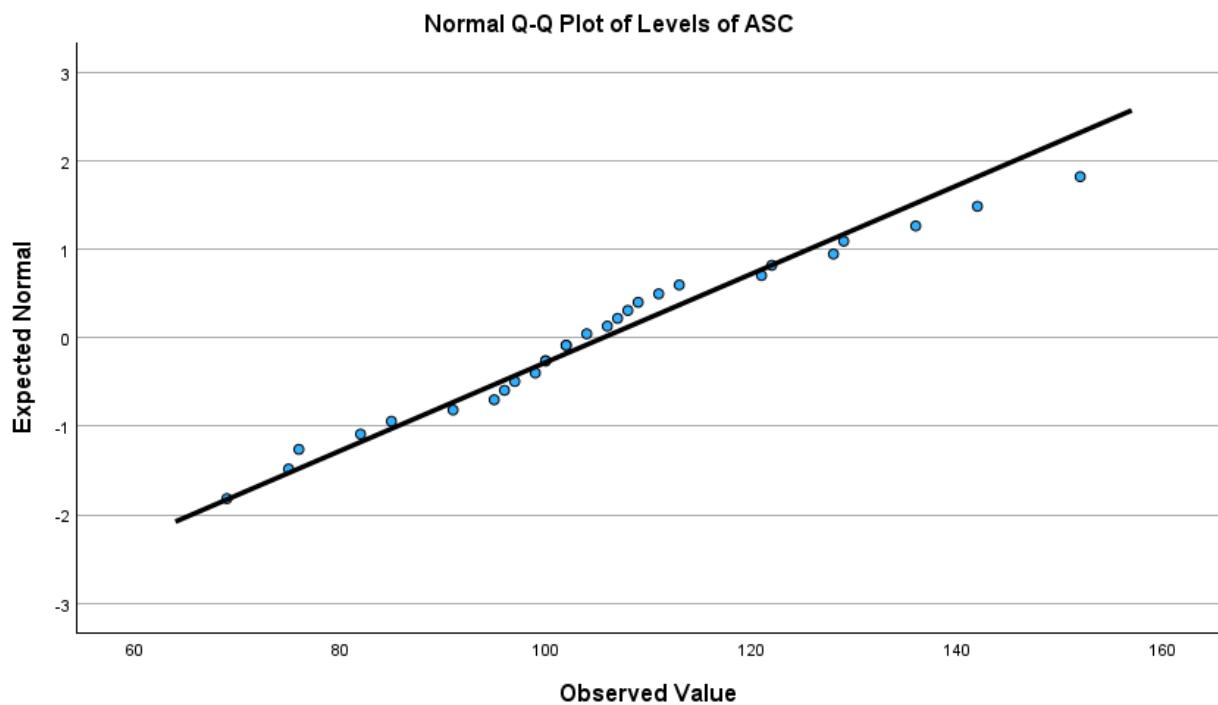
Residual Statistics for Linear Regression Function to Calculate Mahalanobis Distance.

Residual Statistics					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Mahal. Distance	0.34	10.756	1.929	2.582	28

The researcher utilised a Q-Q plot (see Figure 7) to visually assesses the normality assumption for levels of ASC variable. The plot demonstrates that the observed data points closely follow the diagonal line in the central region, indicating a reasonably good fit to the theoretical normal distribution. However, there is a slight deviation from the line in the upper tail, suggesting some departure from normality in the extreme high values of ASC. Despite this deviation in the upper tail, the assumption of normality appears to be adequately met for the majority of ASC distribution, providing justification for the subsequent MANOVA. Nevertheless, caution should be exercised when interpreting results related to the extreme high values of ASC, where the deviation from normality is observed.

Figure 7

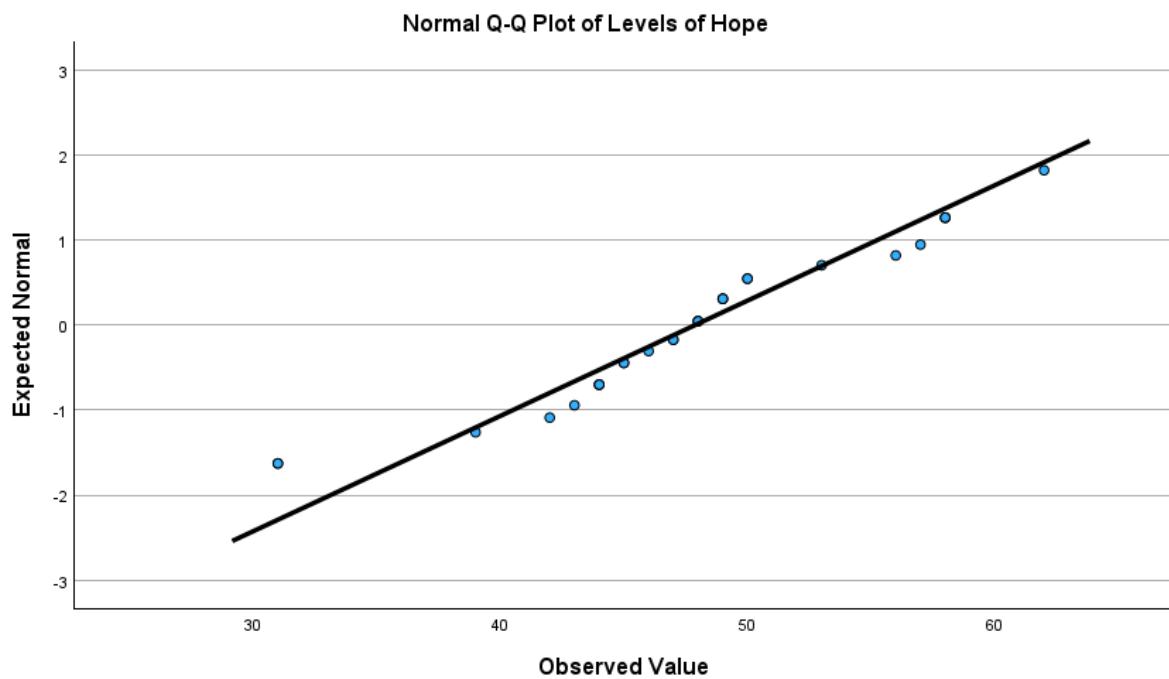
Q-Q Plot showing the normality assumption for levels of ASC.



The researcher further utilised a Q-Q plot to visually assesses the normality assumption for levels of Hope (see Figure 8). The plot demonstrates that the observed data points closely follow the diagonal line in the central region, indicating a reasonably good fit to the theoretical normal distribution. However, there is a slight deviation from the line in the bottom of the tail, suggesting some departure from normality in the extreme low values of Hope. Despite the deviation in the bottom tail, the assumption of normality appears to be adequately met for the majority of Hope distribution, providing justification for the subsequent MANVOA. Nevertheless, caution should be exercised when interpreting results related to the extreme low values of Hope, where the deviation from normality is observed.

Figure 8

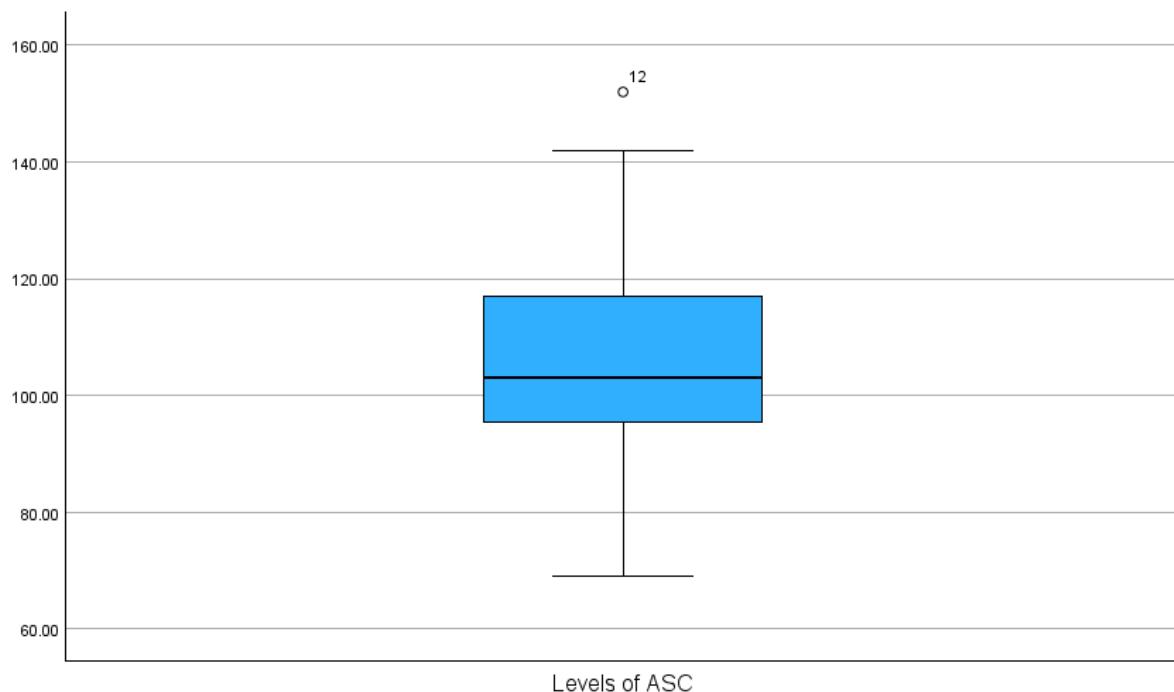
Q-Q Plot showing the normality assumption for levels of Hope.



A box plot was utilised to visually assess the equality of variances across groups for the ASC dependant variable within the analysis (see Figure 19). Upon examination, there was a slight positive skew observed in the overall ASC distribution, with participants tending to have lower levels of ASC. One potential outlier was identified within the dataset, represented by a data point outside the whiskers of the box plot. However, further investigation through statistical methods, revealed that this outlier was a valid and legitimate data point that did not unduly influence the analysis. As such, it was deemed appropriate to retain this data point within the dataset.

Figure 9

Boxplot illustrating the equality of variance across groups for ASC.



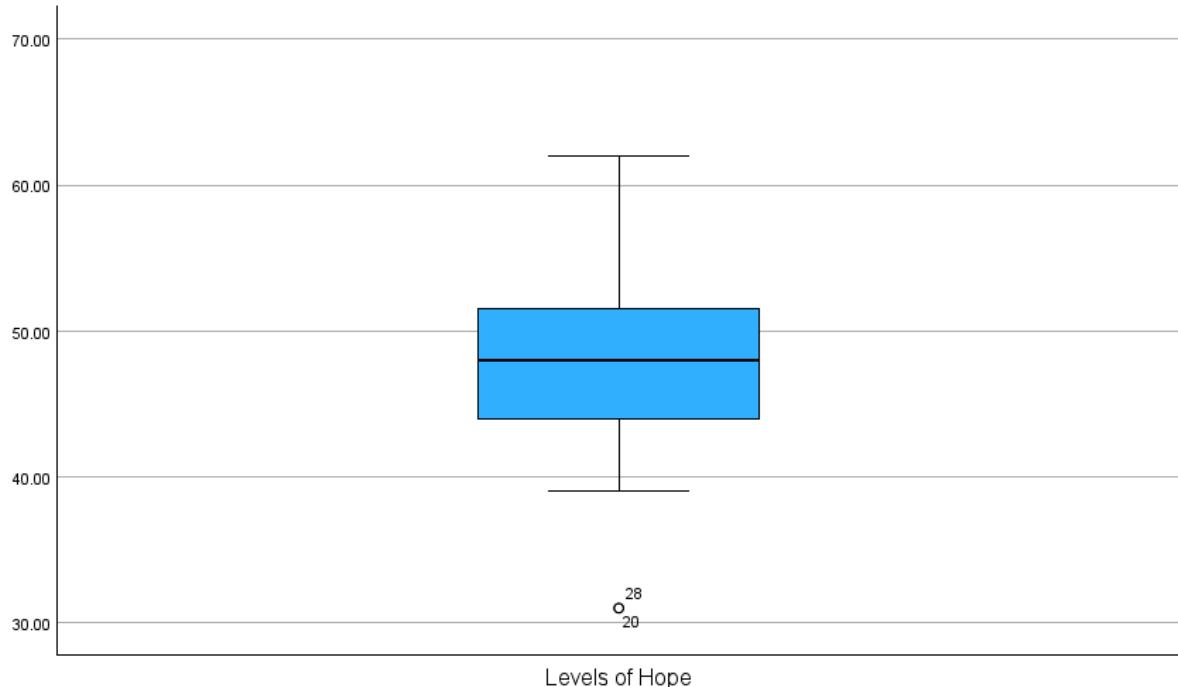
Despite the presence of this potential outlier, the box plot reveals relatively consistent box sizes and whisker lengths across groups, indicating approximate

equality of variances. Additionally, there do not appear to be any substantial deviations from normality within each group's distribution, although the slight positive skew should be noted. These observations support the assumption of homogeneity of variances and normality, strengthening the validity of the subsequent MANOVA involving the ASC variable.

A box plot was also utilised to visually assess the equality of variances across groups for the Hope dependent variable within the analysis (see Figure 10). Upon examination, there was a slight negative skew observed in the overall Hope distribution, with participants tending to have higher levels of Hope. Two potential outliers were identified within the dataset, represented by data points outside the whiskers of the plot. However, further investigation through statistical methods, revealed that these outliers were valid and legitimate data points that did not unduly influence the analysis. As such, it was deemed appropriate to retain these data points within the data set.

Figure 10

Boxplot illustrating the equality of variance across groups for Hope.

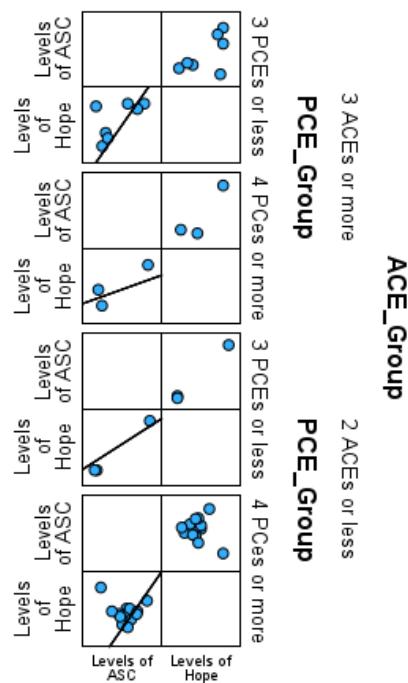


Despite the presence of the two potential outliers, the plot reveals relatively consistent box sizes and whisker lengths across groups, indicating approximate equality of variances. Additionally, there do not appear to be any substantial deviations from normality within each group's distribution, although the slight negative skew should be noted. These observations support the assumption of homogeneity of variances and normality, strengthening the validity of the subsequent MANOVA involving the Hope variable.

To assess the assumptions of linearity and multivariate normal distribution, a matrix scatter plot was generated in SPSS for the dependent variables ASC and Hope and the independent variables ACEs and PCEs included in the subsequent MANOVA analysis (see Figure 11). The plot depicted pairwise scatterplots with lines of best fit to visually examine the relationships between variables.

Figure 11

Scatterplot illustrating the assumptions of linearity for ASC, Hope and grouped ACEs, PCEs.



The matrix scatter plot revealed varying degrees of positive linear associations between the dependent and independent variables. To further assess multicollinearity, the researcher examined the bivariate correlation between the dependent variables ASC and Hope (See Table 13). The correlation coefficient ($r = .521$) fell within the acceptable range, being less than 0.9, but greater than 0.2. This suggests that ASC and Hope are related but not collinear, satisfying the assumption of non-multicollinearity for the subsequent MANOVA (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Table 13*Correlation Statistics for the Pearson Correlation.*

		Levels of ASC	Levels of Hope
Levels of ASC	Pearson Correlation	1	.521**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	28	28
Levels of Hope	Pearson Correlation	.521**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	28	28

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was tested using Box's M test of equality of covariance ($p = .030$) (see Table 14). These observations support the assumption of homogeneity and strengthens the validity of the subsequent MANOVA analysis.

Table 14*Box's M Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices*

Box's M	27.542
F	2.091
df1	9
df2	313.648
Sig.	.030

Note. Tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependant variables are equal across groups.

Based on the Levene's test of equality of error variances (Table 15), the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met for the ASC variable, as indicated by non-significant test statistics across all measures (Mean: $F(3, 24) = 2.943, p = .053$; Median: $F(3, 24) = 1.147, p = .350$; Adjusted Median: $F(3, 17.712) = 1.147, p = .358$; Trimmed Mean: $F(3, 24) = 2.869, p = .058$). However, for the Hope variable, the assumption was violated, with significant test statistics observed across all measures (Mean: $F(3, 24) = 4.650, p = .011$; Median: $F(3, 24) = 1.308, p = .295$; Adjusted Median: $F(3, 13.734) = 1.308, p = .312$; Trimmed Mean: $F(3, 24) = 4.381, p = .014$).

Table 15*Levene's Test for Equality of Error Variance^s*

		Levene	df1	df2	Sig.
		Statistic			
Levels of ASC	Based on Mean	2.943	3	24	.053
	Based on Median	1.147	3	24	.350
	Based on Median	1.147	3	17.712	.358
	Based on Median	2.869	3	24	.058
and with adjusted df					
Levels of Hope	Based on Mean	4.650	3	24	.011
	Based on Median	1.308	3	24	.295
	Based on Median	1.308	3	13.734	.312
	and with adjusted df				
Based on trimmed mean					
		4.381	3	24	.014

Note: Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependant variable is equal across groups

a. Design: Intercept + ACE_Group + PCE_Group = ACE_Group * PCE_Group.

Since the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated for the Hope variable, Pillai's trace will be utilised as the overall test statistic, as it provides more robust results in the presence of violations of the homogeneity of variances and covariance assumptions (Ates et al., 2019).

2.5.1.6 Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

A two way between groups MANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of ACES (ACE_Group) and PCEs (PCE_Group), and their potential interaction on levels of ASC and Hope in a sample of participants (n=28). Table 16 outlines the descriptive statistics derived from the MANOVA, providing a comprehensive overview of the sample characteristic and variables.

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics derived from the MANOVA.

Levels of ASC	ACEs_Group	PCEs_Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
	2 ACEs or less	3 PCEs or less	83.6667	14.15392	3
		4 PCEs of more	105.400	15.87361	15
		Total	101.778	17.33597	18
	3 ACEs or more	3 PCEs or less	112.8571	27.43737	7
		4 PCEs or more	111.6667	15.04438	3
		Total	112.5000	23.50532	10
	Total	3 PCEs or less	104.1000	27.29856	10
		4 PCEs or more	106.444	15.48898	18

		Total	105.6071	20.01914	28
Levels of	2 ACEs or	3 PCEs or	35.3333	7.50555	3
Hope	less	less			
		4 PCEs or	48.2000	3.83964	15
		more			
		Total	46.0556	6.56615	18
	3 ACEs or	3 PCEs or	51.8571	6.91444	7
	more	less			
		4 PCEs or	49.6667	11.59023	3
		more			
		Total	51.2000	7.92745	10
Total	3 PCEs or	46.9000	10.39711	10	
	less				
	4 PCEs or	48.4444	5.31615	18	
	more				
	Total	47.8929	7.37533	28	

Table 17 shows the results of the multivariate test performed in the MANOVA. Here Pillai's Trace was chosen as the test statistic due to its robustness against violations of assumptions. Table 17 shows the significance levels of all independent variables, including the interaction effect. The values indicate whether there are statistically significant differences among the groups on a linear combination of the dependent variables.

Table 17*Results from multivariate tests*

		Value	F	Hypothesis	Error	Sig.	Partial Eta
				df	df		Squared
ACE_Group	Pillai's	.312	5.215 ^b	2.000	23.000	.014	.312
	Trace						
PCE_Group	Pillai's	.137	1.822 ^b	2.000	23.000	.184	.137
	Trace						
ACE_Group*	Pillai's	.231	3.452 ^b	2.000	23.000	.049	.231
PCE_Group	Trace						

Note: a. Design: Intercept + ACE_Group + PCE_Group + ACE_Group * PCE_Group

b. Exact Statistic

The results of the MANOVA yielded a significant multivariate main effect of ACE-Group, Pillai's Trace = .312, $F(2, 23) = 5.215$, $p = .014$, partial $\eta^2 = .312$, indicating that the number of ACEs had a significant impact on the combined dependant variables of ASC and Hope. However, the multivariate main effect of PCE_Group was not statistically significant Pillai's Trace = .137, $F(2, 23) = 1.822$, $p = .184$, partial $\eta^2 = .137$, indicating that the number of PCEs alone did not significantly affect the combined dependant variables. A significant multivariate main effect of ACE_group * PCE_Group interaction was found, Pillai's Trace = .231, $F(2, 23) = 3.452$, $p = .049$, partial $\eta^2 = .231$, suggesting that the interaction between ACE_Group and PCE-Group also significantly influenced the combined dependant variables of ASC and Hope.

2.5.1.7 Test of Between-Subjects Effects

To examine the main effects and interaction effect for the independent variables (ACEs and PCES) on the dependant variables (ASC and Hope), a series of Type III sum of squares ANOVAs were conducted. Bonferroni protected p-values and Tukey post hoc tests to control for type 1 error (see Table 18).

Table 18

Test of Between-Subject Effects

	Dependant Variables	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
ACE_Group	Levels of ASC	1434.858	1	1434.858	3.870	.061	.139
	Levels of Hope	369.391	1	369.391	10.137	.004	.297
PCE_Group	Levels of ASC	481.641	1	481.641	1.299	.266	.051
	Levels of Hope	130.087	1	130.187	3.570	.071	.129
ACE-Group	Levels of ASC	599.757	1	599.757	1.618	.216	.063
*							
PCE_Group	Levels of Hope	258.754	1	258.754	7.101	.014	.228
a. R Squared = .178 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.75)							
b. R Squared = .405 (Adjusted R Squared = .330)							

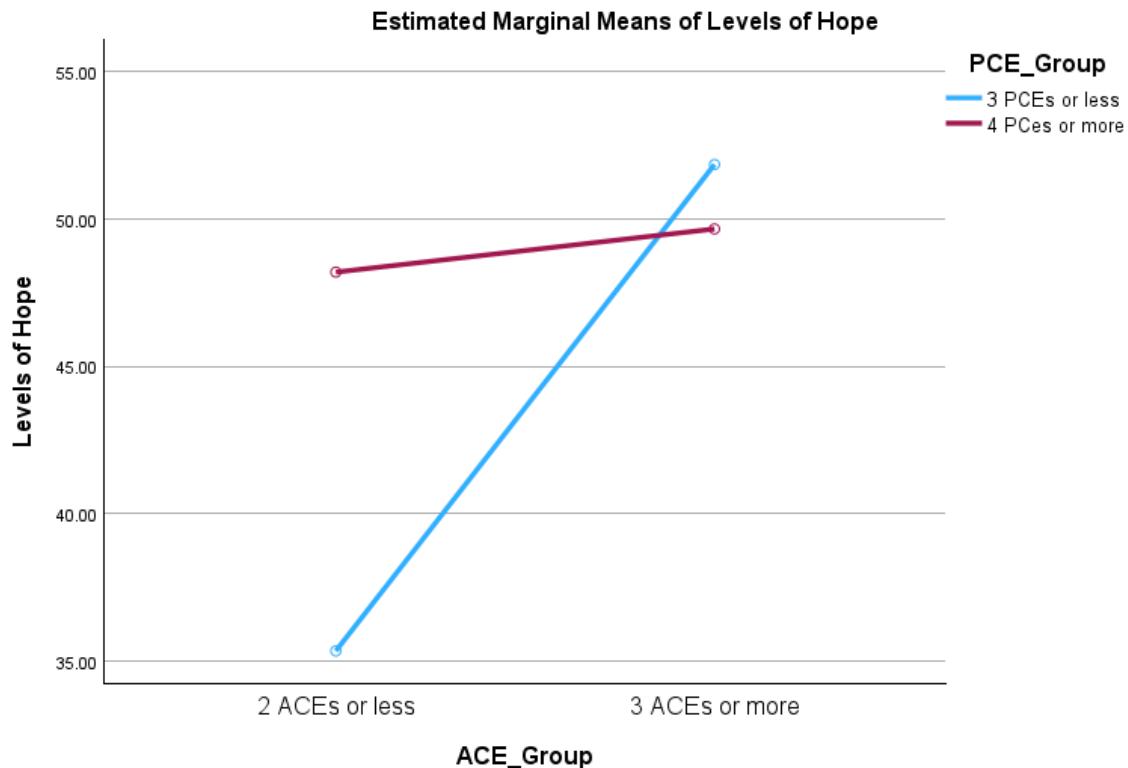
For levels of ASC, the main effect of ACEs was not statistically significant $F(1, 24) = 3.870$, $p = .061$, partial $\eta^2 = .139$. this indicates that the number of ACEs did not significantly influence levels of ASC. Similarly, the main effect of PCEs on levels of ASC was not statistically significant $F(1, 24) = 1.299$, $p = .266$, partial $\eta^2 = .051$, suggesting that the number of PCEs alone did not statistically impact levels of ASC. The interaction effect between ACEs and PCEs on levels of ASC was also not statistically significant $F(1, 24) = 1.618$, $p = .216$, partial $\eta^2 = .063$., indicating that the interaction between ACEs and PCEs does not significantly influence levels of ASC.

For levels of Hope, the main effect of ACEs was statistically significant $F(1, 24) = 10.137$, $p = .004$, partial $\eta^2 = .297$, indicating that the number of ACEs significantly influenced levels of Hope. However, the main effect of PCEs on levels of Hope was not statistically significant, $F(1, 24) = 3.570$, $p = .071$, partial $\eta^2 = .129$, suggesting that the number of PCEs alone did not significantly impact levels of Hope. The interaction between ACEs and PCEs on levels of Hope was statistically significant, $F(1, 24) = 7.101$, $p = .014$, partial $\eta^2 = .228$, indicating that the interaction between the number of ACEs and PCEs significantly influenced levels of Hope.

An interaction plot was generated to examine the interaction effect between the independent variables of ACEs and PCEs on the dependant variable of Hope, in the context of a two-way MANOVA conducted in SPSS. The interaction plot (see Figure 12) illustrates the mean values of Hope across different groupings of ACEs and PCEs. Each line represents a unique combination of ACEs and PCEs, allowing for a visual comparison of their effects on the outcome variable.

Figure 12

Interaction Profile Plot for Levels of Hope



Upon visual inspection, a significant interaction between ACES and PCES is evident for levels of Hope, indicated by the non-parallel lines representing different combination groupings for ACEs and PCEs. For participants with 2 ACEs or less, having 4 PCEs or more is associated with higher levels of Hope compared to those with 3 PCEs or less. This suggests that a higher number of PCEs may act as a protective factor, promoting higher levels of Hope among individuals with lower levels of ACEs.

However, for participants with 3 ACEs or more, the pattern is reversed. Those with 3 PCEs or less display higher levels of Hope compared to those with 4 PCEs or

more. This finding indicates that among individuals with higher levels of ACEs, a lower number of PCEs may be associated with higher levels of Hope.

The researcher conducted a two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to explore the interaction between ACEs and PCEs on levels of Hope (see Table 19). This analysis aimed to examine how PCEs influence levels of Hope among individuals with varying degree of ACE exposure.

Table 19

Univariate Analysis Test Results.

ACE_Group		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1.00 (2 ACEs or less)	Contrast	413.878	1	413.878	11.357	.003
	Error	874.590	24	36.441		
2.00 (3 ACEs of more)	Contrast	10.076	1	10.076	.277	.604
	Error	874.590	24	36.441		

Note: Each F tests the simple effect of PCE-Group within each level of combination of the other effect shown. These tests are based on the linearly independent pairwise comparison among the estimated marginal means.

The univariate analysis yielded a significant effect of PCEs on levels of Hope for participants with lower ACEs ($F = 11.357, p = .003$). In contrast, there was no significant effect of PCEs on levels of Hope for participants with higher levels of ACES ($F = .277, p = ..604$).

When combined, the interaction effect highlights the complex interplay between ACES and PCEs in shaping levels of Hope. The number of PCEs appears to have a differential impact on Hope levels, depending on the degree of ACE exposure. While higher PCEs seem beneficial for individuals with lower ACE levels, the opposite is true for those with higher ACE levels, where fewer PCEs are associated with higher levels of Hope. The findings suggest that PCEs may have less influence in mitigating the negative impact of ACES on Levels of Hope at higher levels of ACE exposure (3 or more ACES).

2.5.2 Phase Two

The aim of phase two was to understand in greater depth the potential mechanisms that allow individuals to maintain high levels of ASC and Hope, in the context of experiencing varied childhood experiences (both ACES and PCEs). Following a reflexive thematic analysis of the transcripts, the following themes were developed:

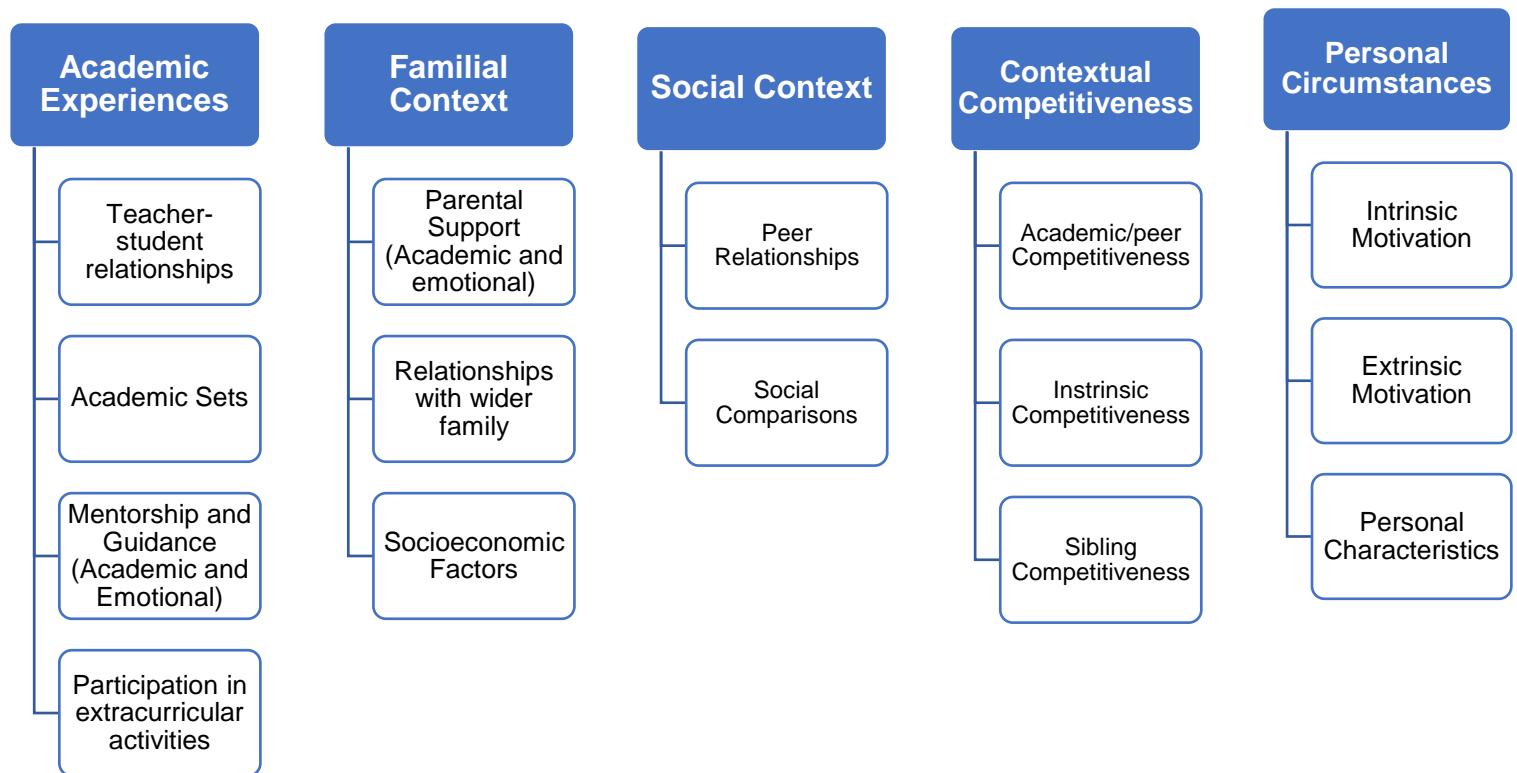
1. Academic Experiences
2. Familial Context
3. Social Context
4. Contextual competitiveness
5. Personal Circumstances

Themes 1 encompasses four subthemes: Themes 2, 4, and 5 include three subthemes and Theme includes 3 subthemes. These thematic relationships are visually represented in Figure 13, which provides a thematic map displaying the themes and corresponding subthemes. In the following section, each theme and its associated subthemes will be discussed in detail. While the thematic map presents

themes separately, it is important to emphasise their interconnectedness throughout the participants narratives.

Figure 13

Thematic Map detailing the Themes and Subthemes derived Phase 2.



2.5.2.1 Theme 1: Academic Experiences

Across all interviews, participants highlighted the importance of academic experiences across primary, secondary, and tertiary education settings in shaping their levels of ASC, levels of Hope, and engagement with tertiary education. Within educational settings, factors including teacher-student relationships, ability-based academic grouping, access to support and guidance, as well as the availability of diverse extracurricular activities contributed to participants' learning environments

affecting their academic experiences. Their narratives highlight how positive, enriching academic experiences facilitated resilience, motivation, and engagement in tertiary education. Conversely, participants faced detrimental impacts to their levels of ASC and Hope when settings or relationships fostered adversity, discouragement, or inequality, which is captured in the subthemes below.

2.5.2.1.1 Sub theme 1: Teacher-Student Relationships

Participants consistently emphasised the profound influence of teacher-student relationships on their levels of ASC and Hope. A recurring theme throughout the interviews was the vital role of teachers in fostering positive or negative interactions and the subsequent impact that these interactions had on the participants.

P2: *“Erm... well the best teachers were the one who sort of had the respect of other children but were also ‘matey’ with you as well. You sort of knew you could have a laugh and a joke with them but where the line was if you crossed it. One of my teachers, a PE teacher has such an impact on me that I still consider them a role model today. They just need to listen, push you to be the best you could be and were always considerate.”*

P3: *“She just gave me time, spoke to me like a friend and actually helped me realise that these people I was hanging around with weren’t actually my friends and that they were just taking advantage of me. She really helped me academically and get back to achieving the grades I wanted to achieve. She just invested her time, energy, and effort into me, and I really appreciated it at the time.”*

P4: *“I think she was the only teacher in the whole school who genuinely wanted me to do well to be honest. Like the only teacher I felt actually, genuinely cared*

about what happened to me. She used to talk to me in the hallways, ask how I was getting on, try and support me in class, you know stuff like that”.

These extracts highlight the protective and promotive factors that positive teacher-student relationships can have upon ASC and Hope, in the context of varied childhood experiences. Participants highlighted the importance of teachers demonstrating genuine interest and establishing collaborative relationships rooted in mutual respect. They emphasised that these attributes, alongside teachers' capacity to nurture self-belief and confidence, contributed positively to levels of ASC and Hope. Furthermore, by embodying these qualities, positive teacher-student relationships not only have the ability to safeguard students psychological well-being but can also play a pivotal role in fostering tertiary education engagement, serving as a catalyst for academic success and personal growth as highlighted within the below extract from Participant 4.

P4: *“Erm, definitely the teacher I told you about before too. Like I said, I don’t think I would have continued with school if it wasn’t for her because I didn’t think it was for me.... I mean she’s probably the main reason I decided to go to sixth form at the school”.*

In contrast, a recurring theme emphasised by some participants was the influence of negative teacher-student relationships on their levels of ASC, Hope and overall emotional-wellbeing.

P1: *“You don’t really get nice teachers in secondary school do you, it’s a bit of a jump. Don’t get me wrong, there is a few but most of them were awful. Loads of them just seemed like they had a ‘cob on’ and took it out on the children all the time”.*

P2: *“Not like some other teacher who you could just tell hated their jobs”.*

P3: *"I think the school you attend and the teachers within the school also has massive implications... Sometimes you would just walk into a lesson and just have a substitute teacher... it meant that you couldn't really build relationships with teachers".*

These extracts highlight the potential effects of negative teacher-student relationships described by participants on levels of ASC and Hope across various educational stages. They also highlight the significance to participants of cultivating positive teacher-student relationships. Unlike their positive counterparts, negative teacher-student relationships were characterised by the negative attitudes and behaviours of teachers toward children and young people, as well as from systemic issues such as inconsistency in teaching personnel and lack of continuity within broader school systems. These negative academic experiences have the ability to impact academic performance, emotional wellbeing, and individuals overall educational experiences.

2.5.2.1.2 Sub theme 2: Academic Sets

Academic sets were a predominant subtheme highlighted by all participants within the broader theme of academic experiences. The 'setting' of children within key educational transitions across primary and secondary education was consistently highlighted as having both a positive and negative impact upon their levels of ASC, Hope, and subsequent tertiary educational engagement.

P1: *"I think one of the main experiences for me looking back was being put in sets in school. I think we are put into sets as little kids not really understanding what they are for really. Then when you get a little older you start to understand that all the smarter kids are in the top set and all the kids with difficulties or who*

aren't as smart are in the lower sets. I think being put in sets at such an early age can either positively or negatively affect how you perceive yourself academically".

P3: *"I had a little think about this, and I feel that sets in school massive contributed to it. As soon as you start school you are put into sets, so straight away you immediately know whether you are clever or not. For example, in my primary school you were either put on a blue table, red table or green table and when you get a little bit older you sort of realise and understand what type of people you are with. So, I think immediately when you start school that has a massive impact in how you go on to perceive yourself for the rest of your life to be honest".*

P4: *"You get 'setted' from such an early age and I think that basically sets you up to either succeed or fail in life. Like if you're in the lower set then your academic self-concept is probably low, whereas if you're in the higher set you're probably going to have a higher academic self-concept. That's what I think anyway".*

These extracts highlight the profound effect that participants described of being put into academic sets on their academic journeys. Participants talked about how their categorisation into different sets within primary education based on ability appeared to create a clear distinction between 'smart' and 'less smart' individuals, therefore shaping their self-perceptions and subsequently affecting levels of ASC, Hope, as well as their confidence, motivation, and future academic aspirations.

Within the extract provided by Participant 4, being put into academic sets within the primary years also has the capacity to serve as a perceived predictor of future academic success or failure.

This view was further emphasised by participants throughout their educational journeys, with participants reporting associations being made between higher sets and a better quality of teaching, more supportive learning environments, improved motivation, and improved behaviours, all of which fostered academic success and elevated levels of ASC and Hope. Conversely, individuals placed in lower sets often reported a lack of academic support, disengagement in learning tasks, heightened disruptive behaviours from peers, feelings of inadequacy, and, at times, social isolation. These experiences collectively exerted a negative effect on individual levels of ASC and Hope.

P2: *"I was in classes where people actually wanted to learn. Yes you would have people mess around sometimes, say if there was a supply teacher in. But on the whole the people in my classes were all good... I was lucky being in set one classes because we seemed to get all the best teachers".*

P3: *"I think being in top sets you are generally more interested too. From my point of view, when you are in bottom sets, people tend to mess about more or they are not interested, getting kicked out of class and they are probably less engaged compared to the people in higher sets".*

P4: *"Just being in lower sets and getting difficult work with no support Keith. Sometimes I'd just think, what's the point. I'd look round and everyone would be getting on and I would be sat there thinking, why is it just me who doesn't get this. It makes you feel dumb and stupid".*

2.5.2.1.3 Sub theme 3: Mentorship and Guidance

The thematic analysis revealed a further significant subtheme surrounding academic and emotional mentorship and guidance, which both emerged as

influential factors in participants levels of ASC and Hope and subsequent engagement with tertiary education. Participants highlighted instances where effective mentorship and guidance across primary, secondary, and tertiary education, positively impacted their levels of ASC and Hope. Conversely, the absence of such support systems was often reported to lead to lower levels of ASC and Hope leading to feelings of uncertainty and disengagement.

P4: *“I’d say my academic self-concept lowered over the course of secondary school. Especially at the beginning because you go from a very small supportive primary school in lessons like English and Maths to a massive secondary school where you get no help at all.”*

This extract from Participant 4 echoes the opinions of some participants in relation to the role mentorship and guidance has in shaping student’s levels of ASC and Hope, as well as their academic trajectories. Many participants reported that the supportive, nurturing environment of primary school was not replicated within secondary school, potentially affecting levels of ASC and Hope during the initial transition. The more supportive, nurturing environment in primary school was often typified by receiving adult support when necessary, more manageable academic tasks, smaller environments, and generally more positive adults.

Within the secondary school environment, participants often alluded to the fact that these supportive mechanisms were absent in most cases. Participants reported that a lack of academic and emotional support at this educational stage was also linked to feelings of abandonment and isolation throughout secondary school, significantly impacting upon some individuals overall emotional wellbeing as illustrated in the quotes below.

P1: “Yes, as I’ve just said the lack of support from teachers was a big one. In primary school I used to get a bit of support whenever I needed it to be honest, especially with English because I found that a bit more difficult. But when I went to secondary school, it was like you were left on your own. I didn’t really get any help and I remember sitting there in some classes like staring in to space because I didn’t know what to do and had no-one to help me.”

Despite the initial challenges faced in their secondary school transition, some participants highlighted the pivotal role of certain teachers who intervened and provided crucial mentorship and guidance during critical moments in their educational journeys. This contributed to individuals regaining academic confidence and subsequently increasing their levels of ASC and Hope, along with their ability to further engage in tertiary education as outlined in the below extracts.

P3: “We had one teacher who was my English teacher and I built up a really good relationship with her. She was actually one of the only teachers who was there from when I started to when I left. When I went off the path a little bit in Year 8/9 and started hanging around with children who didn’t really have my best interests at heart, she was the only teacher who actually helped me. I felt like the rest of them just gave up on me or weren’t really bothered”.

P5: “Yes, definitely. That was when I didn’t know, like, what way I was going to go. That was when the teachers in the school sort of intervened. That’s when the teachers I’ve talked about earlier became role models to me and that’s when I managed to turn it back around and get back to the set one classes in year 10”.

2.5.2.1.4 Sub theme 4: Participation in Extracurricular Opportunities

Participation in extracurricular activities as part of the wider academic experience was discussed as a prominent factor in developing and influencing levels of ASC and Hope. Conversely, limited access to extracurricular opportunities emerged as a significant concern for participants. This subtheme also captured the profound impact of key adults within educational settings, in facilitating extracurricular involvement and fostering a sense of belonging among children and young people reported in the interviews. Through their narratives, participants shed light on the transformative potential of extracurricular engagement in nurturing levels of ASC and Hope throughout their educational journeys.

P4: *"Well, because my friends who went to other schools that I'd see or play out with went to different schools in the area and it sounded like they had well more opportunities than us. Like, my school didn't have any sports teams, the only after school clubs you could attend were like music clubs, stuff I wasn't really interested in. My mates that went to other schools had like footballs clubs, dodgeballs clubs, Lego clubs all those types of things that I'd of liked to do and I remember thinking why isn't my school like theirs?"*

P4: *"Erm, I wouldn't say they weren't supportive, because they were in other ways, like when it came to learning. But I'd definitely say they didn't offer a range of experiences for us. It was more like whatever the headteacher was interested in that's what was on offer and the headteacher at the time loved music. She used to make us sing every day to hymns and that during assemblies."*

In addition, football often emerged as a significant extracurricular activity consistently associated with the enhancement of ASC and Hope. Participants frequently highlighted footballs capacity to offer problem solving opportunities, requiring individuals to think strategically and adapt swiftly to dynamic situations, which could be likened to the experiences of adversity or ACEs. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of football also seemed to foster both personal and collective goal setting, where teammates mutually encourage and motivate each other towards success. These dynamics seemingly contributed positively to the development of ASC and Hope among participants.

P2: *"I think the last one for me would be playing football. I've always played football since I was younger, and I feel like it makes you that more competitive and motivated to achieve certain things... It's helped me think of lots of possibilities and different ways around things, like if I can't get past a defender this time what could I do next time or if I missed a goal what could I do next time, you know things like that. I think I'm always setting myself smaller goals in footballer like can I pass that longer, can I run quicker, can I dribble faster and it's just something I've sort of taken into my life in general. I always want to be the best I can be, and I think that comes from football and being extremely driven and motivated."*

P4: *"Well, I'd say being part of a team definitely helps doesn't it. Like all working towards winning a match. That's like a shared goal but then everyone in the team has their own goals, like a defender will want to keep a clean sheet, a striker will want to score, you know things like that."*

2.5.2.2 Theme 2: Familial Context

Throughout the interviews, participants emphasised how the familial context and relationships within the context could profoundly shape the development of ASC, Hope, and tertiary education engagement. Discussions frequently revolved around how family dynamics could either create opportunities for enhancing or diminishing these traits over time.

This theme encompasses the fundamental principles identified by participants and is centered around the influence of academic and emotional support from parents and primary care givers, how wider family members can act as sources of inspiration or connection, and how socioeconomic realities within the familial context can impact upon levels of ASC and Hope.

2.5.2.2.1 Subtheme 1: Parental Support (Academic and Emotional)

In the exploration of participants experiences, parental support emerged as a fundamental and recurrent theme. Central to this theme was the profound influence of both academic and emotional support provided by parents and primary care givers. Parental academic support was characterised by various forms of assistance, including celebrating academic achievements, offering guidance with academic tasks and homework, and offering rewards as motivation which played a crucial role in shaping participants levels of ASC and Hope.

P2: "Yes, I would say the main one for me, having thought about it, would be my mum. My mum was a single mum with four children, and she always made sure she sat down with us and helped us with things like homework when we were little. She always used to make a massive fuss whenever we come home

with things like awards or certificates, and she would treat us to little things like a 'chippy tea' or a KFC or something."

