An Exploration of Educational Psychologists' Perceptions of the Impact of Poverty on Children and Young People and their Role when Working with this Group.

Lisa Bancroft Prescott

Registration Number: 100290939/1

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Summary

This thesis is divided into three chapters: a narrative literature review, an empirical paper and a critical reflective chapter.

The narrative literature review seeks to illustrate the existing understandings of poverty; specifically, how it relates to the role of the educational psychologist (EP) and the impact on children and young people (CYP). This literature review identifies the dominant prevailing understandings of poverty and current relevant narratives and research on this topic are also considered.

The empirical paper outlines the current research, methodology and findings of this study which are framed within a social constructivist epistemological position. The findings of the study are situated within an ecological systems context, centring the child in their immediate and wider environment and context. Potential implications of the findings for educational psychology theory and practice are discussed along with the research's limitations.

The third chapter reflects on the researcher's experience and thoughts around conducting this research. Personal reflections and aspects which the researcher will carry forward into a career as an EP are explored.

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This thesis was largely inspired by and therefore dedicated to my Grandmar,

Jean Jones

The kindest and cleverest lady I knew.

6th August 1932 – 19th May 2025.

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List of Acronyms

ACE:	Adverse Childhood Experiences
AEP:	Association of Educational Psychologists
APA:	American Psychiatric Association
BPS:	British Psychological Society
CPAG:	Child Poverty Action Group
CT:	Critical Theory
CYP:	Children and Young People
DfE:	Department for Education
DoH:	Department of Health
EET:	Education Employment or Training
EP:	Educational Psychologist
EPI:	Education Policy Institute
EPS:	Educational Psychology Service
EST:	Ecological Systems Theory
FSM:	Family Stress Model
GCSEs:	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HCPC:	Health and Care Professions Council
HYP:	Homeless Young Person
IPA:	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
JRF:	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LA:	Local Authority
LSES:	Low Socioeconomic Status
MPI:	Multidimensional Poverty Index
RF:	Resolution Foundation
SEN:	Special Education Needs
SENCo:	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SEND:	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SES:	Socioeconomic Status
TEP:	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UEA:	University of East Anglia
UK:	United Kingdom
UNCRC:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund

Chapter One: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review starts by defining low socioeconomic status (LSES) and other related definitions such as poverty, deprivation and considers the term ‘working class’. Sociological and psychological concepts and issues which surround poverty will be situated in the historical and global context. Relevant theories and literature relating to poverty and its impact on children are explored.

The relevance to children and schools in England and the impact of policies are discussed including the relevance to the work of educational psychologists. The contextual factors of poverty are considered with a focus on how it affects children in England specifically (as separate from the home nations), with the critical debates and narratives explored. Limitations and ‘gaps’ in the literature are identified to inform the rationale for this study.

Terminology

There are several words and phrases associated with the subject matter, and all have their own nuances and meaning and encapsulate different elements of ‘poverty’. The definition which the researcher will use is children from low socioeconomic status (LSES) or children who live in a LSES environment, although throughout the literature review alternative words such as ‘poverty’ and ‘deprived’ may be used when describing particular pieces of research which use this phraseology to maintain fidelity with the research being discussed.

Language creates meaning (Burr, 2015) and in view of the social constructivist epistemological position of this study, terminology is particularly important. It seems that LSES is the term more readily used in the more recent literature, and this definition has the connotation of referring to a person's stake in society, which reflects the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2000; Bronfenbrenner, 2005) which the researcher has referred to as a main framework in this study.

Narrative Literature Review Rationale

Due to the nature of the subject matter and the diversity of the research which comes from social, political, economic, health, historical and psychological disciplines, it was felt that a narrative review was the most appropriate approach rather than a systematic review. Systematic reviews offer a defined answer to a defined question with rigid inclusion criteria and an emphasis on 'higher quality' evidence which sits within strict parameters (Sarkar & Bhatia, 2021), whereas narrative reviews do not follow rules of how to search for evidence about a topic (Collins & Fauser, 2005). A downside of narrative literature reviews is that there can be researcher bias (Green, Johnson, & Adams, 2006) present due to the researcher driving the selection of research so it follows that there will be more subjectivity and variation of approach (Ferrari, 2015). However, a strength of narrative reviews, is that the researcher can follow specific lines of enquiry maintaining more conformity to the research aims with less rigidity than in a systematic review. This also enables updating of research as new publications become available (Ferrari, 2015).

Narrative literature reviews also allow the flexibility to effectively review qualitative research which is the methodology used in this study. Qualitative research has less defined methods and data (in that it is not numerical) (Siddaway et al., 2019). Narrative reviews do still incorporate quantitative studies but use them to inform the narrative alongside studies with varied methodologies and parameters (Baumeister, 2013). The variety of methods and therefore constructs lends itself to the social constructivist epistemological position of the researcher (Burr, 2015). A systematic review would need a comment on the relevance of each piece of literature rather than enabling flexibility to explore questions which arise through considering the literature. These nuanced elements which emerge through a narrative review can sometimes be missed in systematic reviews (Sarkar & Bhatia, 2021). This aligns with the construction of meaning needed in a social constructivist epistemological position such as the approach in this research project.

Organisation of the Literature Review

The first section outlines the methodology and approach to the literature search, including inclusion criteria and the focus of the literature search. The results of the search are presented in narrative form. There is an overview of poverty and low socioeconomic status (LSES) in the global context. Poverty is situated in the national context and then theoretical context. Key psychological theories relating to poverty are outlined.

The relevant literature around poverty and its impact on children is explored as well as literature outlining children from LSES's presentation in the school context. Themes which emerged throughout the literature review are examined. The

relevance of the literature covered by the review is considered and leading to the rationale for the current research. Limitations of the review are discussed.

Literature Search Strategy

Systematic literature reviews have strengths in terms of rigour, transparency and replicability (Sarkar & Bhatia, 2021). They are also suited to research areas which are narrowly defined and therefore exhaustive. As the review of literature relating to CYP from LSES progressed, it became clear that a systematic approach was not the most appropriate method for the present study. Research relating to CYP from LSES is heterogeneous and spans several disciplines, methodologies and theoretical frameworks. There are also discrepancies in key terms and related definitions, for example LSES as opposed to poverty or working class. Therefore it became apparent that applying rigid systematic criteria risked excluding important conceptual and contextual nuances (Grant & Booth, 2009). A narrative literature review provides scope to follow lines of enquiry and to engage with theoretical debates and a range of empirical findings. This approach lends itself to the interpretive and exploratory aims of the research, allowing engagement with criticality and facilitating reflexivity across the broad and varied research base and subject matter (Snyder, 2019).

A systematic literature search was initially carried out for this review to identify papers directly relating to the study's objective and focus, namely the role of the educational psychologist in relation to CYP from LSES in schools. The search strategy also helped to identify the current state of literature directly linked to the research aims.

The search terms were as follows:

(poverty OR low socioeconomic OR deprived OR disadvantaged) AND "educational psycholog*"

This produced no relevant results.

Firstly, databases including Academic Search Complete, APA PyscARTICLES, British Education Index, Education Index, and ERIC were selected, based on an evaluation of their credibility, currency and content. As specific papers had not been found, the research concept was divided into 'lines of enquiry'. Umbrella terms such as ‘poverty’ and ‘low socioeconomic status’ were scoped and then expanded to incorporate related terms such as ‘deprived’ and ‘vulnerable’ alongside the truncated search term ‘educational psycholog*’ to ‘hit’ relevant articles. Boolean operators were added to both to combine certain concepts, for example, “poverty or socioeconomic status and cognition” to maximise the relevancy of results and to explore lines of enquiry. Limiters such as ‘source type’ and ‘date range’ were applied. The researcher’s database searches were refined to find peer-reviewed articles published since 2011. This was to keep the parameters of the search within the time scale of the introduction of the pupil premium policy in England. This strategy increased the credibility and currency of hits, but also resulted in an unmanageable quantity of articles, with 3885 hits for the researcher to review. Therefore, the database index was changed from ‘keyword’ to ‘abstract’ in order to refine the results further, which led to a more manageable 199 articles for the researcher to review.

Overall, searches that looked specifically at poverty and associated terms plus educational psycholog* led to very limited results, therefore sources specifically related to educational psychology were 'hand-searched', including the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) and the British Psychological Society (BPS). As

well as this, the researcher used ‘snowballing’ and scoured the references of related studies to follow each line of enquiry. This was the search method which produced the most relevant research papers to the current review.

Inclusion Criteria

As a narrative review was conducted, the search strategy broadly followed lines of enquiry through ‘snowballing’ and searching references of relevant papers. This was the dominant method of identifying research throughout this study (Bryman, 2012). However, inclusion and exclusion criteria were still applied. English language papers which fell within the scope of topical relevance were searched which explicitly focused on children’s experiences of poverty and its impact. Literature from sociology, education, psychological, public health, economics and childhood studies directly relating to poverty were included. Peer reviewed articles, academic books and high-quality reports from reputable organisations (e.g. Unicef, Joseph Rowntree Foundation) were included. The time span of the search was set at papers since 2011 as this is the date of the initial implementation of the pupil premium policy in schools. However, this time parameter was broadened where needed to incorporate key historical concepts, frameworks and debates relating to CYP from LSES. Studies that looked at the historical and political context of poverty as it relates to children and education, as well as papers relating to the impacts of poverty on children were harvested. Additionally, articles that broadly explored CYP from LSES school experiences were sought, with specific attention paid to psychological research where possible.

Exclusion Criteria

Studies in which poverty as it relates to CYP was not the focus, were excluded. Publications which addressed UK government policies relating to poverty as a whole

and not as it relates to CYP, or their experience of education were also excluded. Studies conducted prior to 2000 were excluded unless they were foundational theories and frameworks. For example, the work of Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) or classical psychological theories such as Attachment Theory (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969) or Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943).
Studies related to non-LSES status pupils, were excluded. The researcher wanted the search to be specifically reflective of English schools and policies, due to diversity of education policies across the home nations, but due to the sparsity of related articles, some research based in Scottish and Welsh schools was eventually included.

Defining LSES and Poverty

It is acknowledged across the literature that it is difficult to define poverty (Cook & Lawson, 2016). There is a well-known analogy in the field of economics which states that 'For deciding who is poor, prayers are more relevant than calculation, because poverty, like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder. Poverty is a value judgement; it is not something that one can verify or demonstrate' (Orshansky, 1969, p 37 as cited in Gordon & Nandy, 2012). To further complicate the issue, varied terminology is used to describe poverty throughout the research over time, terms such as 'low socioeconomic status', 'deprived' or 'vulnerable' as examples. It is not within the scope of this literature review to explore the terms in depth but rather to give an overview and a rationale for the term the researcher intends to use. The two most prominent terms used across the literature are 'poverty' and 'low socioeconomic status'. Although often used interchangeably, these terms are in fact separate concepts. These terms are also often conflated with the phrase 'working class'. In a paper by Easterbrook et al. (2020) it is stated that class identities have

been eroded in favour of identity linked to personal achievement. Manstead (2018) challenges the view that the ‘working class’ has disappeared but does concede that people now think more readily in terms of socioeconomic status than class. Manstead (2018) attributes this to the boundaries of each class being less distinct as well as individuals having more awareness of their own educational attainment and economic position.

Palacios-Barrios and Hanson (2019), state that poverty is multifaceted and incorporates economic, social, and psychological challenges. In fact, poverty is defined as a state of deprivation, characterised by a lack of basic needs and resources (Dufford et al., 2020). Abo Hamza et al. (2024) see socioeconomic status (SES) as synonymous with poverty and talk of it as encompassing the social standing of a family or individual conceptualised as, income, educational level, and occupational attainment which implies that one term informs the other.
However, the definition becomes more complex when considered on a global scale. Absolute poverty is defined by the World Bank (2023) as a lack of sufficient resources to meet basic needs and relative poverty refers to not having the adequate resources to partake in one’s society (Baah et al., 2023). These resources include food, shelter, access to health care and education. There are various ways to measure poverty but one of the most widely used measurements is the concept of ‘absolute poverty’. The accepted barometer of this measurement is the ‘international poverty line’ which is currently considered to be $2.15 per day (United Nations, 2024a). Poverty can also be viewed in relative terms which is a comparison of living standards within society (Townsend, 1979). This measure of poverty highlights the

restrictions individuals may face, which impedes their ability to live a fulfilling life (Sen, 1999).

In contrast, the term socioeconomic status (SES) considers an individual's stake in society and their community. It encompasses access to education and occupations as vehicles to facilitate social mobility (Diemer, 2013). SES is about more than immediate resources and signals the broader scope of a person's social position in society and the impact on health, education and therefore employment prospects (Marmot et al., 2020). As SES seems to draw upon several markers and perceptions of what defines a person from LSES, it seems the most appropriate term to use, especially when considering the social constructivist epistemological position of this study.

Defining LSES as it Applies to Children

LSES as it relates to children uses markers which seem to be more linked to development such as a lack of financial and social resources necessary for a child's healthy development and opportunities in terms of physical, cognitive and social development (Child Poverty Action Group, 2024b). UNICEF, (2024) states that poverty is related to household income, but also measured by the degree of access to essential needs such as nutrition, healthcare, education and safety (Sen, 1999). Breaking the cycle of poverty for children is difficult due to the fact that children from LSES are likely to experience malnutrition, poor health, lack of education and social exclusion (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2024) also developed another measure called the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). This measure

emphasises that child poverty is often rooted in inadequate access to services and opportunities and highlights the need for policy to facilitate equal access for children and to address immediate and long-term impacts of poverty (UNDP, 2024).

Global Poverty

The United Nations Rights of the Child Charter (1989) has several articles which directly address children who live in poverty. Article 27 gives children the right to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development; Article 24, the right to the highest attainable standard of health; Article 26, the right to benefit from social security; Article 23, the right for disabled children to enjoy a full and decent life; and Article 28, the right to education. Currently 1.1 billion out of 6.3 billion people across 112 countries live in multidimensional poverty (UNDP, 2024) of which 584 million are children. 8.5% of people around the globe, approximately 700 million, live in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2024) which is measured as living on less than $2.15 per day. The implications of this are far reaching. Social mobility over the last decade is largely considered to have remained static (World Bank, 2024). This has been exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic which saw people living in poverty more likely to die due to the likelihood of them living in overcrowded accommodation, being more likely to work in occupations where they cannot work from home and the impact of financial uncertainty on mental health (Patel et al., 2020). Progress has been uneven, and the Human Development Report (United Nations, 2024a) outlines that recovery is projected to be highly unequal.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2024b) lists its number one goal as ending poverty in all of its forms everywhere by 2030, but

currently the advancement towards this is not sufficient to meet this aim. Therefore, more than 160 million children globally are at risk of continuing to live in extreme poverty by 2030 (United Nations, 2024a). A report on the state of the world's Children by (Unicef, 2024) outlines what it calls the three global megatrends which will affect children globally which are demographic transition, the environmental crisis and frontier technologies. The report states that the demographic shift of an aging population in some areas juxtaposed with an increase in children in some global areas, has created a need for effective implementation of education, health and social programmes that are tailored to these rapid demographic changes. Children who live in poverty are also not experiencing climate change equally (Hallegatte et al., 2018) and approximately 1 billion children currently live in countries that already face high risk of climate and environmental hazards. It is thought that the world is not on track to achieve the objectives of the Paris agreement which is an international treaty adopted in 2015 with the goal of limiting global temperature to combat climate change by 2050. This affects children and specifically affects children who live in poverty more severely (UNICEF, 2021).

Overview of Theoretical Frameworks of Poverty

Literature supports that over time, societal views of poverty have changed and have moved from within person models of 'the undeserving poor' towards more of an acknowledgement of the impact that society and LSES living environment can have on a person's SES (Carr, 2003). However, the idea of 'the undeserving poor' has not disappeared completely (Romano, 2017), although some critics attribute this previous way of thinking to the research profession's middle-class bias (Henrich et al., 2010; Javier & Herron, 2002).

It is pertinent to briefly outline the main theories of poverty as they are woven throughout the research over time and help to conceptualise debates which still surround thinking about children from LSES. As far back as 1959, Oscar Lewis (1966) through his 'culture of poverty' theory, outlined that poverty is widely thought to extend across generations. He conceptualised this as a poverty cycle and believed that factors such as short-term planning and specific attitudes and behaviours caused generations to remain perpetually in poverty (Lewis, 1966). Conversely the structuralist perspective (Wilson, 1987) conceptualises poverty as a failing of systemic economic structures that could be said to 'hold' people in poverty. This theory focusses more on institutional failures rather than the perceived shortcomings of the people who live in LSES. This theory particularly highlights the lack of access to education which people from LSES may experience. The behavioural perspective proposes that poverty is due to individual choice and cultural values and the relationship between socioeconomic status and the psychological, social and cultural processes that underpin decision-making (Anand & Lea, 2011; Bertrand et al., 2004).

Pierre Bourdieu, widely considered to be a one of the most influential social theorists, developed the 'Capital' theory of poverty (Bourdieu, 1986). As he is still so influential, particularly in the field of education, it is appropriate to briefly outline his theory. Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) saw poverty as divided into four key concepts. Cultural capital; the idea that people have markers or 'symbolic elements' of their social class. Cultural capital comes in three forms – embodied, objectified, and institutionalised. 'Embodied' refers to aspects such as accent which 'marks' people out as being from a particular social class.

‘Objectified’ refers to possessions and financial identifiers clothing or a large house and institutionalised refers to indicators of cultural competency such as education level. Cultural capital is seen to both bond people from similar social classes but can also have the effect of limiting social mobility.

Bourdieu’s idea of ‘habitus’ is an enigmatic concept that refers to life experiences and how they manifest signalled by contexts where a person’s behaviours are most natural or the types of social situations a person might feel comfortable in. He argued that aesthetic sensibilities are informed by culturally ingrained experiences. Bourdieu’s ‘field’ is the idea that structured social spaces, with their own rules, values and ways of working, are where people compete for ‘capital’. For example, this can be in an educational institution or a political institution. This links to the concept of ‘symbolic violence’ which is a key concept in Bourdieu’s theory as it outlines the invisible and subtle domination embedded in everyday social interaction. People are said to internalise the rules of the systems in which they live as well as operating in systemic symbols and beliefs. Educational institutions are a key ‘field’ in the context of this research and epitomise the idea of power and competition within establishments as well as the reproduction of cultural capital and social positionings within schools.

Bourdieu’s theories are still present in more modern readings and reference is still made to his core concepts of habitus, capital and field which link to the educational context. A key concept in more modern readings is the idea of habitus and social reproduction in education, specifically in relation to inequality in terms of the cultural capital of more affluent families. Reay (2017) posits that the UK education system

perpetuates class inequalities. To illustrate this, she draws on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field and argues that 'middle class' CYP are at an advantage due to a reinforcement of disadvantage.

Reay (2017) also questions the general received notion that education is a primary route to social mobility and argues that this comes at an emotional and personal cost and can cause CYP to suffer alienation and cultural dislocation. However, Reay (2017) also highlights resistance and resilience stating that many CYP from LSES actively challenge the system asserting their right to recognition and success. Reay argues that schools fail to recognise the strengths and cultural resources of CYP from LSES. CYP from LSES are often judged by 'middle class' standards of speech, appearance, parental involvement and 'appropriate' aspirations. This in turn leads to feelings of inferiority which Reay links to Bourdieu's (1991) 'symbolic violence'. Indicating that CYP internalise and accept feelings of a devalued position due to the rules and regulations of the institution to which they belong. Reay (2017) also outlines the structure of schools as institutions as problematic and argues that they signal to CYP from LSES that they do not belong through aspects such as streaming, discipline policies and also cultural norms about success.

Ball (1993) agrees with Reay and posits that there is a middle-class advantage and 'social closure' that is using 'capital' to gain access to resources. Vincent et al. (2010) highlight practices such as strategic school choice, private tutoring and enhancement of identity and aspiration through access to extra-curricular activities (Vincent & Ball, 2007). It is notable that Bourdieu's theories have also been updated

to include access to ‘digital capital’ and competency (Ruiu & Ragnedda, 2020) which was particularly significant during the COVID 19 pandemic (Coleman, 2021).

Key Psychological Theories Relating to Poverty

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

One of the main psychological theories which relates to poverty is Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943). This theory outlines the fundamental needs a person needs to achieve self-actualisation, including physiological needs, safety, love and belonging and esteem. This is usually represented as a pyramid. It is notable that Maslow (1943) places psychological needs above physical needs implying that physical needs must be met first.

Locus of Control

The locus of control Rotter (1954) is a person’s perception of how much control they have in a certain situation. It is a continuum which outlines how far a person feels that they can influence their situation. This relates to LSES in terms of how empowered people feel or how much control they feel they have over their own personal circumstances. The theory outlines an internal and external locus of control. People with an internal locus of control attribute success or failure to their own efforts and abilities whereas people with an external locus of control believe external forces such as fate or circumstance are responsible for what happens to them. The locus of control is linked to a person’s motivation, is not binary and can shift in relation to a person’s culture and life experience.

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2000) ecological systems theory has widely been used to illustrate the environmental impact of poverty (Boulanger, 2019). Development is affected by the interaction between children and their environment, with Bronfenbrenner's theory positing that the interconnected systems range from the immediate (e.g. family) to macro (the society or culture in which a child lives), (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Zhang & Han, 2020). This in turn interacts with the chrono system as poverty persists over time taking into account life events. Bronfenbrenner's model has five structures of the ecological environment, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem which are nested within each other. Different aspects of these systems are frequently used in the research to explain the impact of LSES on CYP's development.

LSES and Children in the UK

Over the last twenty or so years, the political landscape relating to child poverty has changed with governments leaning more towards neoliberal policies against a background of austerity measures (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2025). The Child Poverty Act (2010) was renamed 'Life Chances Act' (2010) by the Welfare Reform and Work Act (2016). Subsequent cuts to benefits and services have significantly affected children and families (Lyndon, 2019).

Figures from the JRF (2025) estimate that there are 4.5 million children which equates to one in three, living in poverty in the UK. In fact, children are the group who have the highest poverty rates compared to pensioners and working age adults (JRF, 2025). In the UK, poverty is defined as 'low income' although there is an acknowledgement that there are other aspects of poverty such as 'material

deprivation'. This is a measure of the percentage of households considered to have access to enough food to maintain health (The Households Below Average Income Report, 2025). Deep poverty has also increased and makes up the largest group of people in poverty (CPAG, 2025) causing 3.8 million people and one million children to experience destitution, where people cannot afford to stay warm, dry, clean and fed (CPAG, 2025).

Forecasts predict that child poverty will be at its highest rate in 2027/28 (The Resolution Foundation, 2023) as relative child poverty will return to its upwards trend at the end of the cost-of-living crisis due to the effect of the two-child limit and the benefit cap. This will impact families with three or more children the most. The relative child poverty rate for this group is forecast to be 55% in 2027/28, and the rate for families with four or more children forecast to be 77% (RF, 2023). Poverty statistics are complex, another measure known as the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) looks at what is considered a minimum standard of living with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which is a charity which conducts research with the intention of producing information about and reducing poverty, using this particular measure. Children are much more likely to have income below the MIS than older age groups (JRF, 2025).

Currently, the cost of raising a child to age eighteen in the United Kingdom is the highest it has ever been at £260,000 for a couple and £290,000 for a lone parent (Child Poverty Action Group, 2024a). Over the last twenty years governments have attempted to address this trend. In 1999 to 2005 there was some progress as a result of government policies at the time (efforts to increase employment for lone

parents, additional benefits targeted specifically at children such as child tax credit, significant investments in early years education and care), but subsequent changes to the tax and benefits regime caused child poverty to begin to rise again (Child Poverty Action Group, 2024b). Efforts have been made to raise the status of the issue of child poverty, for example, through the creation of the Child Poverty Commission in 2010, which evolved into the current Tackling Child Poverty Strategy' (Cabinet Office, 2024) under the new Labour government.

In an address to the UN General Assembly on 28 October 2022, UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, has called for negative stereotyping of the poor or "povertyism", to be included in antidiscrimination law. Despite this call, poverty continues not to be listed as a protected characteristic within UK legislation, (Equality Act, 2010)

CYP from LSES in UK Education

There are currently over 4.5 million children living in poverty in the UK (CPAG, 2025; JRF, 2025) with nine children in an average classroom of 30 (31%) living in poverty. In areas of high socio-economic deprivation, this number is likely higher in comparison to more affluent schools where numbers are likely to be lower on average. Poverty has significant and long-term impacts on the life chances of children and negative effects start before birth and accumulate across the lifespan (Treanor, 2012). Poverty has impacts on health including higher levels of obesity (British Medical Association, 2024), negative effects on cognitive development and social and emotional development (Dickerson & Popli, 2016; Jensen et al., 2017).

Measures of 'Disadvantage' in Schools

Schools use a proxy measure of children who have received free school meals at any point in the last 6 years to measure 'disadvantage' in schools. The Pupil Premium Policy (DfE, 2011) was introduced in England in 2011 to try to address the educational disadvantages which children from low socio-economic status face. Pupil premium is a government funded grant intended to 'close the poverty gap'. Currently in schools, 'disadvantaged' refers to, but is not exclusive to those children in receipt of pupil premium funding. The categories are; children who have received free school meals within the last 6 years, (also known as 'ever six'), care experienced children (i.e. those children who are in or have ever been in the care system including kinship, foster, residential or post adoption) and children from military families (DfE, 2011).

The current system of using FSM as a measure for identifying 'disadvantaged' pupils in schools is a good proxy measure of disadvantage but may not capture all CYP living in LSES (Parnham et al., 2020). Some low-income families can be missed by this measure as it reduces disadvantage to a simplistic binary category rather than a continuum, with children either in poverty or not in poverty. Families can be just above the poverty line but still experiencing financial difficulties and this is not accounted for in this measure (Parnham et al., 2020). In a recent report by the Education Policy Institute (2025), it is stated that there are fewer CYP registered for FSM than estimated to actually live in poverty and the under recognition is particularly high in younger CYP from Indian Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities (Campbell et al., 2025; Cooper & Campbell, 2025).

The Impact of ‘Disadvantage’ in Schools in England

Absence and Exclusions

Data associated with children in receipt of the Pupil Premium grant indicates the wide-reaching challenges these children face beyond a lack of material wealth. Government data indicates that 34.8% of pupils who were eligible for free school meals were persistently absent in the academic year 2023/4, compared to 14.1% of pupils who were not eligible (DfE, 2024). A report from the Education Policy Institute states that the main driver for the disadvantage gap can be ‘entirely explained’ by absence rates of CYP from LSES (Education Policy Institute, 2024a). The absences can be traced back to the impact of living in LSES environments. For example, a report by One Education, (Pearce, 2024) indicates that uniform requirements, transport, food poverty and housing contribute to pupil absence. Percentages for exclusions both fixed term and permanent are also higher for children eligible for FSM. In the 2023/24 school year, fixed term exclusions were at 21.7% for children eligible for FSM compared to 5.47% for other children. Rates for permanent exclusion is almost five times the rate for non-FSM eligible; 0.29% compared 0.06% (DfE, 2024).

The Attainment Gap

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, 51.5% of children eligible for free school meals reach a ‘good level of development’ (an expected level across all twelve early learning goals) by the end of the foundation stage as opposed to 72% of children not eligible for FSM (DfE, 2024). By the time they start school, disadvantaged children are already 4.6 months behind their peers (Education Policy Institute, 2024b; The Sutton Trust, 2024). This grows during primary school to 9.3 months by

the end of Year 6. Between Year 7 and Year 11, this gap grows by another 9 months, to 18.1 months. Research from the Department of Education (2024) also shows that there is a 21% attainment gap between children and young people eligible for FSM and their non-eligible for FSM peers in terms of achieving at least five 'good' GCSE grades (Grades 5-9). The disadvantage gap index (which summarises the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and all other pupils) has increased from 2.91 in 2019 to 3.92 in 2024 (DfE, 2024). As well as this, although the 16 – 19 disadvantage gap has remained stable since 2019, disadvantaged students have less likely to continue education beyond key stage 4 (Education Policy Institute, 2024b). In research by Pescod and Gander (2024), into the education experiences of homeless young people (HYP), it was found that low attainment in statutory education is a barrier to future education, employment and training (EET). Pescod and Garner (2024) posit that a main facilitator of accessing EET are opportunities for work experience and qualifications which highlights the importance of CYP from LSES continuing education beyond key stage 4. The research also indicates that HYP's access to EET is not entirely a personal choice but a result of systemic influences impacting on the motivation of the individual (Pescod & Garner, 2024).

The Interaction of SEND and 'Disadvantage'

Figure 1 shows that in schools in England the number of children who are eligible for free school meals and also have SEND is 39.3% and 43.8% for children with an EHC Plan who are eligible for FSM, compared with 22.2% of children who do not have SEND (DfE, 2024). The attainment gap is greatest for those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those assessed with special educational needs (DfE, 2024).

Figure 1

Percentage of pupils with SEND and FSM eligibility

	17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Total	.0	13.6	15.4	17.3	20.8	22.5	23.8	24.6	25.7
Education, Health and Care plans	.4	31.0	32.8	34.6	38.0	39.7	41.1	42.2	43.8
SEN support / SEN without an EHC plan	.5	24.7	27.3	29.9	34.3	36.4	37.5	38.3	39.3
No identified SEN	.8	11.5	13.2	14.9	18.2	19.7	20.8	21.4	22.2

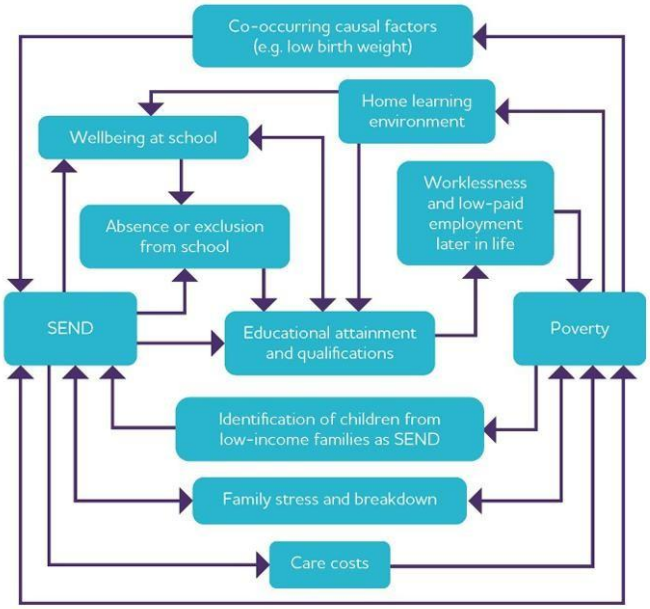
Note. Taken from *Special educational needs in England* (DfE, 2024).

There is a strong established link between socioeconomic disadvantage and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (Anders et al., 2011; Lenkeit et al., 2022; Misik & Barnhardt, 2024; Shaw et al., 2016). The interaction between poverty and SEN is strongly evidenced across the research (Misik & Barnhardt, 2024). It has been said that SEND is both a cause and effect of poverty (Shaw et al., 2016). In fact, the Department for Education report SEN in England 2023 (DfE, 2023) shows higher rates of SEND identification in areas with higher deprivation.

The links between LSES and SEND are complex and multifaceted as shown in figure 2; different elements of this diagram and aspects of LSES are explored further in this literature review.

Figure 2

Links between SEND and LSES



Note. Taken from *Special educational needs and their links to poverty* (JRF, 2016).

However, research from the Education Endowment Foundation (2017), shows that there are some schools which 'buck the trend'. One hypothesis put forward by the EEF (2017) is that for schools with fewer CYP from LSES, benefit from 'peer effect' meaning that CYP from LSESs' outcomes are influenced by the actions and characteristics of their peers (Bäckström, 2023). However, the reasons for the success of CYP from LSES in certain schools remains unclear throughout the literature.

Covid 19 and CYP from LSES

Children's lives in COVID 19 were subject to unparalleled restriction (Cameron et al., 2023). A study by Cameron found that for those living in low-income households, especially in families suffering overcrowding with no outside space, their relational participatory and activity were significantly diminished (Cameron et al., 2023).

Schools also only received half of the intended million free laptops which were largely intended for children from low socio-economic status (DfE, 2020). Ninety percent of families from LSES saw a significant drop in their living standards because of the combination of a decline in income and rise in living costs (CPAG, 2020). Ofsted raised fears about the children who were out of sight during school closures with falling referrals to social care (Ofsted, 2020a). It is also thought that many children will have been exposed to domestic violence and parental mental illness without having the usual channels of support of methods of reporting incidents. Stanley et al (2022) examined the emergence of community touch points for victims of DA. It was found that due to digital poverty these touch points were less accessible to families from a LSES (Stanley et al., 2022). Mindel et al. (2022) outline that children with existing vulnerabilities including poverty (although vulnerable had a broader definition in this paper), faced an increased risk of poor outcomes during the COVID 19 lockdowns. A paper by McKinney (2023) states that the lockdowns exacerbated the disadvantages experienced by children from LSES particularly digital exclusion and food insecurity. (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). There is some emerging evidence that these effects are predicted to be long term and particularly bad for CYP (Whitehead et al., 2021). In a report by the British Academy, it is outlined that COVID had cultural social and economic effects which have a long-term impact on CYP from LSES. The paper states that structural inequalities are rising in communities and that for children there are likely long term physical and health implications. Some studies suggest that the educational discrepancies in terms of GCSE results will never be corrected (Anders et al., 2021; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020)

Papers broadly agree that the impact of COVID 19 was worse for children and families from LSES.

The Effects of LSES on Children and Families

The Family and Stress Models

Families from LSES face other issues aside from financial difficulties such as low levels of education and few qualifications, lack of access to jobs and services, isolation, mental and physical ill health and domestic violence (Chen & Miller, 2013; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2025). These factors are said to interact with each other, therefore clarifying the exact elements which negatively influence the family is complex. There is evidence that poverty is associated with adverse child health and developmental outcomes in the short term, as well as increased risk of chronic diseases and mental illnesses over the life course (Schmidt et al., 2021). Family stress has also been said to alter CYPs' physiological response systems so that children who have experienced significant family stress will have more difficulty selfregulating when faced with external demands (Evans & Kim, 2013).This is widely attributed to the impact of having fewer resources, the stress this causes and the ecological pressure that having low resources brings which affects parenting behaviour (Eckstein-Madry et al., 2021). Some studies have shown that parents from low socio-economic status may be less affectionate and sensitive in parent–child interactions and may be more likely to use harsh disciplinary behaviours (Arditti et al., 2010; Iruka et al., 2018). The adverse parenting style negatively impacts both stress regulation and attachment style (Iruka et al., 2018; Koehn & Kerns, 2018).

Most research on SES and outcomes for CYP and families has been guided by the Family Stress Model (Gard et al., 2020). The Family Stress Model framework suggests that lack of household income can increase caregiver psychological distress, which in turn can impact child and youth development negatively (Conger & Conger, 2002; Conger et al., 2010; Masarik & Conger, 2017). Research states that this leads to psychological distress, family conflict and parenting which is harsh and lacks warmth leading to CYP exhibiting negative internalising and externalising behaviours (Chen et al., 2024; Eckshtain et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2016; Masarik & Conger, 2017; Reising et al., 2012). These acute and chronic stress episodes put parents and children at risk of psychological and relational difficulties (Masarik & Conger, 2017). The FSM (Conger & Conger, 2002; Conger et al., 2010; Masarik & Conger, 2017) outlines how families can have difficulties across several domains relating to their economic challenges as well as the effects of economic hardships and pressures and how they directly exacerbate child and adolescent developmental challenges through disrupted parenting (Conger et al., 2021; Masarik & Conger, 2017).

The literature appears to strongly indicate that family stress is associated with negative consequences for CYP, and it appears that economic hardship and pressures have a direct impact on child and adolescent presentation. However, the research does indicate that this can be mediated and may not be as directly causal as it appears in the literature. In a more recent study, Conger separated out the element of ‘family assets’ and found it had a mediating effect on the degree of psychological wellbeing of parents and had the effect of more positive internalising and externalising behaviours (Chen et al., 2024) which in turn had a positive impact

on the children in the family. Although it was further confirmed in a longitudinal study (Rose et al., 2024), that family stress leads to increased negative child development outcomes, it was suggested that there are limitations to the Family Stress Model in terms of the interaction of mediating factors. In a multi-level meta-analysis, (Jensen et al., 2022) found that CYP's feelings of stress were perhaps more strongly linked to parental differential treatment of siblings rather than contexts that have the potential to cause stress. The analysis identifies that the moderating role of different parenting interactions should be further considered (Jensen et al., 2022). There are also questions about the generalisability of the FSM as it is mainly applied in countries with high income (Roubinov & Boyce, 2017). In a longitudinal study by (Gard et al., 2020) there are criticisms of the FSM due to the over reliance or unilateral view of the economic aspects of the family unit and variations in elements such as parental education and parental status are not considered even though they have varying effects on child outcomes (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002 as cited in Gard et al., 2020).

There is also an over focus on the two-parent unit throughout the FSM (Zietz et al., 2022) with an over focus on mothers. Definitions of 'family' and 'household' are limited in this research with diversity and instability, particularly for ethnic minority families and families with young children, not explored, families are instead presented as a homogenous group throughout the research (Barnett, 2008). Throughout the literature on FSM there is very little discussion of protective factors (Gonzales et al., 2001) or individual differences of children and families from LSES. There is also an absence of child voice, in fact children are viewed as passive recipients of parenting throughout the literature (Parke, 2004).

Attachment and LSES

Attachment theory (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969) outlines the relationship between CYP and their caregivers. The quality of these relationships which are formed in the early years of a child's life influences children developmentally. Secure attachments are linked to caregivers' responsiveness and sensitivity to the child's needs whereas neglectful, inconsistent parenting can result in insecure or disordered attachments.

Research characterises poverty as stressful for caregivers and therefore increasing the risk of adverse effects on attachment. Research links poverty and disordered attachment (Belsky & Fearon, 2002; Lovejoy et al., 2000) as also posited by the family stress model (Conger & Conger, 2002). However, not all CYP from LSES develop insecure or disordered attachment. Research indicates that several factors mediate these effects. Interventions for parents are shown to moderate stress and caregiving (Crnic et al., 1983) as do early intervention programmes for families (Berlin et al., 2008; Dozier et al., 2006; Geoffroy et al., 2010).

Generational Poverty

Research also shows that LSES is not just a socioeconomic barrier. LSES can have a negative effect on children developmentally. Research indicates that living in LSES is associated with long term adverse health outcomes including tooth decay, small birth weight, obesity and a predisposition to asthma. Greater poverty appears to equal greater health impacts (Wickham et al., 2016).

The issue of lower standards of health and the implications of this in terms of children remaining in poverty throughout generations is evidenced strongly in the

research. There is evidence in the literature that poverty persists across generations known as ‘generational poverty’. In the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report ‘Special educational needs and their links to poverty’ (2016), it is stated that children from low-income backgrounds in the UK are more likely to either be born with SEND or be identified as having SEND during their education career. Research shows that living in an impoverished environment can affect prefrontal cortex functioning (Kishiyama et al., 2009) as well as affecting levels of cortisol in children (Brown et al., 2023). Children from LSES backgrounds are more likely to live in inadequate housing (Garbett, 2023). This in turn impacts on their well-being (Clair, 2019). In a 2010 UK government review to address health inequalities (Marmot et al., 2010) it was concluded that health and social inequalities are linked and it was put forward that health can only be improved through addressing social determinates of health. Dialogues around poverty and throughout the literature generally indicate that the negative outcomes of poverty are strong and well established. However, some authors question the validity of this accepted causal effect. A review by Patel and Kleinman (2003), indicates that the evidence for this widely accepted association is actually weak when purely considering income levels. This study suggests that factors such as the experience of insecurity and hopelessness, rapid social change and the risks of violence and physical ill-health may explain the greater vulnerability of the poor to common mental disorders rather than the ‘cascade down’ effect of parenting as suggested by Conger and the FSM (Conger & Conger, 2002; Conger et al., 2010; Masarik & Conger, 2017). Baum (2011) talks of the perceived ‘culture of the poor’ an idea used to characterise the values of people who live in poverty as holding them there, but Baum (2011) points out that this implies that the poor have access to economic opportunities, which in reality they do not have.

LSES and ACEs

One of the frameworks currently widely used in educational contexts is the Adverse Childhood Experiences model (Feletti, 1998). This questionnaire is used by education professionals to associate adversity with negative outcomes (Webster, 2022) and is also frequently referred to throughout the literature. It measures traumatic events in childhood such as abuse, neglect and 'family dysfunction' and these 'dysfunctions' are often linked to LSES. One study uses the family stress model (Conger & Conger, 2002) to examine the effect of economic hardship on ACEs, in effect, directly linking the two concepts together implying causality (Rose et al., 2024). Felitti et al. (1998) concluded that four or more ACEs predicted higher prevalence of health risks in adulthood directly connecting childhood experiences with a trajectory of negative outcomes. There is strong evidence for the ACEs trajectory (Bellis et al., 2014; Hughes et al., 2017), but in a review by Asmussen (2020) it is concluded that this framework should be used with caution as the ACEs narrative has become dominant which has resulted in several misconceptions which overlook the limitations of the model. The review by Asmussen (2020) also highlights that adverse experiences are complex and that there are ethical considerations when using this quite deterministic framework. As the ACEs concept has become more popular in the context of policy which informs interventions, concerns have emerged. As a probabilistic and population-level tool, it is not adapted to diagnose individual-level vulnerabilities, an approach which could ultimately exacerbate inequalities (Kelly-Irving & Delpierre, 2019). Anda et al. (2020) refer to the ACEs framework as a crude measure and it is pointed out that the ACEs scores are also not standardised. Bateson et al. (2019) highlights the methodological challenges of the model and states that the 'predictive validity has

not been proven' and the ACEs scores are generally applied retrospectively (Bateson et al., 2019, pp.4-5). The EIF report (Anda et al., 2020) recommends more evidence into the application of the
ACEs Framework.

The Interaction of LSES and Education

School 'Readiness' and LSES

The effects of poverty on children are multi-faceted and complex. It is now known that the foundations of lifelong health are built early with evidence indicating that this also occurs prenatally (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2020). This also impacts school readiness in terms of the essential executive functions needed to self-regulate and function in the classroom context (Blair & Raver, 2015). There is much discussion across the media about 'school readiness' (Kay, 2022). It is broadly accepted that children from LSES do not achieve as well as their peers (Street, 2021). Early Childhood Education & Care policies (ECEC) (Barnett, 2011; van Huizen & Plantenga, 2018) have been at the forefront of government attempts to fix the attainment gaps with, what seems like the assumption, that this will facilitate better economic mobility and therefore the wellbeing of each child (Metcalfe & Davison, 2025).

A self-regulation intervention was seen to have a positive impact on the maths and literacy scores of children (Duncan et al., 2018). However, Blair and Raver (2015), posit that when kindergarten teachers were asked what constitutes 'school readiness' they mostly spoke of self-regulation skills rather than academic achievements. Ofsted's view of school readiness is showcased in their 'Bold Beginnings' (Ofsted, 2017) document which is a review of what is deemed

successful in outstanding EY contexts. It is notable that in the main Key Findings (Ofsted, 2017, p. 5), relational approaches are not mentioned, rather ‘success’ is spoken of, almost exclusively, in terms of academic success such as improvements in maths and literacy.