P5: *"Well, I would say the main one for me would be like praise and support from my family, specifically my parents. They would always aim to support me with like homework and rewards and stuff. So, say if I would do my homework through the week, then I would be able to go to our caravan site on a weekend, you know, things like that."*

Beyond academic support, participants consistently emphasised the significance of having nurturing relationships with their parents or primary caregivers, which cultivated a sense of security, belonging, and emotional well-being during their childhood. Emotional support was often characterised by offering praise, encouragement, and emotional validation.

P2: *"I'd just say that really supportive nature and her always being there to help guide the way or to help me achieve certain things".*

P5: *"They used to give me little positive comments like they were proud of me, or they knew I could do something, you know things like that. It used to be like every week, especially when I was finding things tough, and it really helped. And then the rewards would be all different things, like if I was doing an exam or something like that they would provide me with a present if I had done well".*

P6: *"Also, I'm really close with my mum so when she was giving me praise and things like that, it made me want to do better."*

The academic and emotional support provided by parents or primary care givers were reported as having a pivotal role in shaping the educational trajectories of some participants, in the context of varied childhood experiences,

ultimately enhancing their capacity to engage with tertiary education, should they choose to do so.

P2: *"My mum has been a huge factor in that too. She has always supported me, and I've always felt supported by her to attend university. She made this pact with me when I was younger which was that she wouldn't charge me any 'keep' or rent if I stayed in full time education, so that was like another motivation for me to stay in education and do well for myself."*

P4: *"Erm, I would probably say my parents again for this one. Like I've already said I wasn't really bothered in secondary school and my Mum and Dad would always help me like set goals for myself. Like they helped me pick my subjects I wanted to do for my GCSE's, they helped me carry on with sixth form when I couldn't be bothered."*

2.5.2.2.2 Subtheme 2: Relationships with Wider Family.

In addition to the support provided by parental or primary caregivers, participants highlighted the significant role of wider family relationships in shaping their goals, motivation and how they perceived themselves academically as well as their ability to influence their engagement with tertiary education. Several participants alluded to the influence of the familial context you are born into as highlighted by the extracts below from Participant 1 and Participant 3. Together these narratives highlight the pivotal role of wider familial relationships in shaping individual levels of ASC, Hope, and readiness to pursue tertiary education opportunities.

P1: *"I think the family you are born into has a massive impact on like the goals you set for yourself and how motivated you actually are to achieve those goals. Like my family were so supportive of anything I tried and in a way always*

helped me to try and achieve little goals that I set for myself. Like I mentioned in the beginning my nan and grandad had a massive impact on that. But I also think having XXXXX brothers and sisters helped me in setting goals and trying to achieve them.”

P3: *“I believe a massive influence on this is the family you grew up in and your wider family support group. I think your parents should always want you to do better for yourself than they did. That was certainly the case with me.”*

The influence of wider familial systems, which encompass immediate family members such as siblings and extended family members including grandparents, emerged as pivotal factors in shaping participants narratives. These familial relationships served as sources of both inspiration and support, offering promotive and protective factors, with certain family members assuming roles as positive influencers and role models in which their behaviours could be emulated. The extracts below from Participant 1 and Participant 3 capture these points.

P1: *“Yeah. Like I said earlier my nan and grandad definitely helped and well my sister. I’d also say my mum in weird way as well... In a way, my sister was like a bit of a role model because I definitely looked up to her and wanted to achieve what she achieved in school anyway... I guess looking at it all I’ve always had a really supportive family even though we’ve had our ups and downs and that’s helped me get to where I am and hopefully will get me to university in the future.”*

P3: *“They both pushed me all of the time in every aspect of life, especially school. That is probably why I was always in the top sets and always getting good grades. It could have gone massively wrong for me when I started messing around with other friends in secondary school, but my family support*

group and the wider family I had gave me that support I needed to continue to do well.”

2.5.2.2.3 Subtheme 3: Socioeconomic Status Factors

The impact of socioeconomic status emerged as another prominent theme discussed by participants throughout the interview process. While many participants shared experiences aligned with a low socioeconomic status perspective, it became evident that socioeconomic factors play a significant role in shaping individual's motivations, aspirations, and academic pursuits. It also highlighted that experiencing certain types of adversity, may have a positive impact on shaping levels of ASC and Hope for some individuals as outlined in the below extracts from Participant 1 and Participant 6.

P1: *“For me it definitely did. It made me more determined and motivated to make sure that, that didn’t happen to me.”*

P6: *“I always strive to do better because growing up and seeing, you know, my parents struggling, things like that. that’s been a massive factor for me to work towards my desired goals and accomplish them.”*

Participants motivation and determination to succeed academically was often connected to memories of financial difficulties or strong feelings of embarrassment by gestures of kindness from others, serving as a reminder of the past hardships. These memories tended to serve as a catalyst in driving individuals to work harder academically and strive for a perceived better future free from the constraints of their assigned socioeconomic status as part of the wider familial context, as represented by Participant 2 in the below extract.

P2: “I would say the biggest one for me is my background and coming from a lower socio-economic background. I think I mentioned before that my mum was a single mum who had four children so growing up we didn’t have very much, and times could be difficult. My mum did her absolute best, and I can’t thank her enough, but I think coming from that made me more motivated and more determined that I was going to succeed for a couple of reasons to be honest. I always remember things like free school meals in secondary school where we had to have a little pass to show the dinner ladies, at the time it was dead embarrassing and I always remember it. Just little things like that had made me more determined and motivated to succeed. I remember another instance where my football coach offered me some of their kid’s football kits. I know he was just being nice and trying to help me, but I remember at the time I felt really embarrassed and things like that always pop into my mind whenever I’m having troubles or difficulties with things”.

2.5.4 Theme 3: Social Context

This theme explores the intricate dynamics of social aspects, including peer relationships, social comparisons, and peer pressure as described by participants. Within these social spheres, participants reported that peers could serve as positive or negative influences, shaping their academic and social perceptions, levels of hopefulness, overall motivation, and subsequent engagement with tertiary education.

2.5.2.3.1 Subtheme 1 – Peer Relationships

P3: “*No, I think your friendship groups are massively important too to be honest with you. If you have mates who look after you and want you to do better for yourself too, it can have a massive impact.*”

Peer relationships were consistently referred to by all participants as having the ability to positively or negatively influence educational experiences as indicated by Participant 3 in the above extract.

Positive peer relationships emerged as pivotal factors in fostering elevated motivation among individuals. Characterised by mutual support, shared interests, and aligned goals, these relationships served as sources of encouragement and motivation for some individuals. Participants highlighted the importance of having a supportive group of friends, emphasising how such relationships facilitated their academic aspirations, commitment to success and enthusiasm to pursue engagement within tertiary education as evidenced by Participant 1 and Participant 5 in the below extracts.

P1: “*Like I said, there much more supportive than the other friends I had. They don't want to try and get you into trouble. We have similar interests which helps, and I'd say many of our goals are similar, like wanting to go to university, do well for ourselves, have a nice life you know those types of things.*”

P5: “*I think your group of friends can have a massive impact, especially in primary and secondary school. Having a good group of friends around you who want you to do well is important I think, because that made me want to do well. It's like we all supported and praised each other to do well and that helped me want to achieve certain goals I had set for myself. We all used to work towards goals, and we all wanted to be high achievers.*”

Conversely, negative peer relationships, often characterised by disruptive or rebellious behaviours, were identified as potential barriers to the development of academic aspirations, academic perception, commitment to success, motivation, and goal pursuits. Consequently, impeding academic progress and having a negative impact upon the likelihood of engaging in tertiary education. Participants also emphasised the influence of peer pressure and the pressure of conformity within these relationships. The tendency to align with negative peers or a negative peer group, as described by Participant 3 and Participant 5 in the below extract, could lead individuals down different paths, often diverting them from their academic goals and reducing their likelihood of pursuing tertiary education opportunities.

P3: *"It's easy in secondary school to mix with the wrong crowd of people who you think are your mates, especially when you put girls and alcohol and doing the more rebellious things that teenagers do into the mix. It is very easy to slip off onto a different path. I had one friend who got introduced to weed and stuff like that and they have gone down a completely different path, so it definitely does happen."*

P5: *"Yes, definitely because the friendship group I had at the time were quite disruptive and they were in lower sets. They always used to say how they wanted me in their class, saying things like 'you're just like us', or 'you're one of us' and I just started to slack in school to be honest."*

Participant 1 highlighted a notable shift in peer influence and associated pressures upon transitioning from primary to secondary school. Participant 1 made reference to the supportive dynamics of their primary school friendships giving way to a more disruptive atmosphere in secondary school, characterised by

distractions and negative behaviours among peers as a result of the associated pressures to conform in a large secondary school environment.

P1: *"Well like growing up in like primary school I'd say I had a good group of mates, we looked out for each other and stuff, but it started to change when we started secondary school. Like the group of mates, I went to secondary with started being, erm... how do I put this nicely... like silly and stupid and just getting distracted by the wrong things shall we say."*

Participants highlighted significant transition points within their secondary school experience as pivotal moments for shifting from negative to positive peer relationships. In the below extract, Participant 1 mentioned Year 10 as a turning point where they began forming new friendships with peers who shared similar interests and aspirations. Participant 5 reflected on being moved between sets in Year 8/9 and how this impacted upon peer group dynamics, suggesting that changes in friendship groups played a role in their academic progress. It also links back to previous comments made about academic sets and higher academic sets being associated with a better quality of teaching, more supportive learning environments, improved motivation, and improved behaviours.

P1: *"Well I started making new mates in school then, because in year 10 we had to pick like are options of classes that we wanted to take for GCSE's. I started talking to people that I played online with as well and id say there like interests and what they wanted to do in life was more similar to how I looked at things."*

P5: *"But in the middle of secondary school, say like Year 8/9 I got moved down a couple of sets. But then once I got back to Year 10, I was moved back up to*

the top sets again. But when I look back I think that was due to friendships groups to be honest."

2.5.2.3.2 Subtheme 2 – Social Comparison

In the below extract, Participant 1 reflected on how the fear of standing out, due to requiring support impacted upon their ASC, suggesting that social comparisons can influence how individuals perceive their academic abilities and influence their level of ASC within their educational journeys.

P1: *"I think you just don't want to stick out do you? Like If your always needing help then you look like the 'dumb one' and I guess looking back, me needing a little help from time to time probably did impact my academic self-concept a bit at the time."*

The pursuit of social acceptance and to be influenced by negative peer relationships was also highlighted by participants. Wanting to 'fit in' by occasionally engaging in disruptive behaviours was described by Participant 2 in the below extract, which can ultimately lead to individuals prioritising conformity over academic engagement and attainment.

P2: *"Don't get me wrong, there were times I wanted to mess about as well just to fit in really."*

Participants expressed how ongoing social comparisons with their peers significantly influenced how they perceived themselves academically, the goals they set themselves and the impact on the motivational levels throughout their educational journeys. Participant 1's reflection on comparing themselves to high achievers highlights the pervasive nature of social comparisons and the resultant uncertainty about their own academic performance relative to others. This

highlights the potential impact of social comparisons on individuals' perceptions of their academic abilities, as well as their levels of ASC and Hope.

2.5.2.4 Theme 4: Contextual Competitiveness

This theme represents the intricate interplay between aspects of contextual competitiveness and their influence on individual's levels of ASC, Hope, and engagement with tertiary education. Competitiveness, as a social construct, can be found in various contexts of participants lives, with participants reporting how competitive elements had the ability to shape their attitudes, motivations, and behaviours. Within education, participants reported that contextual competitiveness manifests through various components, including academic and peer competitiveness, intrinsic drive for excellence and sibling dynamics within the wider familial context. Importantly, within the participants views, competitiveness emerged not as an innate trait, but rather a situational driver cultivated through environmental factors as detailed in the below sub themes.

2.5.2.4.1 Subtheme 1: Academic/Peer Competitiveness

Peer competitiveness in the academic context was often cited by participants as a key contributor influencing academic engagement, motivation, and achievement.. Many participants expressed a fondness for learning activities that could be turned into competitive endeavours with peers, therefore enhancing their academic engagement and motivation as captured in the below extract.

P2: *"In primary school there was like three of us who always pushed each other and in a good way it pushed us to achieve higher grades which pushed us all forward, so really it was a good thing from my perspective anyway."*

Participant 3 echoed this sentiment in the below extract, emphasising the ongoing positive effects of healthy peer competition throughout secondary school. They described being part of a small group of higher achieving peers who consistently pushed each other to excel academically. This sustained friendship and competitiveness not only elevated their academic attainment, an important pre-requisite for tertiary education engagement, but also improved their levels of ASC and Hope.

P3: *"I was always in a little group of three or four of us to be honest. We would always get the highest grades and there was a bit of a competition between us who would do better. This was all the way through secondary school. We would push each other on to do better".*

A recurring theme in participants views on academic/peer competitiveness was the transparent and supportive nature of competition within their peer groups. The below extract from Participant 6 demonstrates that when approached transparently and supportively through open discussions, academic/peer competitiveness can foster a culture of mutual growth and improvement among friends.

P6: *"But like my friends in my friendship group, we all talk about our marks, and I always aim to try and get higher than them."*

2.5.2.4.2 Subtheme 2: Intrinsic Competitiveness

Participants frequently cited intrinsic competitiveness as a driving force behind their pursuit of continuous improvement, the establishment of ambitious goals, and active engagement in competitive learning environments. This intrinsic drive was perceived by participants to have a positive impact on levels of ASC and Hope.

Participant 1's insights represent this perspective, suggesting that individuals with heightened intrinsic competitiveness tend to set ambitious goals and actively pursue them. This proactive approach to goal setting, as described by the Participant 1, holds direct implications for fostering elevated levels of Hope.

P1: *"I'd say the more competitive you are, the more hopeful you would probably be. Like, if your super competitive like I am, then you're always thinking of new goals and how you can achieve them, even if it's something stupid like tidying your room faster like I said. Your goals would change all the time like how can I do this faster, what could I do to do this faster, silly stuff like that. I guess you're always thinking of different ways you could get to your goals with there is a competitive element."*

This desire to seek challenges to fuel continuous improvement in comparison to others was frequently articulated by participants, who shared how setbacks or failures often served as catalysts for increased intrinsic competitiveness. Participants described how such experiences motivated them to excel in future learning tasks or assignments, surpassing both their own expectations and the expectation of others as shared in the below extracts from Participant 3 and Participant 6.

P3: *"I've not always had the best grades in my cohort, but that then motivates me to do better on the next assignment or piece of work."*

P6: *"I'm quite a competitive individual. For example, if my teacher gave me a predictive mark, I would always want to do better than that predicted mark, just to prove that I could do better. I just always would like a challenge on be like, right, 'they have sent you this, so you need to achieve higher.'*

2.5.2.4.3 Subtheme 3: Sibling Competitiveness

Participants elaborated on how sibling competitiveness can influence individual's attitudes, motivations, and behaviours. Within the familial dynamic, competing with siblings emerged as a significant motivator for personal achievement, often fostering a sense of motivation and determination to succeed. In the below extracts, Participant 1 humorously reflects on the general nature of sibling competitiveness and how competitiveness among siblings was a common aspect of their upbringing, whilst Participant 2 highlights the levels of competitiveness inherent in larger families.

P1: *"With my brother haha, everything. It would be like who could run the fastest, finishing tidying our room the fastest, who was better at football. I think that's just normal though isn't it?"*

P2: *"Well, I think coming from a larger family, like I said there was XXXXX of us. That definitely makes you more competitive as I was always competing with my XXXXX younger brothers in everything. Things like who could run faster, who could jump higher who could eat their tea faster, it's just part of growing up in a family isn't it."*

The phenomenon of sibling competitiveness often extended into academia, with some participants expressing a strong desire to outperform their siblings academically. This drive to excel in comparison may contribute to individual's academic achievements and subsequent aspirations for tertiary education, seemingly influencing the likelihood of them engaging with tertiary education.

Within the below extracts, Participant 1 reflects on the dynamic of sibling competitiveness, particularly related to academic performance, whilst Participant 5 acknowledges the influence of sibling competitiveness on their decision to pursue university education.

P1: “Yeah, to be fair that was. She was like the smart one in the family, and I wanted to be the smart one shall we say, so I always used to try and like outdo her on tests and stuff, you know like your SATS, GCSES, coursework and that.”

P5: “Yes, I think so. It was definitely one of the reasons why I’ve attended university, simply because my sister went. I also wanted to attend and get better grades than her.”

Together, these extracts highlight the nuanced interplay between sibling competitiveness and academic pursuits, shedding light on its role in shaping individuals’ educational trajectories and motivations to engage with tertiary education in the future.

2.5.6 Theme 5: Personal Circumstances

Participants often referred to individual personal circumstances and a range of personal experiences that had the ability to shape their levels of ASC, Hope and subsequent personal traits that may have influenced their ability to engage in tertiary education. Within these personal circumstances, PCEs were often referred to by some participants as having the capacity to act as protective and promotive factors, despite facing various adversity or ACES, with Participant 1 making reference to the physiological, safety, and love and belonging needs required in order for individuals to feel ‘happier’. A perception which is reflected in Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs (1954) and key developmental needs within in the pursuit of self-actualisation.

P1: “I think like, the more positive experiences you have then the better you feel in yourself, like your happier aren’t you. If you feel happier, like well looked after and don’t have to worry about certain things then I would say your more able to make goals for yourself and try to achieve them. I guess I was lucky in

having the relationships I did with my nan and grandad and my mum and dad, cause even though they were separated I still had a good relationship with them.”

2.5.2.5.1 Subtheme 1: Intrinsic Motivation

It is essential to differentiate intrinsic motivation, as discussed within this section, and the intrinsic competitiveness mentioned in Theme 4, Subtheme 2. While intrinsic competitiveness focuses on the drive for excellence and outperforming others, intrinsic motivation encompasses an internal enjoyment and satisfaction derived from personal improvement and engagement in activities for their own sake.

In the below extract, Participant 6 alludes to intrinsic motivation through their proactive approach to learning and pursuit of personal improvement. They demonstrate a willingness to seek additional work and engage in independent research to enhance their grades, reflecting a sense of competence and mastery in their academic ability. Participants intrinsic motivations and subsequent behaviours indirectly contributed to increased levels of ASC and Hope, which was also reported by several participants.

P6: *“I would ask things like ‘is there any extra work I could be doing?’ I would even research things online linked to the subject or topic to help me increase my grades.”*

Furthermore, Participant 3 communicated a strong desire for personal growth, demonstrating a clear sense of purpose and direction throughout their educational journey. The increased level of intrinsic motivation subsequently contributed to their engagement in tertiary education.

P3: *“Definitely, yes, I sort of know where I’m going, and I’ve always had a plan.”*

2.5.2.5.2 Subtheme 2: Extrinsic Motivation

Participants consistently highlighted various extrinsic motivations within their personal circumstances that influenced their levels of ASC, Hope, and their desire to pursue tertiary education. These motivations often stemmed from experiences of adversity or ACEs, which served as powerful external drivers. Additionally, external rewards and recognition played a significant role in shaping participant's aspirations and academic engagement.

During the interviews, participants demonstrated a tendency to positively reframe their experiences of adversity or ACEs, by using them as sources of extrinsic motivation to aid the development of their ASC and Hope and enable them to pursue engagement in tertiary education. Participant 2 encapsulates this sentiment in the below extract, characterising tertiary education engagement as a pathway to success and a means of avoiding past challenges or adversity.

P2: *“Definitely, and it’s one of the main reasons I’m at university doing this degree course now. I’ve always thought of university as ‘doing well’ when I look at like certain role models in my life like the teacher I discussed.”*

Many of the participants made reference to witnessing familial difficulties during their childhood, often characterised by financial hardship and the strong external motivating influence these experiences had on their determination to engage in tertiary education. For many of the participants the prospect of attaining a higher educational qualification was represented a pathway to improving socio-economic conditions and alleviating the financial burdens that they experienced during their childhoods.

Several participants expressed a desire to 'succeed' academically, driven by the requirement to secure a better future for themselves and their families. Their aspirations were deeply intertwined with the goal of overcoming economic adversity, issues of social mobility and providing stability for their loved ones. Interestingly, the experience of such adversity indirectly increased participants motivation, as they actively pursued opportunities to secure favourable outcomes, as highlighted in the following extracts.

P1: *"Like seeing my mum struggle to give us what we wanted and needed wasn't nice and I think that gave me like an underlying motivation to do well for myself so I wouldn't have to struggle like she has when I'm older if you get me. I'd definitely say it's contributed to me setting goals and wanting to do well for myself."*

P2: *"Well, I think I wanted to do well so that personally I wouldn't have to struggle like I had seen my mum do. I was the oldest in the family too so I felt a sort of pressure to do well so that I could help look after my family."*

P6: *"I think I touched based on this before, like I always strive to do better because growing up and seeing, you know, my parents struggling, things like that. that's been a massive factor for me to work towards my desired goals and accomplish them."*

Other external factors such as praise, rewards, and recognition were often reported by participants to play a significant role in motivating them to excel academically. Participants often mentioned how receiving external validation from authority figures, such as adults, parents, or primary care givers, through gestures like certificates or acknowledgement, served as powerful motivators. These gestures not only provided a sense of validation but also instilled a drive for continued efforts,

thereby enhancing participant's levels of ASC, Hope, and academic attainment. This sentiment is encapsulated in the following extracts:

P3: *"Just basically simple things. Things like coming home from school, sitting with you while you completed your homework, motivating you with rewards."*

P5: *"Yes, yes. Like the praise you get from people. Like, when you do like, let's say for instance getting certificates and stuff. If you got them in school, you got a really good feeling, so you want to get that feeling again and you get that feeling by doing more good stuff so that you get another certificate."*

2.5.2.5.2 Subtheme 3: Personal Characteristics

Participants highlighted a number of personal characteristics during their educational journeys that they believe contributed to their levels of ASC, Hope, and engagement with tertiary education. These personal attributes including perseverance, a strong work ethic, goal setting, adapting, and maintaining focus despite external changes, challenges, or adversity, and having a positive outlook and belief that things could get better, emerged as crucial factors shaping their academic trajectories.

Perseverance and having a strong work ethic as indicated in the below extracts from Participant 3 and Participant 6, were viewed as favourable personal characteristics that improved academic attainment and fostered a positive outlook toward tertiary education engagement. Despite facing various challenges in their childhood experiences, individuals with these specific attributes demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and dedicated efforts to excel academically.

P3: *"I've not always had the best grades in my cohort, but that then motivates me to do better on the next assignment or piece of work."*

P6: *"I was always able to achieve my predicted grades and higher with my classes through hard work and determination which probably contributed to me having and continuing to have high academic self-concept, or at least I like to think I do haha."*

Goal setting and its influence on behaviour and motivation was consistently viewed as a positive personal characteristic by participants. The practice of setting and pursuing goals was frequently mentioned by participants, as captured in the below extracts from Participant 5 and Participant 6, who described actively embedding goal-setting routines into their daily lives. This proactive approach not only increased their intrinsic motivation but also served as a driving force for continued academic efforts, even in the face of adversity or ACEs.

P5: *"So, majority of the time I will write them down, because when you see it written down and then you are able to tick it off in the future it gives you like a sense of achievement."*

P6: *"Yeah, definitely. I still do it now. I don't know so much about growing up because I grew up in a bit of a crazy household, so I can't barely tell you that was something I done when I was younger. But definitely now, it's definitely something that i still do whilst at university and in my personal life."*

This subsequently increased participants sense of achievement and determination to achieve their educational aspirations. This in turn had a distinctive positive impact upon their levels of ASC, attributed to the possible bi-directional relationship of ASC and Hope, further fuelling their pursuit of engaging

with tertiary education throughout the educational experiences as illustrated by the below extract.

P2: *"I tend to think of the ones I can achieve, say for example attending university, and then I'll look up or research what I need to do to make that goal a reality."*

A further positive characteristic identified by participants was the process of adaptability and maintaining focus on academic pursuits despite external changes, challenges, or adversity. These characteristics emerged in participants responses as significant factors in supporting the maintenance and enhancement of ASC and Hope. Participant 5 demonstrated these characteristics during their secondary education, recounting how they redirected their social circle to align with their academic goals. They described withdrawing from a friendship group that posed challenges and gravitating towards peers in the top sets. This adjustment provided them with the motivation to excel in their GCSEs and provided them with the academic qualifications to engage with tertiary education.

P5: *"But because of the way I was like I was all self-motivated and wanted good grades, by the time I got back to Year 10 I sort of withdrew from that friendship group and gravitated towards my old friendship group, the ones who were in the top sets and high achievers and I remember that sort of give me the motivation to kick on and do well in my GCSE's then."*

The final positive characteristic identified by participants was having a positive outlook and a belief that they could get better at something by dedicating time, effort, and energy. Participants described their dedication to hard work, acknowledging that their success was the result of consistent effort and diligent study habits. For Participant 6, academic success was not attributed to innate

intelligence but rather to their proactive approach to learning and willingness to invest time and effort into their studies, in the context of their varied childhood experiences.

P6: *"I just work really hard; I'm not going to lie. I wouldn't say I'm naturally smart, I just really put the work to get the grades to reflect how well I'm doing, so like, while people were going out, I was staying in and revising."*

2.6 Discussion

2.6.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to examine the influence of ACEs and PCEs on ASC and Hope. By investigating the perceived mechanisms underlying elevated ASC and Hope levels, the study aimed to understand their implications for individuals' engagement with tertiary education. The research was guided by four specific research questions exploring the impact of ACEs exposure on levels of ASC and Hope (RQ1), the impact of PCEs on levels of ASC and Hope (RQ2), the combined influence of ACEs and PCEs on levels of ASC and Hope (RQ3), and the potential mechanisms that allow individuals to maintain elevated levels of ASC and Hope in the context of varied childhood experiences (RQ4).

This was achieved across two sequential phases, each phase addressing specific research questions (see Table 20). The initial phase involved the creation of categories of participants based on relative levels of ACEs and PCEs and testing the effects on levels of ASC and Hope, utilising a Factorial Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) and subsequent two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine the interaction between ACEs and PCEs on levels of Hope. The qualitative phase then employed a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun &

Clarke, 2021) with a solution-orientated approach to retrospectively explore participants' childhood experiences. This approach focused on identifying exceptions, differences, and instances where ACEs and PCEs may have influenced levels of ASC and Hope, providing insights into potential mechanisms that may have influenced ASC and Hope positively or negatively.

Table 20

Mapping the Phase One Questionnaire and the Phase Two Themes onto the four Research Questions.

	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	RQ4
Phase 1 Questionnaire				
ACEs	✓	✓	✓	
PCEs	✓	✓	✓	
ASC	✓	✓	✓	
Hope	✓	✓	✓	
Phase 2 Themes				
Academic Experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓
Familial Context	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social Context	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contextual	✓	✓	✓	✓
Competitiveness				
Personal Circumstances	✓	✓	✓	✓

Given the complexity of environmental, systemic, and contextual factors at play, the discussion aims to interpret and synthesise the findings from both phases with respect to the research questions and previous literature. A number of possible theoretical frameworks were considered relevant to ACEs as described within the literature review; however, an Ecological Systems Framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) was chosen as the most suitable lens through which to synthesis the findings of this study due to its comprehensive and holistic approach to understanding human development (Tong & An, 2024).

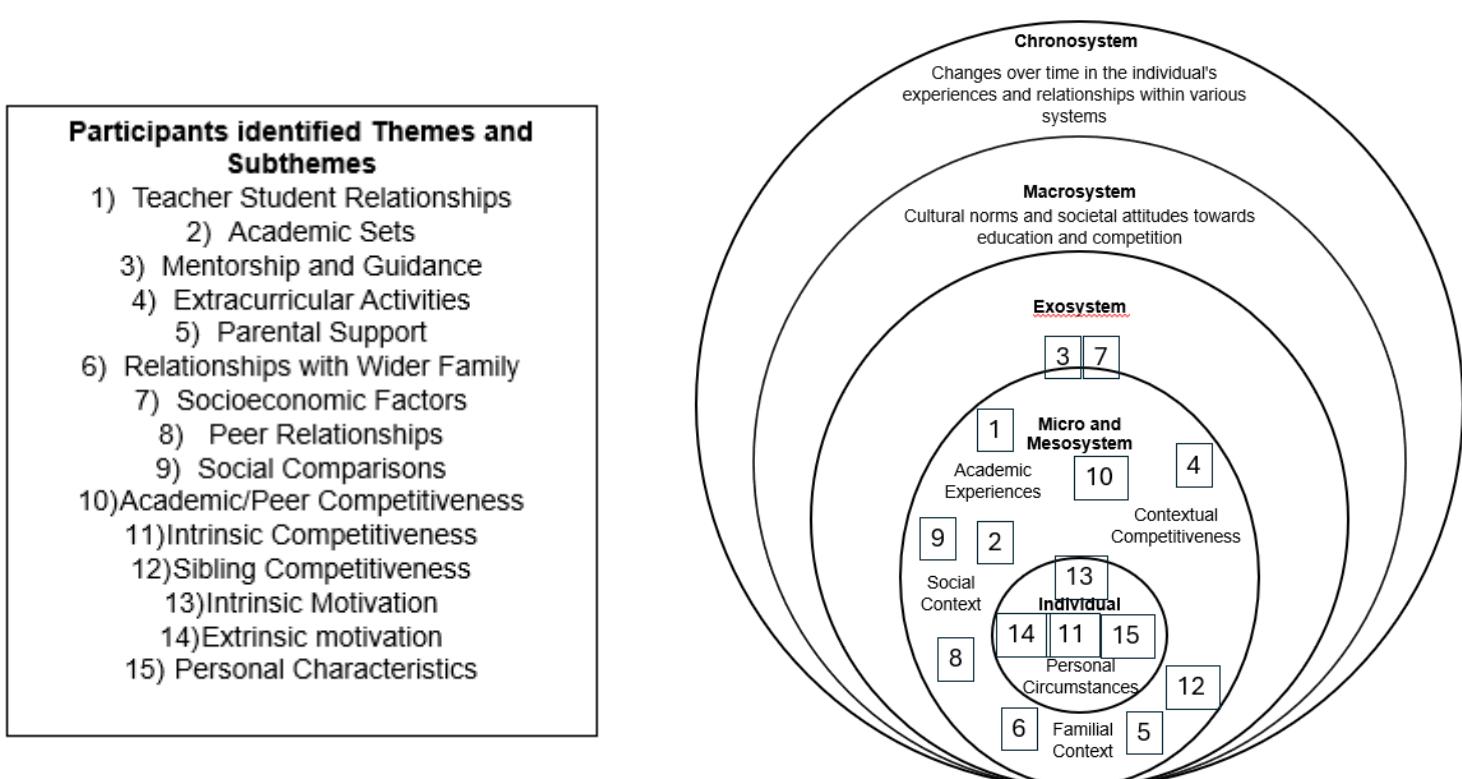
Unlike the Ecobiodevelopmental framework, which primarily focuses on biological and genetic factors, or the risk and resilience framework, which emphasises individual risks and protective factors, the ecological systems framework recognises the intricate interplay between individual characteristics and the multitude of environmental systems that shape the experiences of individuals who have experienced individual and cumulative ACEs. It was felt that this aligned with the multifaceted nature of ACEs and their far-reaching impacts across various domains of an individual's life. Furthermore, the ecological systems framework acknowledges the bidirectional influence between individuals and their surrounding context, which is particularly relevant when considering the complex interactions between ACEs, PCEs, ASC, and Hope and their impact on engagement with tertiary education.

The exploration of significant systems such as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem will help illuminate the complex nature of the findings. By delving into the mechanisms through which ASC and Hope are affected by childhood experiences and making sense of the participant narratives, the study offers valuable insights into the ways in which individuals

navigate and overcome challenges across systems and contexts, drawing strengths from various sources to maintain higher levels of ASC and Hope, in the context of varied childhood experiences (see Figure 14).

Figure 14

Diagram displaying an overview of themes and subthemes identified from participants framed using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979)



Furthermore, the inductive nature of the research necessitates drawing upon additional literature not initially considered in the wider review to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the findings. The discussion will embed implications for EP practice across multiple systems throughout, given that EPs work across individual, systemic, and strategic levels (Fallon et al., 2010), which

encompass the distinct systems highlighted within the Ecological Systems Framework (1979). The discussion will then focus on limitations and future research directions, which will be further expanded upon in the subsequent reflective chapter (3.0), before offering concluding comments orientated around the importance of focusing attention on the specific areas.

2.6.2 RQ1 Does ACEs exposure impact upon levels of ASC and Hope?

The present study unveiled the differential impact of cumulative ACEs exposure on levels of ASC and Hope among emerging adults. While ASC refers to how individuals perceive themselves academically, Hope signifies an individual's ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal/s. The findings within the study suggest that cumulative ACEs exposure does not significantly impact upon levels of ASC; however, it does significantly impact upon levels of Hope. These findings indicate that the bidirectional relationship between ASC and Hope appears to be less prominent than may have been indicated by existing studies on how both constructs are broadly formed and influenced through individual experiences and interactions within the environment (Beld et al., 2019). This may imply that ASC is influenced by a more complex interplay of factors beyond ACEs alone, as opposed to Hope. These findings align with several studies that have found a significant association between ACE exposure and a negative impact upon both children's and adult's levels of Hope (Munoz et al., 2019; Esteves et al., 2013), as well as previous research detailing a lack of correlation between ACE exposure and ASC (Brown & Dodd, 2022).

2.6.3 RQ2 Does PCEs exposure impact upon levels of ASC and Hope?

The present study further unveiled the impact of cumulative PCEs exposure on levels of ASC and Hope among emerging adults. PCEs refer to activities and experiences that enhance a child's life, contributing to successful mental and physical health outcomes such as having supportive relationships, feeling a sense of belonging, and opportunities for positive engagement (Bethell et al., 2019). Findings within the study suggest that cumulative PCEs exposure does not significantly impact upon levels of ASC, or levels of Hope. These findings differ from initial expectations and existing literature around the potential protective and promotive role of PCEs in the physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development domains (Bethell et al., 2019; Crandall et al., 2020; Narayan et al., 2018; Zimmerman, 2013).

Furthermore, the findings suggest that increased PCEs may not necessarily be associated with more advantageous positive psychological traits in the context of ASC and Hope as previously suggested (Crandall et al., 2019; Kokaturk & Cicek, 2023; Shaw et al., 2022). This is interesting as many participants in the qualitative phase often expressed that PCEs, or the lack thereof, such as feeling able to talk to family about feelings, feeling supported by friends, and feeling a sense of belonging in secondary school (Bethell et al., 2018), were all associated with perceived positive or negative impacts upon both their levels of ASC and Hope. These findings suggest that the influence of PCEs on the positive psychological constructs of ASC and Hope may be more complex than previously thought.

2.6.4 RQ3 Is there an interaction effect between ACEs and PCEs and ASC and Hope?

The present study further illuminated the impact of the interaction between ACEs and PCEs on both ASC and Hope. The interaction effect between ACEs and PCEs

on ASC was not statistically significant, indicating that the interaction between ACEs and PCEs does not statistically influence levels of ASC for the participants within the study. In contrast, the interaction effect between ACEs and PCEs on Hope was statistically significant, indicating that the interaction between the number of ACEs and PCEs significantly influenced levels of Hope for participants within the study.

Notably for participants with 2 ACEs or fewer, having 4 PCEs or more was associated with higher levels of Hope compared to those with 3 PCEs or less. This suggests that a higher number of PCEs may act as a protective factor, promoting higher levels of Hope among specific individuals with lower levels of ACEs. This aligns with previous research around the importance of early positive experiences that support Hopefulness (Frederickson, 2001), the impact of increased PCEs and more advantageous positive psychological traits (Crandall et al, 2019, Kokaturk & Cicek, 2023; Shaw et al, 2022), as well as the construct of Hope demonstrating the ability to act as a potential mediator against adverse experiences (Dixson et al., 2018).

2.6.5 RQ4 What are the mechanisms that allow individuals to maintain high levels of ASC and Hope, in the context of experiencing a varied range of childhood experiences (both ACES and PCEs)?

The qualitative findings shed light on the potential mechanisms and contextual factors that may contribute to elevated levels of ASC and Hope among individuals who have experienced varied childhood experiences, including both ACEs and PCEs. Notably, key elements within the school, family, and social contexts emerged as pivotal factors capable of either nurturing elevated levels of ASC and Hope or diminishing them, contingent upon individual circumstances and

situational dynamics. This finding highlights the intricate interplay between ACEs, PCEs, ASC, and Hope, emphasising the need to acknowledge the multifaceted academic, familial, and social influences shaping ASC and Hope. This aligns with existing literature emphasising the significance of considering academic, family, and social contexts in the development and sustenance of ASC and Hope (Catalano et al., 2004; Gamoran & Mare, 1989; Kwok & Shek, 2008; Li & Wong, 2015; Lin et al., 2021; Marsh et al., 1995; Parker et al., 2013; Snyder, 2002).

2.6.6 Synthesis of Findings

While quantitative data and previous research suggest that experiencing ACEs can have a negative impact on ASC and Hope, the extent of this effect is influenced by various contextual, systemic, and individual factors. While ACEs can lead to a propensity to reduce ASC and Hope, the study has identified contextual, systemic, and individual factors that mediate this effect that align with elements of previous research centred around the impact of PCEs (Bethell et al., 2019). This further illustrates the complex interplay of factors that can exacerbate or mitigate these effects. Recognising this multifaceted dynamic, the study adopts an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to contextualise and integrate the findings with the broader aim of examining the impact of ACEs and PCEs on ASC and Hope. Through this ecosystemic lens, the study seeks to offer a comprehensive exploration of the perceived mechanisms contributing to elevated ASC and Hope, along with their implications for individuals' engagement in tertiary education.

2.6.6.1 Microsystem and Mesosystem

The microsystem encompasses the immediate environment where an individual operates (Hosek et al., 2008), fostering enduring relationships within the domains of home, school, and community (Maxwell, 2018). In contrast, the mesosystem represents the interconnectedness between these microsystems, forming a combination of two or more microsystems (Crawford, 2020). Together these systems provide the outline for the processes that will influence psychological development and behavioural changes of individuals over time (Crawford, 2020). Notably, a significant body of research highlights that many ACEs and PCEs are situated within individuals' microsystems and mesosystems (Anda et al., 2006; Bethell et al., 2019; Felitti et al., 1998). This highlights the critical importance of these systems as focal points for broader attention.

2.6.6.1.1 Individual Context

Exposure to ACEs during critical developmental periods has been extensively documented to disrupt individuals' well-being, impacting physical, behavioural, and mental health across the lifespan (Herzog & Schmahl, 2008; Ranjbar & Erb, 2019). In addition, experiencing ACEs can impede the acquisition of essential skills and resources crucial for fostering Hope or Hopeful thinking (Munoz et al., 2019). Consequently, young people who experience ACEs often struggle to develop effective coping strategies, goal-setting abilities, and a sense of agency, all fundamental components of Hope (Snyder, 2022).

One possible explanation for the lack of significant association between cumulative PCE exposure and levels of ASC and Hope within the study may lie within the complex myriad of factors which encompass biological, psychological,

ecological, and developmental factors. The impact of PCEs on levels of ASC and Hope may be moderated or mediated by other contextual factors, making it increasingly challenging to link PCEs with having a direct influence. Research suggests that the negative impact of cumulative ACEs or negative experiences often outweighs the protective effects of PCEs (Baumeister et al., 2001; Bethell et al., 2019; Vaish et al., 2008).

While PCEs have shown their ability to buffer the negative impact of individual ACEs, experiencing cumulative ACEs which often co-occur, may overwhelm the protective capacities of PCEs, making individuals more vulnerable to adverse outcomes (Crandall et al., 2019). While this study did not explore the specific types of ACEs or PCEs experienced by participants, recent literature suggests that specific ACEs, such as maltreatment and neglect, may have more enduring and pervasive effects on various domains including mental health (Negriff, 2020), personality traits (Grusnick et al., 2019), educational attainment (Houtepen, 2020) and health and developmental outcomes (Webster, 2022). Therefore, it is plausible to suggest that specific ACE exposure may have lasting implications for how individuals perceive themselves academically, rendering them less amenable to the buffering or mitigating effects of specific PCEs.

Young people's personal circumstances, often defined by their intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and personal characteristics, were frequently mentioned within participants' narratives as influencing levels of ASC and Hope. This aligns with the findings of Han et al., (2023) who suggested that children's internal assets and resources, fostered by PCEs, play a pivotal role in promoting competent development and can serve as a robust buffer against the negative impact of ACEs. Recognising that personal circumstances are significantly shaped by other

contextual factors (e.g. family, school, peers), there may be an opportunity to utilise specific PCEs within these systems to enhance children's internal assets and resources, thereby potentially contributing to elevated level of ASC and Hope.

Intrinsic motivation, driven by a genuine passion for learning and personal growth, emerged as a crucial component in participants' narratives, playing a pivotal role in maintaining higher levels of ASC and Hope, as well as their pursuit of engaging with tertiary education. This observation aligns with research by Sunu and Anu (2024), who found that intrinsically motivated individuals were more likely to possess a positive ASC. Furthermore, intrinsically motivated young people tend to experience heightened levels of ASC and Hope due to increased enjoyment from their learning experiences, enhanced self-perceptions, and engagement in goal-directed activities (Barret & Morgan, 1991; Deci et al., 1991; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Snyder, 2002). Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) further highlight the importance of supportive relationships, autonomy, and feelings of competence in fostering intrinsic motivation. Consequently, PCEs such as supportive parenting and positive peer relationships within individuals' microsystems and mesosystems, along with having opportunities for exploration and creativity, may nurture intrinsic motivation, thereby promoting higher levels of ASC and Hope.

Furthermore, extrinsic motivations were also highlighted within participants' narratives such as praise, rewards, and recognition from key adults, parents, or primary care givers within their microsystems and mesosystems. These findings further align with Deci & Ryan (2000) who suggest that external motivators, such as teacher encouragement, underpinned by the PCE of positive teacher-student relationships, and access to educational resources, can enhance individuals' feeling of competence and autonomy, therefore impacting upon how they perceive

themselves academically and their ability to independently work towards a desired goal/s and accomplish their desired goal/s.

A particular finding within the study was that participants who experienced 3 PCEs or fewer displayed higher levels of Hope compared to those with 4 PCEs or more. This finding suggests a more nuanced relationship between ACEs and PCEs, indicating that within individuals with higher ACE scores, a lower number of PCEs may paradoxically be associated with higher levels of Hope. These findings offer an alternative perspective from that of Baxter et al. (2017) who observed that individuals with elevated ACE scores often face challenges in developing successful pathways towards their goals, resulting in reduced levels of Hope.

A possible explanation for this may lie within the personal characteristics of individuals and their inherent ability to respond positively to physiological, psychological, and social challenges within their environment (Beutel et al., 2017). A high ACE score does not guarantee negative outcomes in life and some individuals have demonstrated their ability to thrive under hardships, extracting positive aspects or surpassing earlier functioning after handling stressful life events or adversities (Sinclair & Wallston, 2004). This was often mentioned by participants who identified personal characteristics such as perseverance, a strong work ethic, goal setting, adapting, maintaining focus, and having a positive outlook as crucial factors contributing to their ASC, Hope, and engagement with tertiary education on an individual basis.

These identified personal characteristics have demonstrated their capacity to act as key components which can help foster the maintenance of higher levels of ASC and Hope. Perseverance, which can be understood as a facet of Grit (Duckworth et al., 2007), another positive psychological construct, has been found to be an

influential factor in helping individuals in the face of adversity (Hou et al., 2021), as well as impacting upon a range of positive learning outcomes (Duckworth et al., 2021). Likewise, goal setting, an important component of Hope, can influence an individual's future levels of Hope, their academic achievement, and therefore their ASC within an educational context (Chen et al., 2020). It may be that these personal characteristics serve to buffer certain individuals against the negative consequences associated with ACEs (Foster, 2018), therefore maintaining higher levels of Hope in the face of adversity.

The finding that participants with 3 or more ACEs displayed higher levels of Hope when they had 3 or fewer PCEs may also suggest that the experience of overcoming challenges with limited PCEs may foster a greater sense of determination and belief for some, in their ability to achieve their goals, often leading to higher levels of Hope. This phenomenon was often highlighted in participants narratives, who referred to specific ACEs such as parental separation, witnessing domestic violence, familial financial hardship, negative academic experiences, and social adversities as challenges that they had encountered. Despite facing significant obstacles, some participants seemed to develop a deeper appreciation for Hopefulness as a means of navigating and constructing a more positive narrative of their future selves and environments (Cabrera et al., 2009).

Participants who had experienced ACEs and wider adversity, often alluded to holding onto Hope as a guiding light, believing that they could achieve better futures, better opportunities, and better outcomes through the aforementioned personal characteristics. Participants often described a desire not to be defined by their ACEs but to strive for personal growth and continuous improvement which enabled them to maintain higher levels of ASC and Hope, when engaging (or in engaging) with

tertiary education. This aligns with the work of Duckworth et al., (2007) around the positive psychological construct of Grit, who suggest that higher levels of intrinsic competitiveness may drive individuals to persist in their academic endeavours, even when faced with adversities or failures, leading to stronger ASC and a greater sense of Hope, through perseverance and a passion for long-term goals.

Another potentially relevant framework is that of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) which refers to the potential positive psychological and behavioural changes experienced by individuals who have experienced trauma or adversity (Malhotra & Chebiyan, 2016). PTG has received increasing empirical attention in the field of ACEs as a means of making sense of the possible reasons why some individuals experience negative outcomes, whereas others experience positive outcomes (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Recent studies have demonstrated PTG in individuals with specific ACE exposure such as child sexual abuse (Sheridan & Carr, 2020) and neglect (Brooks et al., 2019), suggesting that experiencing ACEs or adversity may have the capacity to promote new coping skills through enhanced personal and social resources in some individuals (Park & Fenster, 2004).

In the context of the present study, it is possible that participants with higher ACEs but fewer PCEs experienced a level of adversity that, while challenging, did not exceed their personal capacity for reasonable coping. This may have allowed them to experience PTG, fostering a greater sense of determination, perseverance, and belief in their ability to achieve their goals, subsequently leading to higher levels of Hope. This view aligns with the narratives of many of the participants who discussed how experiencing specific adversity or ACEs, often served as a powerful external driver in which they were able to positively reframe their experiences, by using them

as extrinsic sources of motivation to aid the development and maintenance of their levels of Hope.