Distributive approaches or resource-based approaches to school readiness is the leading approach to ‘levelling up’ the experiences of children from LSES. This is largely addressed through the Pupil Premium policy in England (DfE, 2011). Street (2015) talks of the difference between distributive approaches and relational approaches and argues that although distributive approaches and equal and fair access to education seems like a just approach, relational approaches are an embedded process which encourages more of a process of belonging for children (Street, 2015). However relational approaches are normally only applied in adult contexts despite evidence for their success being well documented (Gilligan, 2000; Ruch, 2005). Another element to addressing school readiness for CYP from LSES is explored in a paper by (Domina et al., 2017). Despite aiming to provide an equal education, schools sort students based on factors like age, ability, and socioeconomic status, which can perpetuate social inequalities. The categories created by schools influence the overall inequality in society, and the process of sorting students into these categories can generate and reinforce social inequalities which echoes Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory. The evidence for the positive impact of relational approaches is strong, (Blair & Raver, 2015; Domek et al., 2023) with research largely pointing to supporting social emotional development and selfregulation to strengthen cognitive development for children from LSES (Bierman et al., 2008; Riggs et al., 2006). It was also notable that when searching literature to

inform this particular line of enquiry, the researcher found a significant volume of research from the USA and only six UK specific papers which address LSES and school readiness.

Impact of LSES on Children's Cognition

Language, Cognition and LSES

As already discussed, economic hardship puts strain on CYP and families. This in turn has an impact on the health, mental health and behaviour of children from LSES (Chen & Miller, 2013; Marmot et al., 2020). A Department for Health survey showed that one in five children in families with low incomes suffered from mental health conditions (Newlove-Delgado T et al., 2023) with poverty as the most pervasive contributing factor (Graham & Maughan, 2025). Neurodevelopmental conditions such as ADHD also show high social differences (Graham & Maughan, 2025; Pulcini et al., 2017). Research also indicates that child deprivation predicted children would be more likely to be bullied and victimised in school (Chen et al., 2021). There are two competing hypotheses around what holds people in poverty namely the social selection hypothesis and the social causation hypothesis (Kirkbride et al., 2024). The social selection hypothesis is the notion that there is a higher prevalence of mental health conditions in LSES populations, the opposing argument to this is the social causation hypothesis; a person's economic situation causes psychopathologies, rather than the other way around, resulting in the 'drift' into poverty, (Freeman et al., 2016; Murali, 2004). LSES during childhood has immediate effects on cognitive ability and neurological activity across several domains, the worst affected functions include language and regulation of cognitive resources like attention and planning (JRF, 2015). One of the most significant cognitive skills in education are executive

functioning skills due to their role in planning, attention, memory, impulse control and cognitive flexibility (Blair, 2016; Diamond, 2013). Research highlights that LSES in childhood has detrimental effects on executive functioning (Cybele Raver et al., 2013) and evidence for this is cross cultural (Haft & Hoeft, 2017) these effects are long term and last into adulthood (Evans et al., 2021).

There has been an association with LSES and poor language skills for over half a century (Schatzman & Strauss, 1955). Children from disadvantaged background tend to perform poorly on measures of education attainment (Law et al., 2011). Expressive and receptive language are said to predict later academic achievement in reading and maths (Purpuraa & Ganley, 2014; Ramsook et al., 2020; Turnbull et al., 2022). Hart and Risley (1995), described the well-known 30-million-word gap which posits that by age three CYP from higher SES hear on average over 30 million words more than CYP from LSES in the home supporting that quantity of caregiver input and CYP language development are related. Fernald et al. (2013) found that there were discrepancies in language processing efficiency by 18 months and by 24 months there was a 6-month gap in processing skills critical to language development. However, in a paper by Ellwood-Lowe et al. (2020) they investigate the reason for the ‘word gap’ and rather than attributing it to differing levels of parental knowledge between parents from different SES. Ellwood-Lowe et al. (2020) found that parents tend to speak less to their CYP during periods of financial scarcity and that mid to higher SES parents engage in fewer back and forth interactions at the end of the month when they may suffer more financial hardship. Indicating that structural environmental constraints affect how much parents speak to their children.

There is increasing evidence which states that the toxic stress the brain suffers when children live in poverty affects physiological and neurobiological development, and that this is potentially responsible for poverty related gaps in academic achievement (Blair & Raver, 2012, 2016). This has also been linked to school readiness as the level of skills in cognition, language, physical and social emotional affect the degree to which children can acquire new skills (Turnbull et al., 2022).

In a frequently quoted study by Noble et al. (2005) it was shown that children from a kindergarten had a reduction in ability for the LSES group in all five areas tested by a series of standardised cognitive tests. These effects were said to be particularly significant in the areas of the brain concerned with language and executive function in CYP from LSES (Blair & Raver, 2016). This appears to indicate that children's language is negatively impacted by poverty as early as two years of age Noble et al. (2015), supporting the idea that an impoverished environment has a detrimental impact on language skills (Fernald et al., 2013). A paper by Hoff (2003), directly attributes language deficits to differences in maternal SES and links a deficit in productive language in two-year-olds, to the properties of maternal speech. However, in a paper by (Law et al., 2011), it was found that there was a deficit in the areas of semantic and syntactic language, but this was not true across all measures of communication, and it was found that on Gathercole and Baddeley's non word repetition test (1996) scores were within the normal range for CYP from LSES. It is hypothesised in the paper that the phonological nature of this test makes it less susceptible to environmental disruption and therefore strengthens the case that CYP living in a LSES are affected by their environment rather than a 'genetic' or 'innate' lack of ability in terms of language acquisition. Levine (2020) posits that

children's language must be addressed with a clear understanding of vocabulary, syntax and language learning processes and how these integrate for children from low and mid-SES families. Levine (2020) found that CYP from LSES are limited by their knowledge of vocabulary, syntax and language learning processes by age 3. In terms of long-term effects of this language deficiency, Gilkerson et al. (2018), found that the hypothesis that early talk and interaction can be used to predict school age language and cognitive outcomes.

School readiness is complex and multidimensional and includes several broad developmental areas such as language skills and self-regulation (Garon-Carrier et al., 2024; Goble & Pianta, 2017). There is a focus on academic skills in the literature Goble and Pianta (2017). Yet there is also evidence in the literature of the importance of relational and social skills for children (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). In a paper by (Wilcox et al., 2021), it is argued that there is a disconnect between the fields of educational neuroscience and educational psychology. Wilcox et al. (2021) states that "The emerging discipline of educational neuroscience stands at a crossroads between those who see great promise in integrating neuroscience and education and those who see the disciplinary divide as insurmountable". It is concluded that more joined up thinking between the two disciplines would enable more educational neuroscience evidence to be translated to the classroom and create more of an understanding around school readiness. "School psychologists represent untapped potential in their knowledge, skillset, and placement to serve a vital role in building the bridge between neuroscience and education" (Wilcox et al., 2021).

LSES and the Role of Schools and Staff

Government Impact on School Approaches to Poverty

It is acknowledged across the literature that policies to eradicate the impact of poverty on children over the last twenty years through both New Labour and the coalition government have lacked consistency and coherence. This is due to a lack of clarity and assumptions about the causes of poverty (Burn & Childs, 2016). Simpson et al. (2017) highlights what they call the neoliberal prioritisation of 'social investment' to improve life chances via access to services such as early childhood education and care (ECEC). This is seen as a positive approach, as it enables mothers to find employment but Simpson (2015) highlights that there is complexity in the issue of LSES and the measure of mothers in employment does not directly address relationships or children's cultural capital.

The neoliberal construction of child poverty being a problem of the poor and their deficits may not reflect the social reality (Simpson et al., 2015). Simpson (2015) perceives early childhood education and care interventions (ECHC) as only as good as the understanding of the practitioners in the classroom, who in turn are guided by rigid academic EYFS goals which Simpson feels makes practitioners less sensitive and less empathetic to the challenges children from LSES may face in achieving these goals. Simpson (2013) sees this as reducing the issue to 'diagnosis and treatment', the subtext being, that the issue of supporting children from LSES is just not that simple. Practitioners conceptualised child poverty as a problem of child development, reduced to the 'wrong type of parenting'. The research hypothesises that preschool practitioners have internalized the UK Coalition government's discursive formation of child poverty and social justice. Their narratives indicate that

they are regulative and restrictive in their thinking and actions, due to the policy technology accompanying the child poverty strategy and related reforms (Simpson et al., 2015).

School Staff and CYP from LSES

Ellis et al. (2016) found that 82% of student teachers came from middle to high income backgrounds, and when asked about the impact of LSES on pupils' educational outcomes, 81% cited parents' and carers' attitudes to education as the largest factor. The study also found that 24% of student teachers disagreed that there was a link between poverty and educational achievement, and many of those who believed in a link fell back on family and child deficit models to explain it (Ellis et al., 2016). The findings suggest that student teachers tend to attribute low achievement to family and cultural (as in the culture of poverty) factors rather than socioeconomic or school-based factors. Positively, some student teachers' opinions and thinking around the issue of LSES changed during their teacher training (Thompson et al., 2016). This research emphasises the importance of incorporating social justice commitments into teacher education to improve the learning experiences of early career teachers (ECTs) (Simpson, 2013).

The research literature does support the idea that although teachers do not often have lived experience of being from LSES, it is possible for them to develop more complex understandings of social, cultural, economic and political matters which are closer to the lived experience of CYP from LSES than beliefs evidenced in this particular study (Lingard et al., 2003; Munn et al., 2013). This leads to a more holistic understanding of the child and an adaptation of practice rather than perceiving a ‘learning deficit’ as the ‘problem’ (Lupton & Thrupp, 2013).

Passy and Ovenden-Hope (2020) situate their research against the backdrop of austerity measures and their impact. The theme of the lack of clarity around a socially just education system was explored and the research indicates that school leaders believe in the potential of young people to break out of poverty and perceive the school system as 'unfair' yet were complicit in academisation which Passy and Ovenden-Hope (2020) see as contradictory as it moves away from democratic oversight of local authorities.

This mirrors the broader sentiment in this research, which is that there is confusion at all levels around how to 'solve' the issue of child poverty and its impact in schools. An acknowledgement of the impact of environment has enabled schools to be or has placed schools into a role where they can, or should, mitigate these perceived sociopolitical influences and their impact on children (Hanley et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2025). The DfE openly position schools as institutions which should offer practical and emotional support in terms of wellbeing. In 2021 the government issued guidance around ways to guide and support children's mental health (DfE, 2021). Contradictions and dilemmas in policy making is hampering any progress in terms of social justice in schools and that arguments on how to achieve equality has been played out over decades (Francis et al., 2017).

Street (2022) argues that child voice is also underrepresented in the literature and raises, what can be described as the 'philosophical issue' of children living in poverty being treated as 'bounded individuals' (that is, having limited time, information and cognitive resources to make decisions). Rather than schools focusing on resources, which is a perceived solution which runs through the literature, Street (2021, 2022)

argues that a relational approach may be the most beneficial approach for schools to take and suggests relational approaches to well-being, which prioritise the collective and the social and have the potential to improve educational outcomes for children from LSES. The research suggests that children's wellbeing, rather than being merely an individual characteristic or aspiration, is interdependent with their social and material environments, as are the institutions that support them. Lyndon (2022) explored early years practitioners' narratives around poverty and discovered that staff experiences of poverty inform how far they can emphasise with CYP from LSES. The study identified that how practitioners position others within LSES needs to be addressed to facilitate practitioners' ability to support children from LSES effectively.

Protective Factors

Resilience

Masten (2018) characterises resilience as good outcomes despite serious threats to adaptation or development. Poverty increases the risk of negative developmental outcomes. Masten's (2001) concept of 'ordinary magic' puts forward the idea that overcoming difficult circumstances is not exceptional, but as a result of very human adaptational systems and appropriate support. Masten does not view resilience as exceptional or 'magical'. Ungar, (2011; 2021) also rejects the idea of resilience being innate and takes a more socioecological view. Ungar differs from Masten in that he sees the individual's capacity to cope as a factor. He posits that being able to navigate systems such as schools is a factor in success, but also how responsive those systems are, which is where CYP from LSES face barriers and constrained access. Reay (2017) refers to this as 'resistance' where families from LSES assert

the value of their own ‘culture’ through refusing to accept the dominant narratives while asserting their own cultural worth through, for example, maintaining their home accents and embedding themselves in their communities. Parental advocacy is also seen as a way of ‘resistance’ with parents asserting their own knowledge of their children going against prevalent views of LSES parents being disengaged. Luthar (1991; 2000) outlines that resilience is not immunity to stress and that CYP who appear to function well may suffer internally, Luthar (2000) sees strong relationships with a caring adult as a powerful predictor of success (or a protective factor), reflecting the FSM to some degree, Luthar (2016) argues that maternal mental health and parental support is critical for CYP mental health and proposes that resilience comes at a cost and indicates that children perceived as ‘successful’ by conventional measures still need support. Luthar (1991; 2000), outlines how poverty puts a chronic emotional burden on CYP and see resilience as a relational and contextual process rather than an innate fixed trait. Evans and De France (2022) conducted longitudinal study into children who appeared emotionally resilient despite growing up in LSES. It was concluded that these children had higher levels of chronic physiological stress indicating the long-term implications of the stress of poverty.

The literature does agree that strong relationships can be a buffer to the negative effects of poverty and that these relationships should occur across the ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2005). This could be said to mirror the tension in the literature about relational approaches vs distributional approaches. Research on resilience seems to say that relational approaches are

paramount and that interventions should focus on strengthening existing systems such as caregiver support or school connectedness (Sabol & Pianta, 2012).

Positive Childhood Experiences

Links are made throughout the literature between ACEs and socioeconomic status (Jaffee et al., 2018; Marryat & Frank, 2019; Sege & Harper Browne, 2017). However, it is also acknowledged that Positive Childhood Experiences can act as a 'buffer' to these effects. Bethell et al. (2019), found that there are seven different positive experiences which lead to good emotional and mental health outcomes in adults. The PCEs put forward by Bethell et al. (2019) are; the ability to talk with family about feelings, family are supportive during difficult times, participation in community traditions, a sense of belonging in high school, support from friends, having at least two non-parent adults who genuinely cared, feeling safe and protected by an adult in the home. However, the exact causal effect of PCEs and how they act as a buffer to ACEs is currently understudied (Kocatürk & Çiçek, 2023) and the concept has been criticised for being a simplification of child development (Samji et al., 2024).

Summary of the Literature

The most striking thing about the literature is the absence of UK based literature specifically about the role of the educational psychologist in relation to CYP from LSES.

The literature is clear on the profound impact which poverty has on children in terms of cognition and social emotional difficulties. There is also a consensus on the long-term impact these difficulties can have. The lack of the voice of children from LSES was striking as was the lack of the voice of their families. Most of the research is from the perspective of professionals. There is psychological research which

addresses LSES but there is a lack of specific educational psychology research and most of this research is from the USA.

The complexity of the reasons for LSES permeates the literature, and it is acknowledged that thinking around the way to ameliorate poverty has been complicated by successive government initiatives. To compound this further, there is a lack of clarity in the research itself around the best approaches to support CYP from LSES. For example, the debate between relational approaches and approaches which specifically support cognition plus debates about distributional approaches to poverty. There is also an issue surrounding the perceptions of education staff at all levels, and the need for training and support about the true nature and impact of poverty on children. Parents were also often positioned as the ones to blame throughout the literature.

Relevance to the EP Profession and Practice

It is acknowledged by the researcher that there is no UK based direct research about the EP role specifically, when working with children from LSES. However, during the writing of this research a chapter by Clinton et al. (2024), was published outlining poverty during childhood and its implications for school psychologists. This chapter addresses approaches to ameliorating LSES from a broad geographical and more global perspective and does not focus on any particular nations' education system such as the UK.

LSES has huge relevance to the practice of educational psychologists due to its close links with children's SEND and wellbeing as shown throughout this literature review. As members of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), EPs have

social and ethical duties of care to “promote and protect the interests of service users” (HCPC, 2016, p.5). This would imply that EPs have a responsibility to promote and protect CYP from the effects of LSES. The EP role is to promote inclusive thinking and equality and there is specific legislation which directs EPs to do this such as the Children and Families Act, 2014, SEND Code of Practice, 2015 and the Equality Act, 2010; Equality Act and Schools 2014**.** The researcher acknowledges that these policies and professional standards do not address children from LSES directly, but across the literature the evidence for the impact of poverty on children and the link with SEND is undeniable.

The overarching role of educational psychologists is made up of the five functions namely consultation, assessment, training, intervention and research (Currie, 2002). Jones et al. (2019) believe that educational psychology research can build upon current understandings, empirically informing educational practices. Specifically in England, schools are governed by the SEND Code of Practice. The SEND Code of Practice emphasises the crucial role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) in supporting children and young people with SEND, requiring their advice to be sought and considered during EHC needs assessments and the development of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, with EPs providing independent, holistic, and strengths-based perspectives (SEND COP, 2014).

Educational Psychology Services (EPS) play a key role in supporting the development, learning, and wellbeing of children and young people aged 0 to 25. EPs within these services work with education settings across the age range, including special schools and alternative provision schools, and other services, such

as health and social care, to support the most vulnerable children and young people, and those with the most complex needs (Atfield et al., 2023).
The literature around the role of the EP when working with children from LSES is non-existent yet the evidence across the literature indicates that the impact of poverty on CYP is profound and strongly linked to SEND.

The lack of research and therefore understanding and consideration of poverty across the profession is glaring. It is notable that on the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) website (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2024) there is an analysis of equality and diversity of applicants to the doctorate course yet there is no analysis of the socio-economic status of applicants. In a paper by (Embeita & Birch, 2024), findings suggest that EPs' understanding of social justice centres around five main areas: fairness, equity and equality, awareness, advocacy, and cultural competence. Current BPS guidelines do not make direct reference to social justice (Kuria & Kelly, 2023). However, the BPS did release an article “from poverty to flourishing” which exclusively focusses on tackling poverty through psychology. The HCPC state that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is another key focus of the standards (pg 1). Standard 5 states that practitioners must recognise the impact of culture, equality and diversity on practice and practise in a non-discriminatory and inclusive manner pg 9. The Equality Act, 2010 defines the protected characteristics as age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. Poverty or socioeconomic status is not a protected characteristic, yet the literature highlights the relevance to EP practice. Furthermore, Thomas (2022), points out that EPs from LSES face specific barriers when accessing the doctorate.

Therefore, although not directly highlighted in the HCPC standards, the evidence strongly indicates that a child's SES should be a consideration and needs to be embedded across EP practice.

Rationale for this Study

Research indicates that it is paramount that the socioeconomic status of each child and family is considered and that the challenges of LSES permeate all aspects of a CYP's life. As seen across the literature, schools have children who are from LSES in their cohort and so will need advice on how to support these children. Every school produces a 'pupil premium strategy' and as educational psychologists aim to work systemically with schools, advising schools on ways to implement interventions and whole school strategies would align with the EP role.

There is no UK based research specifically about EP role and children from LSES. As LSES and poverty are beginning to gain traction and is more 'on the agenda' as seen through the BPS 'from poverty to flourishing' campaign (British Psychological Society, 2021), then this necessitates a study which explores the role of the EP when working with children from LSES.

Research Questions

RQ1: What do Educational Psychologists perceive as the key barriers faced by children and young people from low socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds?

RQ2: What roles do Educational Psychologists believe they can play in addressing the challenges associated with LSES, and what recommendations do they propose for future practice?

Chapter 2

Empirical Paper

Abstract

Research supports that children from LSES do not achieve educational success in line with their peers from more affluent backgrounds. Children from a LSES face specific barriers such as health, cognition and language challenges. However, across the literature there is a lack of clarity about the best way to address the impact of poverty and support CYP from LSES. There are also questions raised about the true nature of the equality of access to resources for children from LSES and their families within the broader education system. There is a close relationship and crossover between CYP with SEND and CYP from LSES in schools in England. As a social group children also endure the highest rates of poverty and there is a lack of research specifically relating to how educational psychologists can or do ameliorate the negative impact of LSES on CYP. This research explored the experiences of ten qualified EPs practicing in England using online semi-structured interviews. Data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Findings highlight that there are many ways that EPs play a role in ameliorating poverty, but that EPs perceive that inequality of access to resources still exists. The EP perceptions of the negative impact on CYP are discussed as well as, difficulties which EPs encountered personally and systemically when working with this group. Implications for EP practice and broader multiagency services are discussed. The results also raised several areas for further research.

Introduction

Across the literature various terms are used when referring to LSES and it is generally acknowledged that LSES is a concept which is difficult to define (Cook & Lawson, 2016; Palacios-Barrios & Hanson, 2019). Low socioeconomic status and poverty are used interchangeably, and other terms are used such as ‘deprived’, ‘vulnerable’ and ‘working class’. Easterbrook (2020) posits that a reason for this is the erosion of class identities which contributes to the lack of clarity. Manstead (2018) challenges this ‘disappearance’ of class identifiers yet does agree that socioeconomic status encompasses a person’s stake in society and community (Abo Hamza et al., 2024) plus their access to education and occupations are considered markers of social mobility and therefore SES (Diemer, 2013). LSES therefore seems a more accurate term for the purposes of this research. CYP from LSES is the term which will be used throughout this research however the researcher may revert to the predominant term used in particular pieces of literature to aid clarity. Poverty is a worldwide phenomenon (United Nations, 2024a), and several international initiatives have attempted to address and eradicate poverty. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2024) aim to end poverty in all forms everywhere by 2030 but currently 160 million CYP globally are predicted to be living in extreme poverty by 2030. The United Nation’s (UN) report (United Nations, 2024a) highlights three global megatrends or shifts which are said to have an impact on global poverty. These megatrends are demographic changes, frontier technologies and the environmental crisis. These trends have compounded the need for effective implementation of health and social programmes as the growth of an aging population and an increase in children worldwide has created a need for

this implementation (United Nations, 2024a). Another significant impact on CYP living in poverty globally is climate change. Children are not experiencing this equally and one billion CYP live in countries with a high risk of environmental hazards (Hallegatte et al., 2018). It is also acknowledged that globally, CYP did not experience the COVID 19 pandemic equally which exacerbated difficulties for CYP living in LSES contexts across the globe (Rao & Fisher, 2021; UNICEF, 2021).

In the UK 4.5 million or one in three CYP are living in poverty (CPAG, 2025; JRF, 2025). CYP also have the highest rates of poverty of any social group in the UK. Child poverty is predicted to be at its highest rate in 2027/28, and deep poverty is predicted to escalate for one million CYP (JRF, 2025). Over the last two decades there have been frequent changes of government, and this has led to frequent changes of policy with successive governments adopting a more neoliberal approach with associated austerity measures becoming more prevalent (JRF, 2025). This has led to a reduction of resources for CYP from LSES, for example, the two-child benefit cap was introduced and the cost of raising a child in the UK has risen to £260,000 for couples and 290,000 for lone parents (CPAG, 2024).

LSES and Schools in England.

This research will focus on schools in England to achieve more parity of experience between participating EPs. Schools in England use free school meal eligibility as a proxy measure of disadvantage (EEF, 2017). In 2011, the Pupil Premium Policy was introduced (DfE, 2011) to address the attainment gap between CYP from LSES and their peers through extra funding. Literature and data agree that CYP from LSES in England face challenges beyond material wealth in school and they have higher rates of absence and higher exclusion rates (DfE, 2024). One of the most persistent issues is the attainment gap which is evident from the point CYP enter school in the

early years (Education Policy Institute, 2024a; The Sutton Trust, 2024). This gap grows as CYP from LSES progress through their school career culminating in a 21% attainment gap when CYP take their GCSEs. There is also a cross over between LSES and SEND with 38.8% of FSM eligible CYP having a SEND need and 42.2% of FSM eligible CYP with an EHCP have SEND compared to 21.4% of non-FSM eligible CYP (DfE, 2024). Research also shows that CYP from LSES are less likely to continue education beyond key stage 4 (Education Policy Institute, 2024b).

A Summary of the Relevant Literature

One of the conflicts running through the literature is the question of ways to address the challenges CYP from LSES face in school. The main argument is between distributive approaches that is broadening access to resources and relational approaches, prioritising relationships within positive and supportive environments (Street, 2015; Blair & Raver, 2015). In ecosystemic terms, the literature supports that the specific challenges which CYP from LSES face disrupts their development across every ecosystemic level from the microsystem through to the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2000) and therefore this constitutes strong evidence for the profound and multifaceted impact of LSES on CYP and the need for a cohesive approach in schools.

Literature around the COVID 19 pandemic indicates that the impact on children was far reaching (Child Poverty Action Group, 2024b; Patel et al., 2020) and children from LSES were impacted more severely than their non LSES peers. In a paper by Cameron et al., (2023) it was posited that the challenging environments in which CYP from LSES lived during the pandemic impacted their relational and

participatory behaviours significantly. An increase in adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (Felitti et al., 1998) during the pandemic was also evidenced in the literature (Anderson et al., 2022). It is agreed that these disadvantages were exacerbated by the lockdowns, digital exclusion, limited access to enriching environments and food insecurity (Mckinney, 2020; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). It is perhaps evidence that changes in the macro system at national and global levels had differential impacts on CYP depending upon their SES with significant negative impacts felt by CYP from LSES and evidence states that these impacts are likely long term (Whitehead, 2021).

The family context is also explored in the literature, and it is broadly accepted that poverty causes increased stress for families. The most prevalent model is Conger's family stress model (FSM) (Conger et al., 1994) which outlines how the stress that living in LSES causes can result in less affectionate parenting (Arditti et al., 2010; Iruka et al., 2018) which has an adverse effect on CYP's presentation in terms of externalising and internalising behaviours (Evans & De France, 2022). However, some research does contest this and indicates that the FSM model is perhaps too simplistic and that the stress impacting the parent, which in turn impacts the child, may not be as causal as at first thought. There may be other mediating factors such as parental differentiation of treatment of siblings and the moderating role of different parental interactions (Jensen et al., 2022). Variations of income are also shown to affect family stress. Other challenges to the theory state that there is an overfocus on the two-parent family unit and limited exploration of protective factors (Zietz et al., 2022).

Family stress links closely to the idea of generational poverty; the idea that poverty is passed down through the generations and that families get stuck in a 'poverty cycle'. The Marmot review (2010) stated that LSES environments can have a negative impact on cognition including language and that health inequalities are as result of social inequalities and calls for a holistic approach to addressing social determinants of health. However, some research does challenge this causal impact of LSES. Patel et al. (2020) state that evidence for this is weak when only income levels are considered and that the problem is more complex and multifaceted including factors such as feelings of insecurity and social changes making families from LSES more vulnerable. The idea of the 'cascade down' effect and 'culture of the poor' is challenged in the literature with the limitations of the environment and access to opportunity being framed as the main reason for CYP from LSESs' presentations rather than lifestyle 'choices' (Baum, 2011).

The question of determinism is also raised in the research. One of the tools used to determine future outcomes for CYP is the ACEs framework which is widely used in educational contexts. This was criticised in a review (EIF, 2020) due to its deterministic nature, lack of standardisation and retrospective reporting methods. The report stated that this tool has a level of prominence not appropriate for such a probabilistic and population level tool and could ultimately exacerbate inequalities (Anda et al., 2020; Kelly-Irving & Delpierre, 2019) as the predictive validity has not been proven (Bateson et al., 2019). These assumptions about CYP from LSES are also seen in research which explores the perspectives of school staff. Research around views of staff and school approaches broadly found that staff attributed the effects of poverty to 'the wrong type of parenting' and these views were expressed

by student teachers, teachers and school leaders (Ellis et al., 2016; Passy & Ovenden-Hope, 2020). The majority of student teachers in the studies were from middle to high income backgrounds which may be contributing to the 'culture of poverty' views and 'child deficit models' which teachers broadly expressed in the research. However, teachers are said to be able to develop social justice stances with more training leading to a more holistic and less deficit child deficit model of practice (Lingard et al., 2003; Munn et al., 2013).

School readiness is often spoken about in the context of Early Years Settings. Throughout the research school readiness is commented on in terms of children's self-regulation abilities and relational skills with consideration of the impact on cognition also explored. There is disagreement in the literature which seems to centre around the reasons why CYP from LSES do not achieve academically in line with their peers and research centres upon the negative impact of LSES on executive functions and communication and the reasons for this deficit (Blair & Raver, 2016; Fernald et al., 2013; Noble et al., 2005; Turnbull et al., 2022). Addressing this deficit is viewed as a way of tackling the academic disadvantage faced by CYP from LSES, with the aim of promoting social mobility. However, some papers disagree that intervention based around improving cognition is the best approach and see supporting the social and emotional needs of CYP as the primary route to helping CYP from LSES access academic achievement (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). The literature posits that self-regulation interventions and relational approaches are the key to raising the achievement of CYP from LSES (Sabel & Pianta, 2012). These opposing views illustrate the uncertainty throughout the literature of the lack of clarity around ways to tackle the impact of LSES on CYP.

Burn and Childs (2016) also attribute this to the lack of consistency in differing government policies over the years or what Simpson (2013) refers to as 'neoliberal prioritisation of social investment', some of which was directed to ECHC. This seems to trickle down into classroom practice and contribute to the confusion around the most effective approaches.

On the whole, the literature evidences that there is a lack of clarity around the approaches used to ameliorate poverty for CYP. Currently in schools in England distributive approaches are seen as the main approach and efforts to address the challenges of LSES have largely been implemented through the pupil premium policy which is based around extra funding leading to extra resources. However, the evidence for relational approaches indicates that this creates more of a sense of belonging for children. These opposing views are a tension in the literature. The researcher does acknowledge that the two may not be mutually exclusive in that more resourcing could enhance relational approaches (ie, more staff, funding being spent on nurture groups etc). Goble and Pinta (2017) highlight the focus on academic skills in the literature and raise the status of relational approaches for children (Sabel and Pianta, 2012).

The Present Study

This lack of clarity around the best approach in the literature could be said to enhance the need for the role of the EP. Given the strength of evidence about the impact of LSES on CYP and the lack of evidence regarding the role of the EP, it seems that there is a huge research gap, and it is a compelling rationale for a study that can contribute to the understanding of how EPs can have a positive impact on

CYP from LSES. There seems to be a disconnect between the unique and specific skills and understanding which EPs can bring and how far they are enabled to influence the difficulties CYP face. This link is explicitly made in a paper by Wilcox et al. (2021) which highlights the 'untapped' potential which the EP skill set could bring to the context of LSES and its impact on CYP in the school setting.

When following lines of enquiry, the researcher found that the literature is from the perspective of researchers and teaching professionals. There is an absence of parental voice and an absence of the voice of the child. These seem to be specific areas to which EPs could contribute. The crossover between SEND and LSES means that LSES falls within the HCPC standards which EPs are governed by; "promote and protect the interests of service users" (HCPC, 2016, p.5) and although LSES is not a protected characteristic, this would include CYP from LSES. EPs are also governed by the SEND COP (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015), especially through the EHCP process and are positioned to provide independent, holistic and strength-based perspectives during this process (DfH & DoH, 2015) and therefore are specifically positioned to view the child within their broader ecosystemic context. The question of LSES and its impact on CYP is also timely with the relatively recent release of the BPS "from poverty to flourishing" document (British Psychological Society, 2021) which considers the psychological role of ameliorating poverty plus the current review of the SEND crisis which seems an opportune moment to consider the impact of poverty on CYP and the role of the EP within this.

There is an absence of literature on the EP role when considering CYP from LSES in the UK, leading to a clear rationale for the current study.

Research Questions

RQ1: What do Educational Psychologists perceive as the key barriers faced by children and young people from low socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds?

RQ2: What roles do Educational Psychologists believe they can play in addressing the challenges associated with LSES, and what recommendations do they propose for future practice?

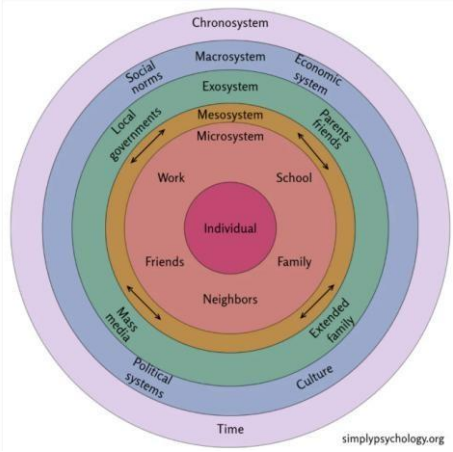
Key Psychological Theories

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2000) posited that the child, the environment and the interaction of the two, affected development over time. Bronfenbrenner conceptualised this in his ecological systems theory model which positions the child centrally within their broadening context.

Figure 3

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



Note: Image taken from and developed by simplypsychology.com.

The microsystem is the child's immediate environment and includes the child's family, school and peers. The mesosystem is the interaction of elements within the microsystem such as interactions between parents and teachers with interactions between different elements affecting the child differentially, e.g. positively or negatively. The exosystem incorporates the indirect environments which the child interacts with and which in turn act upon the child such as local services which can shape opportunity. The macrosystem is the wider cultural context which the child lives in and also incorporates the world's media. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2000) later added the chronosystem which are the events over time which influence the child such as life transitions for the child but also historical and cultural events, for example, COVID 19, which have an impact on the child's development over time. This research will consider LSES using ecological systems theory to support analysis of the interacting elements of poverty which affect a child's context.

Bourdieu and Capital, Habitus and Field

Pierre Bourdieu's theory (1984) states that the interaction of capital, habitus and field produces social inequality. According to his theory, individuals have different types of capital; economic, cultural, social and symbolic. This informs their position and power within social fields (including within educational establishments). Habitus is shaped by upbringing and experience and guides behaviours which unconsciously align with the structure of their social environment. These elements maintain existing social structures and those with more 'capital' are viewed as more likely to succeed across generations.

Modern Readings of Bourdieu.

More modern readings and interpretations of Bourdieu (1986) are still applicable. His core concepts of habitus, capital and field link to the current educational context. A key concept in modern readings is the idea of habitus and social reproduction in education, specifically in relation to inequality in education and how middle-class cultural capital is rewarded. A key researcher in this area is Diane Reay, who in her book 'miseducation' (2017), posited that the UK education system perpetuates class inequalities. To illustrate this, she draws on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Reay (2017) argues that middle class CYP are at an advantage due to a reinforcement of disadvantage. Reay posits that working class habitus is devalued with CYP from LSES ways of speaking, acting and being, generally viewed as 'deficient' (Reay, 2006). Reay links this to Bourdieu's symbolic violence where CYP internalise a lack of belonging and posits that the education system still perpetuates these inequalities.

Family Stress Models

Family stress models have been in existence since the 1940s (Hill, 1949; McCubbin & and Patterson, 1983). The family stress model (FSM) (Conger & Conger, 2002; Conger et al., 1994; Masarik & Conger, 2017) is the model which is often the lens through which economic hardship and its effects on CYP and families is viewed. This model posits that economic pressure increases parental stress which leads to harsh parenting which incorporates less warmth which causes more internalising and externalising behaviours from CYP such as ‘aggression’ ‘defiance’ and ‘withdrawal’ and ‘sadness’. This model is relevant to the current research as it illustrates the impact of LSES on a family although research does question the parental deficit narrative of poverty.

Attachment and Trauma

The FSM outlines how living in LSES can cause stress which can have an effect on the emotional availability of parents. This links to attachment theory (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969) as this stress increases the risk of insecure attachment. Secure attachments are linked to caregivers’ responsiveness and sensitivity to the child’s needs whereas less attentive, inconsistent parenting can result in insecure or disordered attachments. Bowlby and Ainsworth identified four different attachment types: secure, anxious, avoidant, and disorganised. Some research links LSES and disordered attachment (Lovejoy, et al. 2020).

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

One of the main psychological theories which relates to poverty is Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943). This theory outlines the fundamental needs a person needs to achieve self-actualisation, including physiological needs, safety, love and

belonging and esteem. This is usually represented as a pyramid. In the context of this research, it is notable that Maslow places psychological needs above physical needs implying that physical, rather than emotional needs must be met first. This theory is considered simplistic (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003) and does not consider individual difference (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). However, it can be used to consider the impact of LSES on CYP and the best approaches to the support they need.

Locus of Control

The theory of locus of control (Rotter, 1954) is a person's perception of how much control they have in a certain situation. It is a continuum which outlines whether a person feels that they can influence their situation. This relates to poverty in terms of how empowered people feel to be able to change their situation should they wish to. The theory posits that there is an internal locus of control and an external. People with an internal locus of control attribute success or failure to their own efforts and abilities whereas people with an external locus of control believe external forces such as fate or circumstance are responsible for what happens to them. The locus of control is linked to a person's motivation. Culture and life experience can shift a person's locus of control.

Social Graces

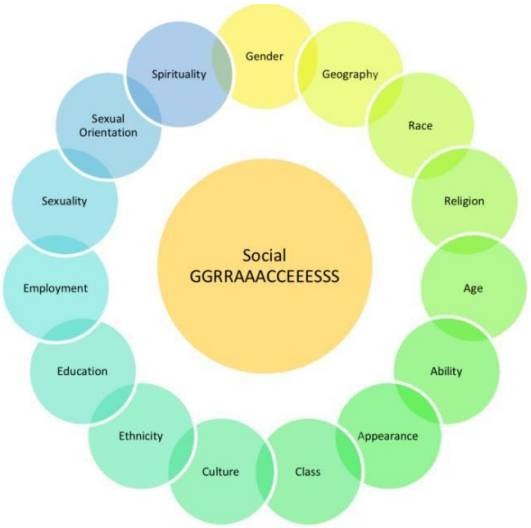
Social GRACES was developed by John Burnham (1993). It is an acronym which helps professionals to hold in mind the aspects of a person's identity. It is used widely in education, psychological and social work contexts. The Social Graces model helps professionals consider a person's identity and social position which may influence their thoughts feelings and actions including experiences of various levels of privilege and class which is particularly relevant to this research. Social

GRACES can help reduce bias, promote inclusion and improve cultural competence and sensitivity in professional practice.

Figure 4

Burnham's Social Graces Model

Figure 2 Burnham's Social Graces Model



Note. Image taken from British Association of Social Workers https://basw.co.uk/articles/socialgraces-practical-tool-address-inequality (Burnham, 2012)

Ontological and Epistemological Position

The ontological position of this research project is relativism with a social constructivist epistemology. Social constructivism is concerned with taking a critical position on generally accepted knowledge. The researcher felt that this was an appropriate position for this research especially as definitions of poverty can vary and this uncertainty of its construction aligned with an exploration of perceptions. A social constructivist perspective questions the perceptions of what we perceive to exist (Burr, 2015). Our perceptions of concepts across time, such as LSES, change and are reflective of contemporary history (Gergen, 1973). This strengthened the case for this research project to take a social constructivist position as LSES is nested in its historical, political, social and psychological context. Within the

findings, the EPs' constructs of LSES and their role are explored which adds strength to this ontological position being used throughout this research. LSES (or poverty) is not only related to material deprivations but with symbolic meanings and moral implications (Lister, 2004).

This research is exploring the mind dependent truths of the participants and their feelings about the concept of poverty and its impact on children (Braun and Clarke, 2021). There is an objective truth about how poverty impacts children and young people. However, the practice of EPs and the responses to the research questions are dependent on the participants' interpretation of the children's presenting needs and behaviours as they relate to the construct of poverty. The participants' own experience, understanding and construction of poverty is subjective and therefore the interpretation of the truth of the interaction between child and poverty, resides within the participants. The qualitative data therefore reflects the perceptions of the participants (Braun and Clark, 2021). It must be acknowledged that during the interviews participants did reflect on their backgrounds and lived experiences and how this informed their current practice, but this was not an area being directly researched and was an incidental finding.

Data collection is not unmediated (Willig, 2013) as the presence of the researcher and the EPs experiences of poverty are significant. The data needs to be analysed and interpreted to fully understand the benefits and challenges through the prism of the perceptions of the educational psychologist. The researcher acknowledges that they bring a limited amount of knowledge of educational psychology in comparison to the participants, but also the broad experiences of their previous career. The

researcher aims to collaboratively make meaning of the EP role as shaped by social, cultural, and structural factors (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, reflexivity is important, as the researcher is aware that their own background, experiences and assumptions will also shape the interpretation.

The underlying structures (Willig, 2013) in a setting such as a school are varied across settings and therefore themes which emerged through thematic analysis helped to tease out common understanding of CYP from LSES and their settings as perceived by the ten participants. Different perspectives, interpretations, representations, possibilities for, the construct of poverty, are captured yet mediated through the language of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This research is concerned with the impact of poverty and as societal conditions constantly change over time, the conditions in which individuals conceptualise and construct themselves and others varies depending on context (Foucault, 1982). Social constructivism allows us to ask questions about this culture and history (Burr, 2015).

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative methodology was used, and semi-structured interviews were chosen as the sole method of data collection. As social constructivism posits that knowledge is constructed through social processes between us (Harper, 2011), then interviews seemed an appropriate vehicle to explore EPs' experiences of working with CYP from LSES and their families. This constructivist perspective enables a bidirectional production and reproduction of meaning through language (Burr, 2006).

The researcher was aware that reflexive analysis places the researcher at the centre and incorporates their thoughts and engagement with the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Braun and Clark (2019) encourage the researcher to embrace reflexivity, subjectivity and creativity in knowledge production. Therefore, the researcher is not a neutral observer (Silverman, 1997) and the researcher was aware of their role as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP), and what this might bring to the interaction and analysis. Thematic analysis was appropriate for this approach as it lends itself to inductive exploratory approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher considered an IPA approach initially (Smith et al., 2009), but the research is not purely looking for responses based on the lived experiences of participants but rather the experiences of multiple participants across different English educational systems. This research is also specifically looking for how EPs interpret poverty as a phenomenon and a construct and how far they consider and incorporate this into their practice. Therefore, IPA was not consistent with this line of enquiry. The researcher was aware that there was a dearth of literature relating to the role of educational psychologists and their work with CYP from LSES and therefore wanted to keep a definite focus on this particular aspect and to explore it in depth (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Flick, 2018).

Participant Sample and Recruitment

The participant sample for the study was purposive; it is usual for participants to be selected who can best inform the research questions and understanding of the phenomenon (Sargeant, 2012). Therefore, the participant sample was recruited from local authority Educational Psychology Services in England as it is the views of

EPs that were being sought. Practicing EPs at all levels were invited to take part including Main Scale EPs, Senior EPs and Principal EPs. Criteria stated that all participants must have been qualified for more than two years to ensure that they had experience across a broad range of schools. Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs) were not included in the study. This decision was taken as it was felt by the researcher that as TEPs are still in the process of reflecting on and developing their practice (HCPC, 10.1), their insight may be limited in terms of how far they can reflect on poverty within their practice as they are not yet considered an autonomous professional (HCPC, 4.1, 4.2).

The gatekeeper for the study was the Principal EP in each service. The information for the study was emailed to the Principal EP (PEP) (see appendix A) and an accompanying email asked the PEPs to distribute the recruitment flyer (appendix B) to the EPs in their service. The flyer invited EPs to contact the researcher if they were interested in taking part. The target number of EP participants was around eight. According to Creswell (2013) this is an adequate number of participants for a project of this size and scope, although the concept of data saturation was considered after each interview (Guest et al., 2020).