Whilst PTG theory offers an empirically sound context in which this phenomenon can be understood (Malhotra & Chebivan, 2016), it is also essential to highlight the findings from Deci & Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory. This theory posits that autonomy is a fundamental psychological need that drives individual's behaviour. Individuals who have experienced specific types of adversity or ACEs, may be extrinsically motivated by their adversities to gain control over their lives and create a better future for themselves, an idea that was referred to on multiple occasions in participants narratives. Conversely, individuals with higher ACEs and more PCEs may have experienced a cumulative level of adversity that exceeded their personal coping capacity, limiting their potential for PTG and its associated benefits. This suggests that the intensity of the adversity experienced, the presence of specific PCEs, and an individual's capacity for coping may be crucial in determining the potential for PTG and its subsequent impact on psychological constructs like Hope.

2.6.6.1.2 Academic Context

ACEs are experienced in various contexts and their impact upon individuals' levels of ASC and Hope may vary according to these contextual factors (Fagan & Novak, 2018; Negriff, 2020). Context may interact with or moderate the effects of ACEs on individuals' levels of ASC and Hope, highlighting the need for a more holistic understanding of an individual's circumstances when thinking about the development and maintenance of their ASC and Hope. Participant narratives make clear that contextual factors within an individual's microsystem and

mesosystem, such as school, have the ability to positively or negatively impact individuals' levels of ASC and Hope.

A possible explanation for the lack of significant association between cumulative ACE exposure and levels of ASC may lie within the multifaceted ecological nature of the concept of ASC. ASC has been shown to be influenced not solely by the microsystems and mesosystems in which an individual exists (e.g. home, school, and community), but also by academic achievement, which can be significantly impacted by exposure to cumulative ACEs (Dixson et al., 2016; Houtepen et al., 2018; Snyder, 2000). Literature suggests that individuals who have experienced ACEs are more likely to experience lower academic achievement (Bellis et al., 2018; Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018; Stewart-Tufuscu et al., 2018). Whilst a significant direct impact of ACEs on levels of ASC was not observed within the study, it is plausible that ACEs exposure may indirectly influence levels of ASC through their negative effects on academic achievement (Valentine et al., 2004). This may cause individuals to compare themselves more negatively than their non-ACE counterparts, potentially contributing to lower levels of ASC (Chen et al., 2022; Oshri et al., 2015; Shattanawi & Ma'abreh, 2022). This is an important factor to consider given that individuals with a history of ACEs are approximately twice as likely to have lower educational qualifications (not achieved their A levels or have GCSE grades D-G) than their non-ACE counterparts (Jaffe et al., 2018).

The use of academic sets by grouping students based on ability levels early on and throughout participants' educational journeys was frequently cited as having the potential to shape academic experiences, academic trajectories, emotional well-being, and subsequent levels of ASC. This suggests that disparities in

learning environments and support systems between different academic sets or settings based on ability may impact individuals' levels of ASC, as well as subsequent educational outcomes. This observation aligns with the BFLPE, which predicts a higher ASC for individuals in a lower-achieving class or setting compared with individuals with the same ability level in a higher-achieving class or setting (Jansen et al., 2022). It also aligns with the findings that individuals often use some form of external frame of reference to form their ASC (Dai & Rimm, 2008).

Furthermore, participant's narratives highlighted the impact of academic sets on their levels of Hope. They reported associations between higher sets and better-quality teaching, more supportive learning environments, improved motivation, and improved behaviours, all of which fostered academic success and elevated levels of Hope. These views align with research suggesting that higher-ability sets may offer varying levels of educational opportunities, such as experienced teachers and supportive learning environments, which can improve levels of Hope (Gamoran & Mare, 1989).

Conversely, participants placed in lower academic sets often reported a lack of academic support, disengagement in learning tasks, heightened disruptive behaviours from peers, feelings of inadequacy, and, at times, social isolation. These experiences collectively exerted a negative effect on individual levels of Hope. One participant also suggested that being placed into academic ability sets during the primary years had the capacity to serve as a perceived predictor of future academic success or failure based on the academic set an individual was placed in, as it fostered clear distinctions between 'smart' and 'less smart' individuals. This adds weight to further research on academic ability setting and

student's perceptions of their academic abilities and future prospects, suggesting that individuals in lower ability sets have reduced Hope for academic success (Burris & Welner, 2005). A concept which distinguishes remarkably different impacts on ASC and Hope in the context of academic sets.

Closely linked to academic sets was the emergence of academic and peer competitiveness within the academic context. This was often expressed within participants narratives as a motivating force influencing their engagement, motivation, and achievements, which was also a driving factor in increasing their levels of ASC and Hope. These findings align with Wentzel, (1991) who suggested that positive peer competitiveness, characterised as healthy competition and mutual support, has the ability to motivate individuals to strive for academic success and improve their ASC. Additionally, Lyubomirsky (2007) highlights how mutual support through social connections and collaboration have the ability to enhance individuals Hope. However, it is important to note that findings from Fang et al. (2018) suggest that being in overly competitive environments can negatively impact upon individuals' ASC through concepts aligned with the BFLPE. These findings emphasise the positive and negative impacts of academic/peer competitiveness and the need to foster environments that balance healthy competition alongside mutual support to promote positive outcomes related to ASC and Hope.

A further recurrent theme within participants' narratives was centred around interactions with adults, primarily within the academic context. Positive teacher-student relationships characterised by genuine interest, collaboration and mutual respect emerged as a pivotal factor in maintaining higher levels of ASC and Hope. These findings align with Hamre & Pianta, (2005) and Van Ryzin, (2011),

highlighting the pivotal role of student-teacher connections in fostering ASC, Hope, and supporting positive academic outcomes. Furthermore, Hamre & Pianta, (2001) identified that positive student-teacher relationships established during the early school years can predict long-term academic achievement. Conversely negative student-teacher relationships characterised by negative attitudes and behaviours towards young people, primarily within the secondary academic context, emerged as a pivotal factor in negatively impacting levels of ASC and Hope. Research in this area suggests that individuals who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs may experience increased feelings of Hopelessness, particularly if they lack supportive relationships within the academic context (Lin et al., 2021).

Participants in the study also highlighted the role of extracurricular activities within the academic context as a mechanism for maintaining higher levels of ASC and Hope. These activities were perceived as fostering a sense of belonging, providing opportunities for both individual and collaborative goal setting, problem solving, and dynamic thinking within participants' narratives. These findings resonate with Marsh (1992), who suggests that participation in extracurricular activities can enhance ASC and subsequently improve academic performance. Similarly, the insights from Finn (1993) and Feldman & Matjasko (2005), align with participants' narratives, indicating that extracurricular involvement may enhance individual's sense of engagement, sense of belonging and ASC within their educational environment. Additionally, factors such as goal setting and dynamic thinking, inherent in extracurricular activity participation, have been linked to more Hopeful thinking (Snyder et al., 2002), demonstrating the importance of access to varied extracurricular activities as a

means of promoting and maintaining higher levels of ASC and Hope within the academic context.

2.6.6.1.3 Family Context

The family context further emerged as a significant contextual factor within the microsystems and mesosystems discussed in participants' narratives, demonstrating its potential to influence individuals' levels of ASC, Hope and engagement with tertiary education. Many of the ACEs identified by Felitti et al. (1998) are experienced within the home microsystem of individuals lives.

Participants' narratives consistently highlighted the invaluable role of academic and emotional support provided by parents or primary caregivers, emphasising how encouragement, guidance, and incentives from familial figures had the ability to shape their self-belief, motivation, subsequent levels of ASC, Hope and engagement with tertiary education. These findings align with Snyder et al. (2002), who observed that emerging adults with high levels of Hope often reported close bonds with at least one primary caregiver during their formative years. Furthermore, existing literature emphasises the importance of family cohesion in the development of ASC, Hope, and academic performance (Cruz-Ramos et al., 2017; DeDonno & Fagan, 2013; Raboteg-Saric et al., 2011), a key pre-requisite in the pursuit of engaging with tertiary education. These insights highlight the critical role familial relationships and support structures within the microsystem play in fostering positive academic identities and aspirations among individuals.

Conversely, participants often highlighted potential negative factors within the familial context, such as a lack of academic and emotional support and a lack of positive relationships with wider family members as key contributors to

experiencing lower levels of Hope throughout their childhood. Many participants highlighted how the lack of these experiences also had the ability to negatively influence their emotional well-being, goals, motivation, and future aspirations. These experiences align with research suggesting that more negative family dynamics can generate increased feelings of Hopelessness (Kwok & Shek, 2008), and that experiencing individual or cumulative ACEs, such as neglect, physical abuse, or the loss of a parent within the family microsystem, may contribute to individuals losing Hope in the future (Li & Wong, 2015; Snyder, 2002).

2.6.6.1.4 Social Context

The social context, encompassing peer relationships, emerged as a further mechanism within participants' microsystems and mesosystems that may positively or negatively influence levels of ASC and Hope and engagement with tertiary education. Participants' narratives often highlighted the significance of peer relationships in shaping their self-perceptions and fostering a sense of belonging and support, which in turn allowed them to maintain higher levels of ASC and Hope within the social context. These positive interactions with peers were often characterised by mutual support, shared interests, and aligned goals which helped to reinforce individual confidence in their academic abilities and remain Hopeful in the face of ACEs they may have experienced.

These findings align with previous literature detailing the importance of positive peer relationships in the formation and maintenance of ASC (Marsh et al., 2004) and Hope (Frisby et al., 2020), as well as multiple factors that may influence the two constructs, such as beliefs, values, expectations, and motivations. In addition, research has shown that the academic characteristics of positive peer

relationships can positively predict adolescent ASC and performance (Rubin et al., 2008; Wentzel, 2017), while individuals with higher levels of Hope have been found to be more likely to gravitate towards each other (Parker et al., 2015), a viewpoint emphasised within the participants narratives. These insights highlight the essential role of peer relationships within the social context and the need for psychologically sound interventions/programmes that may facilitate more positive peer relationships across systems.

Furthermore, participants' narratives often highlighted how social comparisons within the multiple microsystems discussed often contributed to either lower or higher levels of ASC and Hope throughout their childhood as opposed solely to the individual or cumulative ACEs that they had experienced. This aligns with further research detailing how ASC and Hope can be influenced through judgements and social comparisons made by peers within the community context, teachers within the school context, and family members within the home context (Gniewosz et al., 2014; Marsh et al., 1995; Niepel et al., 2014; Parker et al., 2013), which tend to be a central source in the development of ASC in particular (Marsh & Hau, 2003).

2.6.6.2 Exosystem and Macrosystem

The exosystem is a system in which the individual is not directly involved but that impacts them anyway (Hosek et al., 2018). In contrast, the macrosystem is broadly defined as the overall culture and societal structure (Crawford, 2020), which creates a pattern of interaction between and among the different microsystems, mesosystems, and exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Within the broader societal context, encompassing the exosystem and macrosystem,

societal beliefs, and cultural values can significantly influence educational opportunities and perceptions of academic achievement, ultimately shaping individuals' levels of ASC, Hope, and their attitudes towards engaging with tertiary education (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Research suggests that schools can often perpetuate disparities within these systems, particularly regarding academic sets, which can play a crucial role in socioeconomic mobility (Bushna et al., 2021; Jones, 2022). Within the United Kingdom's educational system, inequalities at home, such as experiencing ACEs or low SES, tend to turn into negative differences in school achievement (Tahir, 2022), which can significantly impact levels of ASC, Hope and the qualifications needed to engage with tertiary education in the future (Moulton et al., 2016).

Studies have consistently shown that teachers tend to engage more positively with children and young people in higher ability sets compared to lower-ability sets (Gamoran & Bereneds, 1987; Harlen & Malcolm 1999). This was often highlighted within participants' narratives, particularly throughout their secondary school experiences. Lower ability groups can often be stigmatised, associated with negative learning attitudes, disruptive classroom behaviours, and perceived as more challenging to teach (Finley 1984; Schwartz 1981; Taylor 1993). These perceptions were also alluded to on multiple occasions within participants' narratives, often demonstrating the ability to significantly influence teacher-student dynamics, a key aspect that has the ability to positively or negatively impact levels of ASC and Hope and to determine whether an individual chooses to engage with tertiary education or not.

Furthermore, evidence suggests that students from lower SES backgrounds and disadvantaged groups (Wang et al., 2018), of which many

individuals exposed to individual or cumulative ACEs are categorised due to strong correlations between ACE exposure and socioeconomic disadvantage (Jaffe et al., 2018; Marryat & Frank, 2019), may experience lower teacher expectations and are more likely to be taught by less experienced or under-qualified teachers in lower academic sets (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021). As a result, individuals within lower academic sets often develop a lack of confidence and internalise a sense of inadequacy, which can negatively affect their levels of ASC and Hope (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021). Subsequently, these lower expectations can have a negative impact upon levels of Hope for the future (Rattan et al., 2012) as well as academic achievement throughout individual's educational journeys (Snyder et al., 1997). This experience was highlighted by two participants who had experienced a change in academic sets during their secondary schooling experience, leading to a significant decline in their ASC and Hope at the time.

Notably, individuals from lower SES backgrounds are twice as likely to experience four or more ACEs compared to those from higher SES backgrounds (Houtepen et al., 2020), and are less likely to pursue tertiary education (Boneva & Rauh, 2017; Wilks & Wilson, 2012). Consequently, negative perceptions of individuals within lower academic sets may limit ACE individual's educational aspirations, trajectories, and future engagement in tertiary education through lower levels of ASC and Hope, potentially exacerbating socioeconomic disparities and hampering economic outcomes later in life (Schruer & Trajkovski, 2018).

Participants in the study further highlighted the significant influence of socioeconomic factors, such as financial stability and access to resources, on their ASC and Hope. While some participants noted that their lower family SES

had a detrimental impact upon their ASC and Hope, aligning with findings from previous studies on SES (Covey et al., 2013; Kudrna et al., 2010; Lei et al., 2019; Synder, 2002), others discussed how facing adversity had unexpectedly reinforced their ASC, Hope, and aspirations to engage with tertiary education. This was often underpinned by experiences of embarrassment and acts of kindness from others, serving as emotional reminders of past hardships. This phenomenon is also reflected in Dienstbier's (1989) notion of 'toughness', a characteristic often associated with individuals from lower SES backgrounds who have confronted various adversities. Within the context of this study, 'toughness' may be interpreted as determination and motivation to strive for a better future free from the constraints of their assigned SES and is a key personal characteristic directly influenced by lower SES.

Within the wider academic context, participants' narratives often highlighted more systemic issues such as inconsistency in teaching personnel and a lack of continuity in terms of relationships within the broader school systems, primarily within their secondary school environments. This often led to a lack of positive relationships within their microsystems in which meaningful mentorship and guidance could be sought by individuals, subsequently impacting their levels of Hope. This adds weight to the findings of Lin et al, (2021) who suggest that wider school connectedness within the academic context is fundamental to improving and increasingly Hope and Hopefulness.

Furthermore, Catalano et al. (2004) found that individuals with decreased school connectedness were at higher risk of academic failure. This is of utmost importance for individuals who have experienced ACEs, as they can often lack strong connections with family members and key adults expected to provide

guidance and support (Lackova Rebicova et al., 2020). This highlights the importance of wider positive school experiences for those who may have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs (Gilligan, 2002). It is within these positive experiences of support, closeness, and guidance from a significant adult that Hope can be facilitated through experience (Keane & Evans, 2021). This view further aligns with McGeer (2004) who proposed that Bruner's (1983) concept of scaffolding is the mechanism in which Hope is developed.

2.6.6.3 Chronosystem

The chronosystem, a critical component of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), introduces the dimension of time into the framework of human development (Crawford, 2020). It delves into how environmental changes over time shape an individual's developmental trajectory (Liao et al., 2007). By considering normative and non-normative transitions across the lifespan, the chronosystem sheds light on the dynamic nature of human development and the interplay between various contextual factors (Hosek et al., 2008). These transitions, whether anticipated or unexpected, can exert indirect influences on development by altering the contexts in which individuals interact and grow.

Within the academic context, an individual's chronosystem plays a significant role, indirectly influencing levels of ASC, Hope, and subsequent engagement with tertiary education through pivotal academic transitions (Postigo et al., 2022). Among these transitions, the move from primary to secondary school stands out within participants' narratives as one of the most daunting for young individuals, often associated with heightened stress levels (Zeedyk et al., 2003). This transition involves navigating new environments, establishing new frames of

reference (Gniewosz et al., 2011), coping with new social comparisons (Gniewosz et al., 2011), and adjusting to individual factors such as reduced autonomy within secondary settings (Harter et al., 1992). Such challenges were often described in participants' narratives, suggesting a lack of mentorship, guidance, positive adult relationships, and supportive mechanisms that were available during primary school but absent in secondary school. Consequently, participants felt isolated or unsupported during this critical period, negatively impacting their levels of ASC.

For individuals who have experienced ACEs, this transition is even more challenging. They may find that the transition to secondary school exacerbates existing stressors and triggers emotional difficulties (Akos & Galassi, 2004), leading to decreased emotional well-being (Felitti et al., 1998) and academic underachievement during this key transitional period (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Consequently, experiencing individual or cumulative ACEs during this critical developmental transition can set a negative trajectory for individuals' academic and social development, impacting their future engagement with tertiary education and subsequent career opportunities (Corrales et al., 2016; Metzler et al., 2017; Schurer & Trajkovski, 2018).

Furthermore, many participants reported that their levels of Hope declined during the transition from primary to secondary school, often due to a disruption of the supportive, nurturing environment they experienced in primary school. This was often underpinned by a lack of positive adult relationships, larger educational environments, increased academic demands, and new social environments, echoing findings that there is limited preparation and poor handling of this transition (OFSTED, 2015). The loss of existing support networks and positive relationships with teachers and peers can profoundly impact individuals' levels of

Hope (Waters et al., 2012), as positive, supportive relationships are crucial for fostering Hope (Snyder et al., 1991). Additionally, the environmental changes in secondary school, such as larger settings, higher academic demands, and new social environments, can disrupt individuals' sense of belonging and support, which are important factors in promoting Hopefulness (Marques et al., 2011; Snyder et al., 2002).

Although all transitions involve adjustment and stress, the transition from primary to secondary school may be particularly difficult, as academic outcomes such as achievement, engagement, and motivation tend to decline, while mental health issues such as loneliness, anxiety, and stress tend to increase (Barber & Olsen, 2004; Benner & Graham, 2009). These challenges can impact levels of Hope and limit an individuals' ability to construct a positive narrative of their future selves and environments that they find themselves in (Cabrera et al., 2009). In the context of ACEs, many studies have shown that positive teacher-student relationships can play a crucial role in the cognitive and social development of children (Roorda et al., 2011; Davis, 2003), while also mitigating the multiple risk factors associated with ACE exposure during this key transition (Forster et al., 2017).

Whilst some participants initially faced challenges during their secondary school transitions, they highlighted the pivotal role of certain teachers who intervened and provided crucial mentorship and guidance during these critical moments in their educational journeys. This aligns with Bethell et al.'s (2019) findings on the importance of having at least two non-parent adults who take a genuine interest in a child as well as highlighting the importance of positive teacher-student relationships.

Despite the potential exacerbation of transition challenges due to larger secondary school environments, increased student numbers, a greater emphasis on independent learning, and additional academic subjects, research has indicated a limited preparation for the differences in teaching and learning that children and young people face during this transition, often resulting in poorly handled transitions (OFSTED, 2015). Historically, around 40% of students fail to reach their expected progress following the transition to secondary education (Galton et al., 1999).

Participants highlighted that regaining the supportive, nurturing environments they had experienced in primary school within their secondary settings often contributed to them regaining academic confidence and subsequently increasing their levels of ASC and Hope, along with their ability to further engage in tertiary education. This observation aligns with Rudasill et al.'s (2010) findings that when students feel valued, supported, and respected by their teachers, they are more likely to perceive themselves positively in their academic contexts. Furthermore, Snyder et al. (2002) proposed that when individuals feel connected to their teachers and perceive them as supportive and caring, they are more likely to develop Hopeful thinking patterns as well as Hopefulness for their future prospects (Davies, 2003).

2.6.4.4 Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to examine the influence of ACEs and PCEs on ASC and Hope. By investigating the perceived mechanisms underlying elevated ASC and Hope levels, the study aimed to understand their implications for individuals' engagement with tertiary education. Recognising the multifaceted

nature of this dynamic, the study adopted an ecosystemic framework to contextualise and integrate the findings with the broader aim of examining the impact of ACEs and PCEs on ASC, Hope, and subsequent engagement with tertiary education. By adopting this lens, the study offers a comprehensive exploration of the perceived mechanisms contributing to elevated ASC and Hope, along with their implications for individuals' educational trajectories.

Whilst quantitative findings suggest that ACEs exposure can lead to a propensity for reduced ASC and Hope, the study has identified contextual, systemic, and individual factors that mediate this effect that align with elements of previous research centred around the impact of PCEs (Bethell et al., 2019). The findings highlight the critical role of microsystems and mesosystems, such as family, school, and social contexts, in shaping ASC and Hope for individuals who have experienced ACEs. Within these contexts, factors like supportive relationships, opportunities for exploration and creativity, and access to educational resources emerge as crucial in nurturing intrinsic motivations, personal characteristics, and internal assets that can serve as robust buffers against the negative impact of ACEs.

Furthermore, the study emphasises the importance of considering the exosystem and macrosystem, encompassing societal beliefs, cultural values, and systemic factors that can perpetuate disparities in educational opportunities and perceptions of academic achievement. Addressing these broader systemic issues, such as inconsistencies in teaching practice, lack of continuity of relationships, and negative perceptions associated with lower academic sets is crucial for fostering positive academic identities and aspirations among individuals who have experienced ACEs.

The chronosystem, which further introduced the dimensions of time and transitions across the lifespan, further highlights the dynamic nature of human development and the interplay between various contextual factors. Pivotal academic transitions, such as the move from primary to secondary school, can exacerbate existing stresses and trigger emotional difficulties for individuals who have experienced ACEs, potentially setting a negative trajectory for their academic and social development.

By highlighting the complex interplay of factors that influence ASC and Hope for individuals who have experienced ACEs, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms that can either exacerbate or mitigate the impact of these experiences. It highlights the importance of adopting a holistic approach that considers individual, contextual, and systemic factors, as well as the need for targeted interventions and support systems across various ecological levels.

Ultimately, this study emphasises the significance of focusing attention on the impact of ACEs and PCEs on ASC and Hope, as these psychological constructs can play a pivotal role in shaping individuals' academic trajectories, engagement with tertiary education, and subsequent career opportunities. By addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals who have experienced individual and cumulative ACEs, EPs can foster resilience, nurture Hope, and empower ACE exposed individuals to navigate their educational journeys with confidence and determination, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being, success and ability to live fulfilling and meaningful lives.

2.6.7 Implications for EP Practice

Educational Psychologists work across individual, systemic, and strategic levels (Fallon et al., 2010), which encompass the distinct systems highlighted within the ecosystemic framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) used to illuminate the complex nature of the research study findings. EPs have been shown to provide a useful link between education, health, and social care as they regularly have opportunities to collaborate with other agencies, and because they adopt interactive and ecological approaches (Fallon et al., 2010; Farrell et al., 2006). Furthermore, the role of EPs includes supporting those categorised as vulnerable or marginalised (Woods et al., 2006), of which many individuals exposed to individual or cumulative ACEs fall into. As a result, EPs may have the ability to make a significant difference in the lives of individuals affected by ACEs across systems by developing, improving, and strengthening positive psychological constructs like ASC and Hope through key concepts identified within participant narratives such as teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, sense of belonging, academic sets, and transitions across a range of systems.

2.6.7.1 Microsystem and Mesosystem

The interplay between ACEs, PCEs, ASC and Hope within educational environments provides a rich ecological context for the involvement of EPs in fostering positive psychological development in children and adolescents. Given the pivotal role of microsystems and mesosystems in shaping ASC and Hope for individuals who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs, EPs are well-positioned to develop a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between individual, contextual, and systemic factors that influence the development and maintenance of ASC and Hope, while providing targeted support and intervention

through the five core functions of EP practice which include assessment, consultation, intervention, research and training (Scottish Executive, 2002).

2.6.8.1.1 Individual Context

Within the individual context, EPs may play a significant role in supporting children and young people who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs by addressing unique factors within their individual contexts that shape their levels of ASC and Hope and motivations to engage with tertiary education. Through the core functions of assessment and consultation, which lend themselves to person-centred practices (White & Rae, 2015), EPs can help elicit a more meaningful understanding of each student's personal circumstances, including their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, personal characteristics, and internal assets.

Subsequently, EPs are enabled to design, implement, or recommend evidence-based individualised interventions or programmes that are strengths-based in nature, that may support the development of resilience, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as well as key personal characteristics such as perseverance, goal setting and having a positive outlook. This may allow individuals exposed to individual and cumulative ACEs to experience greater elements of PTG and the development of positive psychological traits that may contribute to their overall psychological well-being and academic success.

2.6.7.1.2 Academic Context

Within the school context, EPs play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of trauma-informed practices that create and foster nurturing environments conducive to personal growth and elevated levels of ASC and

Hope. By working closely with school staff, EPs can facilitate training that enhances educator's understanding of the impact of ACEs on students' academic and social-emotional development. Furthermore, through core functions such as research, consultation and training, EPs can contribute to the creation of supportive learning environments that foster a sense of belonging, encourage exploration and creativity through relational approaches, and promote positive academic identities among students who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs.

A further crucial area where EPs can provide valuable support is in the area of academic setting practices within schools. As highlighted within the participants narratives, the use of academic sets can have significant implications for children and young people's ASC, Hope, and engagement in tertiary education, with disparities in learning environments and support systems between different ability sets potentially exacerbating negative outcomes. EPs have the ability to collaborate with schools to critically evaluate their academic setting policies and practices, ensuring that they promote equity, challenge negative perceptions, and foster supportive learning environments for all students, regardless of their assigned set.

Given EPs knowledge and understanding of child development, EPs are able to advise schools on evidence-based strategies for grouping students in a manner that nurtures their ASC, Hope, and overall well-being. This may involve practices such as advocating for flexible grouping practices that allow for movement between sets, promoting inclusive instructional practices that cater to more diverse learning needs, and providing training for teachers to aid positive teacher-student relationships across all ability levels and educational levels. Additionally, EPs have the ability to work collaboratively with schools to implement evidence-based

interventions that address the potential negative impacts of academic sets, such as mentoring programs, targeted academic support, and social-emotional learning activities, to ensure that all students, regardless of their academic set, have access to supportive resources and opportunities to develop or maintain their levels of ASC and Hope.

Furthermore, given the bidirectional influence between individuals and their surrounding contexts, EPs are uniquely positioned to foster positive relationships for children and young people who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs. Their training in working across multiple systems, enables EPs to navigate the complex interactions between individuals, families, educational settings, and broader community structures to facilitate more positive relationships with adults and key workers. By adopting an ecological approach, EPs are equipped to bridge the gap between the various contexts, facilitating open communication, promoting a shared understanding, and fostering more collaborative relationships that ensure the child or young person remains central to their efforts. Additional EPs have the ability to enhance home-school relationships, therefore empowering families, and creating a cohesive support systems that promotes wellbeing and academic success.

2.6.7.1.3 Family Context

Within the family context, EPs are uniquely positioned to support students through fostering positive relationships, nurturing protective factors, and promoting the development of ASC and Hope, despite the challenges posed by experiencing individual or cumulative ACEs. Through collaboration with wider local authority and social care teams and the importance of emphasising preventative measures, EPs may have the potential to empower parents and primary care givers with the

knowledge and skills necessary to provide invaluable academic and emotional support that can enhance ASC and Hope through the dissemination of research. Topics such as effective communication strategies, positive reinforcement techniques, and strategies for creating a supportive home environment that fosters autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation are all essential elements of information which may contribute to healthier family dynamics that could potentially contribute to the development and maintenance of elevated levels of ASC and Hope.

Furthermore, the collaborative nature of the EP role necessitates working closely with relevant agencies and support services when the family context may be a source of adversity or dysfunction in which individuals experience individual or cumulative ACEs. By further advocating appropriate interventions, strategies and providing trauma-informed care within these collaborative elements, EPs can help mitigate the negative effects of ACEs within the family context and empower individuals to develop more positive psychological traits that may improve their levels of ASC and Hope.

2.6.7.1.4 Social Context

EPs can play a pivotal role in fostering positive social environments and promoting healthy peer relationships within various microsystems. Given the importance of peer relationships and social comparisons, EPs can focus on the core function of intervention to recommend evidence-based social skills training, person-centred peer mentoring, and social-emotional learning curriculums within the school microsystem, that may provide individuals with the necessary skills to navigate social situations, build meaningful connections, and develop a sense of belonging, all of which were components highlighted within the participants narratives as components that could

influence their levels of ASC and Hope. On focusing on inclusive and supportive social environments, EPs may promote acceptance, celebrate diversity, and challenge negative social comparisons or judgements which can impact ASC and Hope.

2.6.7.2 Exosystem and Macrosystem

While the direct influence of EPs may be more prominent within the microsystems and mesosystems of individuals' lives, primarily working on an individual basis, their role can extend to the exosystem and macrosystem, where more systemic approaches can be encompassed. Within these broader systems, EPs can address systemic barriers, challenge societal perceptions, and contribute to the creation of supportive ecosystems that empower individuals who have experienced ACEs to thrive academically, socially, and personally, through working at a policy level to influence government policy. As these systems encompass the broader societal beliefs, cultural values, and systemic factors that can perpetuate disparities in educational opportunities and perceptions of academic achievement, the academic context provides a familiar context that EPs can work within to support individuals.

Further collaboration within local authority teams, policymakers, and educational stakeholders within the exosystems of individuals' lives allows EPs to advocate for systemic changes that can address the unique needs of students who have experienced ACEs, along with those who may come from lower SES backgrounds.. This may involve contributing to the development of policies and initiatives that promote trauma-informed practices, challenging negative behaviour policies which can impact student teacher relationships, challenging policies such

as austerity which may impact upon educational chances and outcomes and ensuring that all individuals regardless of SES or disadvantage have equitable access to educational resources and support service through focusing on aspects of social justice.

This relates to the pupil premium grant, provided to publicly funded schools in the UK to support disadvantaged individuals (Gorard et al., 2019). The grant may present a valuable opportunity for the contribution of EPs to address the educational needs of individuals who have experienced ACEs given that they are approximately twice as likely to have lower educational qualifications, not to be engaged in education, employment, or training at the age of 18 years old (Jaffe et al., 2018) and less likely to engage with tertiary education (Boneva & Rauh, 2017; Wilks & Wilson, 2012). By working closely with schools and utilising resources provided by the pupil premium grant, EPs can work individually or systemically to implement evidence-based strategies that may create trauma-informed learning environments, provide targeted academic and social, emotional, mental health support, or provide psychologically sound training to wider educational staff on the importance of understanding ACEs.

Within the macrosystem, EPs are enabled to use their strong communication and research skills to focus on the core aspect of training. These skills enable EPs to create professional development opportunities for other educational and social care professionals, as well as parents and primary caregivers who work with or care for individuals who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs. By disseminating up-to-date and relevant research around trauma-informed care, resilience building strategies, and evidence-based interventions, EPs can enhance the capacity of these professionals, parents, and

primary care givers to provide effective support and create nurturing environments that promote elevated levels of ASC and Hope. Furthermore, the dissemination of research and critical thinking skills of EPs may allow them to engage in public awareness campaigns to challenge societal stigmas and misconceptions around ACEs, PCEs and their impact upon ASC, Hope, and other essential aspects of development. In doing so, EPs can contribute to the dissemination of accurate information and promote a culture of understanding and support for individuals who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs.

2.6.7.3 Chronosystem

The chronosystem, which encompasses the dimension of time and transitions across the lifespan (Crawford, 2020), plays a significant role in shaping the developmental trajectories of individuals who have experienced ACEs. Given their work across systems and structures at individual, systemic and strategic levels, EPs are well-positioned to utilise all five core functions of their role to provide support during pivotal transitions within the chronosystem, such as the transition from primary school to secondary school.

During this critical transition for many individuals, EPs can collaborate with primary and secondary schools to implement evidence-based transition programs that aim to foster a smooth and supportive transition, particularly for those individuals who have experienced ACEs. By utilising the five core functions, EPs can facilitate activities such as school visits, peer mentoring, and familiarisation sessions, encompassing aspects of PCEs, such as sense of belonging in the new educational environments and positive teacher-student relationships. These

interventions may help promote the development and maintenance of ASC and Hope.

Given that EPs work with children and young people within the age range of 0-25 years old, EPs can also play a crucial role in supporting individuals who have experienced ACEs during other significant transitions within their educational journeys, such as the transition to post-16 education or full-time employment. By connecting students with relevant support services, information and positive mentoring and guidance within their academic settings, EPs can empower individuals to navigate these transitions with confidence and maintain their ASC and Hope for future success.

Furthermore, considering the importance of personal characteristics highlighted within the study, EPs are extremely well-placed to work at the individual level across time to design, implement or advise targeted interventions/programs that may develop positive personal characteristics. Characteristics such as perseverance, goal setting, and adaptability, which may support and empower individuals to overcome challenges, reframe their experiences, and build a brighter future, despite experiencing adversities (Obradović et al., 2009).

2.6.8 Limitations of Study.

This study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the relatively small sample size must be noted, with only 28 individuals included in the quantitative phase and 6 in the qualitative phase. Small sample sizes within quantitative research can compromise the statistical power of the study, potentially hindering the detection of true effects or relationships between variables (Horton et al., 2022). Consequently, the reliability and robustness

of the findings may be reduced, leading to limitations in generalisability. The limited sample size that was obtained may also restrict the transferability of the findings to the broader population of those who have experienced ACEs and PCEs, suggesting that the perspectives of many within this demographic are not adequately represented within this study (Willig, 2013). Additionally, the focus on the specific population of emerging adulthood, may further limit the generalisability of the results to younger or older age groups.

The study utilised a purposive sampling technique in which participants were drawn from particular geographical regions and educational institutions, which could further restrict representativeness of participants experiences, subsequently limiting the transferability and generalisability of findings (Andrade, 2021). Furthermore, the study did not fully consider the potential influence of broader societal, political, or economic factors within the macrosystem and chronosystems that may contribute or shape individuals' experiences and development of both ASC and Hope. Given the wide variability of social and economic contexts across different populations and geographical regions, this presents further limitations in terms of generalisability. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the self-selection of participants may have introduced biases, as those who chose to participate in the study may differ from those who did not engage in the study (Kazmeirczak et al., 2023).

The study further acknowledges specific measurement limitations, particularly regarding the use of self-report measures for ACEs, PCEs, ASC and Hope. Such measures may be susceptible to social desirability bias, where participants provide responses they perceive as socially acceptable or favourable, potentially leading to inaccurate self-perceptions (Laktkin, 2017). This bias could be exacerbated when participants are disclosing traumatic events such as ACEs, potentially resulting in

underreporting (Meinck et al., 2017). Furthermore, the retrospective nature of data collection on ACEs and PCEs among emerging adults may introduce recall bias, wherein participants may inaccurately recall or underreport their experiences or exposures (Hardt & Rutter, 2004). However, the younger age of the participants may mitigate the extent of recall bias within the study.

A methodological limitation within ACEs and PCEs research is the reliance on a total ACE/PCE score. While serving as both a strength and a limitation (Zarse et al., 2019), this approach enables researchers to demonstrate the cumulative risk associated with exposure to multiple ACEs/PCEs. However, it overlooks important nuances such as the type, or duration of experiences (Goodall et al., 2010). This limitation is significant as the impact of a specific ACE or PCE, as well as the duration or exposure, may vary widely among individuals. By assigning equal weight to all types of ACEs/PCEs, valuable insights into the differential effects of various experiences are hidden.

In considering limitations in the current research, a final thought is given to researcher subjectivity and how the researchers individual interpretation of findings may reduce their external validity (Nowell et al., 2017). Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest that the subjectivity involved in reflexive thematic analysis is not a limitation and that the researcher's individual interpretations on research rigour and transferability cannot be ignored. Anderson, (2010), further adds that when carried out properly, qualitative research can be unbiased, in depth, valid, reliable, credible, and rigorous. To add to the academic rigour within the qualitative phase, the researcher also utilised Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria. Braun and Clarke (2022) further emphasis the role of critical reflection throughout the analysis process which is discussed further within section 3.0. Furthermore, the use of a

mixed method approach on this occasion helped to address theoretical limitations of reflexive thematic analysis by complementing quantitative data with qualitative insights, triangulating findings across different methods, enhancing the breadth and depth of understanding and providing complementary explanations and contextualisation's.

2.6.9 Future Research

The findings of this study provide a foundation for several important avenues of future enquiry to further understand the complex relationships between ACEs, PCEs, ASC and Hope. Given the insights into changes of levels of ASC and Hope across developmental stages, longitudinal studies would be valuable in exploring the dynamic nature of these factors overtime. Exploring how the interplay between ACEs, PCEs, ASC and Hope evolves throughout different developmental stages, from childhood to emerging adulthood and beyond, may provide further insights into key transitional periods or specific life events. Such longitudinal data would offer a more detailed understanding of the long-term implications of varied childhood experiences on academic and personal development and the likelihood of individual engaging in tertiary education.

Additionally, delving deeper into the specific types of ACEs and PCES experienced by individuals could provide essential insights. Exploring whether the nature, severity, and timing of these experiences differentially influence the development and maintenance of ASC and Hope, may uncover critical points of intervention or support that could be offered. Understanding the impact of specific ACEs and PCEs on multiple areas for individuals may contribute to more proactive efforts through intervention and support across systems.

Identifying and examining potential moderating and mediating factors would also be an area for future research to gather efforts. Exploring personal circumstances, family dynamics, social supports and other contextual variables highlighted within this study that may influence the relationships between ACEs, PCEs, ASC and Hope, could help uncover further underlying mechanisms driving these processes. Further mixed methods designs, utilising advanced statistical techniques such as structural equation modelling could be employed to map the intricate pathways linking these multifaceted constructs within larger participants groups across wider geographical areas.

An important consideration for future research is the need to expand the conceptualisation of adverse and positive childhood experiences beyond the original frameworks proposed by Feliiti et al., (1998) and Bethell et al., (2019). The current study focused on the 10 ACEs and 7 PCEs identified in these seminal works. However, there are other significant contextual childhood experiences that may create adversity or promote positive development in ways that are not fully captured by the traditional ACE and PCE measures such as socioeconomic status, poverty, exposure to community violence, physical activity and play and nutrition and healthcare.

Finally, a future direction relevant to the EP profession could be to design and evaluate targeted interventions or support that address the identified mechanisms influencing ASC and Hope, particularly for individuals with ACE exposure. Assessing the effectiveness of such interventions in enhancing specific psychological constructs, as well as associated educational and psychosocial outcomes, could inform the development of more effective support systems and evidence-based practices. Exploring the feasibility and scalability of these interventions and support

across more diverse educational and community setting would further strength their real-world applicability.

2.6.10 Conclusion

This doctoral thesis study has provided valuable insights into the complex interplay between ACEs, PCEs, ASC and Hope among emerging adults and their engagement with tertiary education. The findings reveal the differential impact of cumulative ACEs with a significant association observed between ACEs and Hope, while the relationship between ACEs and ASC was found to be more complex and multifaceted. Furthermore, the interaction between ACEs and PCEs for individuals with lower ACEs and higher PCEs may act as a protective factor, promoting higher levels of Hope. However, a more nuanced relationship between higher ACEs and lower PCEs indicates that a lower number of PCEs may paradoxically correlate with higher levels of Hope for some. The study highlights the importance of considering the broader ecological factors that shape these psychological constructs such as academic experiences, familial context, social relationships, contextual competitiveness, and personal circumstances.

Notably the research highlights the pivotal role EPs in the UK can play in supporting individuals in enhancing their ASC and Hope levels, amongst other key positive psychological constructs. By addressing the key mechanisms identified, EPs can contribute to a more holistic approach that supports and empowers individuals, particularly those with diverse backgrounds. The study also proposes several avenues for future research, such as longitudinal studies, exploration of specific ACEs and PCEs, and the incorporation of objective measures to further understanding the complex relationships between these factors.

2.6.11 Concluding Comments

The role of EPs in supporting individuals who have experienced ACEs cannot be overstated. As evidenced by the findings of this study, ACEs have the potential to cast a profound and lasting impact across multiple domains of an individual's life (Boullier & Blair, 2018; Houtepen et al., 2018; Hughes et al., 2017; Schurer & Trajkovski, 2018). By utilising the unique contribution of EPs working across multiple systems, EPs have the opportunity to create a ripple effect of positive change for those who have experienced individual or cumulative ACEs.

Through interventions at the individual level, nurturing positive psychological constructs and providing personalised support, EPs can empower individuals by fostering a range of PCEs. These efforts can enable individuals to overcome the challenges posed by ACEs, realise their full educational potential, and pursue engagement with tertiary engagement should they choose to do so. Furthermore, by advocating for systemic change, challenging societal perceptions, and collaborating with key stakeholders, EPs can help break down the barriers that perpetuate the negative consequences of ACEs whilst causing disruptions to the intergenerational cycle of adversity associated with ACEs for some individuals.

Failure to embrace the unique, transformative role of EPs in the lives of those who have experienced individual and cumulative ACEs could continue to perpetuate the cycle of adversity, lesson levels of ASC and Hope, hinder academic achievement, and impede the development of countless individuals. Ultimately, this could deprive society of their immense potential and unique contributions to the world. It is essential that EPs seize this opportunity to support ACE individuals focusing their attention to PCEs and areas highlighted within the study that may bolster their ASC

and Hope, whilst ensuring the healthy development of all children and young people, to enable them to reach their full health, social, educational, and economic potential (Metzler et al., 2017).

3.0 Reflective Chapter

3.1 Introduction

Becoming a reflective practitioner over the course of my thesis journey has ultimately led to a variety of emotions I did not anticipate nor envision. I use the term 'becoming' as it denotes a process rather than a static state of being. Reflective practice can be understood as a continuous process of learning from experiences, aiming to acquire fresh insights of self and/or practice (Boud et al., 1985). Reflective practice has become synonymous with the Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) role across the UK (Mitchell-Blake, 2020). This is primarily a result of The Health and Care Professional Council (HCPC) and The British Psychological Society (BPS) embedding reflective practice as an important component within policies as regulatory bodies of the EP profession (Mitchell-Blake, 2020).

Throughout my thesis journey, I have contended with moments of contentment and exasperation, clarity and ambiguity, celebrations and setbacks, that have contributed to my development as a reflective practitioner. Embracing the reflective practitioner role has required a willingness to confront my own biases, assumptions, and importantly my limitations, whilst furthering my understanding of self both personally and professionally. The journey has been marked by perseverance, humility, resilience, adaptability and intellectual curiosity, which is pertinent given my chosen thesis topic.

As a result of the emotive nature of my thesis journey, I have found Gibbs reflective cycle (1988) a useful tool as it encompasses and acknowledges practitioners' emotions in guiding and reflecting on decision making processes as well as exploring wider experiences both within my thesis journey and wider TEP

practice, therefore proving a useful tool throughout my reflective practitioner journey (see Appendix 12). In the following section, I will engage in a reflective exploration of my doctoral thesis journey. This will include a thoughtful analysis of how the development, design, and execution of the project were shaped by my personal values and prior experiences. By embracing transparency, accountability, and validity, I will critically reflect on the research process to enhance trustworthiness of the findings (Mortari, 2015). Additionally, I will consider the implications of the thesis work for my own personal and professional growth, as well as contemplate the potential avenues for disseminating the research in the future.

3.2 Choosing a Research Topic

My interests in ACEs (Felitti et al., 1998) were initially sparked during my previous role as an Assistant EP in a Local Authority Educational Psychology Service. As part of my responsibilities, I was tasked with providing training to educational settings on trauma-informed practices, with information about ACEs being a significant component. I distinctively remember attending an ACEs training session delivered by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), which evoked a range of emotions, thoughts, and opinions that kept me thoroughly engaged throughout the day. The information presented during the training had a profound impact on me, both personally and professionally, as much of the content resonated with my own childhood experiences. For transparency purposes within the reflective chapter, I personally fall into the category of having experienced 4 or more ACEs.

During the training, I found myself immediately questioning the categorisation of ‘4 or more ACEs’ and the magnitude of negative consequences that were described. These experiences prompted a continuous, conscious effort on my part to reflect on the potential factors that could contribute to an individual and the systems they find themselves in, which may help mitigate the adverse impacts of ACEs across their life span or help to mitigate the intergenerational cycle of ACEs. I became increasingly interested in exploring potential mechanisms to promote more positive trajectories for individuals who had experienced ACEs, which ultimately led me to exploring the research by Bethell et al., (2019) around PCEs. Again, for the purpose of transparency, this exploration at the time became a personal endeavour of understanding as much as one of professional development.

As I continued to develop in my professional role, my interest in the topics of ACEs and PCEs deepened. During the application for the Educational Psychology Doctoral Programme, I began listening to a podcast titled “Agents of Hope” by Dr.Tim Cox, who was a TEP at Newcastle University at the time and is now an EP and tutor on the Doctoral Programme. Listening to the first episode of the podcast, which focused on the positive psychological construct of Hope, had a profound impact on me, much like the previous CAMHS training on ACEs.

As an individual who would describe themselves as extremely hopeful, the content of the podcast resonated deeply with me. Just like my CAMHS training experience, this experience sparked my desire to further explore Hope theory (Snyder, 2002), in an attempt to understand how my own sense of Hope may have positively impacted my personal and academic trajectory. The merging of my interest in ACEs, PCEs and my newfound appreciation for the construct of Hope,

led me to contemplate the possible interplay between these constructs and their influence on individual development, well-being, and academic journeys. The podcast discovery, combined with my previous experiences and ongoing curiosity, became a pivotal moment that significantly shaped the direction and focus of any future research I may have participated in, I was just not aware at the time.

During my first year on the Educational Psychology Doctoral Programme, I found myself exploring and developing interests in various areas beyond ACEs and PCEs. Specifically, I grew an increasing interest with Lego Based Therapy (LeGoff, 2004) and Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) (Kennedy et al., 2015). I observed a potential synergistic relationship between the two approaches as a means of supporting and enhancing social communication and social competence in a range of children and young people, particularly those with Autism. However, despite these emergent interests, I found myself continually drawn back to the topics of ACEs, PCEs and Hope.

My interests in the interplay between ACEs and PCEs was further reinforced throughout my year one placements, where I had the opportunity to work with numerous children who had experienced ACEs within the LA I was placed. At the same time, I encountered several schools that, as part of their trauma-informed journeys, understood, to some extent, the detrimental effects of ACEs. However, these schools largely lacked any comprehensive understanding of the positive impact that PCEs could have on a range of children and young people.

This discovery both shocked and concerned me, especially given that we were living in a period of prolonged austerity and a cost-of-living crisis, which had significantly impacted school budgets (Belfield et al., 2018), made life tremendously difficult for children and young people from lower socioeconomic

backgrounds (McGrath et al., 2016), and in which mental wellbeing support waiting lists had risen to all-time highs (Frith, 2017). This ultimately led to me carrying out a small-scale research study within the LA EPS to determine the extent to which they practiced trauma-informed principles that may be shared with the educational settings and communities of which they serve.

3.3 Reviewing the Literature.

As I commenced the literature search for my doctoral thesis, I deliberated on the most appropriate approach to summarise the existing research findings and synthesise the extensive body of knowledge related to ACEs and potential positive psychological constructs that may mitigate the negative impacts, as well as improve individual's engagement with tertiary education. The decision to focus on tertiary education originated from the introduction of EPs working with 18–25-year-olds within the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (COP) (Department for Education, 2015), as well as the 18-25 age range being a period of profound change and importance (Chevrier et al., 2020). Ultimately I decided to utilise a thematic literature review. I recall experiencing overwhelming thoughts as a result of the volume of research available due to the broad terms used, in which I had to seek support from my research supervisor. The daunting task of identifying a focused area of research that would align with my personal interests, while simultaneously making a meaningful contribution to the literature was something I initially found difficult.

The decision to undertake a thematic literature review, despite the initial feeling of being overwhelmed, allowed me to thoroughly examine the existing knowledge base and thoughtfully navigate the complexities of the topic I was exploring. This

process ultimately enabled me to refine and hone my research focus in a way that was both personally meaningful and academically significant. I felt that utilising a systematic review was deemed inappropriate given that well-defined research questions could not be established prior to the review. Furthermore, the complexity of the topic I had chosen necessitated a comprehensive exploration across multiple bodies of literature before framing well defined research questions (Robinson & Lowe, 2015). I personally found that navigating the abundance of literature was both time consuming and emotionally demanding and at this point seeking support from my fellow TEPs was a decision I consciously made, despite my insecurities in asking for support.

Having taken some time to recuperate, I ultimately felt that the primary objective of the literature review was to organise and synthesise the existing research around key positive psychological concepts that could potentially mitigate the negative impacts of ACEs in educational settings. This approach allowed me to identify an area where I could build upon the knowledge already present in the wider literature which then laid the groundwork for the proposed research study (Onwuegbuzie, 2016). Identifying a specific research area to focus my attention allowed me to formulate specific research questions that have since been reframed, given the ever-changing landscape of research of this nature. This exploratory process then informed the selection of appropriate quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, in order to enhance the overall validity and comprehensiveness of the research findings (Burrell-Craft, 2020). I found that chunking the task of navigating the literature helped with the process of identifying an area to focus my attention within the literature and allowed me to methodically advance through the initial stages of the literature review.

Throughout the literature review process, the positive psychological constructs of ASC and Hope continued to emerge as potential factors that could mitigate or buffer the effects of individual or cumulative ACEs (Cabrera et al., 2019; Leeson & Ciarrochi, 2010; Michie et al., 2001; Snyder, 2000; Sparks et al., 2021). These constructs were also found to support engagement in tertiary education (Gallagher et al 2016; Jansen et al., 2020; Moulton et al., 2016; Snyder 2002). The literature further characterised ASC and Hope as having a bi-directional relationship, whereby an individual's interactions within their surrounding environment directly influences these psychological factors (Beld et al., 2019; Feldman & Kubota; Rose & Sieban, 2017; Valentine et al. 2014).

Importantly, these constructs demonstrated their ability to possess specific protective qualities, especially for individuals who may have experienced ACEs (Sameroff, 2010). I distinctly remember that at this stage I felt much more content with my proposed research topic and could begin to envisage how the research may look. Notes from my reflective diary also suggest that at this stage I was excited and looking forward to beginning the research process focusing on the constructs of ASC and Hope and the reported bi-directional approach.

3.4 Research Design

Once I had identified the area of focus for my research, the next significant decision was to determine the type of research methodology I would undertake. This is vital as methodological choices should align with the inherent nature of the research problem (McAvoy & Richards, 2006). Initially, I felt that a quantitative study would be the best approach to understand the impact of ACEs and PCEs on the constructs of ASC and Hope. This quantitative approach would enable the

demonstration of patterns and relationships between these variables to be established (Toomeliaa, 2010). However, aligning more closely with my epistemological position of critical realism (CR) (discussed more in section 3.6), I recognised that although there is an objective reality, it is subject to social and contextual influences, making it only partially comprehensible through the perspectives of those engaged with it (Anna et al., 2013; Willig, 2013).

As such, I felt that understanding the mechanisms that assist or support the development of ASC and Hope within the context of individuals who have experienced high ACEs and low PCEs could further enhance understanding by triangulating the viewpoints of various individuals to collectively create shared meaning (Maxwell, 2012). Therefore, a two-phase sequential explanatory mixed methods approach was ultimately adopted, in which I would collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data, integrate the findings, and draw inferences using both approaches (Tashakkori & Cresswell, 2007). Furthermore, engaging in mixed methods research aligned further with my reflective practitioner journey by offering additional opportunities to critically reflect on the research process as a whole (McCradden et al., 2019).

A key reflective point within this section centres around the importance of time management as a TEP. TEPs function in complex environments, carrying multiple role responsibilities while also completing academic research with the aim of contributing to the literature on a specific subject. Consistent with feedback I have received from experienced colleagues and respected professionals throughout my TEP journey, I was advised that completing a mixed methods research design of the proposed scale may not be feasible within the designated timeframe, given the other roles and responsibilities of the TEP programme.

While my effective time management skills have allowed me to maintain focus and contribute to my research productivity (Chase et al., 2013), I have found the weight of the overall research process to be a fatiguing, yet invigorating experience. At times, this has impacted my overall well-being. Consequently, aligned with the views of Woods et al., (2015), support from my research supervisors has been an instrumental factor in helping me navigate elements of confusion and self-care while completing placement, academic, and research tasks. Subsequently the development of my awareness and duty to self-care, an important HCPC standard of proficiency, has benefitted, as I am now more open to seeking support and advice than I was before commencing the doctoral programme.

3.5 Refining My Research Questions

Following the literature review and my intention to utilise a mixed methods research design, the proposed study centred around four key RQs. The formulation of the RQs stemmed from a combination of professional interest, insights from the literature reviews, and considerations for EP practice in supporting a range of stakeholders across multiple systems. This alignment closely mirrored the ‘scientist-practitioner’ role advocated for within the HCPC standards of proficiency (HCPC, 2018). The original four RQs were identified as:

- 1) Does a higher number of ACEs exposure positively/negatively impact levels of ASC and Hope in students attending tertiary education?
- 2) Does a higher number of PCES exposure positively/negatively impact upon levels of ASC and Hope in students attending tertiary education?

- 3) Does a higher number of PCEs have a moderating effect in the relationship between Academic Self-Concept and Hope?
- 4) Are there mechanisms that may potentially allow individuals to maintain high levels of ASC and Hope despite high ACEs exposure and low PCEs exposure during childhood?

Initially I had hoped to gather a larger pool of participants within the quantitative phase to determine meaningful relationships between ACEs and PCEs groups (Wilson et al., 1997). However, recruiting participants to take part in the initial questionnaire proved challenging. This led me to revisiting my initial research questions as well as the statistical analysis used to explore the data (discussed further in section 3.7.1) as I did not feel that I had enough participants to meaningfully separate them into the initially planned groups of 0 ACEs/PCEs, 1 ACE/PCE, 2 ACEs/PCEs, 3 ACEs/PCEs and 4 or more ACEs/PCEs.

Upon reflection, my decision to approach student union representatives to disseminate my research to individuals within the emerging adult range (18-25) at the time of year (June/July), may have proven ill-judged. Many university students had finished their academic years, whilst those attending colleges/sixth forms were in the midst of completing examinations and course work, leaving very little time to complete the questionnaire. This was reiterated in several communications between the student union representatives and myself. The decision to disseminate my research through my own social media channels proved more beneficial, but this approach may have led to potential bias and lack of objectivity, as individuals who completed the questionnaire through my personal social media channels may have felt

obligated to respond in a way that they believed aligned with my expectations, potentially compromising the validity and reliability of the research findings.

As a result of recruiting a lower number of participants (N=29), which proved deflating for me personally at the time, the original research questions were revisited and refined to complement the change in statistical analysis.

The refined research questions were as follows:

- 1) Does ACEs exposure impact upon levels of ASC and Hope?
- 2) Does PCEs exposure impact upon levels of ASC and Hope?
- 3) Is there an interaction effect between ACEs and PCEs on ASC and Hope?
- 4) What are the mechanisms that allow individuals to maintain high levels of ASC and Hope, in the context of experiencing a varied range of childhood experiences (both ACES and PCEs)?

3.6 Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology and epistemology were relatively new concepts to me as a TEP as I had not previously considered their influence on me as a practitioner or in the historical research I had completed. Since being introduced to the concepts within my TEP journey, it has been an interesting reflective experience trying to decipher how I view reality and how I fundamentally believe knowledge is required, whilst also considering my personal and professional values as a researcher.

The 'scientist' in me, underpinned by a science specialist primary PGCE, has been conditioned to place a strong emphasis on scientific methods as the primary means of acquiring knowledge, therefore aligning more closely with a positivist position. However, my own personal values as a researcher align with the belief that there are many truths that can be impacted on by individual experiences,

beliefs, structures, and events which aligns more with a social constructionist position.

Given the focus of my research, I decided to adopt a CR approach. CR combines a realist ontology, which proposes that there is something to be discovered, with a relativist epistemology, which acknowledges diverse paths to knowledge (Stutchbury, 2021). Furthermore, CR acknowledges the value of positivism and the use of scientific methods, but an approach that also recognises that individuals may have undergone a shared experience, such as ACEs or PCEs, but their unique circumstances have likely impacted their experiences, views, and subsequently their 'truth'. The CR approach also acknowledges that there is a reality that exists that is independent of the researcher's knowledge, perceptions of reality, and experiences (Stutchbury, 2021), which has been an essential component for me to continuously reflect on throughout the research process given my personal experiences and my own 'truth'.

An underlying principle of CR as an epistemological position is its orientation to understanding phenomena as opposed to merely describing them (Tikly, 2015). CR posits that although there is an objective reality, it is subject to social and contextual influences, making it only partially comprehensible through the perspectives of those engaged with it (Annan et al; 2013; Willig, 2013). This further aligns with the 'scientist practitioner' role advocated for within the HCPC Standards of Proficiency as it enables coherence between evidence produced and the application of this to variable practice contexts (Kelly & Woolfson, 2017).

3.7 Data Collection

3.7.1 Phase One Quantitative Element

The phase one questionnaire element of the study combined four distinct, strategically selected instruments to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the research topic. Many instruments were screened, however the four instruments identified were selected for reasons explained in more detail within the empirical chapter (2.4.2.1). The questionnaire pursued a dual purpose, not only did it provide important contextual information ahead of phase 2, but it also captured demographic information and quantifiable information on individuals' levels of ACEs and PCEs exposure as well as the levels of ASC and Hope.

As described in section 3.5, I encountered difficulties within the recruitment element of phase one. Within my ethics application I had set out to achieve between 54-120 responses based on Harris's (1985) formula for yielding the absolute minimum number of participants to be able to complete a multiple regression analysis to determine the relationships between variables (Ali & Younas, 2021). However, despite multiple follow up emails with student union representatives and requests on my personal social media, the process obtained 29 responses.

In retrospect, this low response rate may have been a result of my inexperience as a novice researcher and further consistent with feedback I had received from colleagues and professionals around whether a research design of this scale would be feasible (see section 3.4). Nonetheless, with the support and guidance of my research supervisors, I was able to positively reframe the situation, demonstrating research resilience and an ability to adapt constructively to the stressful circumstances (Joyce et al., 2018).

As part of my reflective practitioner journey, I have tried to reflect and learn from the research process. With regards to my specific data collection, it may

have been beneficial to consider the potential impact of the data collection process during specific timeframes, especially given the age range of the targeted participants. Further exploration of alternative recruitment channels may have also improved participation rates, however given the time constraints and ethical considerations of changing such processes, this may not have been feasible in the current study and timeframe.

3.7.2 Phase Two Qualitative Element

The Phase 2 interview element of the study explored participants views on the mechanisms they felt allowed them to maintain higher levels of ASC and Hope despite varied childhood experiences, through a retrospective lens. As previously mentioned in section 3.5, RQ4 was slightly adapted to align with the reduced number of participants and information elicited within the phase one element. Following discussions with both research supervisors a decision to focus on varied childhood experiences as opposed to high ACEs and low PCEs was initially proposed. A further decision was made to focus the qualitative element on a minimum of 6 participants, as this has been a recommended approach within research for conducting Thematic Analysis (Fugard & Potts, 2015).

Reflections within my research diary suggest that this was an extremely challenging and emotive time within the research process for me personally. Embracing uncertainty, being adaptable and thinking flexibly are inherent traits I personally struggle with outside the remit of being a researcher, and these specific growth opportunities are what led to the overwhelming emotions associated with having to make a key decision within the research process. Retaining a growth mindset was imperative, as I recognised that challenges and setbacks within the

research process are opportunities for development and growth. A key reflective point within my research journey did materialise during the interview stage which is described in more detail in section 3.8.2.

3.8 Analysis

3.8.1 Phase One Quantitative Data

Despite having previously used IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyse quantitative data, I found the quantitative analysis aspect of my thesis the most overwhelming, challenging, emotive, and anxiety inducing part of the research process. This was simply a result of my own feelings of incompetence as a researcher and TEP in which I experienced frequent emotions akin to what TEPs typically refer to as 'imposters syndrome'. Feelings and emotions characterised by generalised anxiety, low self-confidence, and low self-esteem (Schubert & Bowker, 2017).

This 'fear of failure or success' is a typical response to new duties or challenging experiences (Maftei et al., 2021), and in an effort to protect myself, I often resorted to two common coping mechanisms; procrastination and perfectionism (Ross et al., 2001). The latter of these, perfectionism, is a trait I have personally struggled with throughout the entire research and TEP process. During this particular phase, I experienced symptoms associated with academic burnout, such as feeling emotionally overwhelmed, decreased motivation, fatigue, and relationship strains, all of which are associated with elements of perfectionism (Kjakic et al., 2017). Consequently, research supervision and guidance were essential for providing containment, validation and enabling progress during this difficult period in my thesis journey (Bager-Charleson & McBeath, 2021).

This particular experience within the thesis journey has shaped my understanding of the importance of self-care and emotional support for researchers, particularly those navigating challenging methodological components. Not being familiar with a MANOVA, meant hours of self-initiated learning through various means. I found testing and meeting the assumptions of MANOVA an incredibly difficult process as there was so much information to input, analyse and interpret before running the statistical analysis. Furthermore, inputting, analysing, and interpreting the MANOVA itself came with its own difficulties. This period of the research process took a considerable chunk of my time, effort, and patience as a researcher, however I distinctly remember receiving positive feedback from my research supervisor about the quantitative element of the study and experiencing absolute elation, as if a huge weight had been lifted off my academic shoulders.

3.8.2 The Interview Process

The interview process within the qualitative element of my research was probably the most pleasant and rewarding of the entire research journey. As a researcher, I genuinely enjoyed the opportunity to build relationships, establish rapport, and actively listen to the personal stories shared by participants. Personally, I felt comfortable conducting the interviews using Microsoft Teams as it was a technology I was already familiar with through my experiences of online consultations and training. However, I was mindful that this may not have been the case for all participants. Consequently, I ensured that participants were provided with information beforehand related to the questions and definitions of

the key concepts, such as ACEs, PCEs, ASC and Hope, to help familiarise them with the content.

In addition, before commencing the formal interview questions, I held informal conversations with each participant to help build rapport, check in on their wellbeing, and address any questions they might have (see Appendix 7). This relational focus and the importance of establishing trust and rapport prior to and during the interviews has been well-documented within the literature (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

Before and throughout the interview process, I continuously reflected on my own personal biases and experiences, which may have influenced participants responses, to ensure the quality of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After all, my 'truth' was different from participants 'truths', and adopting a CR position is to acknowledge diverse paths to knowledge (Stutchbury, 2021). Consequently, I made a conscious decision to refrain from personally empathising or relating with participants answers within the interview process, in order to limit potential shared experience bias, where I may have inadvertently projected my own experiences onto the participants narratives (Greene, 2014).

Furthermore, remaining self-reflective throughout the process helped to limit confirmation bias and a tendency to interpret or selectively focus on information that confirmed my own experiences or linked to the factors being explored, which could have led to a skewed understanding of the phenomenon being explored (Nickerson, 1998). This awareness and intentional approach were crucial, given my CR position, which acknowledges that the objective reality is subject to social and contextual influences (Anna et al., 2013; Willing, 2013)

8 participants were identified from the phase one data and contacted via email to participate in the phase two element. 7 participants responded and 1 participant had to be omitted from the study. The omission of 1 participant provided a further key reflective point within my research journey, which was discussed extensively with my research supervisors. The subsequent decision to omit their data from both the phase one and phase two elements was an important learning experience in the research process which I will further elaborate on.

Upon contacting the identified participants, one participant requested to conduct the interview process in person at the University of East Anglia, primarily due to their discomfort in utilising technology as communicated within their email exchanges. An available room was scheduled, and a date confirmed with the participant. However, upon arrival, the participant turned out to be over the age of 60 years old, having read the participant information sheet and incorrectly filled in the questionnaire, indicating that they were in the age range of 18-25. This was a significant misunderstanding on their behalf, but upon reflection, this could have led to wider safeguarding and safety concerns within the research process.

Howell (1990) suggests that few researchers take the time to anticipate the dangers they may encounter when completing research and this was certainly the true in my circumstance. This particular incident made me acutely aware of the importance of maintaining visibility and remaining vigilant to potential dangers that may jeopardise researcher safety (Paterson et al., 1999). This unexpected challenge served as a valuable lesson in the need for thorough risk assessment and preparedness, even when working with seemingly straightforward participant interactions.

3.8.3 Thematic Analysis

Before beginning the TA process, I remember experiencing a mix of feelings, a sense of apprehension, yet also excitement at the prospect of uncovering patterns of meaning across the data sets. To ensure I was equipped for the task, I had purchased Braun and Clarke's (2022) *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*, which served as a valuable resource in walking me through the process.

I found the staged, yet non-linear, approach of TA to be incredibly helpful in structuring my time, focus and attention throughout the different stages of the TA process. Additionally, I heeded the advice of my research supervisor, who encouraged me to 'immerse myself' with the data set and 'enjoy the lengthy process'. In line with this guidance, I set aside a dedicated period of 6 weeks to fully immerse myself in the transcripts and embrace the TA journey, although I was mindful that Braun and Clarke (2022) also propose that qualitative research always take more time than anticipated.

The choice to utilise a reflexive approach to TA allowed me to inductively analyse the transcripts, capturing all the views and experiences shared by participants, whether positive or negative. This inductive approach provided an opportunity to identify shared themes and patterns of meaning across the data set that were grounded in the participants lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Furthermore, the alignment between TA and my epistemology position of CR was noteworthy, as both approaches acknowledged the inherent role of researcher subjectivity within the research process. Reflexivity was thus considered essential for maintaining transparency, rigor, and validity in the data interpretation, especially given my unique position as a researcher who had experienced 4 or more ACEs (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Willis, 2022).

The first stage of reflexive TA involved the thorough reading and re-reading of transcripts. This enabled me to critically engage with the information as data, rather than simply viewing it as information (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I should highlight, that like so many other qualitative researchers, I found the transcription process rather tedious and tiresome. However, I chose to use this as a valuable opportunity to contribute to my overall immersion and familiarisation within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). By actively trying to make meaning of the participants worlds presented within the data, I was able to begin identifying potential patterns of meaning, which would later inform the development of themes.

Initially, I did attempt to utilise more visual methods, such as post-it notes, and familiarisation doodles as advocated for by Braun and Clarke (2002). However, I found these approaches to become quite messy, chaotic, and disorganised, which ultimately led to increased anxiety levels as a researcher. Consequently, I shifted my approach and began noting my ideas and analysis directly within the digital transcripts, using the comment feature in Microsoft Word (see Appendix 7). I found this digital means of notetaking and analysis to be much easier to manage and refer back to throughout the iterative TA process.

Building on the more digital process I had adopted, I began capturing specific and particular meanings within the dataset through the assignments of descriptive codes, followed by the development of more interpretative codes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I carried out this coding work directly within the Microsoft Word document, mindfully engaging in the process in a thorough and rigour manner (see Appendix 8). I found the use of two screens extremely useful at this point. One screen displaying my familiarisation notes and another screen for code development.

At this stage of the analysis, I remained acutely aware of the role of researcher subjectivity, recognising that, as Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest, reflexive TA is an inherently subjective process in which the researcher's own subjectivity fuels the analysis. Following the production of descriptive and interpretative code for each transcript, I began to notice shared and similar meaning emerging across the data sets. This was an exciting and rewarding moment, as it signalled the potential for meaningful patterns to take shape. The iterative process of assigning, refining, merging, and collapsing the identified codes proved to be both time consuming and exhaustive. However, I recognised the important of maintaining rigor and flexibility, as it enabled me to stay grounded in the participants experiences while also allowing space for my own interpretative insights to develop. The combination of these approaches aligned well with the CR underpinnings of the study, which emphasise the need to balance objective and subjective elements in the pursuits of understanding complex phenomena (Stutchbury, 2022).

When generating tentative themes, I remained mindful that a theme should effectively capture a coherent pattern of meaning across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006), whilst also having its own central organising concept (Braun et al, 2014). To facilitate this process, I continued to utilise digital methods, employing a table within Microsoft Word to help organise my tentative themes around the key constructs of ASC and Hope (see Appendix 8).

It was during this stage that I experienced particularly high levels of anxiety. I found myself consumed by overwhelming thoughts around potentially missing out on vital bits of information shared within the participants transcripts. This ultimately led to the resurfacing of elements of perfectionism, of which I had previously

experienced and discussed in section 3.8.1. This subsequently resulted in several iterative cycles of tentative theme generation as I strove to ensure that I had fully captured and represented the initial descriptive and interpretive code from the data set.

Revisiting my reflective diary entries at this point highlighted self-encouraging comments such as 'You don't have to represent everything in the data!' and 'Change is good, lets things go!', statements that were also reflected in the guidance provided by Braun & Clarke (2022) for this specific stage of the reflexive TA process. These reminders helped me to adopt a more balanced and flexible approach, acknowledging that the themes did not need to be an exhaustive representation, but rather a coherent and meaningful capture of the patterns across the participants experiences.

Reviewing my initial themes led to a process of re-engagement with the data collected so far, in order to determine whether there was any scope for further pattern development (Braun & Clarke, 2022). It was during this phase that I really began to struggle with the recursive, iterative process of TA. I identified similar themes emerging across the constructs of ASC and Hope, while also uncovering additional distinct themes for each. At times, I felt as if I was going backwards, having gained ground, finding myself over analysing and overthinking the data sets.

However, I remained mindful that, as Braun and Clarke (2002) allude to, this sense of 'going backwards' often represents a researcher's commitment to producing a quality analysis, rather than a sign of failure. By trusting the process and remaining open to alternative interpretations throughout the analysis, I was ultimately able to gain new insights and refine my themes, which I believe

contributed to a more coherent and meaningful interpretation of the data. Furthermore, during this iterative phase, I struggled with the decision to let go of additional themes, as I felt it would be doing an injustice to specific participants. It was at this time that I revisited the reflective notes in my reflective diary, reinforcing the understanding that 'It is okay to let things go!' I recognised that not everything can or needs to be perfectly aligned in TA, and this was something I had to contend with, given my personal difficulties with embracing uncertainty, being adaptable, and thinking flexibility, as referred to in section 3.7.2.

Refining, defining, and naming the final themes was a process within the TA journey that I ultimately found to be an enjoyable experience. Encapsulating the essence of the data encompassed within each theme was an important part of the process at this stage, and I remained deeply aware that the chosen themes would provide readers with their initial encounter of my analytical interpretations. As a result, I sought supervision at this point to provide a detailed overview of my TA journey and the rationale behind the identified themes. Following these discussions with my supervisor, we collaboratively revisited several of the initially generated themes and sub-themes, refining them on a more semantic level. For example, the identified theme of 'Family Network', was changed to 'Familial Context', and the sub theme of 'Innate Abilities' was adjusted to 'Personal Characteristics'.

This collaborative refinement process was invaluable in my TA journey, as it allowed me to critically examine the clarity and conciseness of the theme labels and definitions whilst providing a different perspective on the process. By engaging in dialogue with my supervisor, I was able to ensure that the final thematic structure effectively captured the essence of the participants

experiences, while also providing readers with a clear and coherent understanding of my interpretive insights.

The final stages of the TA journey involved weaving the identified themes and subthemes into a cohesive narrative that addressed my broader research questions and situated my findings within the wider literature underpinning this research. Organising the thematic structure was essential guiding the write up of my qualitative findings. Having a clear overview of the overarching themes and sub themes, facilitated by my digital organisation of the process, allowed me to purposefully select the most relevant participant extracts to illustrate the meanings and interpretations I was claiming.

Beyond simply presenting the themes, I placed significant emphasis on considering the flow and order of the narrative. I thoughtfully sequenced the themes in a way that I felt built a logical and compelling story, guiding the reader through the key mechanisms and experiences that enable participants to maintain high levels of ASC and Hope, despite varied childhood experiences. While the overall process of TA was an extensive and intensive effort, it was an incredibly fulfilling journey that, for both personal and professional reasons, evoked a culmination of different emotions. When I reflect back on the participant's experiences, the information they so generously shared, and the TA process as a whole, I am truly honoured and grateful to have had the opportunity to elicit and disseminate such powerful insights on behalf of the participants.

3.9 Dissemination of Research Findings

As Harmsworth and Turpin (2000) suggest, the dissemination strategy is as important as the research itself, as effective dissemination enables the transfer of

research findings and knowledge into practice (Sedgwick & Stothard, 2021). To my knowledge this is the first study exploring the impact of ACEs and PCEs on ASC and Hope and their implications for tertiary education engagement in emerging adults. As such this work contributes a novel perspective to the literature, complementing and extending the existing research in the fields of ACEs, PCES, ASC and Hope.

Harmsworth and Turpin (2000) have identified three key purposes of dissemination: awareness, understanding, and action, with the ultimate goal of driving changes in practice and contributing to practice-based evidence (Sedgwick & Stothard, 2021). In keeping with this framework, I have proposed a multifaceted dissemination plan to share the findings from this research across various contexts, with the hope of informing educational settings, EPs, wider society, and, more importantly, children and young people who have experienced ACEs.

To initially promote awareness of the research findings, I will be sharing a summary of the key insights with the participants who requested a copy within the participant information sheets and consent forms at the onset of the study. Additionally, I plan to disseminate the study findings within my local authority upon completion of the course and post-qualification, further raising awareness among my professional colleagues. Furthermore, I am to contribute academic blog posts to platforms such as Edpsy and Edpsyched, as well as share the research through my own professional social media outlets, in order to communicate the findings to more diverse audiences and populations.

In terms of enhancing understanding, I hope to present the research at conferences in the future, such as the Eastern Region Conference or the BPS

Division of Education and Child Psychology (DECP) TEP conference, upon post qualification. This will provide a platform to share the study findings and contribute to the ongoing discussion around the ACEs/PCEs literature with attendees who will already possess an awareness of these topics. Furthermore, in anticipation of potential publication, I ensured that the participant information sheet and consent form explicitly stated that consent would include dissemination of the research findings. By publishing in educational psychology journals, I aim to amplify the understanding of these important constructs with the scholarly community.

Putting the study findings into action is a more challenging, yet crucial, endeavour. Harmsworth and Turpin (2000) suggest that dissemination for action, should result in direct changes to practice. Following the development of awareness and understanding within the EP profession, I firmly believe that EPs are well positioned to access the research and implement sustained change. This could be primarily achieved through the integration of the findings into various training initiatives within educational settings, centred around ACEs, PCES, and trauma informed practice. Furthermore, given the concerted effort within education and broader public health sectors to prevent ACEs, promote ACE aware services, and promote PCEs, the study's findings have real world implications. Engaging with policymakers and practitioners could promote desirable change and action across these critical systems.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an honest, reflective, transparent account of my research process, which I hope has given the reader an insight into my experiences, thoughts, and inner emotions throughout the doctoral journey. The

completion of this research has been a profound and transformative experience, both professionally and personally. Through the reflection's documented within this chapter, I have gained invaluable insights into the multi-faceted nature of conducting rigorous, ethically grounded research as a TEP, which has significantly contributed to my personal and professional development.

Notably, I have developed a deeper understanding of the importance of aligning one's methodological approach with their underlying ontological and epistemological beliefs. Embracing the CR perspective has not only shaped my engagement with the data but has also reinforced the need to maintain a balanced, flexible, and reflexive stance throughout the research process. Beyond the philosophical and theoretical considerations, this doctoral journey has also served as a powerful lesson in resilience, adaptability, and self-compassion. The unexpected obstacles I encountered, from recruitment difficulties to personal struggles with perfectionism, have highlighted the importance of maintaining a growth mindset and a willingness to revise my plans in the face of adversity. Reflecting on these experiences has strengthened my commitment to practising self-care, seeking out supervision and support, and embracing the TEP/EP role as an opportunity for continued learning and development in the future.

Ultimately, whilst the doctoral research process has been arduous at times, I feel truly honoured to have had the opportunity to engage in such a meaningful endeavour that I hope will be impactful through awareness, understanding, and action. The personal lessons I have learned, the insights I have gained, and the personal growth I have experienced will undoubtedly continue to shape my future practice as an EP, as I strive to make a positive difference in the lives of children and young people, and their families.

I'd like to end my reflective chapter with a take home message given the importance and significance of the theme of Hope throughout my research project. Through listening to participants stories of whom have experienced varied childhood experiences, I would seem that 'Hope is the silent companion that walks alongside individuals on their ACE journeys. It whispers words of encouragement, becomes not just a beacon, but a lifeline and reminds us that no matter how daunting the challenge, Hope is like the North Star, guiding individuals through the darkest of times towards a brighter future.'

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Appendix 1: Email and poster to Student Union Representatives.

Dear [Student Union Representative]

My name is Keith Houghton, and I am currently beginning my thesis research project as partial fulfilment of my Doctorate in Educational Psychology (EDPsyD) at The University of East Anglia, supervised by Dr Nikki Collingwood. I am writing to seek your permission and support in accessing potential participants to take part in the study. It is hoped that your role as a Student Union Representative will be to help share the study by displaying the attached poster or sharing it on relevant platforms with potential participants. Further information about the study and what it entails can be found on the attached participant information sheet.

The research will focus on students attending tertiary education and will be exploring how early childhood experiences (both positive and adverse) may impact upon their levels of Hope (that is, an individual's ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal) and Academic Self-Concept (that is, how they perceive themselves academically).

The research will initially involve completion of online questionnaires to determine participants Adverse Childhood Experiences, Positive Childhood Experiences and levels of Academic Self-Concept and Hope. If participants data meets the requirements for the second phase (High ACEs, Low PCEs, High ASC and Hope), they will then be invited to take part in an online semi-structured interview with the researcher, Mr Keith Houghton (further information can be found in the attached participant information sheets).

If you think it may be of benefit to the recruitment process, I am happy to visit the Student Union (both in-person or virtually) to provide further insight into the proposed study to support the recruitment of participants. This can be conducted at a convenient time, date and location to be arranged if necessary.

All answers and results from the research are kept strictly confidential and the results will be reported in a research paper available to all participants upon completion (further information in regards to data storage and anonymity of participants can be found in the attached Participant Information Sheets).

If this is possible, please could you email me at keith.houghton@uea.ac.uk to confirm that you are willing to allow access to potential participants that you may represent through the Students Union, providing that they agree and are happy to take part.

Thank you for your time and I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely

PARTICIPANTS REQUIRED

**JOIN THIS RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT THE ROLE OF CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES
IN SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS IN ATTENDING UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE
EDUCATION.**



RESEARCHER: MR KEITH HOUGHTON
RESEARCH SUPERVISOR: DR NIKKI COLLINGWOOD



The Study

I am interested in exploring how early childhood experiences (positive and/or negative) in students attending college or university may impact on levels of Hope (that is, an individuals ability to work towards a desired goal/s and/or accomplish their desired goal/s) and Academic Self-Concept (that is, how you think of yourself academically).



Scan me

Why is this research being conducted?

The research is being conducted in partial fulfilment of the researchers requirements for the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at the University of East Anglia (EdPsyD)

**Who can
participate in
the study?**

Anyone aged between the age of 18-25 and currently within full time tertiary education in Merseyside or Norfolk which could include College, University or another vocational training course.

What does participation involve?

Participation involves completing an online questionnaire (around 15-20 minutes). If your data meets the research requirements, then you may be invited to participate in a short online interview to further capture your thoughts, views and experiences.

Appendix 2: Recruitment Poster Shared on Social Media.

PARTICIPANTS REQUIRED

JOIN THIS RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT THE ROLE OF CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IN SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS IN ATTENDING UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE EDUCATION.



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Appendix 3: Phase 1 Questionnaire

Doctorate in Educational Psychology (EdPsyD) Thesis Questionnaire.

5th June 2023

The Role of Childhood Experiences in Supporting Individuals in Attending University/College Education.

Section 1

...

What is the study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study focused on students attending tertiary education and will be exploring how early childhood experiences (positive and negative) may impact on their levels of Hope (that is, an individual's ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal/s) and Academic Self-Concept (that is, how individuals perceive themselves academically).

Current literature suggests that individuals who have experienced a higher number of negative childhood experiences tend to have lower levels of academic self-concept, motivation to engage in education, and hopefulness for their future career goals and overall success (Baxter et al., 2017; Marsh and Ronda, 2002). As a result, individuals who have been exposed to multiple negative childhood experiences during childhood tend to experience lower educational, employment, and economic successes when compared to those with less negative experiences (Currie and Widom, 2010; Lanier et al., 2015). Subsequently, individuals exposed to a higher number of negative experiences during childhood and adolescence are less likely to attend university institutions (Corrales et al., 2016).

It is hoped that the experiences and views of potential participants will play an integral role in determining the impact of childhood experiences upon how individuals perceive themselves academically and their ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal/s. It is also hoped that participant's experiences and views may also provide an insight into how more positive childhood experiences may mitigate the impact of negative childhood experiences and support individuals within the Merseyside and Norfolk areas to attend University/College settings.

It is anticipated that participants could provide further information with regard to the identification of support for young people who may have had adverse childhood experiences. From a participant's point of view, it is hoped that this research will have a beneficial impact on individual participants whereby the process of sharing their experiences can promote feelings of empowerment and reflection.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- Understand what you have read.
- Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- Agree to the use of your personal information as described.
- You have received a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep.

This research is being conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines and approved by the Health Care Professional Council, meaning you have a series of rights as a participant. Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

Term Definitions...

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - Potentially traumatic activities and experiences that can happen in an individual's life before the age of eighteen years old.

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) - Activities and experiences that enhance a child's life, resulting in successful mental and physical health outcomes.

Academic Self-Concept (ASC) - How an individual perceives themselves academically.

Hope - An individual's ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal.

Before completing the questionnaire, can you please confirm the below.

1

Please indicate your current age below. *

Select your answer



2

Please indicate your assigned sex at birth below. *

Select your answer



3

Please select below the type of Tertiary Education provider you currently attend (E.G - Education for people above school age, including college, university, and vocational courses)? *

Select your answer



4

Please select below the geographical area in which you currently reside within the UK (E.G - Your current registered address). *

Select your answer



The Questionnaire...(Copy)

The following questionnaire consists of four separate questionnaires that will measure your exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) whilst also measuring your levels of Hope and Academic Self-Concept (ASC)

Please read all of the questions as carefully as you can and answer them as honestly as you can based on YOU. If you experience any feelings of distress or discomfort whilst completing the questionnaire, please remember that you are under no obligation to respond to any questions that you do not wish to complete. Further information and support can also be accessed following completion of the questionnaire for anybody affected.

If you experience any problems with accessing the questionnaire or the contents within it then please email the researcher (Mr Keith Houghton) at keith.houghton@uea.ac.uk

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Please read the statements below carefully. Please count the number of statements that apply to YOU and indicate the total number on the scale provided below.

5

At any point since you were born... (Remember to add up the amount of statements that apply to YOU and indicate the total number on the scale provided below)

- 1) Your parents or guardian were separated or divorced.
- 2) You lived with a household member who served time in jail or prison.
- 3) You lived with a household member who was depressed, mentally ill or attempted suicide.
- 4) You saw or heard household members hurt or threaten to hurt each other.
- 5) A household member swore at, insulted, humiliated, or put you down in a way that scared you OR a household member acted in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt.
- 6) Someone touched your private parts or asked you to touch their private parts in a sexual way that was unwanted, against your will, or made you feel uncomfortable.
- 7) More than once, you went without food, clothing, a place to live, or had no one to protect you.
- 8) Someone pushed, grabbed, slapped or threw something at you OR you were hit so hard that you were injured or had marks.
- 9) You lived with someone who had a problem with drinking or using drugs.
- 10) You often felt unsupported, unloved and/or unprotected.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

6

Again, please read the statements below carefully. Please count the number of statements that apply to YOU and indicate the total number on the scale provided below.

At any point since you were born... (Remember to add up the amount of statements that apply to YOU and indicate the total number on the scale provided below)

- 1) You have been in foster care.
- 2) You have experienced harassment or bullying at school.
- 3) You have lived with a parent or guardian who died.
- 4) You have been separated from your primary caregiver through deportation or immigration.
- 5) You have had a serious medical procedure or life threatening illness.
- 6) You have often seen or heard violence in the neighbourhood or in your school neighbourhood.
- 7) You have been detained, arrested or incarcerated (imprisoned).
- 8) You have often been treated badly because of race, sexual orientation, place of birth, disability or religion.
- 9) You have experienced verbal or physical abuse or threats from a romantic partner (E.G - Boyfriend or girlfriend).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Section 6

...

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)

Please read the statements below carefully. Please count the number of statements that apply to YOU and indicate the total number on the scale provided below.

7

Before the age of 18, I... (Remember to add up the amount of statements that apply to YOU and indicate the total number on the scale provided below)

- 1) Was able to talk with the family about my feelings.
- 2) Felt that my family stood by me during difficult times.
- 3) Enjoyed participating in community traditions.
- 4) Felt a sense of belonging in high school.
- 5) Felt supported by friends.
- 6) Had at least two non-parent adults who took a genuine interest in me.
- 7) Felt safe and protected by an adult in my home.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Hope

Please read each question below carefully. Using the scale shown below, please indicate the number next to each item that best describes YOU.

8

1) I can think of many ways to get out of a problem

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

2) I energetically pursue my goals

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

10

3) I feel tired most of the time

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

11

4) There are lots of ways around any problem

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

...

12

5) I am easily downed in an argument

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

13

6) I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

14

7) I worry about my health

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

...

15

8) Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

16

9) My past experiences have prepared me for my future

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

:::

17

10) I've been pretty successful in life

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
18

11) I usually find myself worrying about something

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
19

12) I meet the goals that I set for myself

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Academic Self-Concept

Please read each question below carefully. Using the scales shown below, please indicate the answer that best describes YOU or YOUR EXPERIENCE.

20

Question

...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1) Being a student is/was a very rewarding experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2) If I try/tried hard enough, I will/would be able to get good grades	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3) Most of the time my efforts in school are/were rewarded.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4) No matter how hard I try/tried I do/did not do well in school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5) I often expect/expected to do poorly on exams	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6) All in all, I feel/felt I am/was a capable student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7) I do/did well on my courses given the amount of time I dedicate to studying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8) My parents are not/ were not satisfied with my grades in secondary school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9) Others view me as intelligent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10) Most courses are/were very easy for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11) I sometimes feel/felt like dropping out of education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12) Most of my classmates do/did better in school than I do/did.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13) Most of my teachers think/thought that I am/was a good student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14) At times I feel/felt that school is/was too difficult for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15) All in all, I am proud of my grades from school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16) Most of the time while taking a test I feel/felt confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17) I feel/felt capable of helping others with their class work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18) I feel/felt teachers' standards are/were too high for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19) It is/was hard for me to keep up with my class work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20) I am/was satisfied with the class assignments that I turn/turned in.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
21) At times I feel/felt like a failure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22) I feel/felt I do/did not study enough before a test.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23) Most exams are/were easy for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24) I have/had doubts that I will do well in my subjects I have/had selected	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25) For me, studying hard pays off.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26) I have/had a hard time getting through school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27) I am/was good at scheduling my study time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28) I have/had a fairly clear sense of my academic goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29) I would like to be a much better student than I am now/was	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30) I often get/got discouraged about school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31) I enjoy/enjoyed doing my homework	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32) I consider/considered myself a very good student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

33) I usually get/got the grades I deserve in/on my courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34) I do/did not study as much as I should	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35) I usually feel on top of my work by finals week.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36) Others consider/considered me a good student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37) I feel that I am/was better than the average student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38) In most of the courses, I feel/felt that my classmates are/were better prepared than I am/was.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39) I feel/felt that I do/did not have the necessary abilities for certain courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40) I have/had poor study habits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22

If you consent to being contacted to participate in a short interview about your experiences (should your data meet the requirements for the second phase of the research) please leave your NAME below.

Please Note: By leaving your name, your answers will not be anonymous to the researcher but will remain anonymous within all publications.

Enter your answer

23

If you consent to being contacted to participate in a short interview about your experiences (should your data meet the requirements for the second phase of the research) please leave your EMAIL ADDRESS below. You will be contacted by the researcher who will send a 3 digit code that will be assigned to your data (E.G - 001).

Please Note: By leaving your email address, your answers will not be anonymous to the researcher but will remain anonymous within all publications.

Enter your answer

Thank You for completing the questionnaires.

If you require any further information in regards to the study, what happens next or what happens to your data then please refer to the Participant Information sheet that was shared with you before completing the questionnaires. For further information or questions related to the research, please contact the researcher via email, keith.houghton@uea.ac.uk

Important Information.

If you have experienced any feelings of distress or discomfort whilst completing the questionnaire then in the first instance please contact your designated pastoral support or wellbeing advisor within your Tertiary Education Provider.

Further support and advice can also be accessed via a number of ACE charity websites below.

The Mix - <https://www.themix.org.uk>

Body & Soul Charity - <http://bodyandsoulcharity.org/get-support/>

Kooth - <https://www.kooth.com/>

Bernardos - <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/>

We Are With You - <https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/>

Young Minds - <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>



Choice

Text

Rating

Date



Appendix 4: Email to Participants for Phase 2 Element

Good Afternoon XXXXX

I hope you are well.

Firstly, I would like to say thank you for taking the time to complete my questionnaire recently. Finding participants to take part in research can be complex, so I really appreciate your time and efforts.

The data that you entered within the questionnaires meets the criteria for the interview phase of my research and I would really appreciate if you would be willing to participate in a short interview with me about your views around Academic Self-Concept, Hope, and your Tertiary education experience.

I have attached the participant sheet for you which contains a link and QR code at the end to an online consent sheet that you can complete. For ease I have included the link below for you too.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=IYdfxj26UUOKBwhl5djwkKcYXvnEZWdKp7K5oWZq9RtUN1AwSDRRWEdGVE5VQ0xHQkQyVVdLQkRGTS4u>

If you consent to participating in the interview phase simply sign and return the online form and we will arrange a convenient time for yourself to join me on Microsoft Teams via email. I must stress that all information shared is confidential and will be completely anonymised as part of the research process by assigned you a three-digit code number (E.G – 025)

If you have any further questions about the study, the interview process or your data/results so far, please do feel free to contact me.

Best wishes,

Keith Houghton

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Email: keith.houghton@uea.ac.uk



Appendix 5: Participant Information Sheet (Phase 2).

Mr Keith Houghton
Postgraduate Researcher
University of East Anglia

Faculty of Social Sciences
School of Education and
Lifelong Learning

4th August 2023

University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park

The Role of Childhood Experiences in Supporting Individuals in Attending University/College Education.

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in the second phase of the research study focused on students attending tertiary education and will be exploring how early childhood experiences (positive and negative) may impact on their levels of Hope (that is, an individuals ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal/s) and Academic Self-Concept (that is, how individuals perceive themselves academically).

Current literature suggests that individuals who have experienced a higher number of negative childhood experiences tend to have lower levels of academic self-concept, motivation to engage in education and hopefulness for their future career goals and overall success (Baxter et al., 2017; Marsh and Ronda., 2002). As a result, individuals who have been exposed to multiple negative childhood experiences during childhood tend to experience lower educational, employment and economic successes when compared to those with less negative experiences (Currie and Widom, 2010; Lanier et al., 2015). Subsequently, individuals exposed to a higher number of negative experiences during childhood and adolescence are less likely to attend university institutions (Corrales et al., 2016).

It is hoped that the experiences and views of potential participant's will play an integral role in determining the impact of childhood experiences upon how individuals perceive themselves academically and their ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal/s. it is also hoped that participants experiences and views may also provide an insight into how more positive childhood experiences may mitigate the impact of negative childhood experiences and support individuals within the Merseyside and Norfolk areas to attend University/College settings.