The researcher had responses and consent from ten qualified EPs from across England. The ideal minimum participant numbers can be difficult to define (Van Rijnsoever, 2017), although saturation can be achieved in seven to nine interviews with homogenous groups of participants (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Data saturation is different for each study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Two participants had been known to the researcher in a previous placement capacity but had not directly supervised or

worked closely with the researcher. One participant was an acquaintance of the researcher through a family member.

Data Collection

Pilot Interview

The researcher carried out a pilot interview prior to the real research interview. This interview was carried out with a qualified EP who met the criteria for the study and was known to the researcher in a local authority placement capacity. The researcher chose to carry out a pilot interview to ensure that the questions would glean the data needed to answer the research questions plus enable the researcher to be better prepared to foresee any pitfalls the interviews may present (Malmqvist et al., 2019). Results from the pilot can inform subsequent parts of the research process as well as assess the readiness of a novice researcher (Beebe, 2007). The researcher hoped that a pilot study may be helpful to uncover any ethical or practical issues that the online interview or schedule may have raised (Leon et al., 2011). It also gave the researcher the opportunity to discuss the interview process with a more experienced EP.

There were no significant changes made to the interview questions, and the interview was not included in the overall analysis.

Rationale for the use of Microsoft Teams.

Participants were working in local authorities spread around the country from the far north to the south of England. Due to the scope of this research, the timescale and the distance between the locations of participants, the researcher opted to conduct the research exclusively through online means. The researcher did initially consider offering in person interviews to participants who were located nearest to the researcher but after some consideration the researcher felt that there should be

parity across what was offered to participants and across the interview platform. Therefore, the researcher decided to offer online interviews only to all participants. It was decided that due to the vast distances and the scope of this project, online data collection would be most appropriate (Cater, 2019). Online interviews are becoming a more common method of data collection and allow for preservation of verbal and non-verbal cues. Although researchers must be aware of issues around digital literacy and potential technological limitations (Sullivan, 2012).

Data Analysis

Braun and Clark (2022) state that the use of thematic analysis within a data study recognises that the richness of data to answer the research question is a priority and interview questions must consider this. The researcher carried out a pilot interview to ensure the richness of data and to make sure that the questions gleaned the intended information and capture all aspects of the research questions. After this process and any relevant adjustment of questions, semi–structured interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams. Qualitative data responses were scrutinised for themes using Braun & Clarke's iterative six-phase framework for reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013).

Analysis was inductive and 'data driven' and solely reflective of the content of the data and free from a conceptual or theoretical framework of poverty initially (Byrne, 2022). This best represents the meaning as communicated by participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and therefore is consistent with a constructivist epistemology.

The Six Step Process

Phase 1. Dataset Familiarisation.

Phase one incorporates the researcher's familiarisation with the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The researcher listened to the interviews at first without any transcription. Originally the researcher had intended to write the interviews by hand so that the engagement with the text was enhanced, but a decision was made to use the transcriptions which had already been generated by Microsoft Teams. When looking at the transcripts the researcher noticed that they had lots of inaccuracies and looking out for and correcting these while listening to the interviews enabled the researcher to become engaged with and familiar with the data. Next the researcher printed out all the interviews and read them several times varying the order. The researcher made no notes at this stage.

Phase 2. Coding

The research interviews had generated over ten hours of data. Therefore, the researcher decided to make initial summary notes without interpretation or analysis at first (appendix C). The researcher first generated a list which just summarised what the participants had said and only indicated the semantic meaning. This enabled active reading of the data without interpretation. Next the researcher revisited the data and began to interpret and identify meaningful code labels. This two-step approach enabled the researcher to better identify relevant segments of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2022) and scaffolded the identification of latent meaning on revisiting the texts.

The researcher initially tried to track the codes on Microsoft Excel but eventually devised a different tracking system (appendix D). Codes generated initially were

reduced as when analysing the codes some had similar meanings and so were eliminated or conflated with an existing code with similar meaning. This was done through considering repetition of codes but also similarity of meaning between codes (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Phase 3. Generating Initial Themes

Generating themes is an active process involving the identification of patterns of meaning in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The researcher found a physical sorting of themes enhanced the engagement. Individual codes were printed, cut out and organised onto sheets of paper (appendix E). They were then physically sorted into themes and tentative theme names were written onto the paper (appendix E). Initially the researcher sorted the codes into five themes, four of which had two subthemes.

Phase 4. Developing and Reviewing Themes

The initial tentative themes were revisited and further refined. Individual codes were reinterrogated and reorganised if necessary. The researcher looked for similarities, connections and patterns. This resulted in one theme (tentatively titled inequality) being incorporated into the other themes. One theme (tentatively named ‘the broad issues’) was divided into subthemes.

Phase 5. Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

The researcher revisited the themes and checked for meaning within and across themes with consideration of the research questions. This fine tuning of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) enabled clear themes to be demarcated. The names moved from tentative descriptive titles to titles.

Phase 6. Writing-up

This phase can begin during prior phases and involves creating an analytic narrative containing data extracts (Braun & Clarke, 2022). However, as the researcher is inexperienced, no writing up was completed alongside the analysis as the researcher wanted to fully attend to each stage of the process. However, the researcher held in mind their own positionality throughout the writing up process (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher considered their own positionality through the process using Burnham's (2012) Social Graces model to guide thinking throughout each phase of the research process. The researcher also held in mind their previous career and life experiences throughout the analysis process.

Demographic Information

Table 1

Demographic Information

	n
Length of Time Working as an EP	
3-5 years	1
6-10 years	1
11-15 years	2
15+ years	5
Mode of work	
Local authority	8
Private/ independent EP company	2
Independent EP/ Locum	1
Part time	5
Full time	4
Grade	
Main grade EP	3
Specialist EP	2
Senior EP	2
Principal EP	2
I am a specialist Senior EP	
Age	
up to 24 years	1
25-34	3

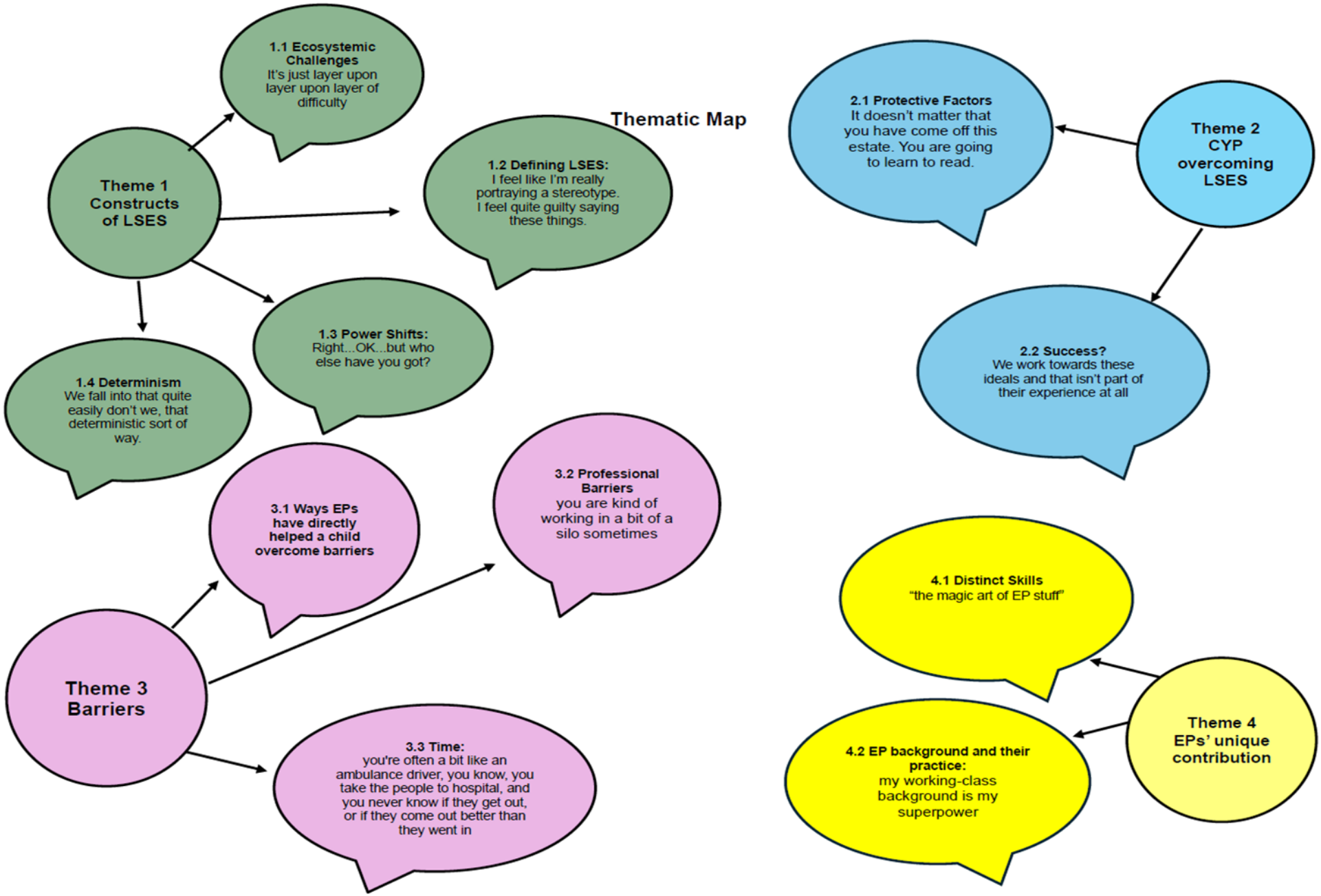
35-44	2
45-54	2
55-64	1
65- 74	
Gender	
Female	8
Male	1
Religion or belief	
Christian	3
Spiritual	1
No religion or belief	4
Atheist	1
Ethnicity	
White - English/ Welsh/ Scottish, Northern Irish/ British	9
Disability	
No	9
Identifies as coming from LSES	
Yes	3
No	6

Note: Unanswered questions were not included in the table. See appendix F for full range of questions.

Ethical Considerations.

Initially an ethics proposal was submitted to the University of East Anglia School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee in line with British Educational Research Association (2024) guidelines. Ethical clearance was granted in September 2024. Participants were practicing EPs and therefore had capacity to give informed consent (BERA 8, 9; BPS CoHRE 4, 4.1, 4.11; BPS Practice Guideline 6). Participants were given a participant information sheet prior to taking part and a full debrief was sent after the interviews including notification that they can withdraw their data up to a certain point (BERA 31).

Potential ethical difficulties centred around the prospect of EPs discussing their own personal experience of poverty which could have potentially evoked difficult feelings if they were significantly impacted by poverty throughout their life or if reflecting on this brought up difficult emotions. This was mitigated by the researcher through offering breaks where necessary and through planning questions which were not overly direct (BPS CoHRE 2, 2.1). This was also a consideration during the pilot study. Transcriptions and recordings of the interviews were kept confidentially and securely. (BERA 40. 50; BPS CoHRE 5; HCPC SoCPE 5.1, 5.2; HCPC SoPs 7.1, 7.3; BPS Practice Guideline 7). No incentives were offered as part of this research, it is hoped that as practising EPs, participants will recognise the value of the research to the profession (appendix G). Pseudonyms have been used throughout this research.


Thematic Map
Theme 1 Constructs of LSES
1.1 Ecosystemic Challenges
It's just layer upon layer upon layer of difficulty
1.2 Defining LSES:
I feel like I'm really portraying a stereotype. I feel quite guilty saying these things.
1.3 Power Shifts:
Right...OK...but who else have you got?
1.4 Determinism
We fall into that quite easily don't we, that deterministic sort of way.
Theme 2 CYP overcoming LSES
2.1 Protective Factors
It doesn't matter that you have come off this estate. You are going to learn to read.
2.2 Success?
We work towards these ideals and that isn't part of their experience at all
Theme 3 Barriers
3.1 Ways EPs have directly helped a child overcome barriers
3.2 Professional Barriers
you are kind of working in a bit of a silo sometimes
3.3 Time:
you're often a bit like an ambulance driver, you know, you take the people to hospital, and you never know if they get out, or if they come out better than they went in
Theme 4 EPs' unique contribution
4.1 Distinct Skills
"the magic art of EP stuff"
4.2 EP background and their practice:
my working-class background is my superpower

Findings

Theme one; Constructs of Low Socioeconomic Status.

Subtheme 1.1: Ecosystemic Challenges: "…it's just layer upon layer upon layer of difficulty…".

Theme one captures participant's perceptions and constructions of the experiences of CYP and their families who are from a LSES. The data reveals the main challenges for CYP as EPs see them.

Participants felt that coming from LSES directly caused difficulties that CYP from non LSES backgrounds would not encounter. Rose conceptualises this as a lack of resources.

> I mean, you know, there are needs in all communities aren't there, but you know, there are a lot of demands and it's not getting any easier for a lot of families in terms of having resources and you know, jobs and cost of living and that kind of thing (Rose)

Opal cites the more multifaceted impacts of living in LSES.

> It [poverty] massively reduces your life chances. The huge impacts on mental health, the huge impacts on physical health, you know? From just relentless, relentless exposure to poor housing, diet…and just…yeah, just that lack of hope, really. Just how demanding it is to live in poverty. (Opal)

Zoe situates the issues within the current economic climate.

> I think it is becoming more and more part of the conversation and more and more part of the role because you know socially and financially, everybody is

> struggling more than they were five years ago and the impact on things like providing a nutritious breakfast for your child is so expensive (Zoe)

Opal sees families living in LSES as marginalised.

> You know, these are children, often on the fringes of care or the fringes of the youth justice system. Or the families are, you know, really at rock bottom in terms of difficulties. So, I just feel, I suppose, the word I feel is that I feel very passionate about it because I just can see that, you know, it's just layer upon layer upon layer of difficulty. (Opal)

Rose also spoke of the stress which families from LSES are under which she sees as a direct consequence of poverty. Here she outlines some of the everyday difficulties families living in LSES may encounter.

> You know, “can I afford a meal? When am I getting my benefits or when am I getting some money enough money to cover what we need? Is the electricity going to get switched off? Are we going to be asked to move out this accommodation? Can I put the petrol in my car to go to work?” You know? So I think often they're very stressed and I think often they need some support (Rose)

Lily outlines the emotional impact living in stressful circumstances as a direct result of poverty can have.

> …the children are hearing things [in the home] that are not very comfortable, a bit stressful, a bit traumatic for them and their emotional well-being has been affected and they're really difficult to engage. Not all of them, of course, but some struggle to engage with education (Lily)

Ruby adds to this and outlines how family stress can impact the emotional availability of parents.

> If there is general family stress within the home because of financial worries, then parents might not be sort of, they might be less emotionally available for the young person because they're worrying about finances, how to pay for the uniform, or how to put food on the plate, etcetera. How to keep a roof over their heads. So that will impact on the young person or the child. (Ruby)

EPs felt that narratives of low aspirations often impacted young people. Here, Alisha outlines how some CYP from LSES see perceive their future.

> …when we get involved at a much later stage of development where like attitudes, beliefs, views have become quite entrenched in terms of, you know, this is what the future looks like for our family…and nothing's really going to change that (Alisha).

Linked to this, broader media narratives were perceived to be affecting the CYP's self-concept "…everything they see everything they're fed about advertising about value systems they come across will tell them that they're not valued. And they're not worth it". (Hilda)

Violet outlines the entrenched views CYP may have internalised.

> I think one particular area of the city the adult reading age is 6 years old, so that has a big impact. So why would you? do you know if my neighbours can't read it doesn't matter if I can't read, because nobody on my street reads that also has a knock-on effect (Violet)

Participants linked low levels of literacy skills to LSES. Here Ruby describes how parental literacy levels can impact their ability to support the child.

> If the adults in the home are experiencing literacy difficulties, they're going to find it harder to support the child or the young person in the home. So that potentially is going to impact on the development of their literacy skills, which potentially could impact life chances later on (Ruby).

Violet also saw this as a barrier to parental engagement with the school and a barrier to parents being able to engage with the school “I think some of that is if you know, if letters are going home, you [parents] can't access them and then I guess then in terms of being able to support their children with homework and reading”.

Zoe outlined the lower language skills CYP from LSES enter school with.

> I would say that's a real big issue in the city at the moment is the number of children coming through with very, very little language, because they are not growing up in these language rich environments that you might have in other areas of the country (Zoe)

Zoe expands on her thoughts on early language later in the interview “We know the discrepancy in the number of words spoken to children living in LSES areas compared to higher economic status areas and that's just had such a huge impact” (Zoe)

EPs spoke about CYP from LSES face when starting school in the early years.

> early years, works off the assumption that these children are coming in ‘school ready’, and I find that poverty has a massive impact on school readiness because they're not necessarily used to certain behaviours. They're definitely, you know, that independence that in a nursery might build from two in terms of, you know, putting your own coat on, getting a snack, pouring yourself a

> drink…I think in terms of, actually, you know, being able to sit and listen to a story or sitting on the carpet and things like that, that experience isn't necessarily there (Rose).

Environment was a factor which EPs felt CYPs were not experiencing equally. EPs spoke of this in terms of the immediate home environment but also in terms of the broader local environment. EPs also felt children do not experience the environment equally in terms of climate change and EPs reflected on the COVID 19 pandemic.

EPs spoke about difficulties in the CYPs immediate physical environment.

> I can remember working with a family where the child needed a walker to move around, but they were in a second floor flat. So, for Mum to get, she couldn't get the child and the walker down at the same time. So, do you take the walker and leave the child or take the child and leave the walker? So, in reality, the child wasn't getting outdoor space (Peggy)

Zoe outlines the locality which the child lives in and also sees this as limiting the CYPs experience.

> The park isn't safe, you know, it's things like that where actually the play that they do is often in the home with siblings. They're not necessarily used to playing with other children. And then they get to school. And then we sometimes see challenging behaviour, or we might see that they can't cope, and they find it very stressful to share (Zoe)

Peggy describes the difficulties LSES in a rural area can bring “…there isn't a bus route there isn't you know the access nearest children's centre is 15 miles away but there's no buses if you’ve not got a car so we've got those issues of poverty” (Peggy).

Participants also outlined their thoughts about the broader environment and considered that CYP from LSES experience environment and climate change more severely. Rose spoke about children living in an inner-city area “I used to drive along [inner city area] thinking these flats are full of children. Like, what are they breathing in, you know, what is the noise? Is it affecting their sleep? Is it affecting their learning?” (Rose). Participants also considered broader global issues such as climate change and expressed that CYP do not experience this equally.

> Not all children experience, for example climate difficulties equally, but often it'll be these same children who are living in poor socioeconomic backgrounds having the most impact of climate change on their living conditions. Houses that are really unfit to cope with changes in weather temperature, there's no access to green spaces to get a break from the intensity of climate change (Opal).

Participants share the view that the COVID 19 pandemic disproportionately impacted children from a LSES.

> I do think that [COVID 19] really affected children from low socio-economic groups …because again, not very much space. They were stuck inside. Think of the first lockdown, you couldn't go to the park even. And they didn't have gardens (Rose).

Subtheme 1.2 Defining LSES: “I feel like I’m really portraying a stereotype. I feel quite guilty saying these things”.

This subtheme addresses the difficulty and discomfort which EPs felt when defining poverty and the lack of clarity around the construct of poverty which permeates

through systems from schools to multiagency working across children's services and health.

Ruby identifies the difficulty of dialogues around LSES and situates this within the current political narratives which address social status. "it's [defining poverty] a bit like that whole Labour thing this week around. How do you define a working person? [laughs]" (Ruby).

Violet outlines feelings of discomfort when defining CYP from LSES and feels that she is drawing on stereotypes "I feel like I'm really painting a stereotype. I feel quite guilty saying all these things" (Violet), she also expressed that LSES can sometimes be an enigmatic concept and difficult to define and identify in the moment when working with a family "some families you know, really try hard and are open about their difficulties and other families, it's much more hidden" (Violet)

Opal posits that there are indicators of poverty but also indicates that they are often hidden.

> So it's just looking for patterns really and signs and they are there if you look, if you choose to look, the signs are very clear actually. You know, because children work hard to hide poverty, it's embarrassing for them. They feel embarrassed, but they can't hide everything because it's there, it's in front of you. It's whether you choose to notice I think (Opal)

Violet expresses feelings of difficulty when talking about her image of a child from LSES. The word 'awful' indicates her discomfort.

> Do you know what this is so awful, but when I think about a child with, you know, significant financial needs, I just think about a kid that's just sat on the sofa with a tablet or with a phone and with no toys, so therefore limited play skills (Violet)

Peter also expressed feelings of discomfort when speaking about how CYP from LSES could be identified. “I don't want to write kids off and think because they've had this experience or they're from this background, they're never going to achieve this or they're going to always have these sorts of issues” (Peter).

Participants spoke of the uncertainty they encountered from other professionals about how to clearly identify the challenges in schools. This uncertainty was experienced through responses from school staff.

> Schools are sympathetic, if that's the right word. I'm not sure it is. I think they're sympathetic to the, you know, ‘oh this poor child’, but I think there's often a bit of like, well, whatever can we do about it? (Hilda).

EPs spoke about the lack of recognition of poverty as a discreet difficulty and noted that it was not discussed in this way by schools. Participants felt that the direct impact of poverty on young people was not always recognised or supported. “…schools are sort of sort of wringing their hands again, ‘but we don't know how to work with these children’”. (Violet).

Zoe spoke about parental recognition of the impact of LSES and states that she sometimes feels that she has to explain the impact of LSES to schools.