It is anticipated that participants could provide further information with regard to the identification of support for young people who may have had adverse childhood experiences. From a participant point of view, it is hoped that this research will have a beneficial impact on individual participant's whereby the process of sharing their experiences can promote feelings of empowerment and reflection.

This Participant Information Sheet tells you about the second phase of the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you would like to participate in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand or want to know more about

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.
- ✓ You have received a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researcher(s): Mr Keith Houghton.

This will take place under the supervision of Dr Nikki Collingwood (nikki.collingwood@uea.ac.uk,).

(3) What will the study involve for me?

Once you have read the information sheet, you are able to click a link to the online consent form or scan the QR code to access it. Please read the information carefully and if you are happy to provide consent, please provide your name, signature and date of completion. Once consent has been gained, the Researcher (Mr Keith Houghton) will contact you via the email address provided within the first stage of the research to arrange a convenient date and time to complete the interview process with you. The interview process will be centred around your personal views of the key concepts within the study (E.G – Adverse Childhood Experiences, Positive Childhood Experiences, Academic Self-Concept and Hope).

An Audio recording will be taken of the interview and you will have the opportunity to review the transcribed recordings before any data is used within the study. All transcripts from the interview processes will be transcribed anonymously to ensure participants are not identified from their comments.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

The interview process will take approximately 20-45 minutes to complete. Further information about convenient dates and times will be sent accordingly, once consent has been approved.

(5) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I have started?

This research is being conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines and approved by the Health Care Professional Council, meaning you have a series of rights as a participant. Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

(6) What are the consequences if I withdraw from the study?

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview. If you decide at a later time to withdraw from the study your information will be removed from our records and will not be included in any results, up to the point we have analysed and published the results.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study. However, as part of the reflective nature of engaging in an interview about your experiences and personal characteristics, you may reflect on significant times of your life, and the life of your family. This may result in some adverse emotional reactions. At the end of each phase of the interview, you will be provided with information as to where you can access support should you need to. The researcher will also monitor your responses and check in on your wellbeing at various points of the interview.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

Your participation in the study will help to further our knowledge and understanding of the role of Positive Childhood Experiences in the formation of Academic Self-Concept and Hope and their ability to mitigate the negative impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences over time.

(9) What will happen to information provided by me and data collected during the study?

Your personal data and information will only be used as outlined in this Participant Information Sheet, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy.

Your personal data and information will only be used as outlined in this Participant Information Sheet, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's [Research Data Management Policy](#).

The information you provide will be stored securely and your identity will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be identified in these publications if you decide to participate in this study.

Study data may also be deposited with a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes. The data will be kept for at least 10 years beyond the last date the data were accessed. The deposited data will not include your name or any identifiable information about you.

(10) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Mr Keith Houghton (keith.houghton@uea.ac.uk, 07872552531) will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have.

(11) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have the right to receive transcripts of the interview in order for you to review the information collected during the interview phase. All transcripts from the interview processes will be transcribed anonymously to ensure participants are not identified from their comments.

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can indicate if you wish to receive feedback about the study at the end of the online consent form by simply selecting 'yes' (which is accessible via the link and QR code at the end of this sheet). .

(12) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact myself or my research supervisor (Dr Nikki Collingwood) via the University of East Anglia address noted above.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of School of Education and Lifelong Learning: Yann LeBeau (y.lebeau@uea.ac.uk,).

(13) How do I know that this study has been approved to take place?

To protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity, all research in the University of East Anglia is reviewed by a Research Ethics Body. This research was approved by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee).

(14) What is the general data protection information I need to be informed about?

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a university.

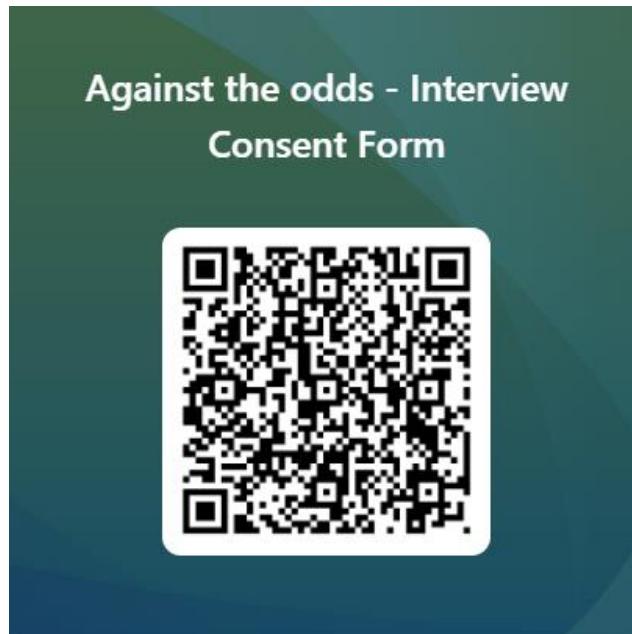
In addition to the specific information provided above about why your personal data is required and how it will be used, there is also some general information which needs to be provided for you:

- The data controller is the University of East Anglia.
- For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk
- You can also find out more about your data protection rights at the [Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](#).
- If you are unhappy with how your personal data has been used, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk in the first instance.

(15) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?

If you are happy and consent to take part in the study, you will be required to complete one copy of the consent form which you can simply access via the link and QR code below. By submitting your responses you are agreeing to the researcher using the data collected for the purposes described above. Please keep the information sheet for your information.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=1Ydfxj26UUOKBwhl5djwkKcYXvnEZWdKp7K5oWZq9RtUN1AwSDRRWEEdGVE5VQ0xHQkQyVVdLQkRGTS4u>



<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=1Ydfxj26UUOKBwhl5djkKcYXvnEZWdKp7K5oWZq9RtUN1AwSDRRWEdGVE5VQ0xHQkQyVVdLQkRGTS4u>

(16) Further information

This information was last updated on 04th August 2023.

If there are changes to the information provided, you will be notified by If there are changes to the information provided, you will be notified by via email

This information sheet is for you to keep

Appendix 6: Phase 2 Interview Consent Form

Doctorate in Educational Psychology (EdPsyD) Thesis - Interview Consent Form

18th May 2023

The Role of Childhood Experiences in Supporting Individuals in Attending University/College Education.

Section 1

...

Participant Consent Form

Please read the below information carefully and if you agree, please print your name and sign using the selections at the end of the consent form.

In giving my consent I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Participant Information Sheet, which I may keep, for my records, and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or the Child and Educational Psychology Practice now or in the future.
- I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study results. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
- I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- I understand that the results of this study will be submitted for as part of a university thesis for the researcher, but that it will not contain my name. I understand that my transcripts from any recordings will be shared with me before being used within the research and a small one page summary profile of the findings will be sent accordingly to the email address I have provided.
- I understand that if a disclosure or safeguarding issue arises during the interview process, then the researcher (Mr. Keith Houghton) will have a professional obligation to contact the safeguarding lead of the Tertiary Education provider I attend as well as reporting it to their Research Supervisor and appropriate channels if necessary.

1. Please provide your name

Enter your answer

2. Please provide your initials or signature

Enter your answer

3. Date of completion

Please input date (dd/MM/yyyy)



4. Please indicate below.

Yes

No

I would like to receive feedback of the results once the study is complete

I would like to receive transcripts of the interview to review before being used within the study.

Section 2

...

Obtaining Consent

5. I Consent to:

Yes

No

Participating within an Interview for the purpose of the study

Audio-recording of my interview for the purpose of the study



Choice

Text

Rating

Date



Appendix 7: Stage 1 TA: Data Familiarisation Notes Example

1 The Role of Childhood Experiences in Supporting Individuals in Attending
2 University/College Education.

3

4 Researchers Name: Keith Houghton Interview ID: 009

5 Date of Interview: 06/09/23

6 R = Respondent/Interviewee

7 I = Interviewer

8

9 I: Evening XXXXX, how you doing?

10 R: Evening Keith, I'm really good thank you, how are you?

11 I: I'm really good thank you, thank you very much for joining me this evening and taking part in the
12 next part of my research too, I really appreciate it.

13 R: No problem at all, glad I can help you.

14 I: Thank you. First and foremost, XXXXX, I just wanted to check that you managed to look over the
15 email I sent over with the questions and definitions?

16 R: I have yes, they were really helpful. I've got to be honest; I was a little worried about what you
17 were going to ask and being put on the spot ha-ha.

18 I: Oh, I'm glad they've helped then. I felt it would provide better conversations with people by
19 providing them with the answers initially instead of putting them on the spot.

20 R: Good thinking.

21 I: Thank you. Just before we start the questions XXXXX, did you have any questions yourself
22 regarding the definitions or questions I sent over?

23 R: No. They made sense to be fair.

24 I: Great, that's what I was aiming for. Do you have any questions regarding this element of the
25 research study or anything that happens next?

26 R: Erm, yes. What does happen next, do we need to do anything else after this?

27 I: No. This will be the last part of the research study. So following this interview, I'll be running a
28 thematic analysis on all of the interviews I've done and hopefully coming up with some themes from
29 the data to support the literature and research or provide some new insights.

30 R: So, will we receive a copy of that too?

31 I: If you checked that you would like to receive the results of the study on the consent form then yes.
32 When I have finalised everything I will send the results over to those individuals who ticked the box.
33 Likewise with the transcriptions of today interview. If you ticked the box that you would like to
34 review your transcription, I will also send that across to.

35 R: I don't think I ticked that one, but I trust you ha-ha.

36 I: Great stuff. So, shall we go straight into question one as long as there isn't anything else?

37 R: Yep... That's fine.

38 I: Brilliant. So... XXXXX, what do you feel has contributed to how you perceive yourself academically?

39 Do you feel there were any specific activities or experiences up to the age of 16 that helped

40 contribute to how you perceive or perceived yourself academically?

41 I: I think one of the main experiences for me looking back was being put in sets in school| I think we
42 are put into sets as little kids not really understanding what they are for really| Then when you get a
43 little older| you start to understand that all the smarter kids are in the top set and all the kids with
44 difficulties or who aren't as smart are in the lower sets| I think being put in sets at such an early age
45 can either positively or negatively affect how you perceive yourself academically.|

46 R: If you don't mind me asking XXXXX, what sort of sets were you put in throughout school?

47 I: to be honest Keith, I was put in middle sets for the majority of both primary and secondary school|
48 and it was a bit of a mix|

49 R: What do you mean by a bit of a mix?

50 I: For example, in primary school I would say I had a good level of academic self-concept, not
51 amazing, but I felt it was okay. I think that was because in primary school it's smaller, you get more
52 help and support if you need it and there's loads of things like rewards, certificates, and stuff like
53 that to help motivate you. Added to that, the teacher just seemed nicer, as in friendlier and more
54 helpful.|

55 R: Right, so did that change when you went to secondary school?

56 I: Oh god yes. You don't really get nice teachers in secondary school do you, it's a bit of jump. Don't
57 get me wrong there is a few but most of them are awful.

58 R: When you say they were awful, do you mean the way they taught you in lessons or just who they
59 were?

60 I: Erm, bit of both. Some of the teachers were genuinely terrible. Like, I have no idea how they
61 become teachers. But loads of them just seemed like they had a 'cob on' and took it out on the
62 children all the time. I would say there was about 4-5 good teachers within the school I went to. |

63 R: And if you don't mind me asking, what made the good teachers good?

64 I: Erm, they were the teachers who like believed in you. You know, gave you a bit of confidence if
65 you needed it or a bit of support, stuff like that| There was like three teachers I can remember who
66 were always called the best teachers and you know what, it was like they were more your mate than
67 a teacher, but you always knew the boundary. Its hard to explain, but do you know what I mean|

68 R: Yes, I know what you're saying it's like you both had respect for each other, but you knew when
69 you had to be serious and definitely knew when somebody had overstepped the marker.

70 I: Yes, exactly like that. I think kids just respected those teachers more because they weren't always
71 shouting at us or the power of being a teacher hadn't gone to their head shall we say|

72 R: Yes, I get what you're saying, thanks XXXXX. So, when you transitioned to secondary school would it
73 be safe to say that it had a negative impact upon how you perceived yourself academically?

74 I: Erm, id have to say yes it did. I was put in like a mix of sets when I went to secondary school, like
75 set 2/3 and I think straight away that didn't help| because you start to doubt yourself. It was a bit

- Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
1) School sets at an early age and the effect this can have on people
- Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
2) Not really understanding what sets were for as a child
- Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
3) Making comparisons and distinctions when you are older between what constitutes as a 'smart kid' and 'kids with difficulties'
- Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
4) The Impact positive/negative that being put in sets at an early age can have
- Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
5) Middle sets for OOB throughout their education
- Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
6) Description of their experience as a bit of mix
- Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
7) Primary school seemed to develop a good level of Academic Self Concept

76 mad to be honest, because I was like in in set 2 for maths and set 3 for english but I'd say my
77 academic self-concept was stronger in maths because I was better at it, if you get me, I just found it
78 easier. |

79 R: Interesting, would you say there was anything else about your secondary transition that may have
80 negatively impacted how you perceived yourself academically?

81 I: Yes, as I've just said the lack of support from teachers was a big one. In primary school I used to get
82 a bit of support whenever I needed it to be honest, especially with English because I found that a bit
83 more difficult. But when I went to secondary school, it was like you were left on your own | I didn't
84 really get any help and I remember sitting there in some classes like staring in to space because I
85 didn't know what to do and had no-one to help me. |

86 R: Would you not put your hand up or ask the teacher for help at all?

87 I: Not really. |

88 R: Was there a reason why?

89 I: I think you just don't want to stick out do you? Like if you're always needing help then you look like
90 the 'dumb one' and I guess looking back, me needing a little help from time to time probably did
91 impact my academic self-concept a bit at the time. |

92 R: Thanks for that XXXX. Do you feel any other activities or experiences helped contribute to how
93 you perceived yourself academically?

94 I: Erm I would say my nan and grandad had a really positive impact on me though | I spent a lot of
95 time with them after school because my mum and dad worked you see. So, they would pick me up
96 later on. But when I was at my nan and grandad's they would sit down with me all the time and go
97 over my homework as soon as I got home. | That would always be followed by a load of sweets and
98 like cakes and stuff. | I always remember my grandad loved planes and he would always teach me
99 about planes and mechanical stuff, it's probably why I'm pursuing a career as an engineer now. |

100 R: Right, so you are hoping to go onto university when you finished in sixth form to study that then?

101 I: That's the plan.

102 R: Brilliant, Good luck to you XXXX.

103 I: Thanks.

104 R: So, would you say having a supportive nan and grandad was beneficial for how you perceived
105 yourself academically?

106 I: Yes, I would say so. | They both really helped me when I got to secondary school and how I
107 perceived myself slipped a little. | It's mad because when I was in primary school, I would say I had
108 high academic self-concept | I loved primary school though. | I'd always go back to my nan and
109 grandad's, | do all my homework for the next day and get like certificates and little stickers of the
110 teachers for doing it so well | You don't get none of that at secondary school. |

111 I: So, would you say, getting rewards or some form of acknowledgement for your efforts was
112 important to you?

113 R: I wouldn't say it's important to me, but it definitely helps doesn't it, especially when you're a kid.
114 Like when you get star of the week or the teacher gives you some praise in the classroom in front of

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

19) Felt they had better ASC because they were in a higher set for maths compared to English.

[Reply](#)

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

20) Lack of perceived support from secondary teachers contributed to lower ASC

[Reply](#)

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

21) Felt they received more support for difficulties in primary school

[Reply](#)

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

22) Feeling of being left alone in secondary school

[Reply](#)

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

23) Feelings of helplessness in secondary school on occasions which led to lower levels of ASC

[Reply](#)

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

24) A reluctance to ask for help or support

[Reply](#)

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

25) Feelings of being judged by peers and not wanting to stick out

[Reply](#)

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

26) Reflection on their reluctance to ask for help and how that impacted their ASC at the time

115 everyone you feel like you're on top of a mountain ~~haha~~. Difference is, when I got to secondary
116 school, I felt like all the teachers did was moan at me. |

117 I: Argh, that's not good. Sorry you felt like that.

118 R: Its not your fault ~~haha~~.

119 I: I know, I know but its not good to hear is it. So, do you think if your secondary school teachers
120 were more supportive and offered more things like you describes in terms of praise, certificates
121 those sorts of things, do you think your academic self-concept would have been more positive
122 throughout?

123 R: Erm, I can't say for certain, but I don't think it would have harmed anyone. Obviously rewards and
124 praise and stuff like that would have had to change. You can't go giving 13–14-year-olds star of the
125 week and pointing them out in front of the whole class, they will probably just end up being bullied. |

126 I: So how do you think you would go about it? Any ideas?

127 R: Just like little personal feedback through books would have been sound I think or maybe like end
128 of year awards or something. | I don't know it's a hard one isn't it.

129 I: Some good suggestions though, thank you. Anything else you feel contributed to how you
130 perceived yourself academically.

131 R: Erm, no, not that I can think of at the moment, I think that's everything.

132 I: Not to worry. What I will say is, if there is anything that spring to mind as we continue the rest of
133 the interview, the please do feel free to revisit anything ok.

134 R: Yep

135 I: I'll also say that we will have sometime at the end of the interview to revisit anything you have
136 answered or add in anything further so we ~~ll~~ have plenty of opportunity.

137 R: Okay.

138 I: Right then, lets move on to question two. So, were there any activities or experiences before the
139 age of 16 that you feel contributed to your ability to work towards a desired goal or accomplish
140 certain goals that you set for yourself?

141 R: Yes, well. I don't know if this would be one or not, but I think it was definitely one for me. I would
142 say like, ~~the~~ positive experiences I had growing up | I was quite lucky to be fair. Although I had a mum
143 who struggled financially like I said, she still tried to give us the best of everything. I was fortunate
144 because I still seen my dad who was better off, and my nan and grandad were quite well off to be
145 fair. | I used to have loads of positive experiences like visiting the caravan during holidays with my
146 family or even my nana and grandad like taking me the pictures or bowling or something on the
147 weekend. |

148 I: So how do you think those positive experiences like visiting the caravan for instance, how do you
149 think they helped contribute to your ability to work towards a desired goal or accomplish certain
150 goals that you set for yourself?

151 R: I ~~think~~ like, the more positive experiences you have then the better you feel in yourself, like your
152 happier aren't you. If you feel happier, | like well looked after and don't have to worry about certain
153 things then I would say your more able to make goals for yourself and try to achieve them | I guess I

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
38) Felt that secondary school teachers just 'moaned' instead of positive praise or encouragement

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
39) Felt that rewards and incentives need to be changed at secondary level to support ASC

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
40) Suggestions on how secondary school could offer more incentives and rewards

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
41) Positive experiences growing up contributed to higher levels of hope

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
42) Link to money and positive experiences as a child

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
43) Suggestions of positive experiences growing up

154 was lucky in having the relationships I did with my nan and grandad and my mum and dad, cause
155 even though they were separated I still had a good relationship with them.]

156 I: So, do you think there is something in there about family possibly contributing to it too?

157 R: Of course, that was my next point to be honest. I wrote down family and family circumstances. I
158 think the family you are born into has a massive impact on like the goals you set for yourself and
159 how motivated you actually are to achieve those goals. Like my family were so supportive of
160 anything I tried and in a way always helped me to try and achieve little goals that I set for myself.
161 Like I mentioned in the beginning my nan and grandad had a massive impact on that. But I also think
162 having XXXXX brothers and sisters helped me in setting goals and trying to achieve them, because if
163 you sort of didn't set mini silly goals for yourself like getting up at 7am to get a shower, you would
164 have to wait until about 8.30 to use the bathroom ~~haha~~. |

165 I: So, would you say there was a competitive element between you and your siblings in a range of
166 contexts, not just fighting for the bathroom?

167 R: Yes definitely. I had XXXXX brothers and XXXXX ~~sisters~~ so I was more competitive with my other
168 brother to be honest. Although saying that, I was dead competitive with my sister who id say is quite
169 smart, so like I was always trying to out do the marks she would get in school and stuff. |

170 I: When you say you were competitive with your brother, what was it you were competitive about?

171 R: With my brother ~~haha~~, everything. It would be like who could run the fastest, finishing tidying our
172 room the fastest, who was better at football. I think that's just normal though isn't it? |

173 I: I would say there is some normality in being competitive with your brothers and sisters yes. To
174 what extremes is by choice of the family though id have to say.

175 R: Hah, I guess so.

176 I: So, do you think those competitive elements with your brother or sisters contributed in any way to
177 how you worked towards your desired goals or accomplish goals that you set for yourself?

178 R: When you put it like that I guess they did and in a way still continue to. You don't really think of
179 that as a kid do you. I'd say the more competitive ~~you~~ are, the more hopeful you would probably
180 be. Like, if your super competitive like I am, then your always thinking of new goals and how you can
181 achieve them, even if its something stupid like tidying your room faster like I said. Your goals would
182 change all the time like how ~~can~~ I do this faster, what could I do to do this faster, silly stuff like that. I
183 guess your always thinking of different ways you could get to your goals with there is a competitive
184 element. |

185 I: interesting, how about the competitiveness you talked about with your sister because that sounds
186 competitive in a different way?

187 R: Yeah, to be fair that was. She was like the smart one in the ~~family~~ and I wanted to be the smart
188 one shall we say, so I always used to try and like outdo her on tests and stuff, you know like your
189 SATS, GCSEs, coursework and that. She didn't used to like it when I come home with a better grade
190 or something, but she couldn't do anything because she was older. In a way, my sister was like a bit
191 of a role model because I definitely looked up to her and wanted to achieve what she achieved in
192 school anyway. |

193 I: Would you say any other role models in your life helped contribute to you setting goals or working
194 towards desired goals that you set for yourself then?



Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

47) Family circumstances have a large Impact on your levels of hope

[Reply](#)



Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

48) Support Immediate and wider family helped contribute to higher levels of Hope.

[Reply](#)



Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

49) Coming from a larger family Increased Hope levels

[Reply](#)



Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

50) Competitiveness between siblings contributed to higher levels of hope, especially academically

[Reply](#)



Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

51) Competitiveness with brothers from a physical aspect helped contribute to higher levels of hope.

[Reply](#)



Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

52) Acknowledgment that competitiveness with siblings still contributes to higher levels of hope

[Reply](#)



Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ... / &

53) Statement - ' The more competitive you are the more hopeful you would probably be'.

[Reply](#)

195 R: Erm... yeah. Like I said earlier my nan and grandad definitely helped and well my sister. Id also say
 196 my mum in weird way as well. |

197 I: When you say in a weird way, what do you mean?

198 R: Like my mum wasn't intelligent, she didn't have an amazing job or anything, but she did her best
 199 to raise us and I think she did a bloody good job. Like seeing my mum struggle to give us what we
 200 wanted and needed wasn't nice and I think that gave me like an underlying motivation to do well for
 201 myself so I wouldn't have to struggle like she has when [redacted] older if you get me. I'd definitely say its
 202 contributed to me setting goals and wanting to do well for myself.

203 I: So, would you say experiencing adversity or coming from a lower socio-economic background
 204 could effect your levels of hope?

205 R: For me it definitely did. It made me more determined and motivated to make sure that, that
 206 didn't happen to me. I had a little look at adverse childhood experiences on Google from your
 207 research study and I was proper shocked by a poster I found.

208 I: Oh yes, there are plenty of those posters. What one was it, the one with the statistics?

209 R: No I didn't find that one, this was just one that like highlighted the 10 is it... 10 adverse childhood
 210 experiences

211 I: Yes, they are the 10 recognised ones from the research done by Felitti.

212 R: Yeah, like I wouldn't have even thought that your parents separating was classed as one I was
 213 proper shocked. It just goes to show that like your family circumstances and like the family you are
 214 born into has a massive impact on loads of different things. |

215 I: Do you think your family circumstances and the family you were born to have an impact on your
 216 levels of hope?

217 R: Do you mean like me setting goals and achieving them?

218 I: Yes

219 R: Well, it obviously has hasn't it. Yes I've had some adversities but in a weird way they've made me
 220 more determined and motivated to succeed so that they don't happen again. I guess looking at it all
 221 [redacted] always had a really supportive family even though we've had ups and downs and that's
 222 helped me get to where I am and hopefully will get me to university in the future. |

223 I: Thanks for that XXXXX. Do you feel any other activities or experiences have contributed to your
 224 ability to work towards a desired goal or accomplish certain goals that you set for yourself?

225 R: Yeah, you've got me thinking now about how my mates have probably contributed to that as well. |

226 I: Right, in what way, positive or negative?

227 R: Erm, a bit of both to be honest.

228 I: How so?

229 R: Well like growing up in like primary school [redacted] say I had a good group of mates, we looked out for
 230 each other and stuff, but it started to change when we started secondary school. Like the group of
 231 mates I went to secondary with started being, erm... how do I put this nicely... like silly and stupid
 232 and just getting distracted by the wrong things shall we say. |

57) Family members helped contribute to goal setting as a young person
 Reply

58) Observing mother go through hardship and 'struggle' provided higher hope levels and 'wanting to do better'
 Reply

59) Acknowledgement that coming from a lower socioeconomic background contributed to higher levels of hope from a fear of not wanting it to happen to them
 Reply

60) Further acknowledgment that family circumstances can impact on your levels of hope.
 Reply

61) Experiencing adverse childhood experiences contributed to higher levels of determination and motivation so they would repeat the cycle of ACEs
 Reply

62) Having a supportive family can mitigate the impact of ACEs and provide resilience factors into adulthood
 Reply

63) Social circles growing up can influence levels of hope both positively and negatively
 Reply

233 I: Right and did you ever get caught up in it?

234 R: Not really, I've always just kept myself to myself really and not bothered getting in all that stuff

235 that teenagers do.

236 I: Did you ever feel pressured to by your mates?

237 R: Erm, sometimes yeah, I think that's part of being a teenager isn't it. I never got dragged into it

238 though, just never bothered me.

239 I: So, at that time are you saying you probably had higher levels of hope than your friends?

240 R: Erm, I don't know about higher levels of hope, but id say better levels of hope if that's even a

241 thing. Like I wanted to do well in school, I didn't want to get involved in like smoking, drinking or

242 hanging around street corners on the weekend, you know stuff like that. Id rather of plugged into my

243 PlayStation at that time and just played on my game all night.

244 I: So what happened with your group of friends?

245 R: id say like year 9 we just started to drifted apart. I'm still mates with like two of them, but id say

246 those two mates are mates that don't really like all that but also didn't want to be left out if you get

247 me, like they wanted to be liked.

248 I: Yes I get you. So what did you do when you drifted away from your friends that you transitioned to

249 secondary school with?

250 R: Well I started making new mates in school then, because in year 10 we had to pick like are options

251 of classes that we wanted to take for GCSE's. I started talking to people that I played online with as

252 well and id say there like interests and what they wanted to do in life was more similar to how I

253 looked at things.

254 I: So would you say that the new friends you made from Year 10 onwards were better for you in

255 terms of your levels of hope, setting goals and achieving them?

256 R: I'd have to say yes to be honest. I'm in sixth form with loads of them now, whereas the majority of

257 my other mates, the ones I come to the school with have all left to do like more trade jobs and stuff.

258 I: So do you think your new group of friends have positively contributed to your levels of hope?

259 R: Yes, id say so.

260 I: How do you think they've done that?

261 R: like I said, there much more supportive than the other friends I had. They don't want to try and

262 get you into trouble. We have similar interests which helps and id say many of our goals are similar,

263 like wanting to go to university, do well for ourselves, have a nice life you know those types of

264 things.

265 I: Brilliant, thanks XXXX. Anything else that you feel has contributed to your levels of hope?

266 R: Erm no, not at the moment Keith, I think that's everything for now.

267 I: Amazing, thank you. Like I said previously, if there is anything else that comes to mind as we

268 continue the interview, then just feel free to stop me. We also have a chance at the end to go over

269 anything in more detail should you need to as well.

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
66) you can safeguard levels of hope by not participating in negative social behaviours or giving into peer pressure during teenage years

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
67) Selecting friends during secondary school who have similar interests and values can contribute or safeguard higher levels of hope

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
68) Again, acknowledgement that aligning with friend who have similar interests and values contributes to higher levels of hope

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
69) Having friend with similar values and interests can be supportive of your endeavours

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher)
70) having friends with similar values and interests means that they share similar goals

270 R: Thank you.

271 I: Great. Right, lets move onto question three then. Apart from academic self-concept and hope
272 which we have discussed, do you feel that there has been any other factors or experiences that have
273 happened up to the age of 16 in which you feel have contributed to you actually attending tertiary
274 education, so you getting to attend sixth form now?

275 R: I could only think of one thing for this question to be honest and that was like the appeal of
276 university. |

277 I: How do you mean?

278 R: Like from an early age, I think I made, or should I say I was taught that going to university was the
279 only way you would become like successful and rich| Like you were sort of guaranteed a good job if
280 you get me| I think when your someone like me and you come from a family where money was
281 always a worry, like with my mum, not my dad and grandad, I think you want to do as well as you
282 can possibly do to not have that happen again. |

283 I: So, like the fear of not having money has been an underlying motivation for you wanting to
284 attending tertiary education?

285 R: In a weird way yes| Like I said I made that link between university and money very early on and I
286 think that has influenced lots of my decisions to achieve academically so that I can then get what I
287 need to attend university to hopefully do an engineering degree| I think the fact that I've always
288 wanted to help my mum, just like my brothers and sisters have has been a strong reason too. |

289 I: So again, an underlying motivation for you is your mother and the connection you have?

290 R: Yes I mean who doesn't want their mum to be looked after? But again it was that link I made
291 between university and money I guess.

292 I: Were or how do you think that link was made when you were growing up?

293 R: Erm|... I think in secondary school its sort of beaten into you isn't it? Like everything is centred
294 around university, you see it from teachers, you see it from adverts, like its all over buses and stuff
295 as well. | I think my sister going definitely contributed to it from a competitive element too, like I said,
296 I've always wanted to try and out do her academically| You know what though, I think you look at
297 some people who are doing well for themselves, or who look like they're doing well for themselves
298 and you find out they went to university, and it just makes you want to go even more. |

299 I: if you don't mind me asking, what types of people do you look up to when you were younger and
300 think or perceive that they were doing well?

301 R: Well, my grandad first and foremost. He had a lovely house, nice car, loads of money and still does
302 and he went to university to be an engineer. But I looked at other people like teachers or my
303 grandads' friends who would come around to the house when I was there and they always had nice
304 cars, nice clothes and looked like they had money when I was younger. | I think it was just reinforced
305 that university was the way to have a nice life, but I know now that's not always the case. |

306 I: interesting, thanks XXXXX. Anything else you feel has contributed to you attending tertiary
307 education?

308 R: Erm, not really. Other than the things we've already talked about like my family, circumstances,
309 role models those types of things.

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
71) The appeal of university contributed to them attending tertiary education as a means of attending university

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
72) perceived Societal pressures of attending university to be 'successful' in life

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
73) Experiencing ACEs made them want to attend university because of the perceived societal benefit of being 'successful' and its link to financial reward

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
74) Acknowledgment that money has always been an underlying motivation because of experiencing ACEs

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
75) the link between achieving academically and being rewarded financially was made very early in their life.

Keith Houghton (EDU - Postgraduate Researcher) ...  
76) Wanting to help mum financially was a contributing factors after watching her 'struggle'

310 I: That's absolutely fine, thank you very much. I think you've given me lots of useful information
311 during that interview, so I really appreciate it.

312 R: No worries mate, hopefully it helps.

313 I: I'm more than sure it will XXXXX, thank you. Are there any other bits you would like to re-visit or
314 any bits of information you would like to add?

315 R: not that I can think of at the moment mate.

316 I: That fine. If we do finish the interview and there is anything that pops into your mind wish you
317 wish you would have said, please do feel free to drop me a little email with exactly what it is and we
318 can see if we can add it to the transcripts if needed. Is that okay?

319 R: Yep, that's fine.

320 I: Great stuff. Right so that is the interview finished XXXXX. Just before you leave id like to say a
321 massive thank you again, it can be incredible difficult to get people to take part in research, so I
322 really appreciate you giving up your time. Do you have any questions about anything or what
323 happens next?

324 R: No, no not at the moment.

325 I: Great. Well thanks for joining me this evening XXXX and I hope you enjoy the rest of your evening.

326 R: Thanks mate, you too. Oh, and good luck with the research.

327 I: Thanks. See you later.

Appendix 8: Stage 2 TA: Generating Initial Codes Example.

Academic Self Concept

Number	Level 1 Descriptive Code	Level 2 Interpretative Code	Transcript	Line Number
1	School Sets	School sets impacted Academic self-concept	1	41
2	Confusion	Not really understanding what sets are for as a young child	1	42
3	Understanding	Realisation of what sets mean as you get older	1	42-44
4	School Sets	Sets at an early age can either positively or negatively impact ASC	1	44-45
5	School Sets	Placed in middle sets for primary and secondary	1	47
6	Experience	'Bit of a mix' regarding their experience in middle sets	1	48
7	Context	Primary school had better levels of ASC	1	50-51
8	Support	More support in primary school to help with ASC	1	51-53
9	Teachers	Teachers seemed nicer and more helpful in primary school	1	53-54
10	Teachers	Teachers seemed less nice in secondary school	1	56-57
11	Support	Lack of support felt in secondary school from teachers	1	60-61
12	Teachers	Lack of emotional wellbeing support for teachers	1	61-62
13	Teachers	Having teachers that believed in you helped with more positive ASC in secondary school	1	64-67
14	Respect	Mutual respect between teachers and students helps with more positive ASC in secondary school	1	70-71
15	Transition	Moving to secondary school seemed to impact their ASC negatively	1	74-76
16	Context	Levels of ASC seemed to be context specific (E.G – subjects better at)	1	77-78
17	Support	Lack of support from teachers in secondary school led to lower levels of ASC	1	81-83
18	Loneliness	Feelings of academic loneliness in secondary school contributed to lower ASC	1	84
19	Helplessness	Feeling helpless in secondary school led to lower levels of ASC	1	84-85
20	Judged	Fear of being judged impacted upon their levels of ASC.	1	89-91

21	Family	Supportive family contributed to higher levels of ASC	1	94-96
22	Time	Time spent with supportive family members helped foster higher ASC	1	96-97
23	Motivation	Rewards or incentives helped foster higher ASSC	1	97-98
24	Protective	Supportive family members may act as protective factors against factors that may decrease ASC	1	106-107
25	Enjoyment	Enjoying primary school attendance contributed to higher levels of ASC	1	107-108
26	Motivation	Motivation - extrinsic rewards contributed to higher levels of ASC in primary	1	108-110
27	Motivation	Again, extrinsic rewards contributed to higher ASC in primary	1	113-115
28	Motivation	lack of extrinsic rewards may have contributed to lower ASC in secondary	1	115-116
29	Change	a change in extrinsic rewards is needed in secondary school to support ASC	1	123-125
30	Change	Small changes in secondary school could contribute to higher levels of ASC	1	127-128

Hope

Number	Level 1 Descriptive Code	Level 2 Interpretative Code	Transcript	Line Number
31	Positive Experiences	Experiencing more positive experiences growing up helped contribute to higher hope levels.	1	142-147
32	Money	Having more money contributed to experiencing more positive experiences as a child.	1	143-147
33	Happiness	More positive experiences as a child make a person happier and more hopeful	1	151-152
34	Basic Needs	Having your basic needs met (Maslow's Hierarchy) can contribute to higher levels of hope.	1	152-153
35	Family	The importance of having a supportive family and hope levels	1	153-155
36	Circumstance	the family you are born <u>into</u> and their circumstances plays a part in your levels of hope.	1	157-159
37	Family	having a supportive family contributed to higher levels of hope	1	159-161
38	Family	coming from a larger family made them more hopeful	1	161-164
39	Academic Competitiveness	Coming from a larger family made them more competitive which they feel impacted their hope levels positively.	1	167-169
40	Physical Competitiveness	Physical competitiveness - competing with family members made them more hopeful	1	171-172
41	Competitive/rivalry	The Competitiveness/rivalry of family members still contribute to higher levels of hope	1	178-184
42	Academic Competitiveness	With sister helped contribute to higher levels of hope	1	187-190
43	Role Model	impact of family members as role models that would contribute to higher levels of hope.	1	190-192
44	Family	Would help contribute to goal setting and higher levels of hope	1	195-196
45	Hardship	Observing mother go through difficult times made them more hopeful and 'want to do better'	1	198-202
46	Socioeconomic background	Made them more determined and motivated, thus leading to higher levels of hope	1	205-207
47	Circumstances	and how they can impact on not just Hope but other constructs	1	212-214
48	Adversity	contributed to higher levels of hope 'so it doesn't happen again'	1	219-220

49	Protective factor	having a supportive family can help to mitigate the adverse impact of experiencing childhood adversity	1	220-222
50	Social circles	Social circles when growing up can impact upon your levels of hope	1	225
51	Primary School	Hope levels were safeguarded in primary school because of a good group of friends	1	229-230
52	Secondary School	Hope levels were changed in secondary school due to wider group of friends	1	230 -232
53	Choice	you can safeguard levels of hope by not participating in negative social behaviours	1	240-243
54	Friendship Choices	Selecting friends with similar interests during secondary school can contribute to higher levels of hope	1	250-253
55	Friendship Choices	choices made in secondary school can impact upon levels of hope throughout adulthood	1	256-257
56	Values & Interests	Having friends with similar values and interests can support your levels of Hope	1	261-264

Appendix 9: Stage 3 TA: Theme Generation

Stage 3 – Academic Self Concept – Step 1

T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
1	41	School Sets	School sets impacted Academic self- concept	'Setting' of children
1	42	Confusion	Not really understanding what sets are for as a young child	'Setting' of children
1	42-44	Understanding	Realisation of what sets mean as you get older	'Setting' of children
1	44-45	School Sets	Sets at an early age can either positively or negatively impact ASC	'Setting of children'
1	47	School Sets	Placed in middle sets for primary and secondary	'Setting' of children
1	48	Experience	'Bit of a mix' regarding their experience in middle sets	'Setting of children'
1	50-51	Context	Primary school had better levels of ASC	Academic experiences
1	51-53	Support	More support in primary school to help with ASC	Academic experience
1	53-54	Teachers	Teachers seemed nicer and more helpful in primary school	Academic Experience
1	56-57	Teachers	Teachers seemed less nice in secondary school	academic experience
1	60-61	Support	Lack of support felt in secondary school from teachers	Academic Experience
1	61-62	Teachers	Lack of emotional wellbeing support for teachers	Academic Experience
1	64-67	Teachers	Having teachers that believed in you helped with more positive ASC in secondary school	Academic Experience
1	70-71	Respect	Mutual respect between teachers and students helps with more positive ASC in secondary school	Academic Experience
1	74-76	Transition	Moving to secondary school seemed to impact their ASC negatively	Academic Experience
1	77-78	Context	Levels of ASC seemed to be context specific (E.G – subjects better at)	Contextual factors
1	81-83	Support	Lack of support from teachers in secondary school led to lower levels of ASC	Academic Experience
1	84	Loneliness	Feelings of academic loneliness in secondary school contributed to lower ASC	Academic Experience
1	84-85	Helplessness	Feeling helpless in secondary school led to lower levels of ASC	Academic Experience
1	89-91	Judged	Fear of being judged impacted upon their levels of ASC.	Social aspect

T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
2	34-36	Family	Support from mother for academic tasks led to more positive ASC	Family network
2	36-38	Rewards	Receiving rewards for good academic work led to more positive ASC	Academic experience
2	41-43	Support	Support from mum to do better with their lives	Family network
2	46-47	Support	Supportive mother led to positive ASC right through school	Family network
2	47-48	Sets	Sets - influence being in top sets had on their ASC	'Setting of children'
2	50-52	Behaviour	being put in a higher set led to better behaviour and a more positive AS	'Setting of Children'
2	52-54	Behaviour	being put in lower sets often led to worse behaviour	'Setting of Children'
2	56-58	Experience	experiencing the worse behaviours and the impact it had upon them and possibly others ASC?	Academic experience
2	64-65	Ability	being a high achiever led to higher levels of ASC	Personal circumstances
2	65-67	Competitiveness	turning learning activities into competitions led to higher levels of ASC	Competitiveness in learning
2	73-74	Determined	losing or not doing well in academic tasks didn't impact upon their ASC	Personal Circumstances
2	74-76	Competitiveness	having people to be competitive against led to them having a stronger ASC in primary	Competitiveness in learning
2	80-83	Family	being from a larger family made them more competitive which acted as a catalyst for higher levels of ASC	Competitiveness in learning
2	85-87	Ability	Ability - having a higher ability or competence in most activities contributed to higher levels of ASC	Personal Circumstances
2	90	Teachers	contributed to how they perceived themselves academically	Academic experience
2	92-93	Teachers	Having better teachers contributed to better ASC	Academic experience
2	93-94	Sets	being in higher sets gave them access to better teachers which contributed to higher ASC	'Setting of children'
2	97-99	Respect	teachers who gave respect contributed to higher levels of ASC	Academic experience
2	99-100	Role Model	teachers had the ability to be perceived as role models which would contribute to higher levels of ASC	Academic experience
2	101-102	Teachers	Unhappy teachers can contribute to lower levels of AS	Academic experience
2	105-106	Values	Having a teacher who has good values can contribute to higher levels of ASC	Academic experience
2	106-107	Support	obtaining support from 'role model' teachers can contribute to higher ASC	Academic experience
2	107-109	Interactions	positive interactions between teachers and children can contribute to higher ASC	Academic experience
2	113-115	Friendships	perception that friendship groups could positively or negative impact your levels of ASC	Social aspects
2	115-119	Sets	the impact being in lower sets can have on your ASC	'Setting' of children
2	120-122	Belonging	want to fit in during secondary school could impact your ASC	Social aspects
2	122-124	Protective	having a supportive mum acted as a protective factor in lessening their ASC	Family network
2	127-128	Friendships	Having non supportive friendship groups can impact ASC	Social aspect
2	130-132	Family	having a strong support network can contribute to higher ASC	Family network

T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
3	36-38	Sets	being put in sets can either positively or negatively impact your ASC	'Setting' of children
3	39-41	Sets	being put in 'lower sets' can negatively impact your ASC	'Setting' of children
3	43-44	Sets	Have a lasting impact on your ASC throughout education	'Setting' of children
3	51-53	Sets	higher sets led to more confidence and improved ASC	'Setting' of children
3	53-55	Sets/behaviour	lower sets tend to have more behavioural incidents	Academic experiences
3	58-61	Experience	More negative behaviours in lower sets which impacts ASC	Academic Experiences
3	62-63	Friendships	the influence they can have on your ASC	Social Aspect
3	70-72	Competitiveness	with peers led to higher ASC	Competitiveness in learning
3	74-75	Comparisons	to peers established ASC	Social aspect
3	81-83	Experience	attending university improved their ASC	Academic Experiences
3	83-84	Confidence	In their abilities safeguarded ASC levels	Personal Circumstances
3	90-91	Competitiveness	motivated them to do better	Competitiveness in learning
3	95-96	Resilience	<u>set-backs</u> haven't impacted upon them	Personal Circumstances
3	96-98	Perception	that lower grades could lead to lower ASC	Academic Experiences

T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
4	40-41	Experience	Initial school experience can shape ASC	Academic Experiences
4	46-49	Opportunities	less opportunities at school led to lower ASC	Wider Experiences
4	49-51	Extra-Curricular Activities	can help improve ASC	Wider experiences
4	54-57	Opportunities	Opportunities - restricted activities at school can lead to lower ASC	Wider experiences
4	61	Opportunities	less of these negatively impacted ASC	Wider experiences
4	63-64	Motivation	limited learning opportunities led to lower ASC	Academic Experiences
4	64-66	Limited exposure	impacted their confidence and ASC	Wider experiences
4	66-69	Perception	that friend had higher ASC because of a range of experiences	Social aspects
4	72	Experiences	lack of interesting activities led to lower ASC	Wider experience
4	74-78	Sets	setting children early can impact their level of ASC	'Setting' of children
4	80-82	Perception	connections are made early on about sets	'Setting' of children
4	82-85	Perception	that being in a low set has consequences for the rest of your educational experience	'Setting' of children
4	87-88	Sets	higher set had better ASC	'Setting' of children
4	90-93	Context	ASC levels are different depending on the context	Contextual Factors
4	96	Context	ASC changes depending on context	Contextual factors
4	98-99	Transition	ASC levels lowered from primary to secondary	Academic Experiences
4	99-102	Support	Lack of in secondary school impacted ASC	Academic experience
4	105-107	Support	lack of impacted other areas too	Academic experiences
4	110-111	Mitigation	even supportive parents couldn't impact the negativity of sets on ASC	Family network
4	114-115	Pressure	expected to attend higher education had an impact on their ASC	Personal Circumstances
4	117-118	Support	teachers can have a positive impact on ASC	Academic Experience
4	120-121	Support	Support - teachers can have a positive impact on ASC	Academic Experience
4	122-124	Interactions	importance of positive ones with teachers	Academic Experience

T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
5	32-35	Support	Support - Parental helped to foster increased ASC	Family network
5	34-35	Motivation	Rewards helped to motivate academic learning	Academic Experience
5	37-39	Support	Praise and verbal feedback from parents support ASC	Family network
5	39-40	Motivation	Good academic behaviours were positively reinforced with rewards	Academic experiences
5	44-47	Parents	being proud and showing that to them helped	Family network
5	50-51	Support	positive parents helped increase ASC and attainment	Family network
5	53-55	Attainment	Attainment - being a high achiever increased there ASC	Academic experiences
5	55-57	Friendships	can have an impact upon your ASC at secondary level	Social aspects
5	60-62	Friendships	can impact upon your ASC	Social aspects
5	62-66	Self-motivation	an act as a buffer against negative friendships groups	Personal Circumstances
5	70-75	Role model	Impact teachers can have on education and ASC	Academic Experiences
5	77-79	Teachers	time and positive interactions contributed to a better relationship and AS	Academic Experiences
5	83-85	Teachers	genuine interest and respect led to better relationships and improved ASC in secondary	Academic Experiences
5	88	Role models	seen teachers in a positive light and successful	Academic Experiences
5	91-91	Choice	- attending a 'good' primary school contributed to higher ASC	Contextual Factors
5	94-96	Perception	if the school is perceived as good then you must be good to attend	Contextual Factors
5	104-105	DFSTED	having a good rating improved ASC	Contextual Factors
5	105-106	Opportunities	Access to extra curricular activities led to higher ASC	Wider Experience
5	108	Support	more supportive environment led to higher ASC	Academic Experience