> “they're the ones [parents] that say I can see it's [poverty] having an impact, I know it's having an effect, so I'm not the one sitting there going ‘oh well, because this has happened’, but I do find sometimes I'm the one that has to point it out to school (Zoe)

Ruby felt that sometimes the multiagency working around CYP from LSES was disjointed and perhaps the needs were not recognised, prioritised or valued enough across different agencies.

> I think there's always work to be done in terms of multi-agency working; true multi-agency working properly working together with the team around the family, so often at team around the family meetings I turn up and it's me and the school and the parent which is fine and we can get so far by doing that, but sometimes we do need early help or we do need social care to be involved as well to really move a situation on (Ruby)

EPs expressed that they perceive a lack of awareness about poverty across children’s services at all levels and within schools. Opal was able to address this and raised awareness of the definition of LSES through her practice. This was motivated by her own passion for the need, but this extract also highlights that she was able to do this because of her seniority.

> I suppose I had a bit of a passion, a need? I don't know. I don't say crusade that feels a bit dramatic, but I just had a desire really, to just spend a bit of my specialist senior time just doing some awareness raising within the service and with all the SENCos about, you know, this is what the cost-of-living crisis actually means for families (Opal)

Hilda highlighted the need to put CYP from LSES on the agenda. However, she also acknowledges that this was initiated by her when she was in a management capacity

and that the status of LSES as a vulnerability may not be as clearly defined in different Local Authorities. This highlights the disjointed nature of support for CYP from LSES at the systemic level.

> My previous EP services, we've probably done a bit more [work around LSES], I think probably when I've been able to run all the education services, we've had a stronger emphasis on it, like in planning meetings for EPs and specialist teachers, sort of making sure that poverty was a key factor of children we focused on just because of the vulnerability it gave them, so yeah, I think probably all services are at different points. (Hilda).

Subtheme 1.3 Power Shifts: …right, OK, but who else have you got? How can we reach them?

This subtheme highlights the power shifts that EPs felt that they encountered. Firstly, EPs expressed that at times, SENCos are the gatekeepers to support. Violet felt that perhaps EPs were not seeing the neediest children.

> SENCo's are almost like the gatekeepers to who we see as EPs. They're the ones who choose. Right, you're going to see child A child B, then child C, and its community psychology that is like “right, OK, but who else have you got? How can we reach them?” (Violet)

Zoe felt that the degree to which EPs can have an influence on a child within the school context, often related to the seniority of the SENCo within the school staffing structure. “I often find it is the schools where this is commonplace is also the school where the family support worker and the SENCo are often very, very highly respected within the school, often on SLT” (Zoe)

EPs also expressed that they do not tend to have as much contact or work as closely with secondary SENCos.

> Often the SENCo isn't as involved in that in secondary I find because there is a bigger maybe pastoral system, so I don't have as much contact. It may well be happening, but I'm not aware, whereas in primary I think because often that team is so small and it is quite SEND focused, I tend to know. (Zoe)

Linking to this was the observation made by several participants that as the challenges of living in poverty were not clearly understood by all services, they sometimes felt powerless as EPs tackling such a large issue such as poverty. Ruby spoke of feelings of having a lack of influence over other teams as an EP. “It's frustrating when that multi-agency working doesn't happen, but I don't know as EPs how much we can influence that, but that's a system thing, isn't it? In terms of what have we got control over, how can we do better I think” (Ruby).

Attitudes of staff were spoken about by participants and EPs had encountered some problematic terminology around LSES when working in schools “I have worked in some of those areas, the sink estate as it was described when I first took over one of the patches, which you know, says something again about the terminology and the assumptions and everything else”. (Peggy)

EPs spoke of encountering some attitudes relating to a two-tier view of LSES. So a ‘certain type’ of LSES was OK but some characteristics of families perceived as living in poverty evoked judgement from school staff.

> I think also just that awareness [for schools] that you can be in poverty, even if both parents are working, this isn't a benefit culture. You know, that's a really important message. This isn't “they like to smoke cigarettes, and they do this

> and they do that". These are often families who are working round the clock. To make ends meet as well (Opal)

EPs spoke about how they sometimes felt a power shift when working with children from more affluent families. The issue of not seeing the children with needs relating to poverty was also highlighted in this context.

> The statutory work, are we seeing the right children? I would say we're not because again it's all the barriers you have to get through to get into the EHC process. Are we losing children along the way because there haven't been the right voices to make that difference? I would say probably (Peggy)

Lily spoke about the various experiences of families from different SES. This quote highlights the inherent advantage CYP from more affluent backgrounds have

> I think families of other children, OK, they all deserve good education. All the rest of it, but they're already halfway there. Their parents are going to cooperate and provide for them and so on. There isn't the same level of struggle (Lily).

Peggy highlights a sense of making a difference to families from LSES and the satisfaction she feels when working with them.

> I do have an issue with the families who have more resources, who will fight more and so as a contrast, I like feeling I can make a difference with the families who don't have access to the same resources, who don't know how to write to their MP and get things done (Peggy)

But she does share that she feels some CYP are accessing resources as a direct result of parental pressure. Coupled with the previous comment the phrase ‘needy’ refers to CYP from LSES.

> working as a traded EP, part of the start of the year conversations will be about OK, who am I going to be working with and I think we do have a role there in and making sure we are working with the most needy children, not the ones whose parents have the loudest voices (Peggy)

Opal highlights her attempts to raise the profile of CYP from LSES across different agencies. This extract highlights that sometimes EPs feel that there is a lack of awareness across systems.

> So I suppose a lot of what I did with the awareness raising was thinking about that group of young people that would never be on a list to be seen by me…they might be known to the odd support, they might be known to like specialist teachers that do learning assessments, or they might be known to an early help or whatever. But I suppose really for me, what I thought was it's those children that I would never see, that I need schools to be more thoughtful about. (Opal)

Zoe spoke of feeling ‘directed’ by more affluent parents.

> …working with young people who are in private education, or whose parents are paying for private therapy, private paediatrician blah blah. I find I have less freedom in that there is a very significant expectation of what I am being asked to do. They know a little bit more, maybe about what I'm going to do or feel that they can direct (Zoe)

Peggy felt that often more vocal parents have more access to an EP and that perhaps CYP in crisis were not seen.

> I think it is these sorts of conversations where we have a right, we have a duty to be having those difficult conversations, who's at risk of exclusion you know? who are you worried about and not, as I say, not who is badgering the SENCo the most. (Peggy)

Linking to an earlier theme and the difficulties defining poverty, Violet links the issue of more affluent families having more access to resources to a potential lack of clarity about what is meant by ‘needy’. In this context needy can be taken to mean CYP from LSES. EPs highlighted that they often perceived a difference in the motivation of schools to act and to put strategies in place based on the affluence of the parents.

> The other thing that I struggle with working in [affluent area] is that schools were much more on the ball around processes and procedures and that's because they were very used to parents challenging them. You know, why hasn't my child’s book been changed this week, for example…but I think in [less affluent area] I definitely noticed a difference with “the parents aren’t going to challenge us, so we'll just carry on”, especially around exclusions. (Violet)

There was also concern that wider resources are not equally accessible across different SESs. Rose spoke about a period of time when she worked privately and expresses her reasons for returning to local authority work.

> ...this is not to denigrate this, it's important but all this ‘could you assess my child for dyslexia? or could you help with this tribunal? and I thought I'm missing that group who can't come and find me, and I knew it was important to me” (Rose)

EPs feel a power differential linked to parental affluence and feel that they are instructed more by parents with the financial resources to navigate the system effectively.

> you would have a parent that would almost like say to you to be like, well, I earn so much more money than you. I'm more educated than you. I know more than you and I struggle with that. Whereas I don't get that in [LSES area], people are just so happy just to meet you where you are and I feel like it's much more of an equal partnership when you're working with families because you're coming in and saying right, you're the expert on your child. I'm the expert in psychology. How are we going to, you know, work this together? (Violet)

Peggy highlights feelings of professional frustration about the inequality of access and reflects that EPs may feel powerless to promote the needs of 'needier' CYP.

> I think we do have conversations about the pushy middle-class parents. And I think the sort of shared frustration sometimes that we're not seeing the neediest children, but then I don't think we take the conversation, that next step of what is it about those we're describing as the neediest children? What is it about those children? And what are we going to do about it? (Peggy)

Lack of access to services was raised and in this extract, Zoe expresses frustrations with the wider system and agencies.

> I just think if you [CYP] just had, you know, even 6 sessions of play therapy and you could build a relationship and start to talk about what's going on in your head because it's not safe to talk about at home, the difference would be huge, but in the time that we're waiting…I don't think he'll be in that school. CAMHS are incredibly overwhelmed…. (Zoe)

Determinism 1.4. "We fall into that quite easily, don't we, that deterministic sort of way"

This subtheme highlights EP's uneasiness with deterministic views of LSES they encounter.

EPs encountered some attitudes where staff expressed views which indicated that they felt that the young people from LSES in their care were often perceived to be on a pre-determined path and the EPs express their discomfort with this across the data.

> I remember that member of staff in school saying 'he's going to end up in our special school for children with social, emotional and mental health needs'. And I remember thinking, but why? Why does that have to be kind of the preconceived pathway that we have for him? How can we support him here to be successful and make a real difference (Alisha)

Hilda highlights the desire to 'measure' CYP and she reflects that looking beyond the immediate context and considering CYPs lived experience is more useful.

> …. we fall into that quite easily, don't we, that deterministic sort of way of this is this, that we can measure this and actually, it's probably more about people's realities and their worlds and how they make sense of things and the layers (Hilda)

EPs also expressed their own discomfort around within child deficit models.

> I think that within child deficit model is something that we need to change, especially for children, you know, that are living in challenging circumstances to kind of really educate people around the impact of that (Alisha).

Peter expresses concern about how some assessments are used.

> …like the concern for me with some of these trainers that did deliver training around it [ACEs] and the concern is that you get the teachers who are like tick, tick, tick. They've got this ACE and this ACE (Peter).

Theme 2. "Success".

This subtheme outlines the factors which participants view as enabling CYP to be successful.

2.1 Protective Factors "It doesn't matter that you have come off this estate. You are going to learn to read".

Within this subtheme participants outlined their direct experiences of what they consider works to facilitate success for children from LSES.

Participants felt that various factors enabled children to succeed. These included children having a stake in society and opportunities to build 'cultural capital'.

> If you can afford to take your child out to a museum or to the theatre, or you know, they're learning about something at school so let's go and do a trip. You know those kinds of experiences are incredible, but they don't happen for everybody, and it does put people at a disadvantage because you don't necessarily know what they don't know (Zoe)

Violet posits the importance of cultural experiences and indicates that a lack of opportunity has a direct impact on children's literacy skills.

> they haven't been out of [LSES area], they haven't been to the seaside. They don't have those kinds of things, so then to me that has a knock-on effect with literacy. Because how can you create stories? How can you use your imagination? (Violet).

Rose outlines the positive role some schools take in providing experiences which build cultural capital.

> I think schools can really provide those enrichment activities because often the first chance you get to do something…. if school takes you, then you'll know it's somewhere you can go, whereas you might feel that it's not something for you, you know, and you don't have to like those things. But having that experience is good. (Rose)

When considering the facilitating factors which lead to success, participants also felt that some children seem to have an innate drive to succeed despite their circumstances. Alisha indicates that CYP from LSES can envision a positive future.

> They [CYP] want a better life. They want to have a home of their own. They want to have a job, they want to earn money and they're thinking about it in more positive ways in terms of if I work hard, then you know I'm going to be able to make a better life for myself (Alisha).

In this extract Rose highlights the intrinsic motivation to succeed which some CYP display.

> …. that conversation and that motivation, it can be intrinsic I think, and it's from looking at the world around you and going no, I deserve to be here. But that takes a level of security and level of self-assurance (Rose)

Positive adults in children's lives were also seen as conducive to 'success' and participants referenced adults which CYP encounter at school. Opal describes how this can extend to a positive influence at the family level.

> I mean, children always whatever the difficulty, talk about the importance of a key adult and somebody inspiring them throughout their education…. he [headteacher] has really developed close relationships with the families, so it's given the families confidence. It's given the children hope and but also, he's introduced expectations to the young people (Opal)

Violet outlines that the positive adult role model does not necessarily need to be a teacher but can be a member of the support staff.

> Having a teacher that gets that kid and gives them a little bit of leeway, and he doesn't have to be a teacher, I guess it sometimes it can be a wonderful TA, can't it? Or a member of the pastoral team in secondary school (Violet)

Hilda outlines the importance of the two-way relationship between CYP and the member of staff and in this extract describes a school which she sees as having a positive impact on CYP.

> The head meets with those kids, they talk to them with respect wherever they've come from. They just make school a place where those kids can be themselves and enjoy. And yeah, they're amazing. They're so uplifting. And it's interesting because one of the best heads, himself from a working-class area in the city, and I think that he just knows what matters to those kids and how to get them and they love it. (Hilda)

EPs also felt that positive adults within the family can have a positive effect on CYP. In this context Alisha is referring to interactions within the home and the positive influence on speech development.

> Thinking about kind of like stimulation and early development and those sorts of things, I guess children that have stronger language skills and they're more, I don't know, articulate or emotionally literate, that's a really good skill to have, isn't it? Another sort of protective factor, I guess (Alisha).

Violet indicates the positive influence of access to a supportive family member on CYP

> Loving and supportive family, I think is really the key one. The kids who come from where there's a person, doesn't have to be a parent, but could be a grandparent or an auntie or uncle that's fighting that kid's corner and is there for that child. (Violet).

Zoe saw family engagement with the school as vital to the wellbeing of CYP.

> They [the school] are looking at the big picture and going almost, you're part of our family now…'come on in and let's sort this' and, you know, things like, 'if you need to go to a doctor's appointment, we'll come with you and we'll help you'. And they're just, they're there for everything and they do it so well (Zoe)

This family engagement can take the form of sharing ways their CYP learn at school. This can be interpreted as schools empowering parents.

> One of the schools that I work with does regular parents coffee mornings where they come in, you know, they talk about phonics. They talk about maths, you know, because I think things have changed so much, haven't they (Violet)

Rose describes an experience when working with a secondary school.

> They [the school] were quite fussy about the shoes you wore, but they would provide shoes if people only had trainers. It gets more complicated in secondary school, I feel, but they were really…they knew their community really well and they really tried to support people in a way that was acceptable and not ‘we're doing things for you or to you’. You've got to think about how you treat people. It's got to be respect. (Rose)

Promoting high aspirations was also seen as helping young people from LSES succeed.

> It doesn't matter that you've come off of this estate. You are going to learn to read, you are going to learn how to, you know, add, subtract, divide multiplications all of that and we're going to bring these people in to talk to you about the jobs that they do….and I think it's schools like that which have high expectations, high aspirations and really challenge their kids (Violet)

Clear recognition by schools of CYP’s challenges was raised by participants as a way to enable CYP to succeed.

> It's just really simple like listening to those kids and when those kids say something is a barrier, just really taking that on board and say, no, we'll help that, that that shouldn't get in the way. Don't you worry. Thank you for telling us (Hilda)

Ruby highlighted the importance of emotional support for CYP from LSES.

> supporting young people to have an awareness of their emotions and ways to support them to regulate because we do know that there are higher rates of depression amongst that group and so we want people to be aware of what

> those feelings might be and the action that they could take to support themselves to manage and cope in that situation. (Ruby).

Subtheme 2.2 Success? "We work towards these ideals and that isn't part of their experience at all"

Participants did question the meaning of success and how it was defined and what this meant to CYP. Participants felt that schools work on a very middle-class model of success and that different models and perceptions of success are perhaps not facilitated effectively by educational settings.

> Generally, the schools I work with in [LSES area] are quite understanding, but they are stuck in this. 'There's one way to be a successful young person', which is no fault of their own. So, I often have conversations with them that are about there are different ways to be a successful adult in this world. (Hilda)

Hilda talks of ideas of success as being cultural and questions the significance of these narratives and the experiences of CYP from LSES.

> We [the education system] work towards quite a middle class expectation and outcomes and the things that we feel are good and that we work towards are often laced with culture and it's laced with race and there's a lot of that going on and I just think, yeah, we work towards these ideals and that isn't part of their experience at all (Hilda)

If success is assumed to be defined academically then EPs perceive that many young people from LSES may not have the self-belief to break out of the poverty cycle and go to university.

> university feels, maybe scary or unattainable because it's not just the educational side of it, it's the affording the accommodation. It's all of those things and I think those conversations are happening earlier and earlier with some of our young people who are very aware. I would like to go to university but…(Zoe)

Theme 3. Barriers

Subtheme 3.1 Ways EPs have directly helped a child overcome barriers

This subtheme identifies times when EPs felt they had direct experience of working successfully with CYP who are from LSES and their schools.

EPs identified their own relationships with parents as a clear factor in positive outcomes for young people “you know if you build a good relationship with a parent and you can be that voice of reason sometimes” (Rose).

Participants felt that helping CYP and families navigate the system and access certain services as a way they have directly helped CYP. Here Alisha describes how she enjoys helping families from LSES

> I enjoy the challenge of working with people who sometimes find it hard to work with services and access services. I don't really know where that comes from, but I just, I like the challenge of it sometimes to know that actually you could be the one professional that they do connect with and you know, it's kind of a way to move things forward for that family. (Alisha).

EPs spoke of positive changes they had made through their work and interactions directly with children. Here Alisha describes helping a CYP think about positive aspirations.

> I remember doing some work, again, in one of our deprived high schools with a boy who was at risk of permanent exclusion, and we did like a motivational interviewing intervention together. So, kind of looking at the current situation, how things might be in the future, and I remember having some really nice feedback about that in terms of kind of the positive change that that made (Alisha).

Community psychology was described as an effective way to help CYP from LSES, here, Violet describes her positive experiences working with different organisations.

> I am a specialist senior educational psychologist, and my specialism is community psychology and so I'm linked with the family hubs and the parenting working group and the early years group as well. So, what that means is that we can then have a voice in those areas to say, right, have you thought about this? have you thought about that? (Violet)

EPs expressed strongly that systemic work led to incidences of perceived success as does multiagency working.

> I really, really try and sway my schools away from doing case work because I just think it's such an expensive amount of money to spend on one child when you can have much more of an impact doing things like consultation or looking at policies or even doing things like circle of adults. (Violet)

Working alongside other teams was expressed as having positive outcomes for CYP.

> We've got a quite a strong early help team who do that work. I used to feel really uncomfortable about thinking, “Well, we've talked about, you know, their spelling and their this, that and the other”, meanwhile, this child is still living in poverty and doesn't have enough to eat (Hilda).

Subtheme 3.2 Professional Barriers: "you are kind of working in a bit of a silo sometimes ".

This subtheme identifies barriers which participants feel they encountered when practicing.

Value systems within the education system were seen as something which more understanding needs to be developed around.

> The first thing that would happen is our view of education would change the whole context within which we work would be one where different value systems were more understood and recognised, and education was a much more a much broader process and had values and meanings that were more embedded in that working class culture (Hilda).

Linking closely to this Alisha felt that the Social Graces Model (Burnham, 2012) is a useful tool for supervision with school staff. Although only at the early stages, Alisha indicates that the model helps to facilitate consideration of the challenges.

> One of the things that we're doing at the moment in terms of supervision within the service is thinking about how we can bring the social graces model into supervision [with school staff]. So, looking at those different factors which obviously you know class would come into kind of part of that (Alisha).

Enhancing the profile of the experiences of CYP from LSES through consultation was posited as an experience of success. "I think for me it's through things like consultation, person centred, work construct work you know so that it's about that young person's reality" (Hilda)

Opal feels that consideration around ways of assessing children needs to be borne in mind. In this context Opal is indicating that standardised assessments may not suit the culture of poverty. “I do these cognitive assessments, these learning assessments on children. But actually, they're probably so tired and hungry that I'm actually getting false results”. (Opal). Hilda shares this view of cognitive assessments.

> Formal testing is something that I feel incredibly uncomfortable about because of those cultural biases in it…. judging and categorising other human beings isn't something I feel very happy with at all. Understanding and celebrating and respecting and supporting and helping are things that I feel I should be doing as an EP. (Hilda).

Opal felt the profile of LSES as a difficulty needed to be an agenda item.

> I asked that people put it on their agenda for their initial consultation meetings. Say you know, but whether or not individually EPs actually get round to doing that in their meetings. I don't know. So, I'm assuming that in the more you know, deprived socio-economic areas. That it would be part and parcel of any conversation, because that's the lived experience of most of the families. (Opal)

EPs also felt that they needed a higher status as professionals and more of a say at higher levels. Some participants had direct experience of higher status positions and felt that they had more of an impact on CYP from LSES this way.

> If I look at that sort of 20 years of my career where I was a strategic leader in a local authority, that's probably when I was able to do the most change for those children. By changing systems and getting people to recognise and

> support the people who were leading on pupil premium and just sort of being able to promote those things. (Hilda)

Violet indicated that being present when higher level systemic conversations are happening enabled better strategic practice and input.

> I think also the other thing that's really helped is that we've got a brilliant principal who is very much pushing us into those spaces and making sure we've got a seat at all of those tables when conversations have been happening around working systemically and strategically within the local authority (Violet).

Participants expressed the view that LSES as a characteristic was not protected under the equality act (2010) and that they felt it should be. Here Rose explores her thoughts around this and indicates her surprise that LSES is not a protected characteristic.

> I think we hear about it more in terms of race, like you have to see yourself doing things whereas I think the same thing applies for anybody who's…. are they saying that social level should be a protective factor? You know, you know an identified factor because I think it is a disadvantage,
>
> *A protected characteristic? No, it's not.*
>
> That's it. Yeah, it's not. And there's talk about it should be. There was a whole psychologist edition about it. Which is what got me thinking about it (Rose).