T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
6	133-135	Socioeconomic status	Coming from a lower SES provided more motivation and higher levels of hope	Contextual Factors
6	137-138	Praise	praise from parents led to higher levels of Hope	Family network
6	138-141	Personality	being competitive innately led to higher levels of hope	Competitiveness in learning
6	145-148	Competitiveness	higher levels of competition led to higher levels of hope	Competitiveness in learning
6	155-157	Behaviours	goal orientated behaviours led to higher levels of hope	Personal Circumstances
6	160-165	Environment	Being in lower SES contributed to higher ASC	Contextual Factors
6	168-170	Determination	working hard led to higher levels of hope	Personal Circumstances
6	172-173	Motivation	asking for addition learning to improve their academic achievement	Personal Circumstances
6	177	Motivation	wanting to do better for themselves led to higher hope	Personal Circumstances
6	191-193	Experiences	whilst being in lower SES contributed to higher hope	Contextual Factors
6	193-195	Perception	that attending higher education will provide a 'nicer life'	Contextual Factors
6	202-203	Perception	wanting to be held in high esteem by others led to higher hope	Contextual Factors
6	208-210	Competitiveness	wanting to be the best in different contexts led to higher hope	Competitiveness in learning
6	215-219	Competitiveness	has led to both improved ASC and hope for them	Competitiveness in learning

Stage 3 –Hope– Step 1

T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
1	142-143	Experiences	More positive childhood experiences contributed to higher levels of hope	Personal Circumstance
1	143-147	Money	Having increased disposable income contributed to more positive childhood experiences	Personal Circumstances
1	151-152	Happiness	Exposure to more positive childhood experiences make a person happier and more hopeful	Personal Circumstance
1	152-153	Basic Needs	Having your basic needs met can contribute to higher levels of hope	Personal Circumstance
1	153-155	Family	The importance of having a supportive family	Positive Family Relationships
1	157-159	Circumstance	The family you are born into and their circumstance plays a part in hope levels	Family Circumstance
1	159-161	Family	Having a supportive family contributed to higher levels of hope	Positive family relationships
1	161-164	Family	Coming from a larger family influenced hope levels	Family dynamics
1	167-169	Academic Competitiveness	Coming from a larger family made them more competitive which they feel impacted their hope levels positively	Competitive Dynamics
1	171-172	Physical Competitiveness	Physical competitiveness - competing with family members made them more hopeful	Competitive Dynamics
1	178-184	Competitiveness	The Competitiveness/rivalry of family members still contribute to higher levels of hope	Competitiveness Dynamics
1	187-190	Academic Competitiveness	With sister helped contribute to higher levels of hope	Competitiveness Dynamics
1	190-192	Role Model	Impact of family members as role models that would contribute to higher levels of hope	Family dynamics
1	195-196	Family	Would help contribute to goal setting and higher levels of hope	Positive Family Relationships
1	198-202	Hardship	Observing mother go through difficult times made them more hopeful and 'want to do better'	Personal Circumstance
1	205-207	Socioeconomic background	Made them more determined and motivated, thus leading to higher levels of hope	Personal Circumstance
1	212-214	Circumstance	and how they can impact on not just Hope but other constructs	Family dynamics
1	219-220	Adversity	contributed to higher levels of hope 'so it doesn't happen again'	Personal Circumstance
1	220-222	Protective factor	having a supportive family can help to mitigate the adverse impact of experiencing childhood adversity	Positive Family relationships
1	225	Social circles	Social circles when growing up can impact upon your levels of hope	Social aspects
1	229-230	Primary School	Hope levels were safeguarded in primary school because of a good group of friends	Social aspect
1	230-232	Secondary School	Hope levels were changed in secondary school due to wider group of friends	Social Aspect
1	240-243	Choice	you can safeguard levels of hope by not participating in negative social behaviours	Personal Circumstance

T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretive Code	Tentative Theme
1	250-253	Friendship Circles	Selecting friends with similar interests during secondary school can contribute to higher levels of hope	Social Aspects
1	256-257	Friendship choices	choices made in secondary school can impact upon levels of hope throughout adulthood	Social Aspects
1	261-264	Values & interests	Having friends with similar values and interests can support your levels of Hope	Social Aspects

T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
2	142-146	Socioeconomic background	Socioeconomic background - made them more determined and motivated, thus leading to higher hope	Personal Circumstance
2	146-149	Experiences	Embarrassment played a part in higher hope levels	Personal circumstance
2	150-152	Experiences	again, embarrassment caused them to have higher hope levels	Personal Circumstance
2	155	Adversity	actually, made them more determined and motivated with higher hop	Personal Circumstance
2	160-161	Hardship	experiencing hardship led them to higher hope	Personal Circumstance
2	161-162	Pressure	being the oldest sibling	Family Dynamics
2	162-163	Helping	Wanting to help ease the hardship was a motivating factor	Personal Circumstance
2	166	Adversities	Adversities - what they faced when they were younger led them to higher hope levels and attending university.	Personal Circumstance
2	166-168	Perception	that university attendance means you are doing well	Contextual factors
2	168-170	Personality	being a driven individual has led to higher hope	Personal Circumstances
2	170-171	Goal-Orientated	always had to have goals to work towards	Personal Circumstances
2	174-176	Hopeful	highly goal directed and high agency	Personal Circumstances
2	180-182	Support	support from mother helped assist those levels of hope	Positive family relationships
2	187-188	Support	Support from mother was a huge factor in higher hope	Positive family relationships
2	188-191	Incentive	having an incentive motivated them to higher hope too.	Personal Circumstance
2	193-194	Support	guidance from mother and 'being there' helped	Positive family relationships
2	196-197	Extra-Curricular Activities	led to more competitive nature and motivation, therefore higher hope	Wider Experiences
2	200	Behaviour	Playing football led to more goal directed behaviour	Wider Experiences
2	202-206	Pathway thinking	playing football led to improved pathway thinking	Wider Experiences
2	206-207	Personality	wanting to be the best made them more driven and motivated	Personal Circumstance

T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
3	100	Motivation	higher levels of motivation led to higher levels of Hope	Personal Circumstances
3	113-115	Family	shapes your levels of hope	Positive family relationships
3	115-117	Support	Having parental support helps shape Hope	Positive family relationships
3	119-120	Support	parental support led to higher hope and ASC	Positive family relationships
3	120-122	Support	strong family support can increase Hope	Positive family relationships
3	125-126	Experiences	having positive experiences of parents	Positive family relationships
3	126	Motivations	Receiving rewards acted as a motivator	Personal circumstance
3	128-130	Structure & Routine	improved hope levels unconsciously	Positive family relationships
3	133	Support	parents have played an integral part in their hope	Positive family relationships
3	137-140	Structure & Routine	helped not only with their hope but other areas	Positive family relationships
3	141-142	Motivation	Parents acted as motivational influences too	Personal Circumstance
3	145-146	Friendships	can positively or negatively impact your hope	Social Aspects
3	147-151	Experiences	can significantly impact your levels of hope, especially in secondary	Social Aspects
3	156-157	Friendships	ensuring you have a supportive group of friends	Social Aspects
3	160-163	Motivation	wanting to do parents proud contributed to higher hope	Personal Circumstance
3	166-169	Adversity	can actually increase levels of hope	Personal Circumstance
3	172	School & Teachers	can negatively or positively influence Hope	Academic Experiences
3	173-177	Relationships	lack of being able to build meaningful relationships impact hope levels	Academic experiences
3	177-178	Relationships	meaningful relationships with teachers increased Hope levels	Academic experience
3	180-184	Relationships	Positive impact a teacher can have on hope levels	Academic experiences
3	185-188	Interactions	time, respect were positive attributes	Academic Experiences
3	188-189	Relationships	positive ones can impact both Hope and ASC	Academic Experiences
3	193-197	Role models	teachers can influence hope levels	Academic Experiences
	200	Respect	an integral part of positive relationships	Academic Experiences

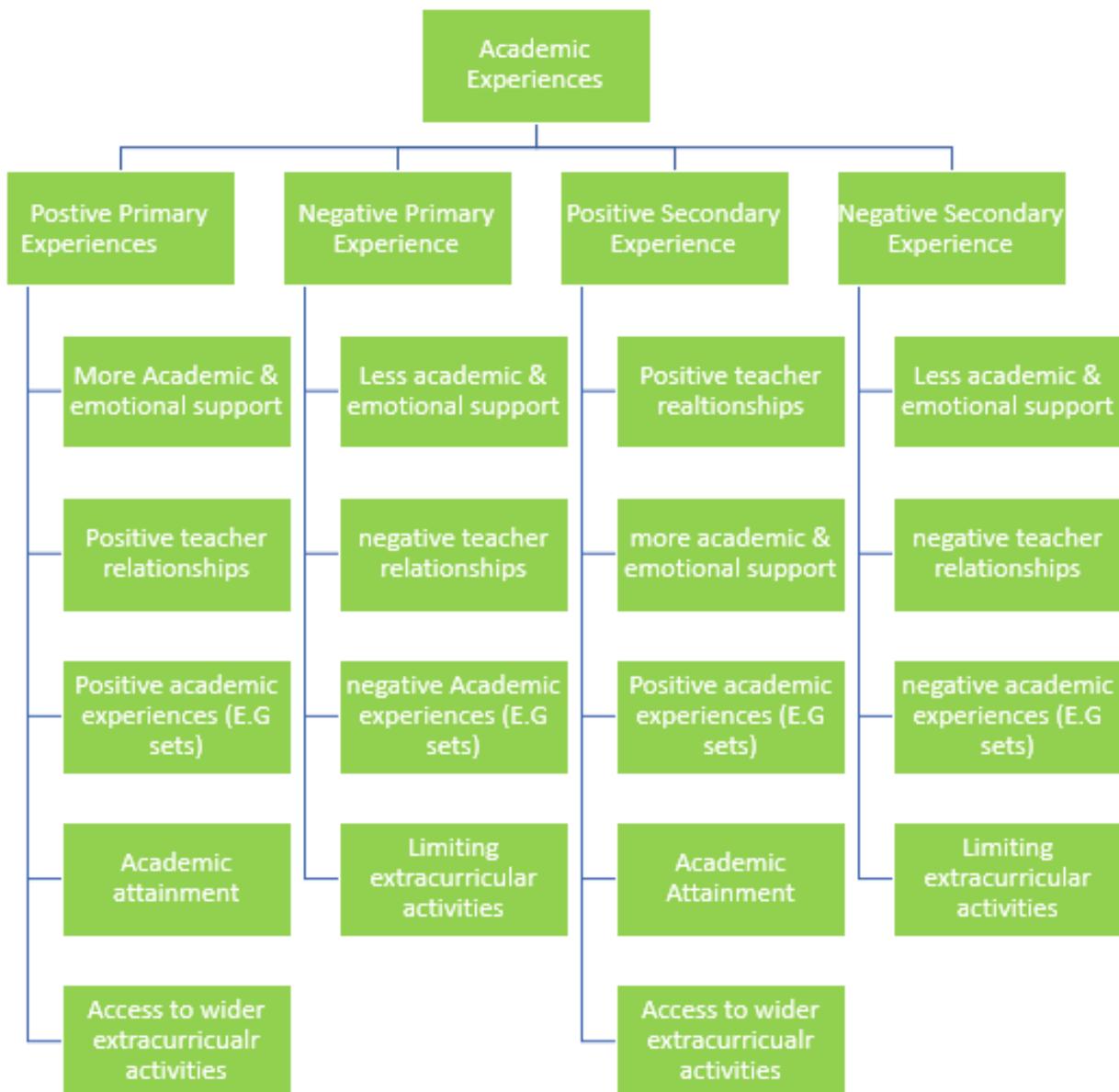
T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
4	149-150	Parents	their importance in setting goals when younger	Positive family relationships
4	151-152	Motivation	impact parents can have on motivation to do things	Positive family relationships
4	154-155	Context	hope may also be context specific	Contextual factors
4	158-159	Interest	can lead to higher levels of hope	Wider Experiences
4	160-161	Enjoyment	can lead to higher levels of hope	Wider Experiences
4	164-166	Goal Directed Behaviour	natural increases in this leads to higher hope	Personal Circumstances
4	166-168	Role model	the impact a supportive parent can have on hope levels	Positive family relationships
4	171-172	Competitiveness	led to higher levels of hope in football context	Personal Circumstances
4	176-178	Team work	feeling part of a team increases hope levels	Wider Experiences
4	186-188	Protective	having high hope in one context to safeguard in another context	Contextual Factors
4	190	School	lack of enjoyment can lead to lower hope	Academic experiences
4	190-191	Teachers	lack of positive relationships with teachers can impact hope	Academic experiences
4	192	Experiences	experiences at secondary can impact hope	Academic experiences
4	195-199	Teachers	positive impact a teacher can have on hope and education	Academic experiences
4	201	Sets	Lower sets impacted hope levels for future	Academic Experiences
4	201-203	Experiences	negative experiences can impact hope and other areas	Academic experiences
4	206-207	Teachers	positive impact a teacher can have on hope	Academic experiences
4	207	Pressure	From parents can also be a positive thing	Contextual factors
4	209-213	Teachers	Positive impact a teacher can have on hope levels	Academic experiences
4	217-219	Support	feeling more supported in sixth form transition which helped with hope levels	Academic experiences

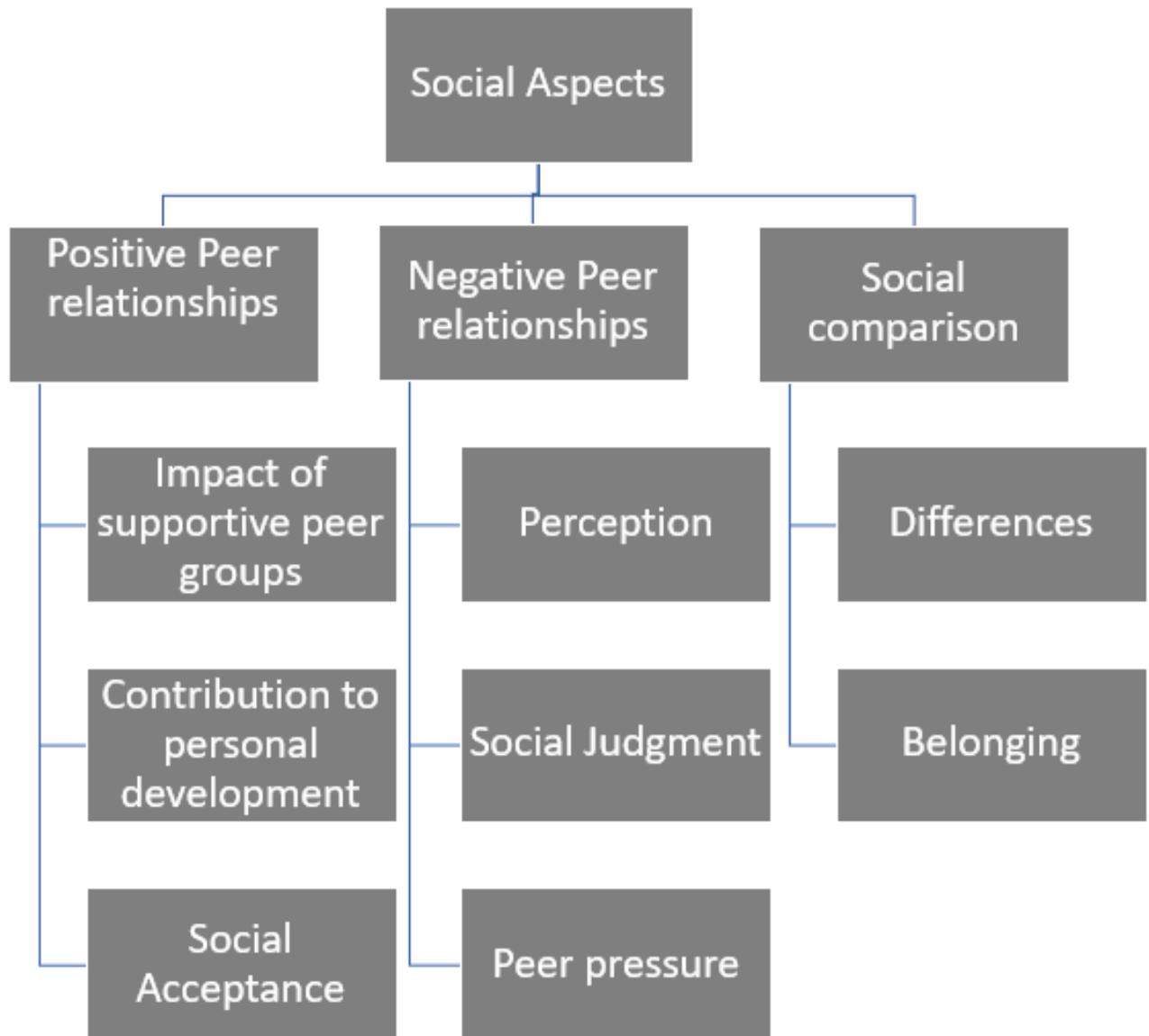
T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
5	118-119	Social Circle	Can influence your levels of hope	Social Aspects
5	119- 122	Social Circle	Having a supportive group of friends can increase hope levels	Social Aspects
5	122	Motivation	having a shared motivation contributed to higher hope	Social Aspects
5	124-126	Support	friendship group can higher hope levels across contexts	Social Aspects
5	132	Support	lack of supportive friendships can negatively impact	Social Aspects
5	132-135	Teachers	Can act as support to increase hope levels	Academic Experiences
5	137-140	Motivation	high levels of self motivation can lead to higher hope	Personal Circumstances
5	143-145	Motivation	extrinsic motivators also helped improve hope levels	Personal Circumstance
5	149-150	Behaviours	goal directed behaviours make them more hopeful	Personal circumstances
5	152	Proactive	in writing goals down	Personal Circumstances
5	157-158	Support	Positive parents who offered praise and rewards increase hope	Positive family relationships

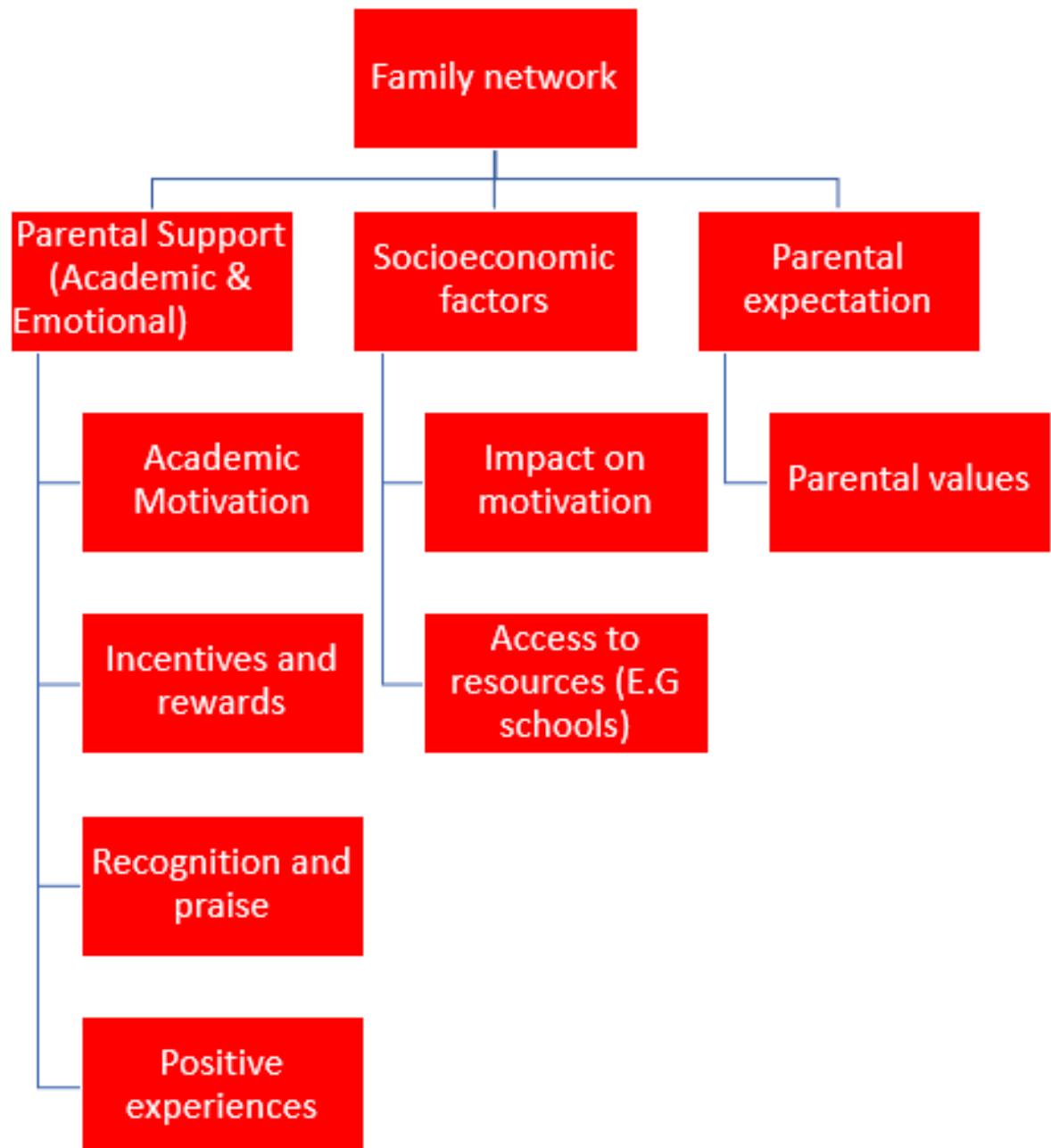
T	LN	Descriptive Code	Interpretative Code	Tentative themes
6	133-135	Socioeconomic status	coming from a lower SES provided more motivation and higher levels of hope	Personal Circumstance
6	137-138	Praise	praise from parents led to higher levels of Hope	Positive Family relationships
6	138-141	Personality	being competitive innately led to higher levels of hope	Personal Circumstances
6	145-148	Competitiveness	higher levels of competition led to higher levels of hope	Competitiveness
6	155-157	Behaviours	goal orientated behaviours led to higher levels of hope	Personal circumstances
6	160-165	Environment	Being in a lower SES environment contributed to higher motivation and hope	Personal Circumstance
6	168-170	Determination	working hard led to higher levels of hope	Personal circumstances
6	172-173	Motivation	asking for addition learning to improve their academic achievement	Personal Circumstance
6	177	Motivation	wanting to do better for themselves led to higher hope	Personal Circumstance
6	191-193	Experiences	whilst being in lower SES contributed to higher hope	Personal Circumstance
6	193-195	Perception	that attending higher education will provide a 'nicer life'	Contextual factor
6	202-203	Perception	wanting to be held in high esteem by others led to higher hope	Personal Circumstance
6	208-210	Competitiveness	wanting to be the best in different contexts led to higher hope	Competitiveness
6	215-219	Competitiveness	has led to both improved ASC and hope for them	Competitiveness

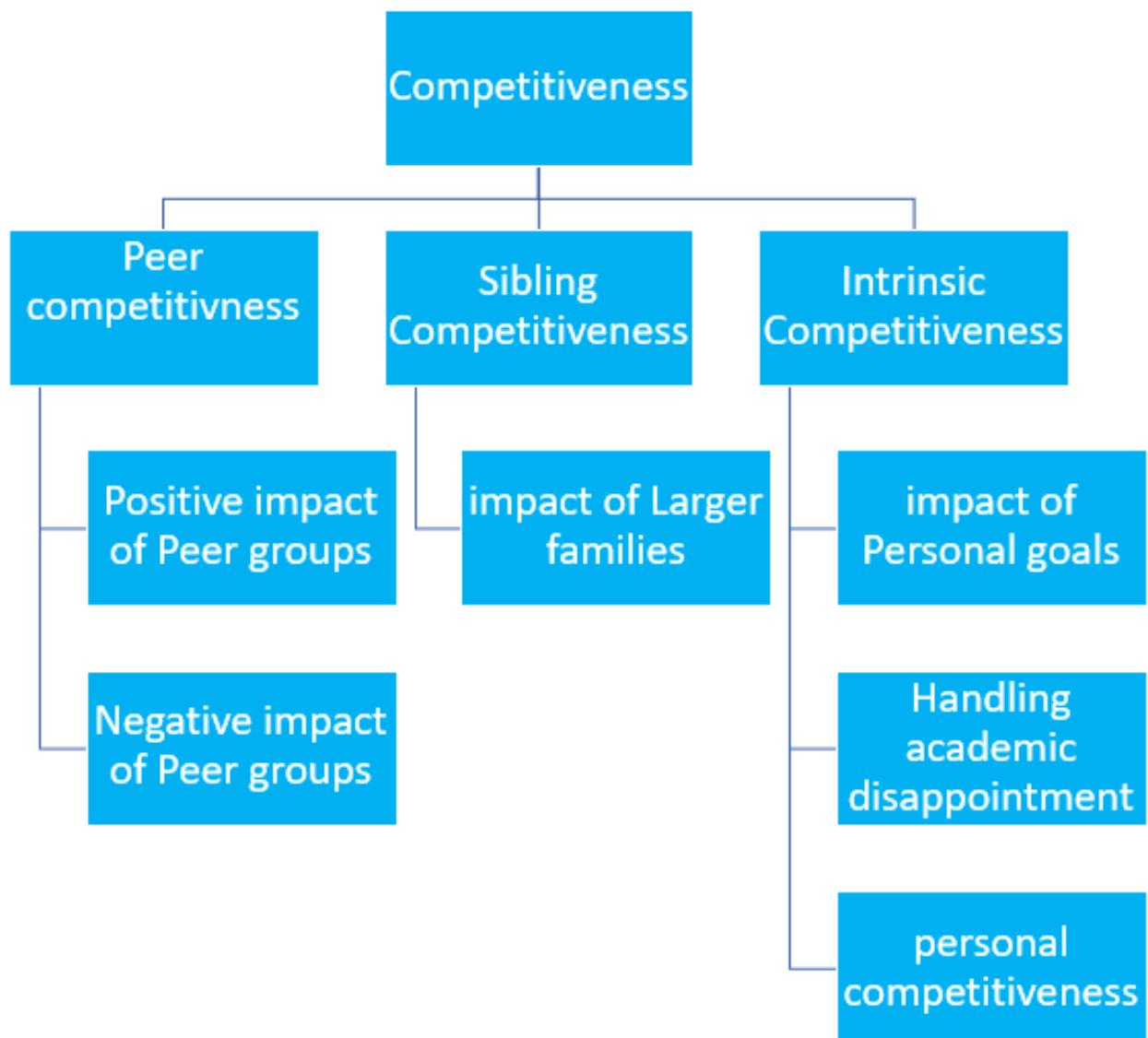
Appendix 10: Stage 4 TA: Reviewing Themes

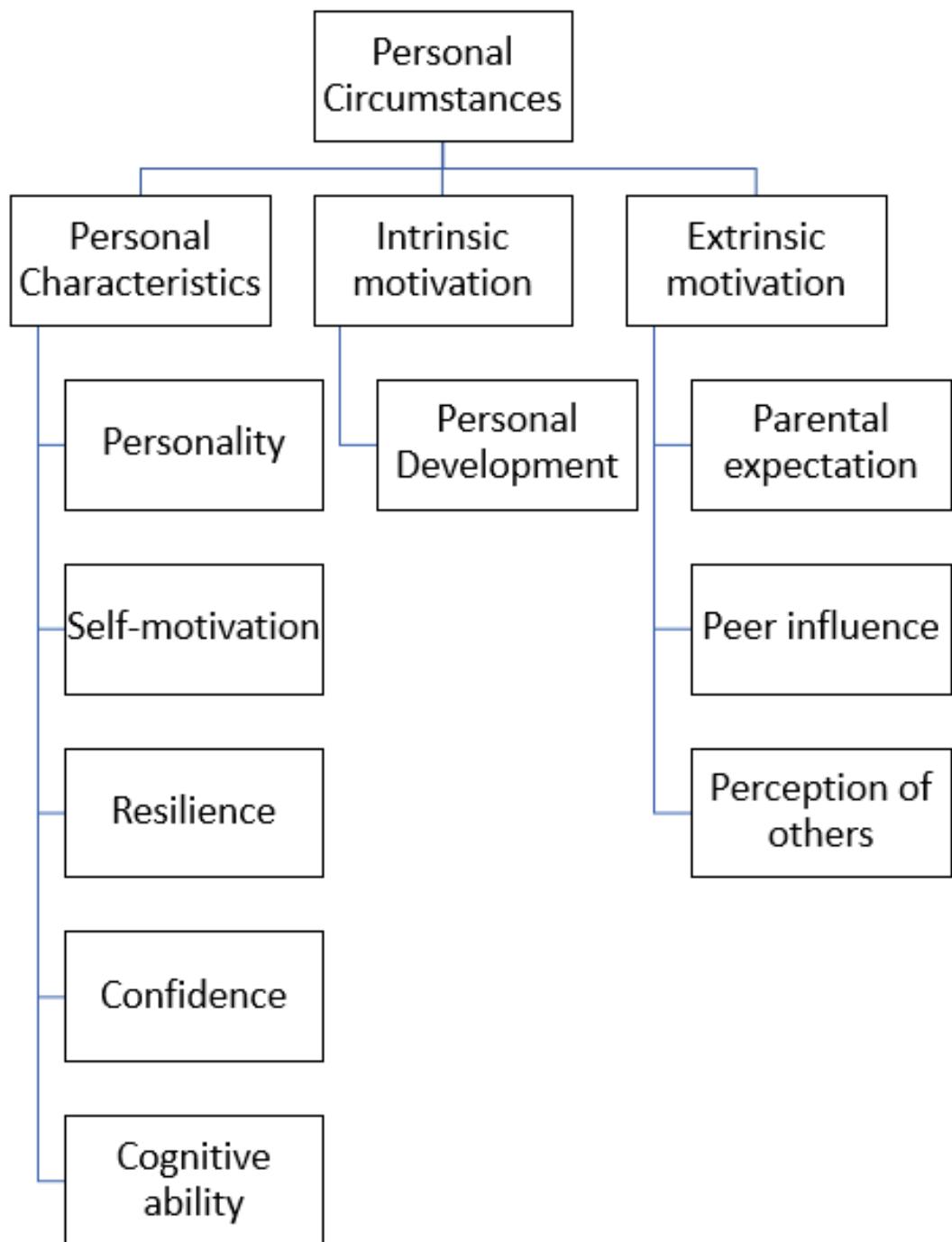
Stage 4 potential themes and subthemes ASC



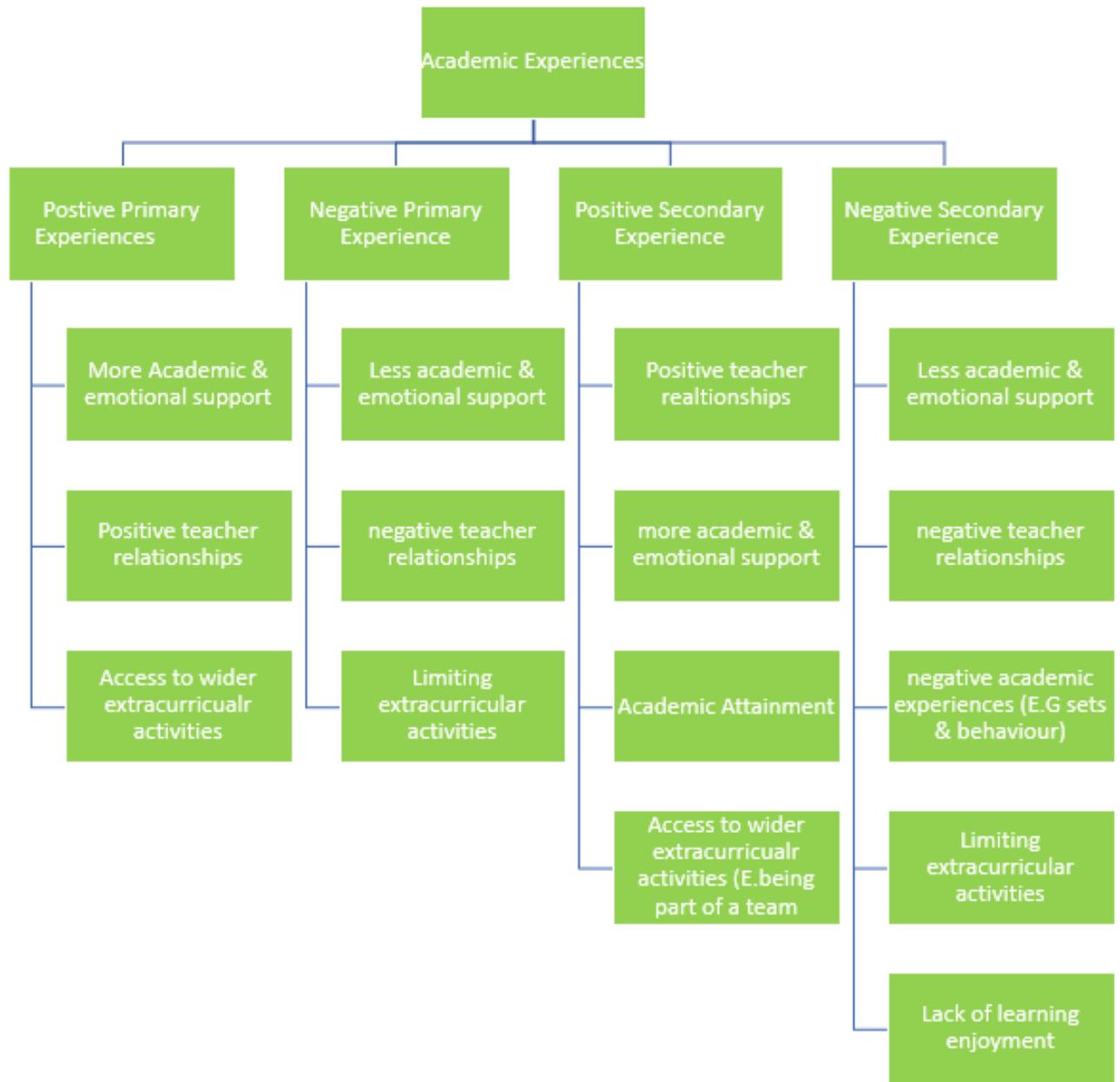


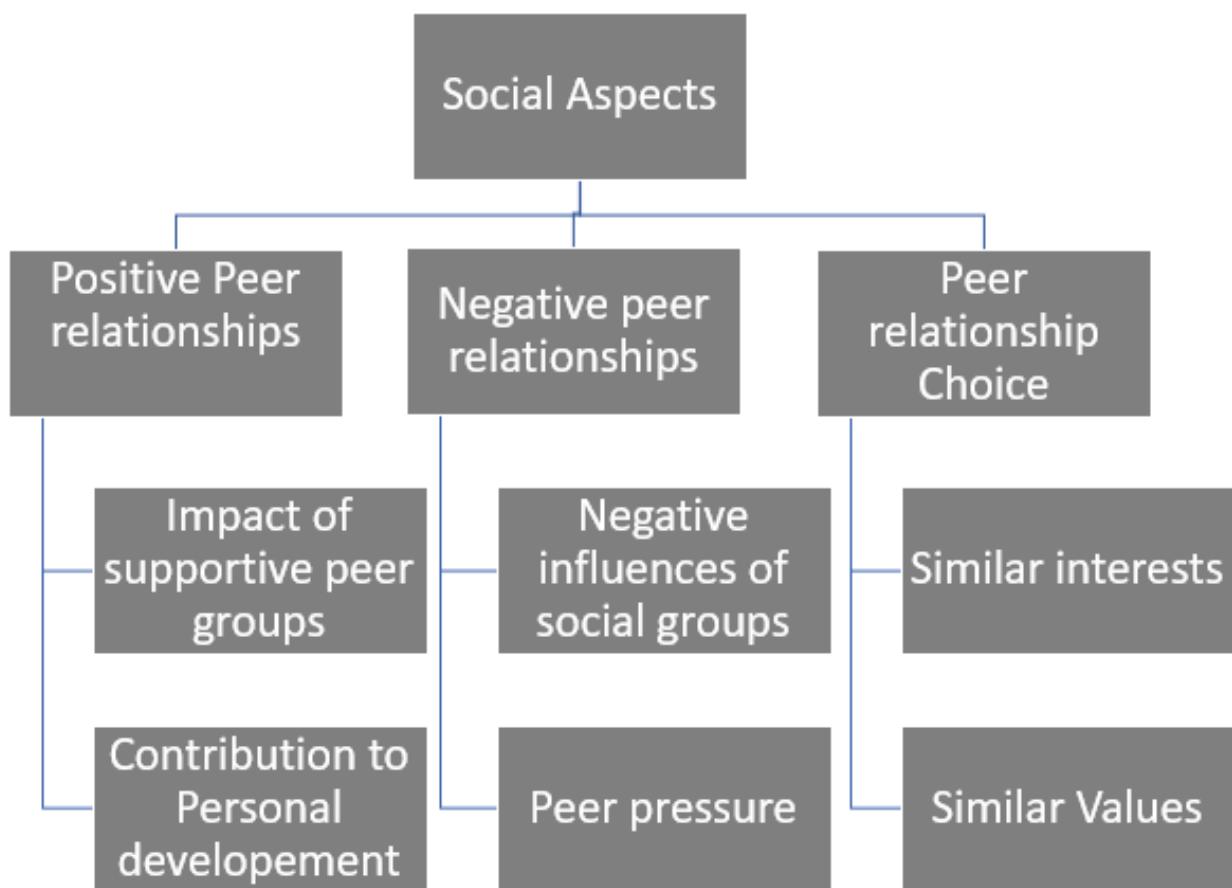


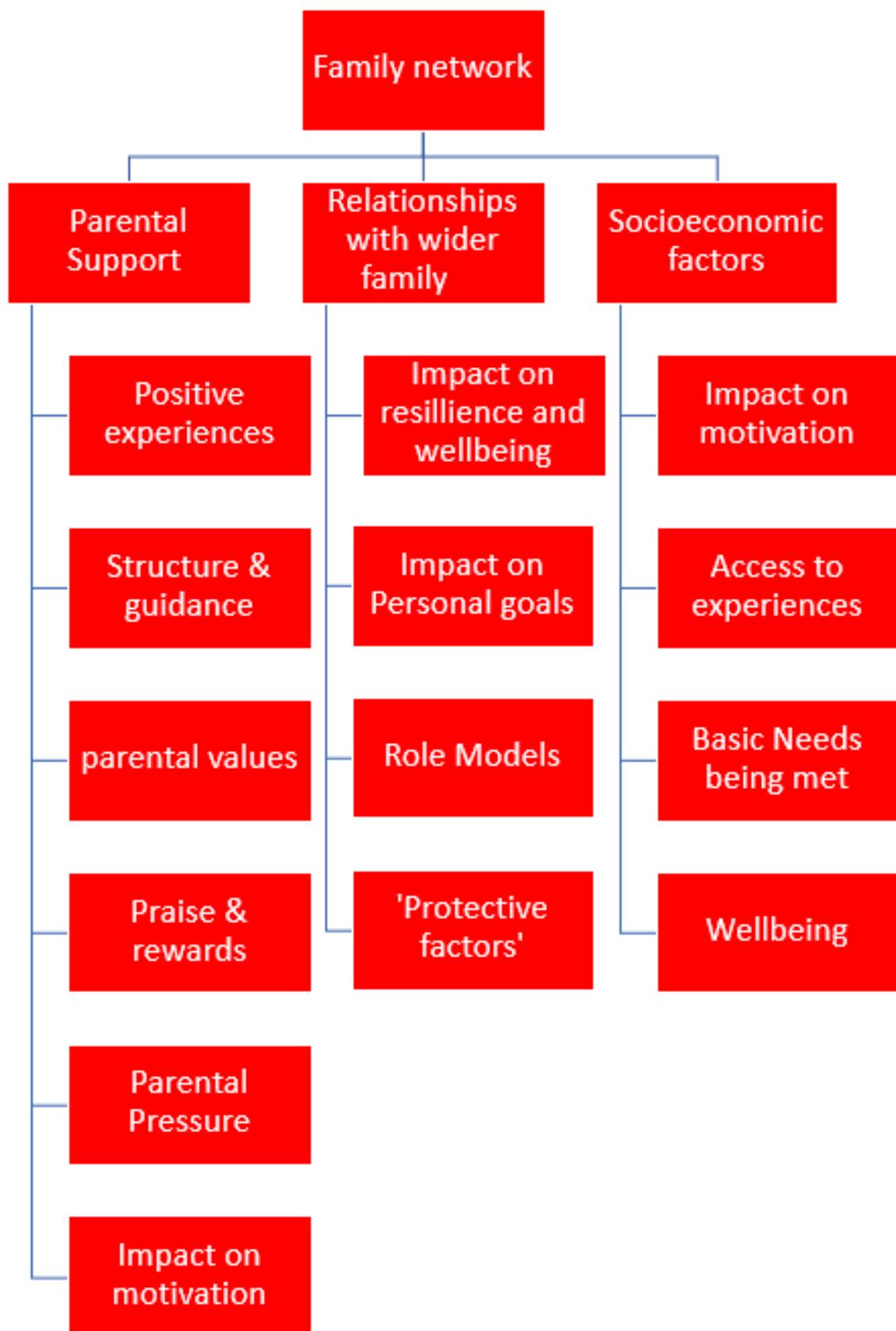


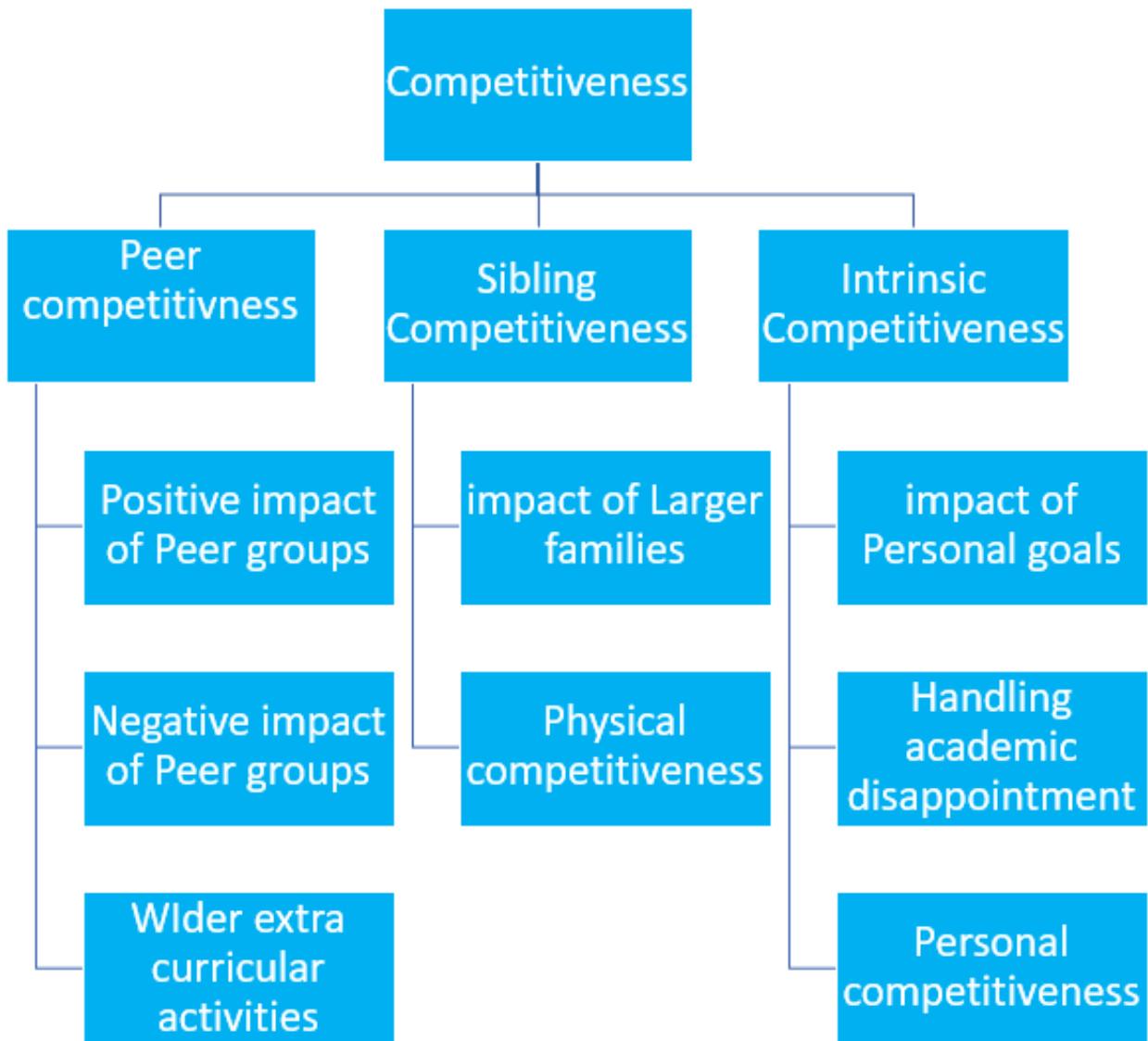


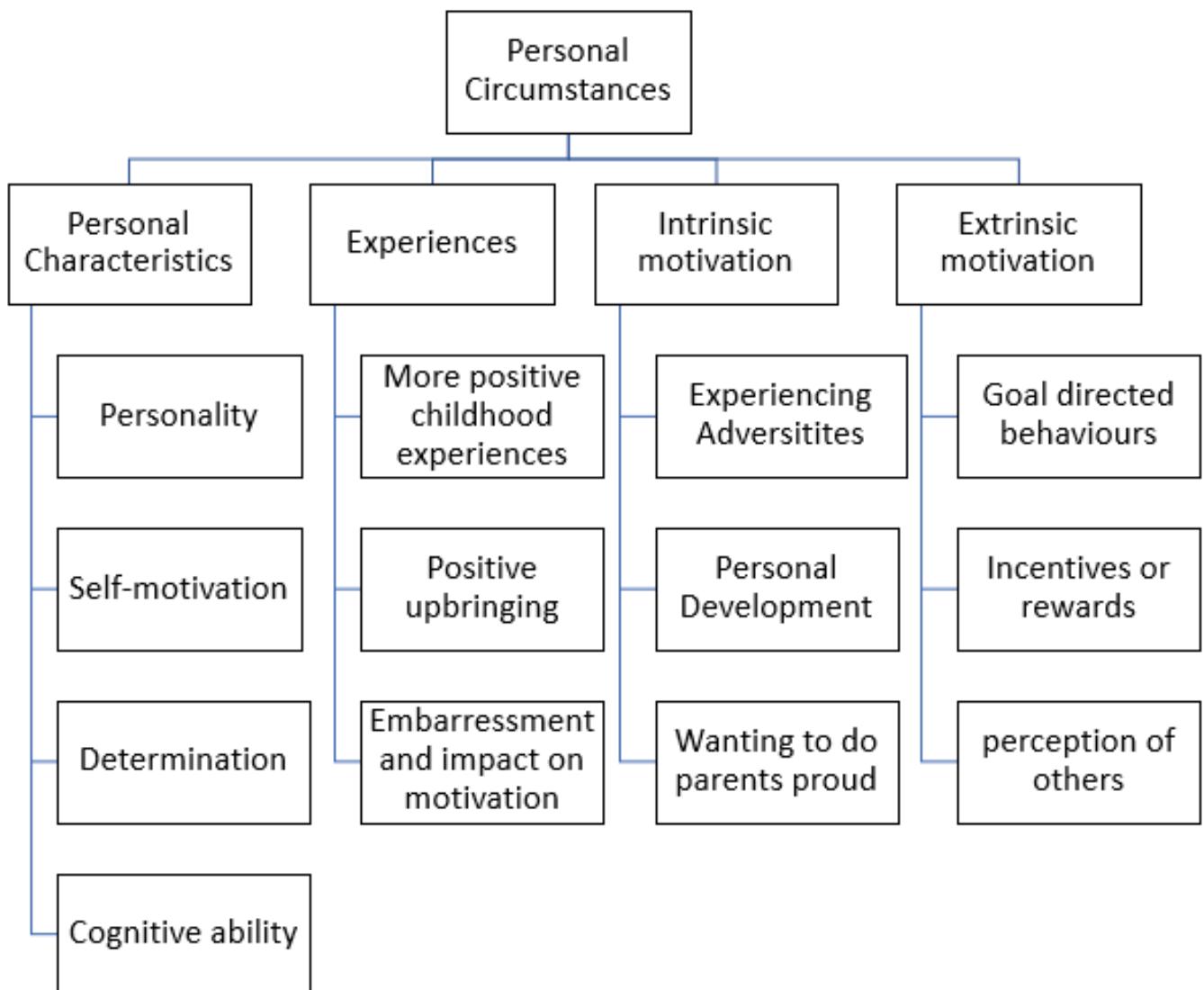
Stage 4 potential themes and subthemes Hope



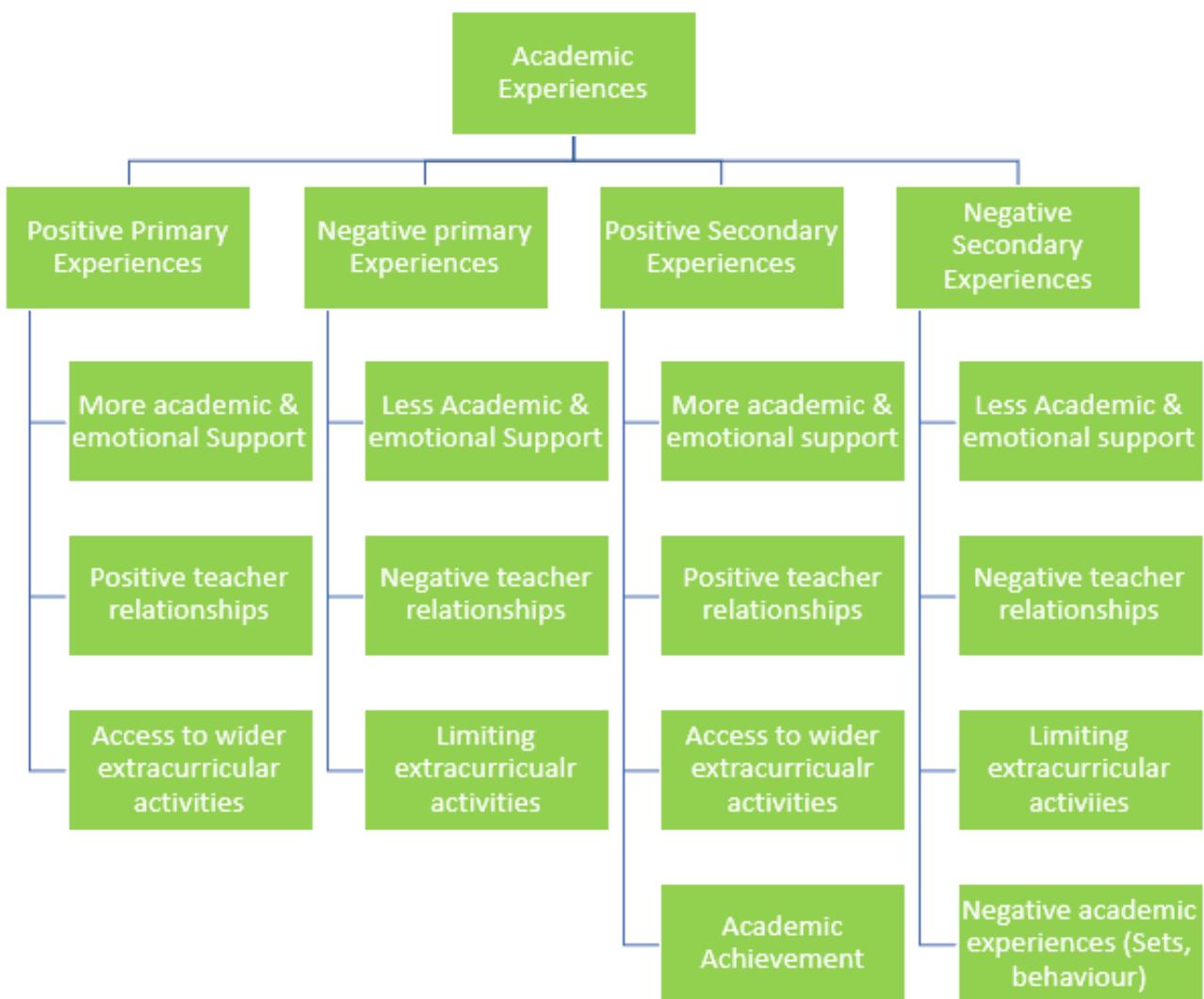


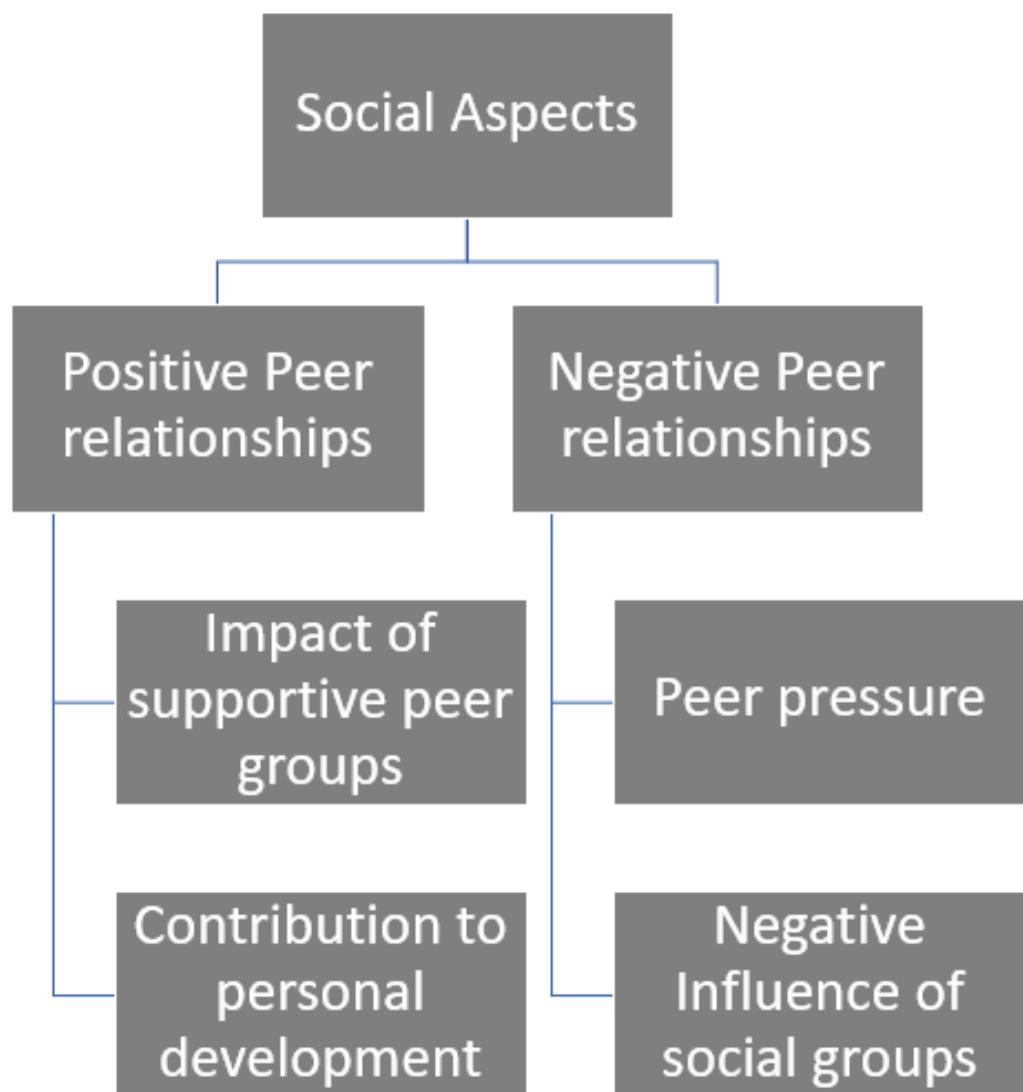


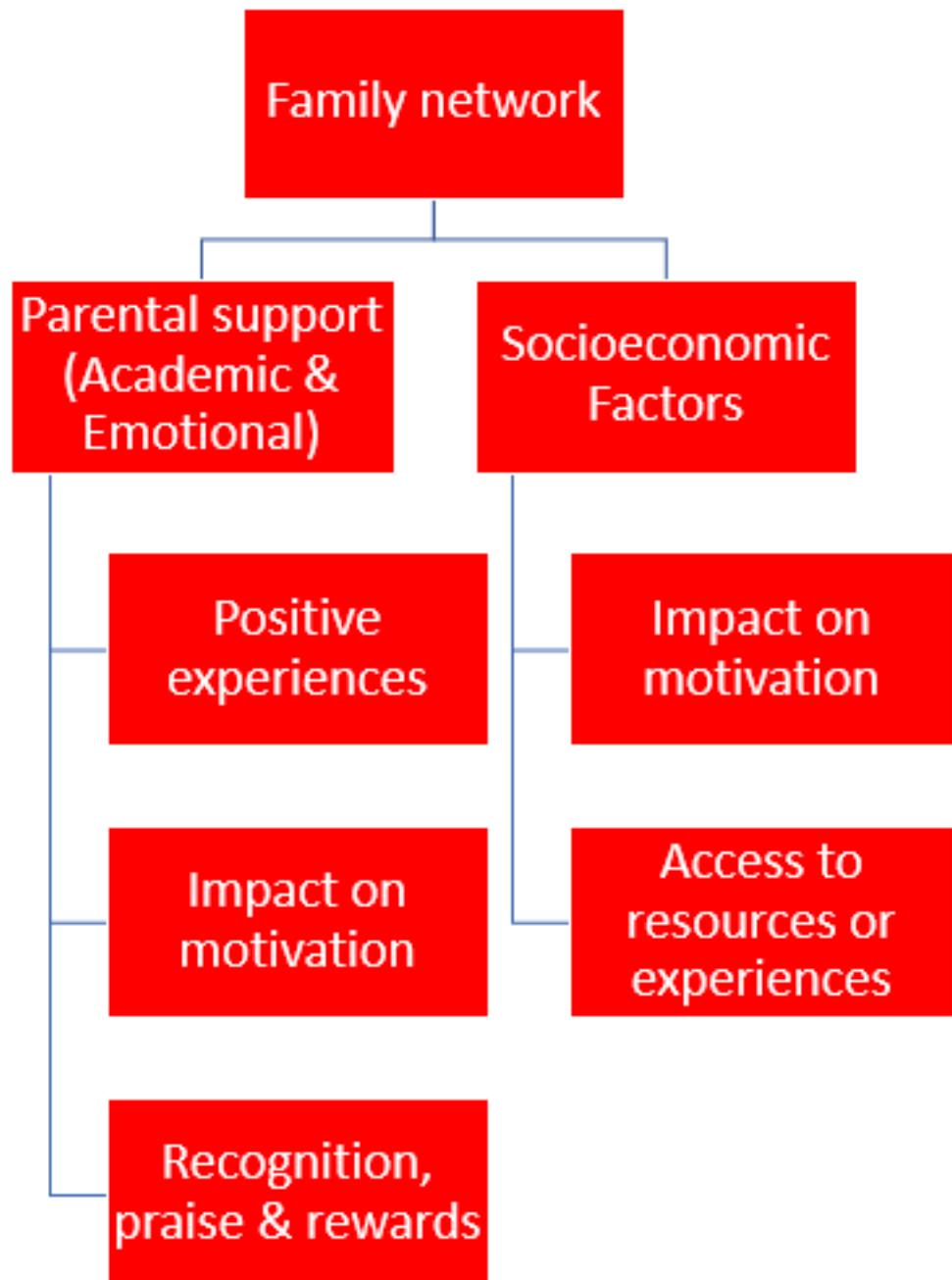


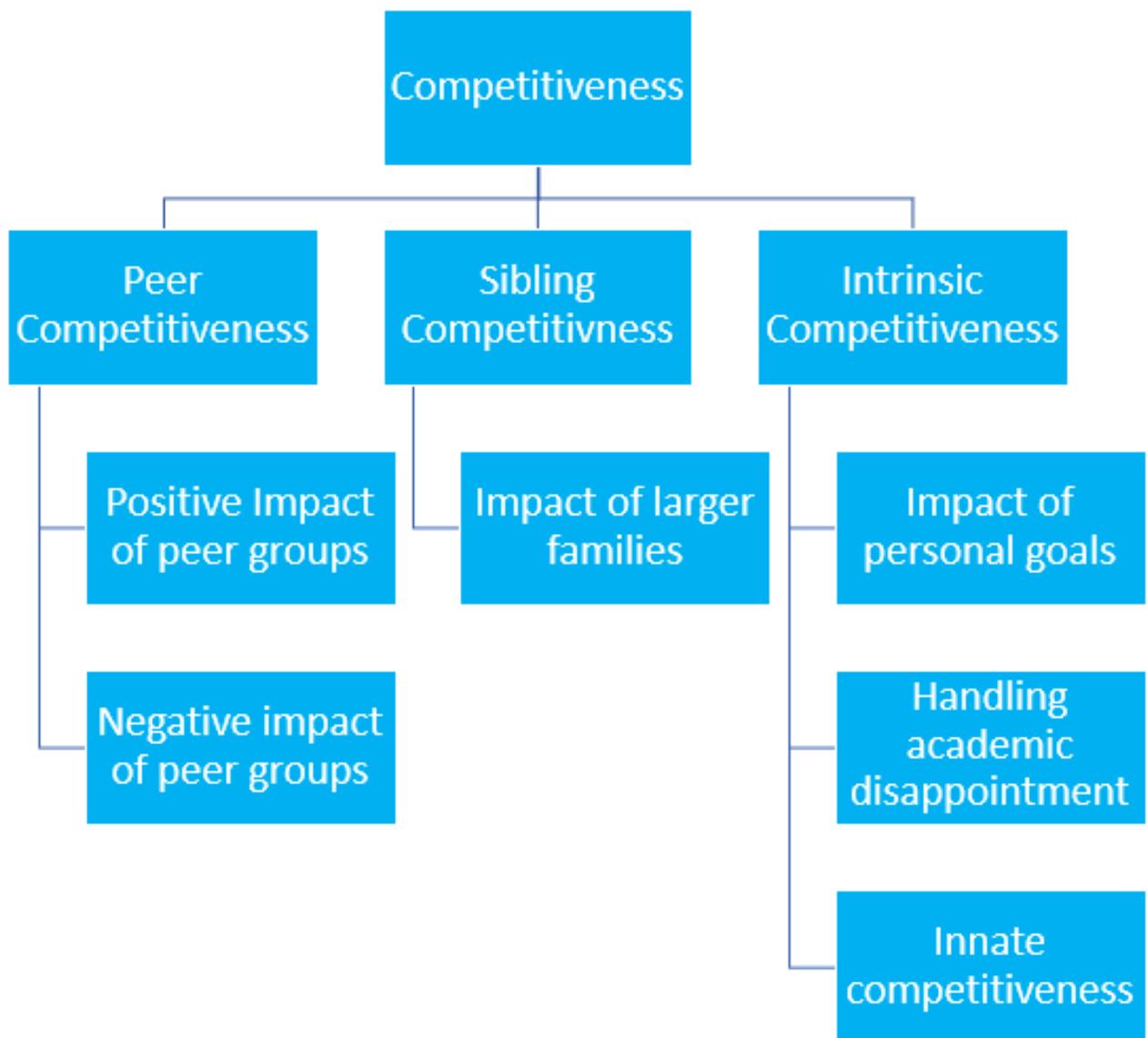


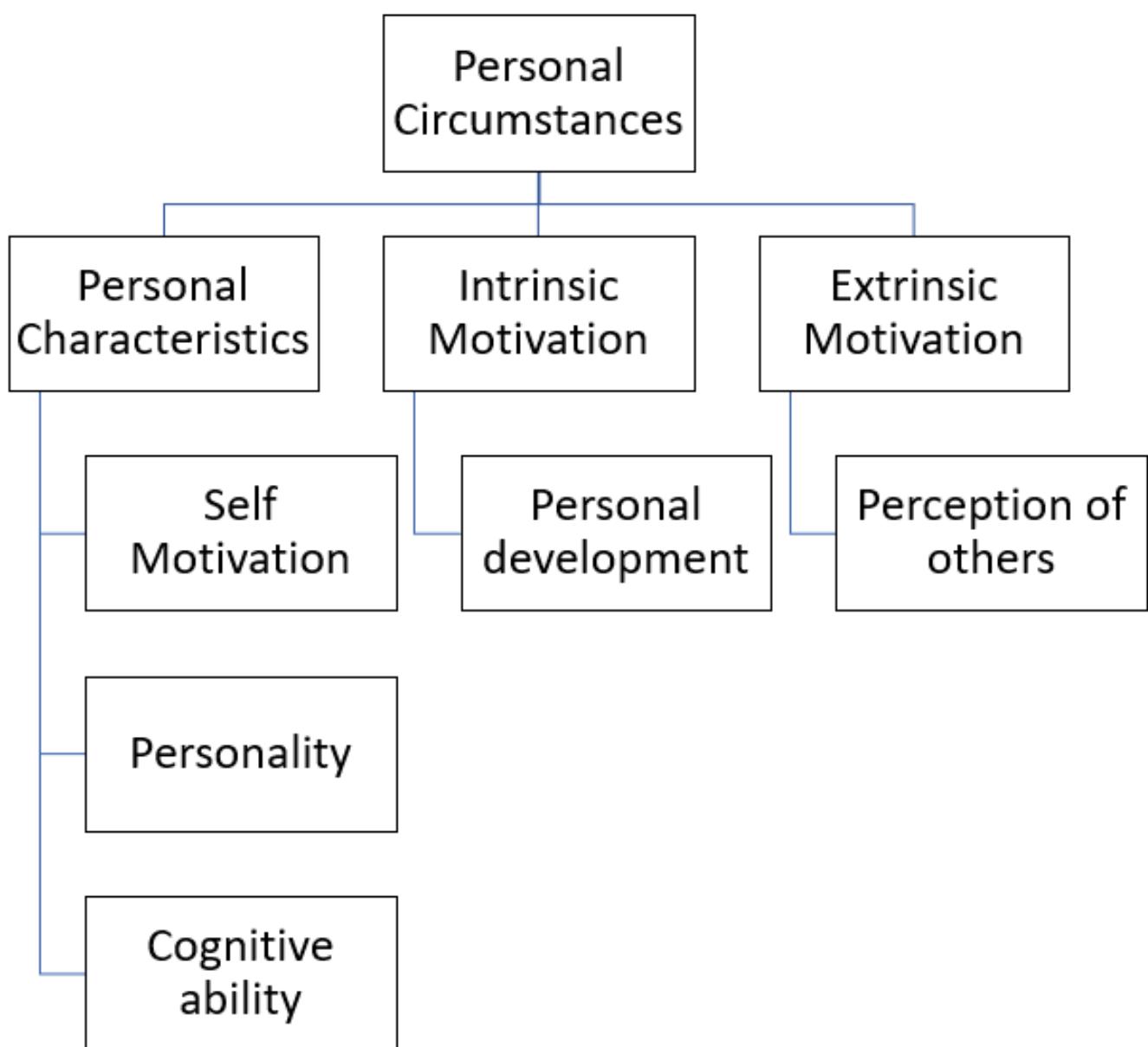
Identified themes for both ASC & Hope



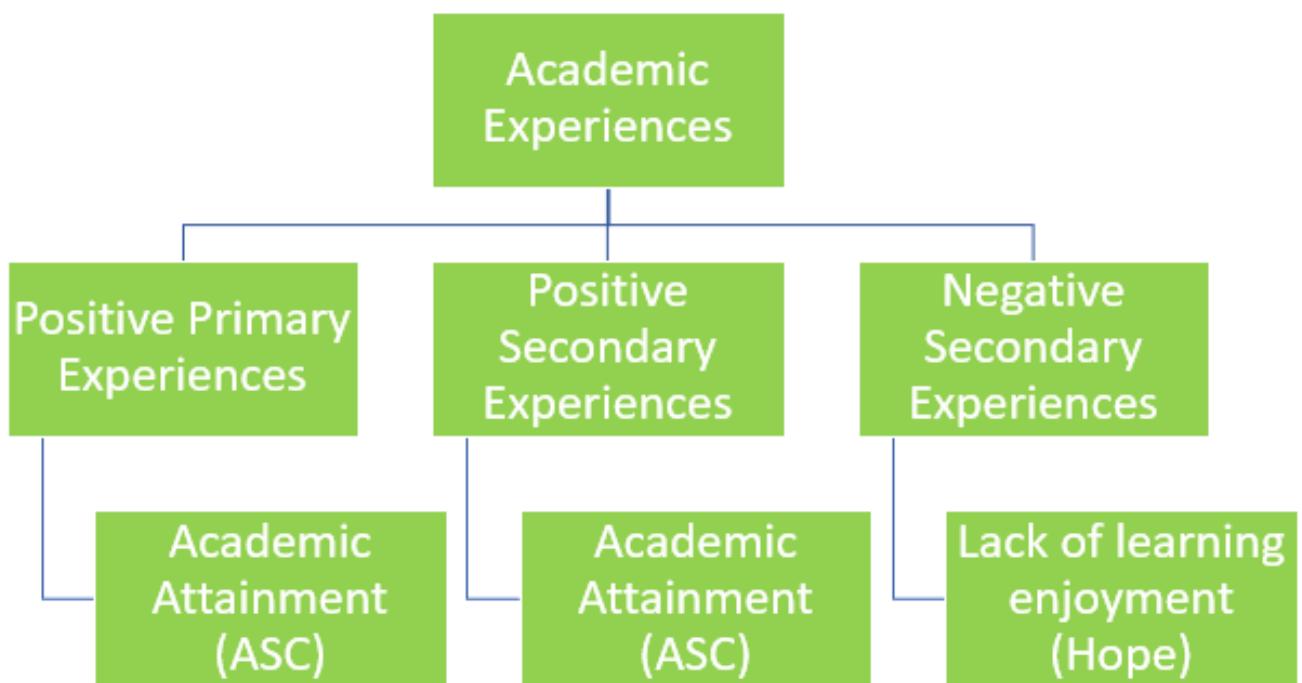


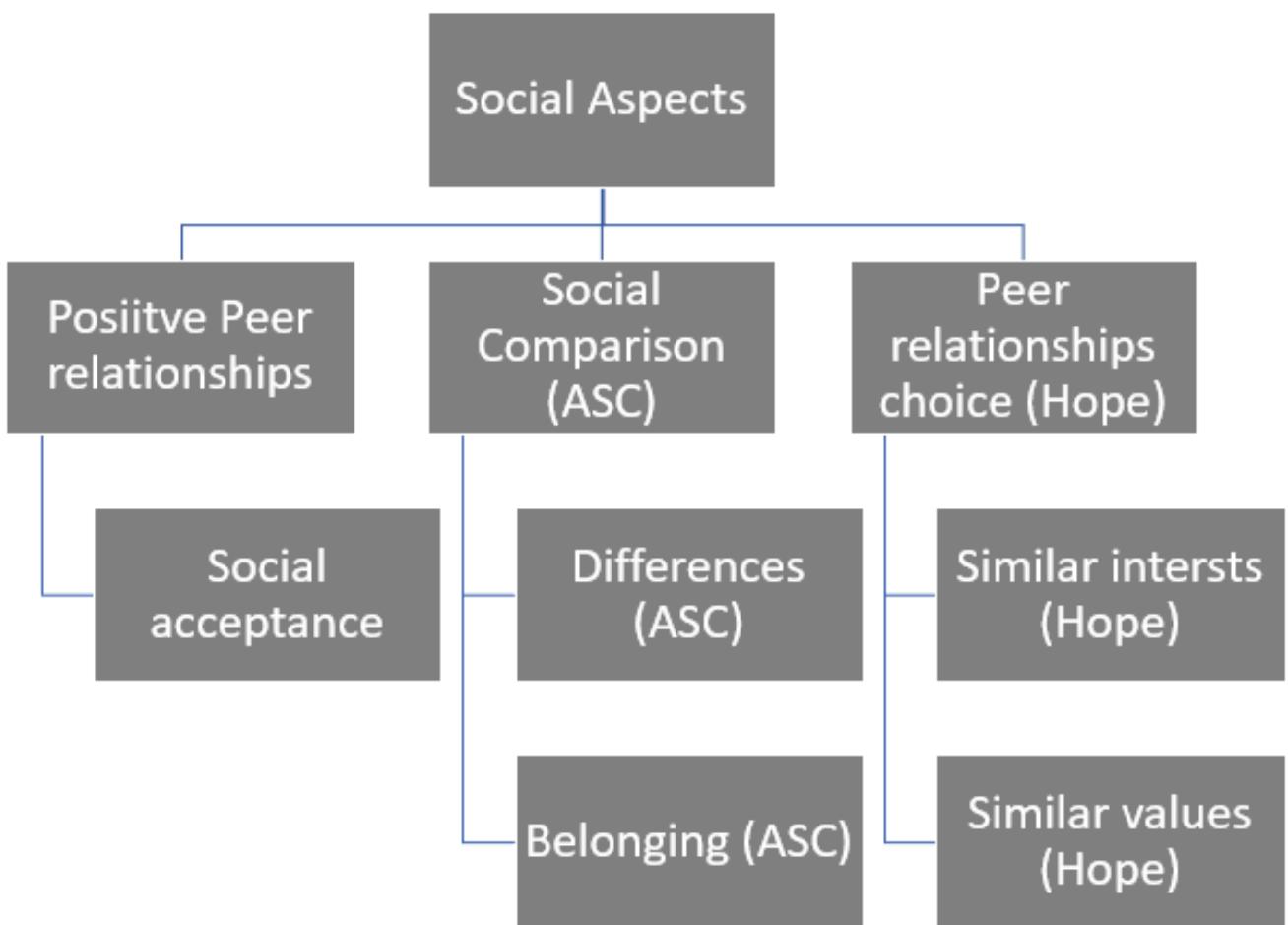


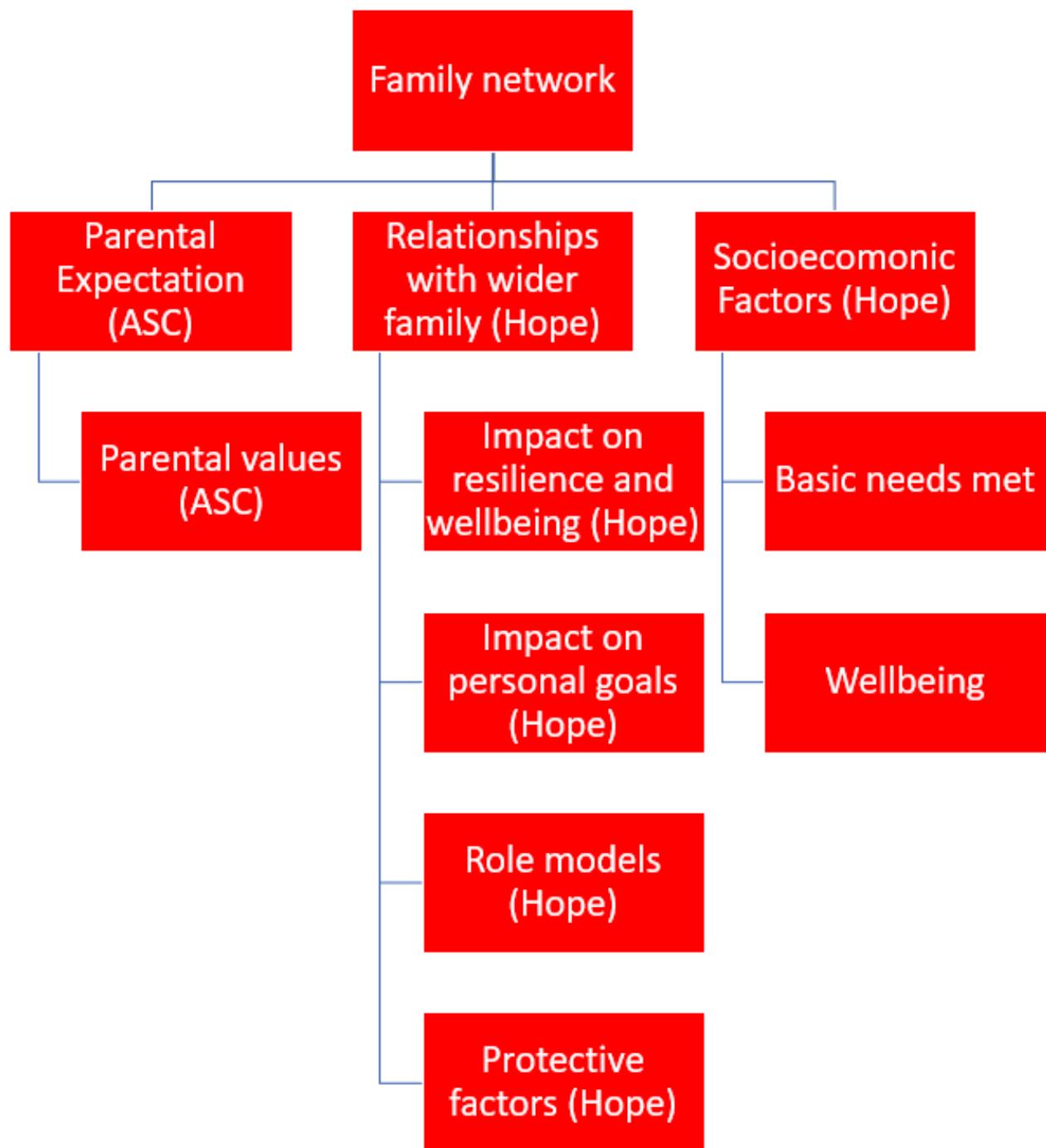


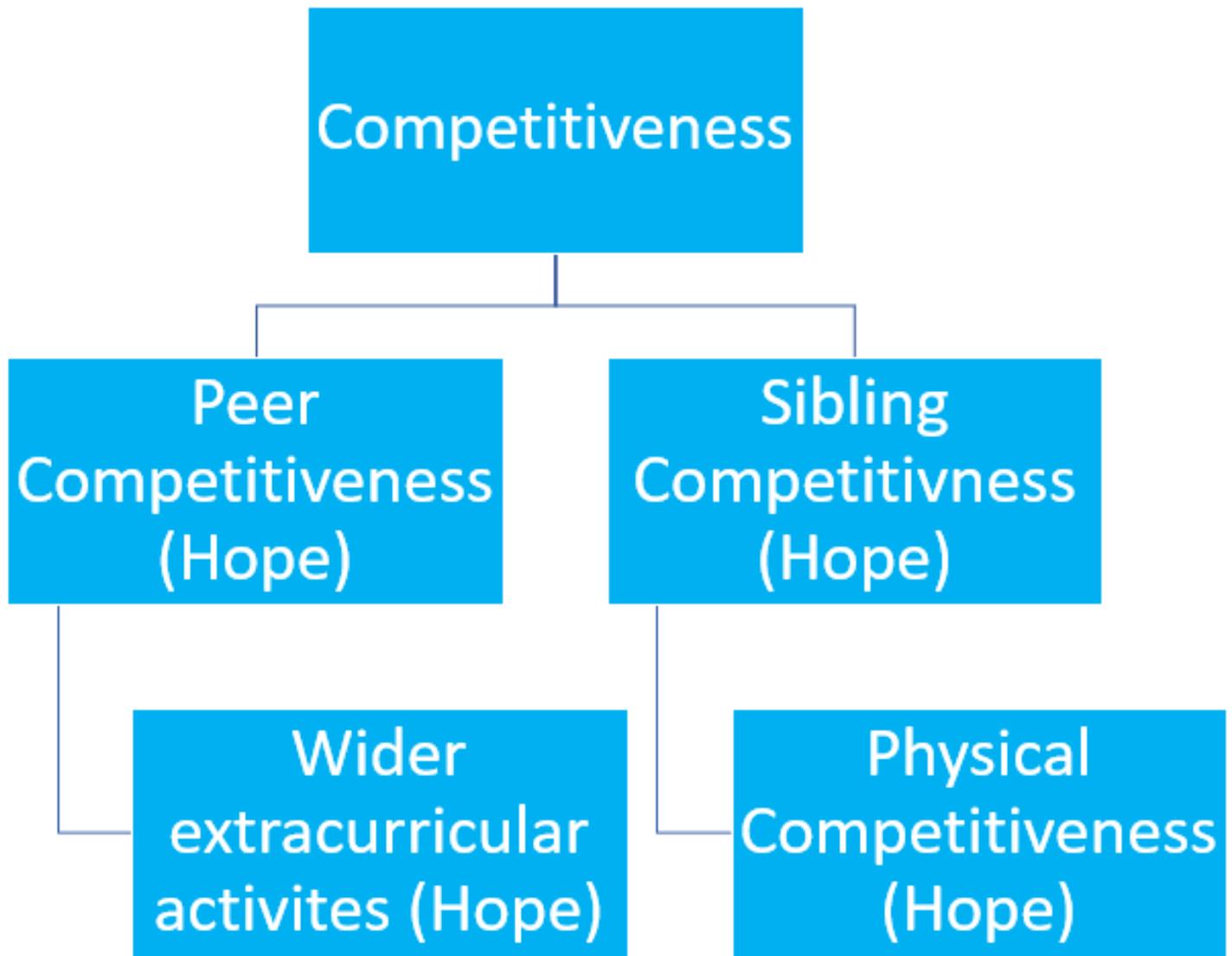


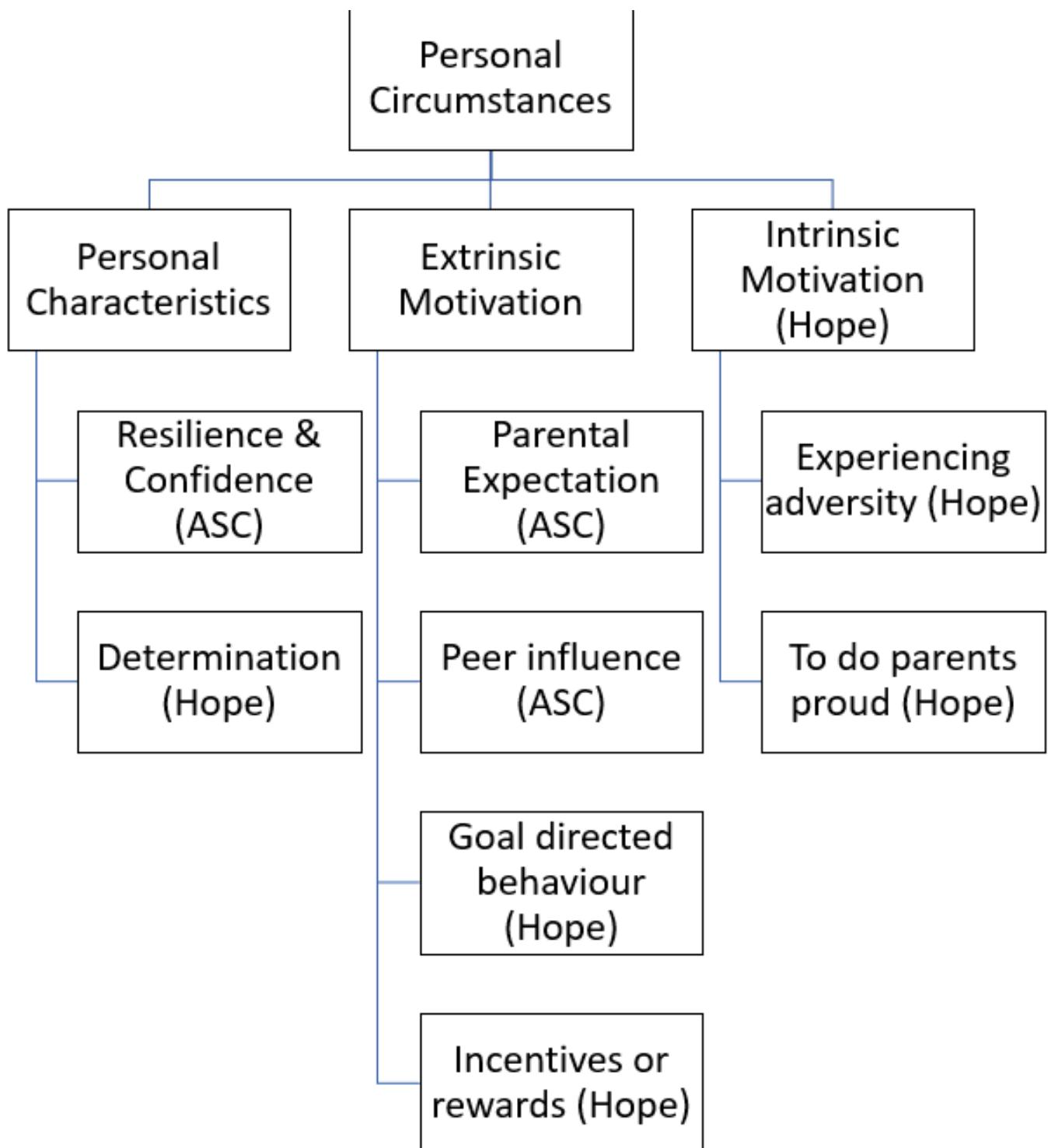
Additional themes for both ASC & Hope











Appendix 11: Stage 5 TA: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes.

Theme 1 – Academic Experiences

- Teacher student relationships
- Educational transitions (Sets and years)
- Mentorship and Guidance (Academic and Emotional support)
- Participation in extracurricular activities

Theme 2 – Family Context

- Parental support (Academic and Emotional)
- Relationships with wider family
- Socioeconomic factors (Hope)

Theme 3 - Social context

- Peer relationships
- Social comparisons (ASC)

Theme 4 – Contextual competitiveness

- Academic/peer competitiveness
- Intrinsic competitiveness
- Sibling competitiveness

Theme 5 – Personal Circumstances

- Intrinsic motivation
- Extrinsic motivation
- Personal Characteristics

Appendix 12: Examples of Gibbs Research Reflective Diary Entries

Educational Psychology Keith's Diary Entry Year 1 TEP UEA					
Scenario - Conversation with Nikki about potential these ideas		Date 07/02/22	Diary Entry number 1		
DESCRIPTION  (What Happened) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial conversation with Nikki about thesis ideas Thesis topics and related ideas discussed with Nikki. These included ACEs, school sets and a new one centred around CBT and football that Nikki has created a 6-week programme for. 	FEELINGS  (Thinking/Feeling) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nikki provided some clarity in going about the ACEs thesis and explained that I need to do something that I'm really passionate about. The CBT and football idea seems really interesting and something I had never thought about. Nikki is going to send further information on it. 	EVALUATION  (Positive/Negative experiences) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A really nice positive experience that helped shed light on some of the concerns I had related to the thesis. Gave me some more food for thought on particular thesis ideas (e.g – football) 	ANALYSIS  (Sense of situation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have managed to narrow down thesis topics to 3 ideas but need to make a decision on which one I am going to proceed with. Need to carry on further reading around each topic and decide which one I'm most passionate about. 	CONCLUSION  (Done Differently/Changed?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't think I would have changed anything about this meeting with Nikki. It was informative and friendly and gave me lots to try and digest on my journey to decide what thesis topic I am going to pursue. 	ACTION PLAN  (Done Differently/Changed?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To look over the 6 week intervention for CBT and football that Nikki is going to send over. To delve into ACEs and their impact on motivation and hope a little more To obtain a greater understanding of school sets and their impact on children's wellbeing.

Educational Psychology
Keith's Diary Entry
 Year 2 TEP UEA

Scenario - Research proposal presentation deadline

Date 10/11/22

Diary Entry number 14

DESCRIPTION  (What Happened)	FEELINGS  (Thinking/Feeling)	EVALUATION  (Positive/Negative experiences)	ANALYSIS  (Sense of situation)	CONCLUSION  (Done Differently/Changed?)	ACTION PLAN  (Done Differently/Changed?)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having delved into more of the information related to the protective factors framework as part of my research proposal presentation, it quickly came to fruition that the protective factors framework did not align with what I wanted to establish within the research. As a result, I had to change my presentation and a huge element my research proposal last minute. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I was anxious, scared and massively overwhelmed at the thought of changing a large part of my research proposal in 24 hours. Positive childhood experiences (Bethell et al) aligned much better with ACES and there was relevant research looking into hope and ASC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changes provided more substance to the research proposal and felt more natural. It was a negative experience having to change everything I had put some much time, effort and patience into. But I knew for the benefit of the research proposal it had to be changed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I felt more comfortable given the quantitative element and had made a decision to pursue a mixed methods approach as I wanted to establish the environmental reasons as to why individuals had managed to retain high levels of hope and ASD despite having high ACES and low PCES. It also aligned with my epistemological stance of critical realism. As the truth is individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I wish I would have delved into the protective factors framework more when Nikki first sent it. It was a great tool but didn't align with what I wanted to achieve from the research, however I had spent a lot of effort and time within the literature review putting information and providing a rationale for its use. So to change it was terrifying. 	<p>Change the presentation to encompass Positive childhood experiences and provide a good rationale as to why its been included in the study.</p>

Educational Psychology
Keith's Diary Entry
 Year 2 TEP UEA

Scenario - Discussing feedback from Ethics board and Nikki's comments

Date 18/05/23

Diary Entry number 27

DESCRIPTION (What Happened)	FEELINGS (Thinking/Feeling)	EVALUATION (Positive/Negative experiences)	ANALYSIS (Sense of situation)	CONCLUSION (Done Differently/Changed?)	ACTION PLAN (Done Differently/Changed?)
<p>Following completion of the comments from the ethics board I submitted the application back to Nikki.</p> <p>Nikki again went through and just highlighted a few comments and amendments that were required.</p> <p>We briefly met on teams to go through some of her comments and some of the questions I had in relation to the comments so that we could complete them and get them submitted.</p>	<p>When starting to complete the amendments I was so filled with anxiety that it took me around 60 minutes to even open the laptop to complete them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process was becoming a bit of a 'chore' now and personally I'm not enjoying it at all. Again Nikki was great in ironing out changed and going through the application process, leaving me feeling slightly more positive about it all. 	<p>Another positive experience alongside Nikki who guided me through the process and provided answers to all the questions I had so far.</p> <p>In terms of filling in the application, as I've mentioned, the process is starting to become negative for me personally. I'm hoping once the ethics committee signs off on the application, that I will feel more positive about the research process.</p>	<p>Today's session was just about confirmed what Nikki wanted me to change as well as confirmed exactly what the ethics committee wanted in relation to some of their comments.</p> <p>Once all of the amendments were made, Nikki was going to re-submit it to them.</p> <p>I also need to spend some time looking up a rationale as to why I've chosen Merseyside and Norfolk and not just because it's 'convenient'.</p>	<p>At this stage I was started to think I'd chosen something 'easier' to complete as my research.</p> <p>There are lots of fiddly bits and I think obtaining the 120 responses needed within Norfolk and Merseyside areas is going to prove extremely difficult.</p>	<p>I am going to make the amendments and changes requested by Nikki and submit the application again. Hopefully it doesn't come back with too many amendments from the research committee.</p>

Educational Psychology
Keith's Diary Entry
Year 3 TEP UEA

Scenario - Literature re-draft

Date 27/10/23

Diary Entry number 41

DESCRIPTION



(What Happened)

Spent the reading week in October completing the redraft on my literature review.