Community psychology was seen as a working style that would give families more access to an EP and here Violet indicates that community psychology facilitates systemic work with families.

> Because we can use psychology to reach so many more children, not just the ones who are struggling in school, they might be struggling for other reasons, so I think that means that community psychology should be in all LAs (Violet)

Zoe expresses a feeling of professional isolation. Here Zoe is referring to a lack of collaboration and information sharing in her work linked to families and CYP accessing help privately “I sometimes find that when you're working with families who have the accessibility to maybe identify these things earlier or to find their own help, you are kind of working in a bit of a silo sometimes”.

EPs feel they should also have a say around the how the pupil premium funding is spent in schools.

> Currently I would say I'm not that certain at all about how pupil premium funding is being used and again that that's another shift. Actually, when I'm sort of reflecting about my entire time as an EP so far, we did used to have conversations about funding and about the best way of using different pots of money (Ruby)

Participants feel that it is difficult to effectively signpost families to various services. Here Opal outlines this difficulty; “….and I think that's what's been difficult recently is services have been stripped out of local authorities. It's been difficult to signpost parents to support”. Violet also describes difficulties with accessing support from outside agencies, here she is describing difficulties with access to services “how often do I liaise with CAHMS over a case? Extremely rarely, if ever”.

Supervision benefitting CYP in terms of helping school staff be more aware of the difficulties which CYP from LSES face.

> working with the adults to help them think about where young people are what their constructs of those young people are and how their work is going. So, I think that supervision work is probably the most valuable bit now….I think it's probably where I see the most change (Hilda).

Participants expressed that EPs leaving the profession or moving to private practice can limit relationships with schools and therefore reduce the impact on CYP from LSES.

> … then I do think there's something, I mean, we need to keep people in the profession, in local authorities, don't we? Because of the demands or for whatever reason people might train and then move on…. So, I think there's something about building the profession and valuing having those relationships with schools (Rose)

The demographic of people accessing the training course and the demographic of the EP workforce was spoken about by participants. In the following extract, Lily talks about an experience she had when supervising trainees, which to her, indicated that perhaps the background of most EP applicants can limit their lived experience of LSES.

> I was told, well, all the trainees are in this room. They're just waiting for the supervisors to turn up and I went into the room, and I thought, oh my goodness, they're clones, they're clones, and I don't think there were any men in in that cohort and so there were a number 10...12… young women. All with long straight hair. All wearing very similar clothes and knee length boots. All chatting without local accents and I thought, well, what's going on? (Lily).

However, Hilda expresses that despite the demographic makeup of the EP workforce, there seems to be an increasing willingness to talk about the challenges of coming from a LSES background.

> I think what's been good recently as well is more talking in the profession about the issues and more recognition about the makeup of our profession, because certainly it's only within the last year that I've ever told any of my colleagues that I was from a working-class background (Hilda).

Subtheme 3.3 Time: "you're often a bit like an ambulance driver, you know, you take the people to hospital, and you never know if they get out, or if they come out better than they went in".

Participants identified current ways of working as a barrier to effective practice and this subtheme considers 'time' in terms of capacity, time spent working with a school and also in terms of when the intervention occurs for a CYP. In this subtheme EPs outline the difficulty of follow up with children and schools.
Lily outlines the limitations that time as a resource for EPs can create which may affects how closely she can follow up with cases and schools.

> It's difficult, isn't it in our job because you're often a bit like an ambulance driver, you know, you take the people to hospital and you never know if they get out or if they come out better than they went in. So, we don't always get feedback about our work. (Lily)

Peggy outlines that she feels a lack of capacity in the workforce and that families who need support may be missed because of this. There is not enough time to work

with all families who need EP input. Peggy talks about the traded model here and alludes to the fact this model could be limiting EP capacity to see families and CYP from LSES.

> I think in an ideal world, because we're never going to get a chance to see those children with, you know, even if you're not a traded service, even if you're a service where there's endless amounts of EP time in that fantasy world, you know, you never realistically going to get to see all of these families. (Peggy)

As well as time in terms of capacity, participants outline how time in terms of long-term impact can also be limited due to ways of working. Here Violet posits community psychology as a way to reach families and maintain a relationship which would facilitate long term impact “I think that in order to have that long term impact and work with families, low-income families, would be to look at how we can use Community psychology to impact that”.

Alisha describes similar sentiments and talks of the limitations not being able to work with CYP over time presents when working with CYP with social and emotional needs.

> Some young people have kind of presented with you know, sort of like low mood, anxiety, lots of worries about the future and you know at the moment, I don't really have the luxury of being able to work with children and young people over time (Alisha)

Participants felt that the amount of statutory work was having an impact on long term involvement. Alisha talks of her experience before the SEND crisis as more positive in terms of long-term impact.

> In terms of this kind of statutory work at the moment, we're not necessarily seeing the long-term impact of our involvement, but I'm really fortunate that I've kind of had that prior experience to the SEND crisis that we now see ourselves in and actually seeing that there can be a longer-term impact. (Alisha).

Participants expressed that currently, any follow up to cases is incidental. Here Lily describes a chance encounter with a family she had previously worked with.

> ….then I met her [the Mum] a little bit later in the car park of the school with her younger child, and she said, “thank you so much he’s making some progress. I remember the things that you tried to do with him. And I'm able to do that now at home with him”. (Lily).

EPs also felt that whether the work is statutory or traded also has an impact on the likelihood of any follow up over time. Here Rose describes the difference between traded and statutory work.

> If it's an Education, Health and Care Plan, it's so different, because, you know, we're sort of involved and then we just pass it on to the SEN team and then, you know, they carry it on, whereas actually if it's a traded piece of work then there's a relationship with the school, which is what we aim for. (Rose)

EPs also felt that their relationships with schools can now be fragmented and short term, and this prevents them developing a knowledge of what each individual school can offer “I think that there's probably more that we could do in terms of finding out what is available in school, but…. we’re approaching things very much by a case-on case basis right now” …. (Alisha).

Rose shares this view and expresses her experiences positive long-term relationships with schools. “I'd have schools for quite a few years, and I think there is something about knowing how a school works, knowing the staff having those conversations and then actually being able to sort of informally track children”.

Theme 4. EPs’ Unique Contribution.

In this theme, EPs highlight how their specific skill set has a positive influence on young people from LSES.

Subtheme 4.1 Distinct Skills “the magic art of EP stuff”

EPs saw themselves as having an advocacy role. EPs can advocate through challenging schools, and this is particularly powerful when they have a long-term relationship with them.

> I've had the same schools for quite a period of time. So, I literally have been like a dog with a bone about some issues with them. You know we've got a lot of mutual respect, so I can really challenge my schools and say, hang on a minute, I know you want to talk about this, but actually we need to talk about this other thing first (Opal)

Part of this advocacy takes the form of specifically challenging judgement and perceptions.

> I think that something I would like to see long-term is advocating for a low judgement approach to working with young people and their families, you know and build those relationships, because it isn't just something you can fix and it doesn't…it isn't something that people choose…we need to reserve judgement and advocate for that young person and their family, when other people maybe are judging and not joining that conversation. (Rose)

Participants outlined the importance of compassion and indicated that EPs can influence school staff to think differently about CYP. Here Peter talks about compassion. “It's often about valuing compassion, valuing, helping others feel more positively about that young person in their strengths and also helping people think about different ways of success”.

EPs also describe how they also specifically advocate for parents from LSES.

> It's easy for some schools to underestimate how difficult that [poverty] can be for parents. I always try and do like a really nice home school meeting and make it lovely and offer parents a chance to have a chat beforehand and talk to schools about how, you know, we try and sort of really involve parents as partners and to value what they bring (Hilda).

Zoe also describes a non-judgemental approach. “I think there are some parents who are so thankful that somebody is on their team not turning round and judging them, but coming alongside them and going OK how are we going to work with this? (Zoe)”

Alisha states that “I think sometimes the impact of what we do isn't always that observable or known”. Peter shares this view and describes how EP skills are not always explicit and that the impact of involvement can be lasting, and although not necessarily quantifiable, it is still valuable and influential.

> If you can unpick the needs around what's going on with that young person, what they need you’d hope that [understanding] would then follow on…. you kind of get them to reflect on things and think about what they [CYP] do and why they do it and stuff. I think that has lasting impact because even if they don't necessarily recognise it's from our involvement, I think there's definitely things that we do that’s you know…. the magic art of EP stuff” (Peter).

Supporting the skills of people working with CYP from LSES is also seen as a way EPs positively impact practice.

> If the only thing I can do is support those key adults in school to support that child or that young person to develop their literacy skills to a functional level. To improve their life chances moving forwards, then I would see that as a success and a positive impact (Ruby).

Promoting equality in the type of assessments carried out with CYP from LSES is seen as a particular perspective and awareness that EPs bring. Rose feels that concerns around standardised assessment and culturally responsive practice also helps to shine a light on the challenges living in a ‘culture’ of poverty can present and the limitations of these types of assessments for CYP from certain backgrounds. Ms Rose explores the concept of culture and cultural responsivity and sees this as having a ripple effect and raising awareness of the challenge of living in LSES.

> In the previous authority we did a lot of work about dynamic assessment rather than standardised assessment and the reason for doing that was as a response to the Black Lives Matter and George Floyd's murder. It really helps a range of people, doesn't it? So, we don't make assumptions based on what your standardised score might be or what percentile you might be working at in our work (Rose)

EPs felt that they were in a unique position to be able to challenge staff perception of young people from LSES and to help staff understand that certain presentations may be a direct result of the challenges of LSES.

> They're [school staff] being expected to get them through these spellings or something, you know, and it's just giving them permission really to say actually,

> just think about where they are in their lives and what this all means. And I guess it's like encouraging a bit of compassion and respect for that child, really. (Hilda).

EPs also felt that they could raise awareness and increase understanding of the experience of LSES and how this might manifest in the classroom. This critical friend role helped EPs to promote protective factors.

> They're sort of going well, you know, he does have these temper tantrums in the morning. Of course he does, he probably hasn't had any breakfast, he's tired, he's cold and you know I think sometimes it is just pointing out those things that are happening before school and going, that has a huge impact, and I think that is where we come into our own (Zoe)

Zoe links this awareness to the impact EPs can have systemically.

> I think the fact that we are trained to think so systemically is where that strength lies, because we do have an opportunity to sit back and think about every influence that is on this young person (Zoe)

EPs also feel empowered to promote protective factors within their role.

> I think one of the most powerful things we can do is make sure that they come to school and that they can learn and that they're warm and that they've had something to eat and they feel welcome. They don't feel different because they're poor. So, I think it's that even on the most basic level, that is what my job is to do is to say to my schools, how do you ensure these things are in place around most vulnerable young people? (Opal)

Participants see EPs as being uniquely positioned to help CYP to feel empowered through their interaction.

> I remain hopeful that a little bit of that empowerment to young people can really help them feel valued and that any as an EP you can come in and do that. You've almost got that freedom to do that, that perhaps some of the teachers don't. (Hilda)

EPs also perceive that they approach each situation with unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1957). The following extracts indicate that EPs approach interactions from a place of acceptance and no judgement.

> We have to come from the perspective that people are doing their best and love their children, and we have to help them to access the help. So I have pretty good feedback that parents find me approachable and that to me is what I want. I want them to be able to engage with me and so that we can help the children in school. (Rose)

> I really do believe that there are lots of people out there that genuinely want the best for their children, and I think that you know I've known a lot of people and I've interacted with a lot of people and I just think that everybody deserves a fair chance and you know it's not about how much money you have (Alisha).

EPs also spoke about hope and its importance in their role.

> I really like positive psychology and kind of thinking about how we can look at strengths and we can look at characteristics and use them positively to try and create change in all areas, but you know, it relates as well, doesn't it, to kind of aspirations, engagement…just hope really. (Alisha).

EPs also felt that they have a unique teaching role. Not just in terms of training but in their interactions with staff. Several participants spoke about how through supervision or consultation they can help spread good practice and challenge staff to

not only view a situation in a certain way but hope that staff will carry this interaction forward into their future work with young people.

> I have had to challenge people in the past….so I think we've got a key role really because I think our job is all about relationships. I think there's something about having relationships with schools so we can be that sort of honest friend. I don't want to use critical, but like we can challenge it. (Rose)

Alisha posits that the interactions school staff have with EPs helps change perspectives and that this new perspective will be carried forwards into future practice across the school.

> When we're able to work through a consultation model where you know you're having those conversations about breakfast club and all of those sorts of things that actually, that learning stays with staff. So then next time when they're in a similar situation, they might be able to look more broadly at the system that that child or young person is in to kind of inform their thinking around the support that's in place (Alisha).

4.2 EP background and their practice: "…my working-class background is my superpower"

EP perspectives appear to be largely influenced by their own background. Participants who identified as from a LSES felt that their background had informed their practice directly. EPs who did not come from a LSES did talk of experiences which had informed their awareness of the challenges of poverty and how they still practice with empathy.

Hilda spoke about her early experiences and her parents' views of psychologists. She alludes to this informing her awareness of how parents from LSES may be suspicious of professionals working with their children.

> I remember when I was in middle school them saying to my mother, we want her to see a psychologist and my mother saying to me and to them, I'm not letting one of those people near my child. It's an oppression of, you know, it's middle-class values being imposed upon my children, it's control, you know, she will be fine….I guess I always had that sort of sociopolitical thing about middle class establishments imposing a value system on working class children and families (Hilda)

The following extracts indicate that EPs life experiences have directly informed their motivation when working with these families.

> Feeling that I've done what I could in a situation, even if life didn't change for the young person, but I've done what I could when I related them to my personal experience as a child and young person. I think the stuff that I'd rather forget is what makes you. (Lily)

Opal describes how her worries about social mobility are compounded by her own experience.

> It's really quite shocking when you dig around the statistics and particularly worrying around social mobility. When I'm somebody who's hugely benefited from it. So, yeah, I'm sorry. I do feel a bit depressed, but I feel very passionate to try and do something about it (Opal)

EPs from more affluent backgrounds are aware of their privilege yet still empathised with the life experiences of the CYP from LSES that they work with.

Across the data, EPs who do not identify as being from a LSES were sensitive to the experiences that CYP from LSES may be going through. Zoe acknowledges learning about the depth of the difficulties people experience.

> I am from a very white, very stable, quite middle-class area and moving here and taking up this role really opened my eyes to the different ways that people live their lives and the different type of experiences that young people go through (Zoe)

Peggy also acknowledges her privileged upbringing and describes how she still tries to acknowledge their perspective.

> Yeah, I am the white middle class woman EP that EPnet had a big fuss about a couple of years ago and I'm very aware that I did have a privileged background, so we were comfortably off and then I went to private education at 14….so yes, I'm trying to look through other people's eyes, where I've never actually stood in their shoes. (Peggy)

Some EPs would try to ‘level the playing field’ and try to reduce any power imbalance through their behaviour and presentation. EPs seem very aware of power imbalances and want to reduce this. Lily talks about considering the vocabulary she uses.

> They [CYP and families] don't want people to be patronising, but they want you to use words that they can understand, and they want tolerance. If they are distressed because of their circumstances. I think I can empathise in those situations. (Lily).

Peter describes how although he does not identify as being from a LSES, he still considers how he engages with families from LSES and their perceptions of him as a professional.

> I think, for me it's about engaging with people from different backgrounds, so I think my experience of obviously kind of what I said before about we as a family, had more money than my peers, but it's about how you engage and learn and how you learn to engage with different people from different socioeconomic backgrounds (Peter)

Hilda spoke of her different feelings about her LSES in different contexts. Here she reflects on how she felt more comfortable talking about her background when she was in a senior managerial position but is more reluctant to talk about it now she has taken a position as a main scale EP.

> So when you're the manager of everything, it's easy to bring it [her own LSES background] up because you think well, I can say something quite radical here about children with different experiences because I know that I've got status and power and credibility, but I think I'd be less willing to raise it now. (Hilda)

EPs talk about being conscious of their own class identifiers. Peter does not identify as being from LSES yet is still aware of the impact his title and dress might have.

> My title can be a barrier. If people say doctor whatever. I feel kind of uncomfortable with that. I kind of create that level playing field really for all, but I wear smart trousers and shirt, but I don't wear a tie. I think there's a balance there between being professional but being approachable as well and not trying to give an air of authority or superiority (Peter).

Zoe also indicates that although she does not identify as being from a LSES she is very aware of how she may be perceived. Zoe also indicates that she is acutely aware of potential barriers.

> I don't know what it feels like to grow up in poverty. I don't know what it feels like to worry where your next meal is coming from. I don't know what it feels like to not have space in my own home for myself and I think that it can create a barrier, but I'm also incredibly conscious of it…I think I'm so aware of my otherness because I am a doctor (Zoe)

Hilda does identify as coming from a LSES and indicates that she feels familiarity when working with this demographic, in fact she indicated her positive perception of her own background “I think my working-class background is my superpower and I don't want to lose it. I never want to lose it because it is my bedrock” but she wonders whether this is true across the profession.

> I think working in a person-centred consultative way with them [CYP] really, really helps and for me personally it's like working class parents…I feel so comfortable with. It's like meeting my family, you know… I do wonder how as a whole profession, how good we are at that, really, I suppose (Hilda)

Peggy indicates that although she does not identify as coming from a LSES, she still feels a motivation to reach as many CYP as possible through local authority work.

> I think working for an LA full stop is influenced by my background and my belief in doing good is not the word I want to use, but it's the word I'm going to use. I don't believe in private practice. I do believe that we need to be working with as many children and families as we can and not just who can pay (Peggy)

EPs who did identify as coming from a LSES spoke about how their parents' views and experiences had helped them relate to the potential perceptions which families from LSES may have about working with outside professionals. Here participants talk about their own parents' perceptions of professionals.

> I just think my parents have this thing also that they were very open minded to some extent, but they were quite biassed against what they called posh people. That simply meant anyone who spoke nicely, and you know who had a rather nice house and so I kind of identify with a lot of the children I work with. (Lily)

> I think they do pick up on it and I think if my dad had to do this [talk to a psychologist about their child], he'd have felt absolutely out of his depth. It would have been an alien world to him, and he would have felt judged even if he hadn't been, do you know what I mean? It was because it just wasn't their world. (Hilda)

EPs did seem to show empathy for children from LSES despite their own more affluent background.

> I would say that I had quite a privileged upbringing in that I had a stable family life, and we didn't ever have experience, financial worries or worries about food, etcetera. I guess I went to school with people who did experience those difficulties, and so I suppose I've been aware of that sort of that divide and society from a young age (Ruby)

Alisha indicates that she was the first person in her family to move to a different SES and therefore does not see SES as limiting. She also indicates that her own move away from LSES gives her belief in the abilities of CYP from LSES who she meets through her role.

> I was the first person in my family to go to university, for example, because my parents didn't have those opportunities and I guess in some ways that's kind of given me the mindset that that anything's possible….if it's something that you want and you want to work towards, how can we support those children to work towards those higher aspirations? And I think for me, I hold on to that in terms of my experience (Alisha).

Violet observes that the CYP she works with will not have had the same cultural experiences as she had access to growing up.

> I think that whereas my summer holidays were, I guess either on the beach or we were going to for a day out in London or a musical or an art gallery or National Trust property…. I have to be so conscious around what is normal? What was normal for me growing up is not necessarily normal, right? (Violet)

Discussion

This study explored the perspectives of ten qualified EPs and their perceptions of their role when working with CYP from LSES. The aim was to explore their experiences of working with these CYP and to glean EP views of ways to work effectively with this population.

Research Questions

RQ1: What do Educational Psychologists perceive as the key barriers faced by children and young people from low socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds?

RQ2: What roles do Educational Psychologists believe they can play in addressing the challenges associated with LSES, and what recommendations do they propose for future practice?

In the current study the Educational Psychologists' perspectives on poverty suggest that they view children and young people from low socio-economic backgrounds as being adversely affected in multiple, interrelated ways. Participants' descriptions and observations can be understood through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2005), highlighting that CYP from LSES encounter developmental challenges across all layers of their ecological environment.

Microsystem

Participants describe the challenges in the immediate environment of CYP from LSES. In ecosystemic terms, this can be viewed as the microsystem being affected for these children. In their responses, participants directly link the immediate living environment to family stress. This is supported by the literature (Conger & Conger, 2002; Conger et al., 2010; Masarik & Conger, 2017) which presents family stress as a main factor in differences in presentation between CYP from LSES and CYP from more affluent backgrounds. The literature outlines the causal effect of parental stress impacting on CYP's internalised and externalised behaviours (JRF, 2007; Miller & Chen, 2013).

Other challenges caused by the immediate environment were also outlined by participants. The emotional availability of parents was described as reduced, and a direct link was made to the stress of living in a LSES context. This also links to the FSM (Conger et al., 1994) especially in terms of the interacting factors of low levels of education and mental and physical ill health caused by poverty as evidenced in the literature (JRF, 2007; Miller & Chen, 2013). Participants also explicitly link the

child's microsystem and a lack of language skills to their living environment which participants see as preventing parents' ability to interact with their CYP, particularly for younger children about to begin school. This can also be understood in the context of school readiness which participants comment upon and is consistent with research by Hart & Risley who outlined the 30-million-word gap (1995) linked to quantity of caregiver input. Research by Fernald et al. (2013) outlines discrepancies in language processing efficiency at 18 and 24 months between CYP from different SES which also supports these findings.