Went over each of the notes left by Nikki and managed to complete another 6000 words for matt to look over

FEELINGS



(Thinking/Feeling)

Initially I was feeling really positive and motivated to complete the literature review, given the feedback I had received and how I was trying to make the most of time towards the back end of the year.

EVALUATION

(Positive/Negative experiences)

The beginning was a really positive experience as I shaped the comments from Nikki and put together the re-draft. I did hit a few walls in putting it together and had to remove myself from the laptop.

By the time the Thursday come I couldn't think straight anymore and I felt my work was suffering, therefore I made the decision to submit what I had and re-visit it when my head was more clear.

ANALYSIS



(Sense of situation)

The 6000 words or so at the moment I am happy with. I am going to await the feedback from Matt and see where we go from there.

CONCLUSION

(Done Differently/Changed?)

at the moment, im not feeling to confident with the study criteria section which I met with Matt about. He provided me with some good advice which I have put into practice but we shall see what Matt has to say when he has read it. .

ACTION PLAN



(Done Differently/Changed?)

Waiting on the feedback from Matt before progressing any further with it. In the meantime I will use Friday to focus on my thematic analysis.

Educational Psychology
Keith's Diary Entry
Year 3 TEP UEA

Scenario - Literature review feedback from Matt

Date 05/01/24

Diary Entry number 47

DESCRIPTION (What Happened)	FEELINGS (Thinking/Feeling)	EVALUATION (Positive/Negative experiences)	ANALYSIS (Sense of situation)	CONCLUSION (Done Differently/Changed?)	ACTION PLAN (Done Differently/Changed?)
I received further feedback about my updated literature review from Matt.	I was dreading the feedback to be honest as I had already had some from my previous supervisor and this was an updated version. I had struggled with providing a rationale for the focus on ASC and Hope and again this was highlighted within the feedback. .	Both a positive and negative experience as some of the feedback was great and other bits of the feedback was difficult to digest and still struggling to make sense of it. .	I need to make it clear the rationale for <u>asc</u> and Hope. I followed the process but <u>im</u> finding it difficult to communicate this clearly.	I need to go back over the literature review and finish the final bits as well as completing the feedback matt has given. This will need to be looked over again.	Need to book out some time to get it done. Before meeting with matt again on 24 th January to go over comments

Appendix 13: Ethics Application

Ethics ETH2223-1564 : Mr Keith Houghton

Date Created 27 Feb 2023

Date Submitted 28 Feb

2023 Date of last resubmission

19 May

2023

Date 19 May 2023

forwarded to

committee

Researcher Mr Keith Houghton

Category PGR

Supervisor Dr Nikki Collingwood

Faculty Faculty of Social Sciences

Current status Approved

Ethics application Applicant

and research team Principal

Applicant

Name of Principal

Applicant Mr Keith

Houghton

UEA account

erb21snu@uea.ac.uk

School/Department

School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Category

PGR

Primary Supervisor

Name of Primary Supervisor

Dr Nikki Collingwood

Primary Supervisor's
school/department School of
Education and Lifelong Learning

Project details

Project title

Against the Odds: The Role of Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in the Formation of Academic Self-Concept and Hope in Individuals Attending Tertiary Education.

Simplified title for use within documents -

The Role of Childhood Experiences in Supporting Individuals in Attending University/College Education.

Project start date

04 Sept 2023

Project end date

31 Jul 2024

Describe the scope and aims of the project in language understandable by a non-technical audience. Include any other relevant background which will allow the reviewers to contextualise the research.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are defined as potentially traumatic events that can happen in an individual's life before the age of eighteen years old and can be classified into ten distinct ACEs, categorised by neglect, abuse and household dysfunction (Felitti et al., 1998). Current literature suggests that individuals who have experienced a higher number of ACEs (4+) tend to have lower levels of academic self-concept (ASC), motivation to engage in education and hopefulness for their future career goals and overall success (Baxter et al., 2017; Marsh and Ronda., 2002).

As a result, individuals who have been exposed to multiple ACEs during childhood tend to experience lower educational, employment and economic successes when compared to their non- ACE counterparts (Currie & Widom, 2010; Lanier et al., 2015). Individuals who have experienced 4+ ACES, generally having a doubling in odds of attaining educational qualifications or not being in education, employment, or training at the age of 18 years old (Jaffe et al., 2018).

Subsequently, individuals exposed to a higher number of ACEs during childhood and adolescence are less likely to attend university institutions (Corrales et al., 2016), whilst being less likely to experience the distinct developmental period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000).

Given the above, the aim of this research study is to investigate the potential impact of Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) in individuals who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), but who have subsequently attended Tertiary Education within the United Kingdom. Linked to this, the research will explore the relationship between Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) and the potential facilitating factors of Academic Self-Concept (ASC) and Hope during Emerging Adulthood (18-25).

It is hoped that the research will provide further understanding of the protective factors associated with the development and maintenance of ASC and Hope when faced with individual or cumulative ACEs

Provide a brief explanation of the research design (e.g. interview, experimental, observational, survey), questions, methodology, and data gathered/analysis. If relevant, include what the participants will be expected to do/experience.

The research will use a sequential explanatory mixed-method design, completed over two phases. Phase1 will require 54-120 participants to complete an anonymous questionnaire. This will determine participant's levels of ACEs, PCES, Academic Self-Concept (ASC) and Hope, using 4 questionnaires completed online using Microsoft Forms (approximately 15 minutes to complete).

The questionnaires will include: The Centre for Youth Wellness ACE-Q, PCE Questionnaire (Bethell et al., 2019), the Adult Trait Hope scale (Snyder et al., 1991) and the ASC scale (Reynolds, 1988).

Two hierarchical multiple linear regression analyses will be performed to answer the first 3 proposed research questions. Please note: an interaction term will need to be created to determine if there is a moderating impact.

1. Does a higher number of ACEs exposure positively/negatively impact level of ASC and Hope in students attending Tertiary Education?
2. Does a higher number of PCEs exposure positively/negatively impact level of ASC and Hope in students attending Tertiary Education?
3. Does a higher number of PCEs have a moderating effect in the relationship between ASC and Hope
4. What contributes to high levels of ASC and Hope in students attending tertiary education in light of their adverse childhood experiences

Phase2 will include only identified participants with High ACEs, Low PCEs, High ASC and High Hope, to explore RQ4. Semi-structured interviews will illicit factors which they feel have contributed to the maintenance of high levels of ASC and Hope. Five to Seven interviews (approximately 45 minutes) will take place online using MS Teams. Thematic Analysis will be used to analyse the interviews.

If participants with the specific criteria required for Phase2 cannot be identified a series of one-way ANOVA's will be used within the data collected to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of groupings used for ACEs and PCES

Detail how any adverse events arising in the course of the project will be reported in a timely manner.

In the event of adverse events arising from the research project, the researcher will contact their supervisor immediately, so that the researcher is able to respond and deal with the adverse event. It will then be reported to Ethics Monitor. This action will notify the Chair and Support Staff that approved the original ethics application, the primary supervisor and UEA's Research Integrity manager. An additional email will be sent from the

researcher to the research supervisor requesting a research supervision meeting to discuss the event at the earliest convenience. The Head of the School of Education will also need to be made aware, depending on the severity of the situation.

Whilst every effort has been made to minimise any adverse events arising from the research it is important to acknowledge that completing the questionnaires or subsequent interviews may bring up feelings of distress or discomfort for some participants. As such it will be reiterated within the questionnaires and interviews that participants are under no obligation to respond to questions that they do not wish to. Furthermore, participants will be signposted to further information and support should they require it following the questionnaire element in Phase 1 and the Interview element in Phase 2 should they meet the specific requirements.

Will you also be applying for Health Research Authority approval (HRA)?

No

Indicate if you are applying for approval for an experiment to be conducted in the School of Economics' Laboratory for Economic and Decision Research (LEDR).

No

Is the project?:

none of the options listed

Does the project have external funding administered through the University's Research and Innovation Services (RIN)?

No

Will the research take place outside of the UK?

No

Will any part of the project be carried out under the auspices of an external organisation, or involve collaboration between institutions?

No

Do you require or have you already gained approval from an ethics review body external to UEA?

No

Does this new project relate to a project which already has ethics approval from UEA?

No

Research categories

Will the project include primary data collection involving human participants?

Yes

Will the project use secondary data involving human participants?

No

Will the project involve the use of live animals?

No

Will the project have the potential to affect the environment?

No

Will the project have the potential to affect culturally valuable, significant or sensitive objects or practices?

No

Will the project involve security sensitive research?

No

Human participants - selection and recruitment

How many Participant Groups are there who will receive tailored participant information?:

One

Name of Participant Group 1.

Individuals aged 18-25 enrolled in Tertiary Education.

How will the participants be selected/recruited?

The proposed sampling strategy will focus on a homogenous purposeful sampling method. Since individuals within the study will share specific characteristics of attending Tertiary Education and live within the Merseyside or Norfolk regions and will be within the age range of 18-25, the sampling method will align well with assisting the research.

Around 54-120 participants will be required to participate within the Phase1 element of the study and a further 5-7 participants will be required for the Phase2 element in order to achieve data saturation.

The researcher will be contacting Tertiary Education providers (Universities, colleges etc) within Merseyside and Norfolk. Student Unions of each provider will be contacted via email/telephone. The researcher will introduce themselves and the elements of the study that can be shared with potential participants. This will be in the form of an email detailing the proposed study and will be accompanied by additional information and a one-page profile summary poster of the research that they can share with participants.

The study will be shared via the researcher's own personal Twitter account and Student Union Facebook pages of the Tertiary Education providers in order to reach a larger audience within Merseyside and Norfolk.

Information about the study will be provided in the form of a One Page Profile summary detailing the key characteristics in which participants can take part.

Within the Phase2 element, participants will be subsequently selected and contacted if their data meets the specific requirements of the study (E.G – High ACEs, Low PCEs, High ASC and High Hope). This will be done via

the contact details they submit as part of the Phase1 questionnaire. The researcher will monitor responses and once the researcher feels a 'reasonable' number of participants have completed it in order to identify participants for the Phase2 element, it will be closed.

In terms of UEA participants only, will you be advertising the opportunity to take part in this project to?:

Over 250 current UEA students who are from across more than one UEA school

What are the characteristics of the participants?

Anyone aged 18-25 attending or enrolled in a full-time and/or Part-time Tertiary Education Course within the Merseyside or Norfolk regions of the United Kingdom.

Will the project require the cooperation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the individuals/groups to be recruited?

Yes

Who will be your gatekeeper for accessing participants?

Student Unions of Tertiary Education Providers within Merseyside and Norfolk. Representatives of the Facebook Student Union Groups will also be contacted with the same process as outlined above.

How and when will a gatekeeper permission be obtained?

Student Union permission will be obtained from September 2023 - December 2023 and will be sought via email and/or telephone call. An email will be sent to student union representatives with a letter attached containing further information about that study. A further one-page profile summary of the research will also be sent to potential gatekeepers that they can share with potential participants.

If gatekeepers are willing to share with students, then the original information sheet will be linked to the Participant Information Sheet for

potential individuals to involve themselves in the research. The gatekeepers will not have to recruit participants on the researcher's behalf.

Provide any relevant documentation (letters of invite, emails etc). How will you record a gatekeeper's permission?

Via Email contact.

Is there any sense in which participants might be 'obliged' to participate?

Yes

If yes, provide details.

Participants of the researcher (E.G - friends or colleagues) may feel 'obliged' to participate in the research study. This will be mitigated through confidentiality.

Participants will also be notified at each stage as to their rights as participants and their ability to withdraw from the study at any given point should they feel they would like/need to.

What will you do to ensure participation is voluntary?

It will be made clear in the Participant information sheet as well as communicated to participants when they start the questionnaire and interviews of the following:

There is no obligation to take part in the study and details of how to withdraw will be included in the participant information sheets

The participants will need to opt-in to participate in the research

Participants' decision to participate in the study or not will not affect their current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

Will the project involve vulnerable groups?

Yes

If yes, explain the necessity of involving these individuals as research participants and what will be done to facilitate their participation, or the participation of people with physical disabilities.

While not directly vulnerable, some participants may have experienced a number of Adverse Childhood Experiences in their past.

Signposting to relevant organisations will be included within the questionnaire element for any participants affected by the questionnaires.

During Interviews, each participant's well-being will be checked by the researcher and any signs of uncomfortableness or distress will be addressed by offering a 'break' or an opportunity to withdraw from the interview process.

The researcher will safeguard each participant wellbeing by asking them to 'check in' on a scale of 1- 10 before, during (twice) and following the interview process.

Debriefing following the interview, where details of support (if needed) will again be provided.

Will payment or any other incentive be made to any participant?

No

Human participants - consent options

By which method(s) will consent to participate in the research be obtained?:

Online Participant Information and Consent

Human participants - information and consent

Participant Information and Consent

Will opt out consent for participation in the research be used?

No

You can generate a Participant Information Text and Consent Form for this application by completing information in the Participant Information Text and Consent Form Generator tab. Alternatively you can upload your Participant Information Text and Participant Consent Form which you have already prepared. Confirm below:

Generate automated Participant Information Text and Consent Form.

When will participants receive the participant information and consent request?

Upon ethical approval, the gatekeepers (Student Unions) will be contacted via email. It will be up to the gatekeepers to then advertise the study (E.G - sharing of poster) with potential participants who meet the criteria (E.G - over the age of 18 and enrolled in a Tertiary Education course within Merseyside or Norfolk).

Additionally, if Gatekeepers reach out via email or Telephone and request the researcher (Mr Keith Houghton) to visit their respected Tertiary Education setting (virtually or in-person), then this can be arranged at a convenient time, date and location for them.

Following ethical approval, the researcher (Mr Keith Houghton) will also share the research on his personal Twitter account and specific Facebook Student Union groups linked to each Tertiary Education provider within Merseyside and Norfolk will be contacted to seek their permission to distribute online.

The researcher (Mr Keith Houghton) will also request support from the Student Unions in advertising the research by placing posters around each campus or student union.

How will you record a participant's decision to take part in the research?

Anonymous. However, there will be a section at the end of the form for those to provide additional consent if they would like to be contacted to take part in the Phase 2 element. This will obviously mean that their initial questionnaire is no longer anonymous.

Further information regarding participant questionnaires no longer being anonymous, is shared within the Participant information sheet.

If participants are happy to participate in the qualitative element, then their name and email address will be required in order to contact them should they meet the requirements. This will be asked for on completion of the questionnaire.

Their personal data and information will only be used as outlined in this Participant Information Sheet, unless the consent otherwise.

Parental/Guardian Information and Consent**Are you asking for parental/guardian (or other responsible person) consent?**

No

Provide an explanation if you are NOT asking for parental/guardian or other responsible person consent.

Parent/guardian consent is not required due to the age range (18-25) of individuals within the research.

Human participants - method**Which data collection methods will be used in the research?:**

Interview

Anonymous questionnaire

If your research involves any of the methods (including Other) listed above, upload supporting materials.**How have your characteristics, or those of the participants influenced the design of the study or how the research is experienced by participants?**

I myself may share some of the characteristics of the participants and as such, I have had to reflect on my own possible biases when formulating questions for the semi-structured interview process.

Furthermore, I will also need to be aware of my own possible biases when drawing out themes within the qualitative aspects of the analysis.

Design of study - i.e. use of questionnaires to be completed online is appropriate for the participant age range (18 - 25) as well as the likelihood of their ability to read and access questionnaires (as they are currently in tertiary education)

Each interview will begin with a script that introduces my own journey into tertiary education and my current role as a TEP.

Will the project involve transcripts? Yes

Select ONE option below:

Transcription software

If yes provide details.

I will be using Microsoft Teams to record and transcribe the interviews.

Provide an explanation if you are not offering the participant the opportunity to review their transcripts.

Participants will have the option to review their transcriptions which is stated within the participant information sheet.

Will you be capturing photographs or video footage (digital assets) of individuals taken for University business?

No

Is this research using visual/vocal methods where respondents may be identified?

Yes

If yes, confirm what safeguards are in place for participants who are vulnerable or underage. individuals will be sharing their experiences and events so these will be anonymised within the details of the research.

Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time?

No

Will deception or incomplete disclosure be used?

No

Will the participants be debriefed?

Yes

If yes, how will they be debriefed and what information will be provided?

For the anonymous questionnaires, feedback will be shared with the student unions of the Tertiary Education Providers within Merseyside and Norfolk for them to distribute.

Interview participants will be debriefed as part of the interview process which will include a 2-4 minute summary of their discussions as well as an explanation of what will happen with the information shared.

The interview process will end by asking the interviewee to 'check in' once again on the rating scale to ensure that there has been minimal impact on the interviewee's well-being.

The interviewee will also have an opportunity to ask any questions about the interview, process or what happens next.

Each participant within the interview stage will receive a debriefing document that will outline what will happen with their data, their right to withdraw as well as access to further support should they require it (information which is documented at the end of the questionnaire for example).

If yes, upload a copy of the debrief information.

Will substances be administered to the participants?

No

Will involvement in the project result in, or the risk of, discomfort, physical harm, psychological harm or intrusive procedures?

No

Will the project involve prolonged or repetitive testing?

No

Will the project involve potentially sensitive topics?

Yes

If yes, provide details.

Many of the Adverse Childhood Experiences identified may trigger past trauma or negative memories. As a result, if any of the participants experience any feelings of distress or discomfort whilst completing the questionnaire, several ACE-specific charities along with links to their websites have been provided following completion of the questionnaire.

If a disclosure or safeguarding issue arises during the interview process with participants (E.G - a participant is still experiencing Adverse Experiences) then I will have a professional obligation to contact the safeguarding lead of the Tertiary Education provider whilst also reporting it to my Research Supervisor and appropriate channels if necessary.

Will the project involve elite interviews?

No

Will the project involve any incitement to, encouragement of, or participation, in an illegal act (by participant or researcher)?

No

Will the research involve an investigation of people engaged in or supporting activities that compromise computer security or other activities that may normally be considered harmful or unlawful?

No

Does the research involve members of the public in participatory research where they are actively involved in undertaking research tasks?

No

Does the research offer advice or guidance to people?

No

Is the research intended to benefit the participants, third parties or the local community?

Yes

Provide an explanation.

From the participant's point of view, it is hoped that this research will have a beneficial impact on individual participants whereby the process of sharing their experiences can promote feelings of empowerment and reflection.

The research has potential benefits to school providers and communities/society in terms of providing identified and targeted support for young people with particular characteristics. It is hoped that the results of the study will help enhance inclusion for potentially vulnerable individuals across ecological contexts (E.G - family, schools, communities etc)

What procedures are in place for monitoring the research with respect to ethical compliance? To protect the scientific integrity, human rights and dignity of the potential participants being recruited, a number of researcher procedures will be followed. It is hoped that the principles outlined below will make sure that participation within the study is voluntary, informed and safe for potential participants.

- 1) In order to safeguard potential participants, the research will follow the universities standards and code of ethics
- 2) Participation in the study is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw their consent at any time by contacting the researcher (Mr Keith Houghton). It is important to note that once the questionnaire is completed (Specifically if completed anonymously) the researcher will not be able to withdraw data as it will not be identifiable within the study. This is outlined within the participant information sheet.
- 3) All of the information has been provided for both the Phase 1 and 2 elements so that potential participants know the purpose, risks and advantages of participating in the proposed study, this will allow them to provide informed consent to participate.
- 4) Personally identifiable data will not be collected from the Phase 1 element, unless participants state that they are happy to be contacted should their data meet the requirements for the Phase 2 element of the research. There will be no identifiable information shared within the study.

- 5) There is a potential that the questionnaires and subsequent interviews may cause distress or discomfort for participants. Following completion of both aspects, participants will be given a handout (virtually) of ACE specific charities and information regarding subjects discussed.
- 6) The researcher (Mr Keith Houghton) will receive ongoing support from their research Supervisor (Dr Nikki Collingwood) to ensure the universities standards and ethics are people adhered to throughout the research process.

Does the study involve the use of a clinical or non-clinical scale, questionnaire or inventory which has specific copyright permissions, reproduction or distribution restrictions or training requirements?

No

Include any other ethical considerations regarding data collection methods.

N/A

Health and safety - participants

Is there a possibility that the health and safety of any of the participants in this project including a support person (e.g. a care giver, school teaching assistant) may be in question? Yes

If yes, describe the nature of any health and safety concerns to the participants and the steps you will take to minimise these.

Given the context of Adverse Childhood Experiences and the potentially traumatic experiences, individuals have endured, the questionnaires and interview processes have the potential to evoke the feelings/emotions associated with a participant's experiences and subsequently impact upon their wellbeing.

A number of steps have been taken to ensure participants are fully informed before taking part in the study.

The researcher will also provide a sheet to participants following interviews with reminders of where they can access support should they need it. In

addition, the researcher will also 'check in' with each participant before, during and following the interview with regard to their well-being using a rating scale (1-10).

What procedures have been established for the care and protection of participants? Participants will be directed towards The pastoral staff and well-being support staff within Tertiary Education providers as well as a number of ACE charities being shared throughout the process.

A well-being 'check-in' will also be used with all interview participants to ensure they do not experience any heightened feelings of distress which may impact their emotional wellbeing.

Describe your safeguarding protocol. What procedures are in place for the appropriate referral of a participant who discloses an emotional, psychological, health, education or other issue during the course of the research or is identified by the researcher to have such a need?

If a disclosure or safeguarding issue arises during the interview process, then the researcher (Mr. Keith Houghton) will have a professional obligation to contact the safeguarding lead of the Tertiary Education provider in which the participant attends (this is outlined within the consent sheet). The researcher will also have an obligation to report it to their research supervisor as well as any appropriate channels if necessary (E.G - designated safeguarding lead at the participant's education setting).

What is the possible harm to the wider community from their participation or from the project as a whole?

N/A

What precautions will you take to minimise any possible harm to the wider community?

discussed in previous sections.

Health and safety - researcher(s)

Is there a possibility that the health and safety of any of the researcher(s) and that of any other people (as distinct from any participants) impacted by this project including research assistants/translators may be in question?

Yes

If yes, how have you addressed the health and safety concerns? Describe any safeguards included and relevant protocols.

All interviews will be conducted on Microsoft Teams with a blurred background and no identifiable features in terms of location will be shared by either the researcher or participants.

All participants will be given the option to share their camera or not given their preference.

All interviews will be conducted at a time suitable for each participant to minimise disruptions and identifiable features.

Risk assessment

Are there hazards associated with undertaking this project where a formal risk assessment will be required?

No

Data management

Will the project involve any personal data (including pseudonymised data) not in the public domain?

Yes

If yes, will any of the personal data be?:

Anonymised and pseudonymised

If using anonymised and/or pseudonymised data, describe the measures that will be implemented to prevent de-anonymisation.

Phase 1 will use anonymised data, whilst Phase 2 will use pseudonymised data (participants will be given a specific 3-digit number)

If not using anonymised or pseudonymised data, how will you maintain participant confidentiality and comply with data protection requirements?

All participants taking part within the study will be notified within the participant sheet and consent form that all responses will be anonymous unless they state that they would like to participate in the qualitative element of the research in which they will be identifiable in order to arrange the interview process.

All personal details will not be shared within the thesis and instead participants will be referred to as Participant 1,2,3 etc within the write up

Will any personal data be processed by another organisation(s)?

No

Will the project involve access to records of sensitive/confidential information?

No

Will the project involve access to confidential business data?

No

Will the project involve secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?

No

Will you be using publicly available data from the internet for your study?

No

Will the research data in this study be deposited in a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes?

No

Provide details.

The final thesis (but not raw data) will be available online through UEA site

Who will have access to the data during and after the project?

the researcher and research supervisor

Where/how do you intend to store the data during and after the project?

For the duration of the study, the data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or password-protected document.

How will you ensure the secure storage of the data during and after the project?

The data will be stored securely in line with guidance and procedures within UEA's research data management policy.

How long will research data be stored after the study has ended?

The information provided will be stored securely and the participants identity will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but participants will not be identified in these publications if they decide to participate in this study. Study data may also be deposited with a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes. The data will be kept for at least 10 years beyond the last date the data were accessed. The deposited data will not include participants names or any identifiable information about them.

How long will research data be accessible after the study has ended?

The information you provide will be stored securely and your identity will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be identified in these publications if you decide to participate in this study. Study data may also be deposited with a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes. The data will be kept for at least 10 years beyond the last date the data were accessed. The deposited data will not include your name or any identifiable information about you.

How are you intending to destroy the project data when it is no longer required?

The information will be deleted in accordance with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) on deleting personal data.

Generate and upload files

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION TEXT AND CONSENT FORM

**Upload the Participant Information Sheet and
Consent Form. Enter Participant Group number
and name.**

Participant Sheet Phase 1 - Questionnaire

Enter Participant Group number and name.

Participant Sheet Phase 2 - Semi-Structured Interviews

Attached files

Email to Student Union

R3.docx Student Union

Letter R3.docx

One Page overview with tear

offs R3.docx One Page

overview poster R3.docx

Link to questionnaire.docx

Proposed Semi Structured Interview

Questions R3.docx One Page Profile

Summary Results R3.docx

Participant Sheet - Thesis Questionnaire

R3.docx Participant Sheet - Thesis

Interviews R3.docx

Dear [Student Union Representative]

My name is Keith Houghton, and I am currently beginning my thesis research project as partial fulfilment of my Doctorate in Educational Psychology (EDPsyD) at The University of East Anglia, supervised by Dr Nikki Collingwood. I am writing to seek your permission and support in accessing potential participants to take part in the study. It is hoped that your role as a Student Union Representative will be to help share the study by displaying the attached poster or sharing it on relevant platforms with potential participants. Further information about the study and what it entails can be found on the attached participant information sheet.

The research will focus on students attending tertiary education and will be exploring how early childhood experiences (both positive and adverse) may impact upon their levels of Hope (that is, an individual's ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal) and Academic Self-Concept (that is, how they perceive themselves academically).

The research will initially involve completion of online questionnaires to determine participants Adverse Childhood Experiences, Positive Childhood Experiences and levels of Academic Self-Concept and Hope. If participants data meets the requirements for the second phase (High ACEs, Low PCEs, High ASC and Hope), they will then be invited to take part in an online semi-structured interview with the researcher, Mr Keith Houghton (further information can be found in the attached participant information sheets).

If you think it may be of benefit to the recruitment process, I am happy to visit the Student Union (both in-person or virtually) to provide further insight into the proposed study to support the recruitment of participants. This can be conducted at a convenient time, date and location to be arranged if necessary.

All answers and results from the research are kept strictly confidential and the results will be reported in a research paper available to all participants upon completion (further information in regards to data storage and anonymity of participants can be found in the attached Participant Information Sheets).

If this is possible, please could you email me at keith.houghton@uea.ac.uk to confirm that you are willing to allow access to potential participants that you may represent through the Students Union, providing that they agree and are happy to take part.

Thank you for your time and I hope to hear from you
soon. Yours sincerely

Mr Keith Houghton

Mr Keith Houghton
Postgraduate
Researcher
University of East
Anglia

17th May 2023

Faculty of Social
Sciences School of
Education and
Lifelong Learning

University of
East Anglia
Norwich
Research Park
Norwich NR4
7TJ United
Kingdom

Email:
keith.houghton@uea.
ac.uk Tel:
07872552531

Web: www.uea.ac.uk

The Role of Childhood Experiences in Supporting Individuals in Attending University/College Education.

Dear (STUDENT UNION REPRESENTATIVE NAME)

I am contacting you to help me recruit participants for a research study I am conducting. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like further information.

(1) Who am I and what is the study about

My name is Keith Houghton, and I am currently completing the above study as partial fulfilment towards my Doctorate in Educational Psychology (EdPsyD) at the University of East Anglia. The research will focus on students attending tertiary education and will be exploring how early childhood experiences (positive and negative) may impact on their levels of Hope (that is, an individuals ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal/s) and Academic Self- Concept (that is, how they perceive themselves academically).

Current literature suggests that individuals who have experienced a higher number of negative childhood experiences tend to have lower levels of academic self- concept, motivation to engage in education and hopefulness for their future career goals and overall success (Baxter et al., 2017; Marsh and Ronda., 2002). As a result, individuals who have been exposed to multiple negative childhood experiences during childhood tend to experience lower educational, employment and economic successes when compared to those with less negative experiences (Currie and Widom, 2010; Lanier et al., 2015). Subsequently, individuals exposed to a higher number of negative experiences during childhood and adolescence are less likely to attend university institutions (Corrales et al., 2016).

It is hoped that the experiences and views of potential participants will play an integral role in determining the impact of childhood experiences upon how individuals perceive themselves academically and their ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal/s. It is also hoped that participants experiences and views may also provide an insight into how more positive childhood experiences may mitigate the impact of negative childhood experiences and support individuals within the Merseyside and Norfolk areas to attend University/College settings. It is anticipated that participants could provide further information with regard to

identification of support for young people who may have had adverse childhood experiences. From a participant point of view, it is hoped that this research will have a beneficial impact on individual participants whereby the process of sharing their experiences can promote feelings of empowerment and reflection.

(2) What I need your assistance/support with

The 'gatekeeper' role is simply one of distributing information to potential participants. I am seeking your permission to be allowed to access your Student Union to seek research participants and distribute the online questionnaire as part of the initial phase of the research study. Additionally, if you think it may be of benefit to the recruitment

process, I am happy to visit the Student Union (both in-person or virtually) to provide further insight into the proposed study to support the recruitment of participants. This can be conducted at a convenient time, date and location to be arranged if necessary.

It would be much appreciated if yourself or a member of the administration team at the Student Union were able to circulate the attached summary of the research (poster) to students to support potential recruitment of participants. I am required to achieve between 54-120 participants so your support would be appreciated.

(3) What taking part in the research will involve?

Having read the information sheet (accessible via the QR code on the electronic research poster), potential participants will be able to click a link to the online questionnaire or scan another QR code to access it. By clicking this link or scanning the QR code, potential participants will be giving their consent to the researcher to take part in the study. The questionnaire can be completed within their own time at their own pace and consists of four short separate questionnaires that will measure their exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences and Positive Childhood Experiences whilst also measuring your levels of Hope and Academic Self-Concept.

Participants will be asked at the end of the questionnaire whether they are happy to provide their name and email address. This is in case their information meets the criteria required for the second phase of the research process (Interviews) which will explore their personal views in relation to the distinct areas identified within the questionnaires. Please note, that if participants choose to provide their details at this point, their information will no longer be anonymous so that they can be identified to take part in the second phase. If participants are selected to participate within the second phase they will have the opportunity to review the information generated about them prior to publication, although they will not be identifiable within the research itself. Participants will also have the opportunity to review any transcripts from the interview process. Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

(4) Who will have access to the data from the research

If participants are happy to participate in the qualitative element, then their name and email address will be required in order to contact them should they meet the requirements. This will be asked for on completion of the questionnaire.

Their personal data and information will only be used as outlined in this Participant Information Sheet. Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's [Research Data Management Policy](#).

The information participants provide will be stored securely and their identity will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but the participants will not be identifiable in these publications.

Study data may also be deposited with a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes. The data will be kept for at least 10 years beyond the last date the data were accessed. The deposited data will not include participant name or any identifiable information about them.

(5) What will happen to the results of the study

Participants have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. For those who complete the questionnaire anonymously, the overall results of the study cannot be shared as those who participated will not be identifiable. For individuals who provide their details and are willing to participate in the qualitative element of the study, should their data meet the requirements, then individuals will receive a one-page summary of the research findings upon completion.

(6) Who should you contact for further information

For further information in regards to the research study please feel free to contact the researcher (Mr Keith Houghton) or the research supervisor (Dr Nikki Collingwood) via the University of East Anglia at the following addresses:

Mr Keith Houghton
School of Education and
Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
Norwich, NR4 7TJ
keith.houghton@uea.ac.uk
07872552531

Dr Nikki Collingwood
School of Education and
Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
Norwich, NR4 7TJ
nikki.collingwood@uea.ac.uk

Thank you

<p>Mr. Keith Houghton Postgraduate Researcher University of East Anglia</p> <p>18th May 2023</p>	<p>Faculty of Social Sciences School of Education and Lifelong Learning</p> <p>University of East Anglia Norwich Research Park Norwich NR4 7TJ United Kingdom</p> <p>Email: keith.houghton@uea.ac.uk Tel: 07872552531 Web: www.uea.ac.uk</p>
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The Role of Childhood Experiences in Supporting Individuals in Attending University/College Education.

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study focused on students attending tertiary education and will be exploring how early childhood experiences (positive and negative) may impact on their levels of Hope (that is, an individuals ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal/s) and Academic Self-Concept (that is, how individuals perceive themselves academically).

Current literature suggests that individuals who have experienced a higher number of negative childhood experiences tend to have lower levels of academic self-concept, motivation to engage in education and hopefulness for their future career goals and overall success (Baxter et al., 2017; Marsh and Ronda., 2002). As a result, individuals who have been exposed to multiple negative childhood experiences during childhood tend to experience lower educational, employment and economic successes when compared to those with less negative experiences (Currie and Widom, 2010; Lanier et al., 2015). Subsequently, individuals exposed to a higher number of negative experiences during childhood and adolescence are less likely to attend university institutions (Corrales et al., 2016).

It is hoped that the experiences and views of potential participants will play an integral role in determining the impact of childhood experiences upon how individuals perceive themselves academically and their ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal/s. it is also hoped that participant's experiences and views may also provide an insight into how more positive childhood experiences may mitigate the impact of negative childhood experiences and support individuals within the Merseyside and Norfolk areas to attend University/College settings.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - Potentially traumatic activities and experiences that can happen in an individual's life before the age of eighteen years old.

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) - Activities and experiences that enhance a child's life, resulting in successful mental and physical health outcomes.

Academic Self-Concept (ASC) - How an individual perceives themselves academically.

Hope - An individual's ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – QUESTIONNAIRES

It is anticipated that participants could provide further information with regard to the identification of support for young people who may have had adverse childhood experiences. From a participant's point of view, it is hoped that this research will have a beneficial impact on individual participants whereby the process of sharing their experiences can promote feelings of empowerment and reflection.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

AUnderstand what you have read.

AAgree to take part in the research study as outlined below.

AAgree to the use of your personal information as described.

AYou have received a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being conducted by the following researcher(s): Mr. Keith Houghton. This will take place under the supervision of Dr Nikki Collingwood (nikki.collingwood@uea.ac.uk).

(3) What will the study involve for me?

Once you have read the information sheet, you will be able to click a link to the online questionnaire or scan the QR code to access it. The questionnaire can be completed within your own time at your own pace and consists of four short separate questionnaires that will measure your exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences and Positive Childhood Experiences whilst also measuring your levels of Hope and Academic Self-Concept. By clicking this link or scanning the QR code and completing the questionnaire, you are giving consent to the researcher to take part in the study.

You will be asked at the end of the questionnaire whether you are happy to provide your name and email address. This is in case your information meets the criteria required for the second phase of the research process (short Interviews) which will explore your personal views in relation to the distinct areas identified within the questionnaires. Please Note, that if you choose to provide your details at this point, your information will no longer be anonymous so that you can be identified to take part in the second phase. If you are selected to participate in the second phase, you will have the opportunity to review the information generated about you prior to publication, although you will not be identifiable within the research itself.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

If you consent to participate in the second phase of the research project (interview process), given that your data meets the specific requirements, you will also be invited to take part in a semi-structured interview about your experiences which may take up to 45 minutes. When you provide your email address, you will be contacted with a unique 3 letter number code (E.G – 001) which will be assigned to your data to ensure that your name is not used within any element of the study. A further participant information sheet will be shared with you (linked to the interview process) and further

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – QUESTIONNAIRES

consent will be sought for your participation within this element of the study. Convenient dates and times will be sent accordingly to the email address provided.

(5) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I have started?

This research is being conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines and approved by the Health Care Professional Council, meaning you have a series of rights as a participant. Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

(6) What are the consequences if I withdraw from the study?

If you decide to take part in the study, you can withdraw your consent at any time by contacting Mr. Keith Houghton on the email address below. It is important to note that you can withdraw at anytime up to the point you submit the questionnaire. Once the questionnaire is completed (specifically if completed anonymously) the data can not be removed unless you provide your contact details. Therefore, if specific contact details are not submitted, the researcher will not be able to withdraw your data as it will not be identifiable within the study.

Once the questionnaire is completed (specifically if completed anonymously) the researcher will not be able to withdraw your data as it will not be identifiable within the study.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

Your participation in the study will help to further our knowledge and understanding of the role of Positive Childhood Experiences in the formation of Academic Self-Concept and Hope and their ability to mitigate the negative impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences over time.

(9) What will happen to information provided by me and data collected during the study?

The information you provide within the research will be completely anonymous unless you state that you are happy to participate in the qualitative element of the research (interviews), which is dependent on whether your personal data meets the specific requirements. If you are happy to participate in the qualitative element, then your name and email address will be required in order to contact you should you meet the requirements. This will be asked for on completion of the questionnaire.

(10) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Mr Keith Houghton (keith.houghton@uea.ac.uk, 07872552531) will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have.

(11) Will I be told the results of the study?

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – QUESTIONNAIRES

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can indicate if you wish to receive feedback about the study at the end of the online consent form by simply selecting 'yes' (which is accessible via the link and QR code at the end of this sheet).

You have the right to receive transcripts of the interview in order for you to review the information collected during the interview phase. All transcripts from the interview processes will be transcribed anonymously to ensure participants are not identified from their comments. You can indicate if you wish to receive feedback about the study at the end of the online consent form by simply selecting 'yes' (which is accessible via the link and QR code at the end of this sheet). All transcripts from the interview processes will be transcribed anonymously to ensure participants are not identified from their comments.

(12) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact myself or my research supervisor (Dr Nikki Collingwood) via the University of East Anglia address noted above.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of School of Education and Lifelong Learning: Yann LeBeau (y.lebeau@uea.ac.uk).

(13) How do I know that this study has been approved to take place?

To protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity, all research in the University of East Anglia is reviewed by a Research Ethics Body. This research was approved by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee).

(14) What is the general data protection information I need to be informed about? According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a university.

In addition to the specific information provided above about why your personal data is required and how it will be used, there is also some general information which needs to be provided for you:

- The data controller is the University of East Anglia.
- For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk
- You can also find out more about your data protection rights at the [Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](https://ico.org.uk).
- If you are unhappy with how your personal data has been used, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk in the first instance.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – QUESTIONNAIRES

(15) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?

If you are happy and consent to take part in the study, you will be required to complete one copy of the consent form which you can simply access via the link and QR code below. By submitting your responses, you are agreeing to the researcher using the data collected for the purposes described above. Please keep the information sheet for your information.



<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=1Ydfxj26UUOKBwhl5djkKcYXvnEZWdKp7K5oWZq9RtURFFMQ1E4TjRCVFU2ODY3VExJTU5aQ1VVTi4u>

(16) Further information

This information was last updated on 18th May 2023.

If there are changes to the information provided, you will be notified by email. If there are changes to the information provided, you will be notified by via email

This information sheet is for you to keep

Mr Keith Houghton
Postgraduate Researcher
University of East Anglia

Faculty of Social Sciences
School of Education and
Lifelong Learning

18th May 2023

University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR4 7TJ
United Kingdom

The Role of Childhood Experiences in Supporting Individuals in Attending University/College Education.

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in the second phase of the research study focused on students attending tertiary education and will be exploring how early childhood experiences (positive and negative) may impact on their levels of Hope (that is, an individuals ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal/s) and Academic Self-Concept (that is, how individuals perceive themselves academically).

Current literature suggests that individuals who have experienced a higher number of negative childhood experiences tend to have lower levels of academic self-concept, motivation to engage in education and hopefulness for their future career goals and overall success (Baxter et al., 2017; Marsh and Ronda., 2002). As a result, individuals who have been exposed to multiple negative childhood experiences during childhood tend to experience lower educational, employment and economic successes when compared to those with less negative experiences (Currie and Widom, 2010; Lanier et al., 2015). Subsequently, individuals exposed to a higher number of negative experiences during childhood and adolescence are less likely to attend university institutions (Corrales et al., 2016).

It is hoped that the experiences and views of potential participant's will play an integral role in determining the impact of childhood experiences upon how individuals perceive themselves academically and their ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal/s. it is also hoped that participants experiences and views may also provide an insight into how more positive childhood experiences may mitigate the impact of negative childhood experiences and support individuals within the Merseyside and Norfolk areas to attend University/College settings.

It is anticipated that participants could provide further information with regard to the identification of support for young people who may have had adverse childhood experiences. From a participant point of view, it is hoped that this research will have a

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - Potentially traumatic activities and experiences that can happen in an individual's life before the age of eighteen years old.

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) - Activities and experiences that enhance a child's life, resulting in successful mental and physical health outcomes.

Academic Self-Concept (ASC) - How an individual perceives themselves academically.

Hope - An individual's ability to work towards a desired goal and/or accomplish their desired goal.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – INTERVIEWS

beneficial impact on individual participant's whereby the process of sharing their experiences can promote feelings of empowerment and reflection.

This Participant Information Sheet tells you about the second phase of the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you would like to participate in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand or want to know more about

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

AUnderstand what you have read.

AAgree to take part in the research study as outlined below.

AAgree to the use of your personal information as described.

AYou have received a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researcher(s): Mr Keith Houghton.

This will take place under the supervision of Dr Nikki Collingwood (nikki.collingwood@uea.ac.uk,).

(3) What will the study involve for me?

Once you have read the information sheet, you are able to click a link to the online consent form or scan the QR code to access it. Please read the information carefully and if you are happy to provide consent, please provide your name, signature and date of completion. Once consent has been gained, the Researcher (Mr Keith Houghton) will contact you via the email address provided within the first stage of the research to arrange a convenient date and time to complete the interview process with you. The interview process will be centred around your personal views of the key concepts within the study (E.G – Adverse Childhood Experiences, Positive Childhood Experiences, Academic Self-Concept and Hope).

An Audio recording will be taken of the interview and you will have the opportunity to review the transcribed recordings before any data is used within the study. All transcripts from the interview processes will be transcribed anonymously to ensure participants are not identified from their comments.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

The interview process will take approximately 20-45 minutes to complete. Further information about convenient dates and times will be sent accordingly, once consent has been approved.

(5) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I have started? This research is being conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines and approved by the Health Care Professional Council, meaning you have a series of rights as a participant. Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

(6) What are the consequences if I withdraw from the study?

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – INTERVIEWS

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview. If you decide at a later time to withdraw from the study your information will be removed from our records and will not be included in any results, up to the point we have analysed and published the results.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study. However, as part of the reflective nature of engaging in an interview about your experiences and personal characteristics, you may reflect on significant times of your life, and the life of your family. This may result in some adverse emotional reactions. At the end of each phase of the interview, you will be provided with information as to where you can access support should you need to. The researcher will also monitor your responses and check in on your wellbeing at various points of the interview.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

Your participation in the study will help to further our knowledge and understanding of the role of Positive Childhood Experiences in the formation of Academic Self-Concept and Hope and their ability to mitigate the negative impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences over time.

(9) What will happen to information provided by me and data collected during the study?

Your personal data and information will only be used as outlined in this Participant Information Sheet, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy.

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The information you provide will be stored securely and your identity will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be identified in these publications if you decide to participate in this study.

Study data may also be deposited with a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes. The data will be kept for at least 10 years beyond the last date the data were accessed. The deposited data will not include your name or any identifiable information about you.

(10) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Mr Keith Houghton (keith.houghton@uea.ac.uk, 07872552531) will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have.

(11) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have the right to receive transcripts of the interview in order for you to review the information collected during the interview phase. All transcripts from the interview processes

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – INTERVIEWS

will be transcribed anonymously to ensure participants are not identified from their comments.

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can indicate if you wish to receive feedback about the study at the end of the online consent form by simply selecting 'yes' (which is accessible via the link and QR code at the end of this sheet).

(12) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

If there is a problem, please let me know. You can contact myself or my research supervisor (Dr Nikki Collingwood) via the University of East Anglia address noted above.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of School of Education and Lifelong Learning: Yann LeBeau (y.lebeau@uea.ac.uk,).

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According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a university.

In addition to the specific information provided above about why your personal data is required and how it will be used, there is also some general information which needs to be provided

for

you:

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- For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk
- You can also find out more about your data protection rights at the [Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](https://ico.org.uk).
- If you are unhappy with how your personal data has been used, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk in the first instance.

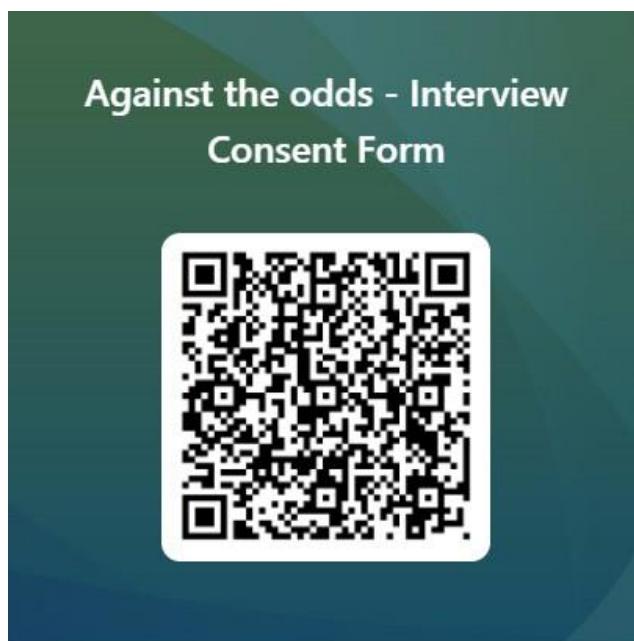
(15) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?

If you are happy and consent to take part in the study, you will be required to complete one copy of the consent form which you can simply access via the link

and QR code below. By submitting your responses you are agreeing to the researcher using the data collected for the purposes described above. Please keep the information sheet for your information.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=1Ydfxj26UUOKBwhl5djwkKcYXvnEZWdKp7K5oWZq9RtUN1AwSDRRWEdGVE5VQ0xHQkQyVVdLQkRGTS4u>

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – INTERVIEWS



(16) Further information

This information was last updated on 18th May 2023.

If there are changes to the information provided, you will be notified by email

This information sheet is for you to keep