The Impact of Generational Poverty

The participants cited generational poverty as a specific challenge for CYP from LSES. This was expressed both in terms of the persistent attitudes and narratives which the CYP are exposed to in their immediate and broader environment. Participants describe these limiting narratives as coming from the education system due to, what participants see as, a middle-class view of success. Participants perceive that these messages permeate all areas of a child's life and are seen as being expressed by family and school staff plus more widespread media messages which the CYP are exposed to. These limiting narratives can be understood through the prism of Oscar Lewis' culture of poverty theory (1966) which views poverty as stretching across generations due to cultural values which create a self-perpetuating cycle. Therefore, the narratives which CYP are exposed to 'hold them' in poverty and it seems participants see these narratives which exist across ecological systems, (i.e. the home, school and media) as specifically limiting for CYP from LSES. However, the findings show that participants also interpret this 'culture of poverty' through a more structuralist lens (Brady, 2009). Participants reference the underlying systems as the reason CYP from LSES are 'held' in LSES and they perceive this as

the reason for the challenging living conditions and view systemic issues as the main factor contributing to these narratives rather than the moral 'short comings' within the family unit. This view strongly mirrors Bourdieu's theory of 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1986) and participants seem to be indicating the internalised, unconscious schemas and patterns of thoughts and behaviour which individuals acquire through their experiences in social and cultural fields shaped by social class and position within the social structure. Bourdieu's theory (1984) positions society and its socially constructed narratives as embodied by individuals influencing their thoughts and behaviours. The present study indicates that the participants share this view. For example, EPs felt that parental experiences and constructs of education may be informing the narratives around the CYP. In this context families are positioned as having an external locus of control (Rotter, 1954), however in different contexts discussed in these findings, participants acknowledge an internal locus of control for participants. This links to a belief that CYP and their families can overcome LSES. Participants mainly cite relational approaches and opportunities for CYP to develop 'capital' as the main way CYP achieve this.

Wider Systems

The wider environment, or macrosystem and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005) was a factor which participants cited as impacting the lives of CYP. EPs described the CYP's experiences of climate change and cited that they do not feel that CYP are experiencing this equally. This corroborates existing research and data from World Bank (2024) and (UNICEF, 2021) which confirms that environmental changes have a larger impact on CYP who live in poverty (Hellegatte et al., 2018). The data indicates that participants feel that the impact of COVID was also experienced unequally by children from different SES. This is supported by research

by Cameron et al., (2023) which found CYPs relational and participatory activity was diminished plus families from LSES suffered a drop in living standards (CPAG, 2020) which included digital exclusion and food insecurity (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020) with these effects predicted to be long term (Anders et al., 2020; Van Lancker, 2020). COVID as an event can therefore be understood in the context of Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem and this also represents an inequality of experience. The findings in the current study indicate that CYP from LSES face numerous challenges which negatively impact each level of the ecological systems in which they are nested. It is the participants' view that CYPs' environment, immediate and broader plus interactions and experiences intrinsic to CYPs wellbeing and presentation at school are negatively affected by living in LSES. Participants also established a strong link between the difficulties CYP from LSES face and their presentations in school.

Definitions of Poverty

Participants described some difficulties with the construct of poverty, and this seemed to stem from two areas, both the difficulties with the exact definition and also the lack of clarity they experience with the identification of CYP from LSES within the education system in which they carry out their role. The participants expressed discomfort when talking about what could be considered the 'characteristics' and identifying factors of CYP from LSES. This can be seen when Peter stated that he 'struggled' with the question and Violet used the word 'awful' to describe her own descriptions. This aspect of the data mirrors the uncertainty and lack of clarity in the literature around LSES which also extends to its definition (Cook & Lawson, Manstead, 2018) which supports the multi-faceted nature of poverty Palacios-Barrios and Hanson (2019) as a concept making it difficult to define. It can be concluded from the data that EPs felt discomfort when defining LSES because

they felt that they were leaning on stereotypes and they openly expressed concerns about making judgements. Participants had insight into their discomfort and openly expressed the reasons for their discomfort and difficulty defining how LSES would present. Although, at times, uncomfortable for some participants, this indicates EPs' awareness of social justice. A recent review by Embeita and Birch (2024) indicated that EPs construct of social justice centres around fairness, equity and equality, awareness, advocacy and cultural competence. To practice through the prism of stereotypes and judgement would go directly against ethical EP practice. An awareness of client backgrounds is necessary for socially just EP practice (Embeita & Birch, 2024) and HCPC standards indicate that EPs must be aware of their personal values and their potential impact and biases (HCPC, 1.5) and that they must ensure that this does not lead to discrimination of service users (HCPC, 1.6). To use stereotypes as a definition would go against these values for EPs. This strengthens the case for the need for clear identification of children from LSES in referrals to facilitate consideration of the challenges of LSES for EPs.

Defining LSES in Practice

The findings show that the lack of clarity around the identification of LSES was also perceived as extending to school staff. Participants described their direct experiences of school staff expressing quite negative and deterministic views about CYP, their families and prospects. Descriptions in the current research findings of these experiences of encountering deterministic views are supported by Simpson (2013), who states that school practitioners conceptualise 'child poverty' as a problem caused by the 'wrong type' of parenting which he views as not reflecting the reality of poverty. The literature also shows that school staff made no link between children experiencing LSES and challenges in the classroom (Ellis et al,.2016;

Thompson et al. 2016). The findings in the current study indicate that school staff would defer to child deficit models to explain the educational achievement discrepancy which CYP from LSES face. This directly links to the idea of determinism which is another theme running through the findings in the current study. An example of this is reference to the ACEs model (Feletti, 1998) which is in alignment with a review by Asmussen (2020) which indicates that this measure should be used with caution (Anda et al., 2020).

The literature agrees that the negative effects of poverty are well established in terms of the broad impacts which include health, cognition (Kishiyama et al., 2009; Moulton et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2023) and language (Fernald et al., 2013; Gilkerson et al., 2018; Law et al., 2011). However, findings indicate that despite the strength of evidence, LSES is not always recognised as a discreet difficulty within the education system. Participants describe the attribution of SEND needs by school staff when, in the view of participants, the CYPs presentation is a direct result of living in LSES. Conversely, across the data participants also indicate that they have seen evidence of schools working with CYP from LSES effectively, through facilitating increased access to resources and school trips. This links to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) and can be understood as the school providing essentials that CYP need to function within the school context. Participants also describe positive relational interactions which they have seen between CYP from LSES and school staff. However, participants perceive that these experiences of positive interactions and provision for CYP from LSES are not consistent across different school settings. The lack of consistency around consideration of LSES as a discrete need is echoed at a wider systemic level, for example participants express

the lack of consideration LSES is given during multiagency meetings. Furthermore, participants highlighted a lack of cultural competence across education systems. Burnham's Social Graces model (Burnham, 2012) lists 'class' as an identity which can be affected by power differentials, and the data in this study confirms that this is not considered effectively across systems.

Power Shifts

Participants describe the power shifts they have experienced when carrying out their role. Participants link this to their concerns that they may not be seeing the 'neediest' children. Participants also describe the feeling of powerlessness when working with more affluent families and also perceive some SENCos as gatekeeping access to the 'right' children. These shifts of power can be understood in the context of Bourdieu's 'capital' theory particularly the social capital theory. According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital is obtained through connections, position and social norms which assume advantage both actual and virtual which is also relevant in terms of access to resources. In this context the more affluent parents are displaying cultural competency and displaying the skills necessary to navigate the school and SEND system. Families from LSES are perceived by participants as not having these skills and inherent assumptions about their right to resources. Bourdieu's symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991) is also relevant here as participants' descriptions indicate that more affluent parents have more clarity about what their child is entitled to and are more adept at navigating the system than their less affluent counterparts. This is supported by the literature (Ball & Vincent, 2021), which suggests that more affluent parents can use capital to access resources and names strategies such as strategic school choice as an example of this. These sentiments and observations which

participants make, strongly suggest that they perceive widespread inequality of access across the education system.

Protective Factors

Across the data the participants strongly challenge the meaning of success and suggest that the concept of success which is presented to CYP from LSES is very narrow and reflective of more ‘middle class’ values and that perhaps there are other routes to success which are not valued equally. This is echoed in the literature specifically through the research by Reay (2017), which states that schools can fail to recognise and value the strengths and cultural resources of ‘working class’ or CYP from LSES. Findings suggest that the concept of success which is imposed on CYP or the ideals which they are measured against are often not the same or meaningless to CYP from LSES. This links back to Bourdieu’s idea of habitus, capital and field (Bourdieu, 1984) as it is indicated in the findings that EPs perceive middle class cultural capital as being rewarded. The Social Graces Model (Burnham, 2012) helps practitioners to be alert to their own preconceptions. The responses from participants indicate that they do not see LSES as receiving sufficient consideration within the education system, hence their questioning of the views of success put forward by schools. This is a strong indication that participants see this aspect of education as overlooked and undervalued. Rowland (n.d., as cited in BASW, 2020) noted that “The graces are about process, not procedure. It’s about the interaction between people, not data”. Therefore, the findings in the current study indicate that the idea of ‘success’ for CYP needs to be more wide-ranging.

The complexity of the impact of LSES on CYP is strongly indicated across the literature (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Dufford et al., 2020; Palacios-Barrios &

Hanson, 2019) . Debates which address the best way to ameliorate poverty centre on relational approaches and distributive approaches (Street, 2021) set against a backdrop of a lack of clarity of approach due to different methods of measuring poverty and differing approaches from successive governments. The data indicates that EPs bring unique skills to this complex situation and that EPs understand the true complexity of the LSES context. Participants described several ways that they have directly helped children overcome the impact of poverty through their practice. Relationships with parents were cited as a key aspect and participants felt that they advocated for families and helped them to navigate a complex system. Participants also describe how positive interactions with CYP have had the effect of making positive change. This approach and focus on relationships is supported by research by Street (2021, 2022) which posits that relational approaches to wellbeing and a prioritisation of 'the collective' and 'the social' have the potential to improve educational outcomes for CYP from LSES, rather than distributive resource-based approaches which are generally promoted by current government policy (Simpson et al., 2015).

Advocacy

Advocacy was strongly featured across the findings and EPs described their experiences of challenging judgements and negative perceptions of CYP from LSES. Research by Lindon (2022) indicates that school staff experiences of poverty dictates how far they can emphasise with the reality of living in LSES. Participants saw their interactions as a way to challenge and change perceptions around these views and felt that their interactions can have long term learning impacts for staff. The vehicle for this learning and change of views was seen to be supervision and

consultation of school staff. Participants perceive this as giving school staff space to consider their perceptions of CYP from LSES and the challenges they face.

Cultural Competence

Participants link the impact of standardised cognitive assessments to other social causes, cultural competence and protected characteristics. For example, one participant specifically references work they had done as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement and how this had given them awareness of the cultural difficulties and controversies around standardised cognitive assessments which they in turn link to the challenges of LSES. This aligns to the recently updated HCPC standards of proficiency which EPs must meet, with the role of equality, diversity and inclusion significantly expanded to ensure that the practice of EPs is inclusive for all service users.

Awareness Raising

EPs expressed that they would like to see a general raising of awareness of the impact of poverty. It was established in the data that CYP are affected by poverty at all ecosystemic levels and therefore for EPs to have an influence, they need to be 'in those spaces' as one participant put it. The participants expressed their feeling that they would like more involvement at higher levels, for example, through robust multiagency systemic work. Linked to this is the sense across the data that the role of the EP needs elevating in status, so that EPs are a part of high-level conversations around working systemically and strategically within the LA. The participants expressed that they feel that they can have an impact and advocate for CYP from LSES more effectively this way and one participant had direct experience of being able to influence systems more directly when she had a high-level role. The data finds that CYP from LSES have challenges across all their ecosystemic levels

and so this view from EPs that they need to be present at all levels of decision making aligns with the literature and psychological frameworks.

EP Workforce

Participants described distinct barriers they faced throughout the profession. For example, the increase in numbers of Educational Psychologists leaving local authority roles to work in private practice was perceived as having a detrimental impact on CYP, both by reducing their access to support and by diminishing the capacity of services. This was also seen to limit the development of sustained relationships with schools. The lack of opportunities to work with CYP over-time was seen as problematic by EPs and they described how follow up work with cases is largely incidental and that they therefore do not always know the impact of their work. Differences between statutory work and traded or early intervention work influenced how far participants felt they could help CYP from LSES over time, with participants describing how their relationships with schools are now more fragmented in that their work is frequently on a case-by-case basis. Both the existing literature and the findings in this research strongly suggest that as well as the multifaceted impact across the ecosystemic context of CYP from LSES, the challenges they face as a result of poverty are also long term. In longitudinal research relating to resilience, DeFrance (2022) found that CYP who appeared ‘resilient’ after growing up in LSES did in fact have higher levels of chronic physiological stress and Luthar et al, (2015) posits that resilience is a relational contextual process. Therefore, this supports the participants concerns about being unable to work with schools and CYP over time and it is seen as limiting the embedding and promoting of relational approaches. This is also supported by and closely related to attachment theory (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969) which

outlines the idea of a secure base from which children can explore. In the current study participants give examples of some schools being a successful source of practical help and providing positive relationships for families and their children. This indicates that schools can act as a secure base for CYP which strengthens the case for EPs supporting a relational approaches over time for schools and CYP from LSES.

The SES of the EP Profession

EP background was discussed throughout the data and participants expressed that the majority of people in the profession and people accessing the training seem to be from a homogenous group, in that they are from more affluent SES, and therefore the implication is that they may not be as capable of emphasising with CYP from LSES. It is notable that on the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) website (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2024) in their equality and diversity monitoring report of Educational Psychology Doctorate applicants, only gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and dependents are tracked. There is no reference to SES anywhere in the metrics. Participants indicate that they feel that they need to keep their social class 'hidden' and one particularly experienced participant outlined how even when working at a high management level she kept her SES hidden. This is supported by research by Thomas (2022) which posits that EPs felt they had little opportunity to discuss their background and personal experiences of LSES. However, participants in this study do express that they feel that there may be an emerging awareness and consideration of EP SES developing across the profession. The data also strongly evidenced how the participants who identified as being from a 'privileged' background had an acute awareness of the impact their more affluent SES could have on the CYP and

families they work with. EPs who identified as being from more affluent SES were able to empathise, had an awareness of the power differential and even described their ability to ‘code switch’ (Gumperz, 1982) within their role, for example, in terms of their accent and dress. This can be understood through the lens of Burnham’s social Graces (2012) as EPs are actively and consciously ameliorating the impact of their perceived higher SES. This can also be understood in the context of power and echoes Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991) where CYP and their families internalise and accept feelings of a devalued position due to the rules of the institution they belong to. Despite their background, EPs see themselves as helping families overcome this perception by facilitating their sense of agency (Reay, 2017) and helping parents to feel more comfortable and able to actively engage with and navigate systems to access ‘cultural capital’ equal to more affluent families.

Therefore, ultimately empowering CYP from LSES and their families.

Work Within the LA Structure

Throughout the data participants strongly and consistently indicate that EPs bring a unique and distinct skill set when working with CYP from LSES. EPs also perceiving themselves as being well placed within LA systems to build the capacity, understanding and skill set of schools to ameliorate the impact of LSES. The EP role has been examined in the literature over many decades (Cameron, 2006; Fallon et al., 2010; Gillham, 1978; Squires & Farrell, 2006; Squires et al., 2007). The Currie Report (2002) sets out five functions of the role which are widely used within the profession to set out the core duties (consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research).

Participants highlighted that they feel a lack of clarity around how to identify LSES both within their own practice and within schools. Participants also highlighted that LSES, and its impact is often overlooked by school staff. Its importance is also not referred to during multiagency meetings. In this research participants indicate that children's services within LAs are at different stages of development in their work relating to ameliorating the impact of poverty. Participants also indicate that how far LSES is taken into consideration by individual EPs within their own service varies, there are differences in how far each EP considers LSES and its impact. This constitutes a training need across all systems from school level, through to service level and systemically across the different agencies which are nested within local authority children's services. The data in this study shows that EPs have an awareness of this barrier within their own practice, but participants outline that they have experienced a lack of acknowledgement of these challenges for CYP from LSES across schools and other agencies. This can be viewed through the lens of The Four Stages of Competence Model (Adams, 2021) which outlines progression of competence through several stages. The stages are: unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, and unconscious competence. Participants indicate that EP services can be placed at the conscious incompetence range, in that they are aware of the difficulties around the definition and the lack of status the impact of LSES is given across EP services. However, it must be noted that participants acknowledge a variation in practice; some EPs consider LSES more than others. In this research participants view schools and broader children's services as being at the unconsciously incompetent stage. This constitutes a broad training need across education and broader children's services in England.

Consultation is an integral part of EP practice (Scottish Executive, 2002). It was highlighted by participants that the degree to which individual EPs within each service consider the impact of LSES during consultations varied. Participants felt that there was also variation across EP services in different LAs around how far the SES of a child is considered during consultation. Across the data in this study participants expressed their feeling that consideration of the status of LSES as a specific barrier for CYP from LSES should be higher 'on the agenda'. There was also a feeling across the findings that during multi agency meetings, the SES of LSES should be a consideration. The findings indicate that EPs felt that they could affect change when they had a higher status within the LA and that they could then influence and bring a psychological perspective to the outcome of multiagency meetings.

Therapeutic Approaches

EPs indicated that they believe therapeutic approaches would help CYP from LSES and they highlight importance of work focussed on aspirations. However, participants also described some barriers to implementing this which they have experienced through their practice. They feel that they currently have far fewer places to signpost to in order to help families access therapeutic interventions and services. Participants also outline that time constraints limit their ability to work with CYP and families over time due to current ways of working which has an impact on their ability to practice therapeutically.

Community Psychology

Community psychology was frequently referenced as an approach which EPs feel has a positive impact on CYP and families from LSES and it was seen as a way to 'reach' these families. Participants also felt that the supervision of school staff

enabled a space and opportunity to facilitate consideration of the challenges this group of children face.

Assessment

Participants discussed their feelings around different approaches to assessment. They strongly indicate that they feel discomfort with using standardised cognitive assessments due to the categorisation and assumptions which can be made about CYP as a result. Participants also expressed their views on the broader impact of their work and felt that assessing a single child through casework may have a positive impact on that child but they feel whole school systemic work would be more effective and enable EPs to reach more children than an individual assessment can.

Research Limitations

Intersectionality

One of the limitations of this research is the absence of a discussion around intersectionality. In this study, intersectionality is only addressed in terms of SEND and LSES, but there are other important considerations for CYP from LSES who may be disadvantaged in other ways. This is particularly important as the researcher proposes, and it was expressed in the data, that LSES should be considered a protected characteristic, so recognition of already established protected characteristics and their interactions seems appropriate. The Social Graces framework (Burnham, 2012) indicates the power deficits which certain marginalised groups face. This was recognised in the data when EPs discussed the issue around cognitive assessments leading to inappropriate categorisation of CYP. As well as this, some of the challenges CYP from other groups face, echo the challenges and assumptions made about CYP from LSES. For example, Rollock et al. (2014)

indicate that teachers have chronically low expectations of black children and labels such as SEMH are disproportionately used to describe this group. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) outlines the interaction between multiple dimensions of identity rather than conceptualising them as a single entity. In the context of the current study, this moves the concept of poverty away from a unilateral disadvantage towards an acknowledgement that more than one single construct can exist within individuals (Yuval-Davis, 2011) which constitutes a further impact on the lived experience of CYP from LSES.

The present study indicates that CYP from LSES suffer similar unconscious biases as other marginalised groups and therefore more research into intersectionality with LSES would hopefully enhance the school experience for all groups and enhance the awareness and practice of staff who work with CYP from all marginalised groups.

Child and Family Voice

The voice of the child is absent from this research as is the voice of families. As the research highlights the need for relational approaches to addressing LSES for CYP then this cannot happen without the voices of the children and families. Generally, person centred approaches lead to effective engagement of CYP and their families (Gray & Woods, 2022). It is also part of the statutory process (SEND COP, 2014;

Children and Families act, 2014) and so further research into CYP and families from LSES experiences of working with EP services and their perceptions of their own difficulties would be worthwhile.

What do we Mean by Family?

Throughout the research on LSES and education the family is referred to often. Yet the idea of family seems homogenous and seems to assume a heteronormative traditional mother and father model. This is also true of the present study and was not an element explored by the researcher. Perhaps more research into different types of family and the mediating factors this brings when working with CYP from LSES would be worthwhile to reflect the lived reality and context of CYP in LSES.

POST 16

The present study is mainly focussed on children in primary and secondary educational settings. There is no exploration of the further challenges CYP from LSES might face post 16 and when leaving education. Research by Howell (2024) indicates that research into young people's views of their experience of leaving education is underexplored. Work by Pescod and Gander (2024) into homeless young people's complex and overlapping barriers to accessing education employment and training indicates that the specific individual circumstances for groups facing such barriers needs to be further explored. Although CYP from LSES are not specifically homeless in the current study, the barriers identified by Pescod and Gander (2024) such as needing additional support in school; behavioural challenges or academic failings at school; support from professionals and external organisations; support from teachers; unsupportive educational settings/professionals; challenges meeting basic needs and accessing resources mirror the challenges CYP from LSES face and therefore specific research into the post 16 experiences of CYP from LSES would be beneficial.

Conclusion

This study explored the experiences of ten qualified EPs when working with CYP from LSES. The research focussed on their perceptions of the challenges which CYP from LSES face and participants' feelings about their role and their impact on these CYP. Four main themes were developed: Constructs of LSES, 'Success', Barriers and the Unique contribution of EPs.

These themes highlight the barriers which CYP from LSES face according to EPs and also how far EPs feel that they can ameliorate poverty and the strengths and current limitations of the EP role when working with this population. The themes also highlight inequality of access across the education system due to a lack of social and cultural capital plus an element of negative assumptions made about the challenges of living in LSES. Factors which help CYP to succeed were also explored and questions were raised about the nature of success and what it means for CYP from LSES.

Findings indicate that there is a lack of clarity around the definition of LSES and methods of clearly identifying this population. There is also a lack of clarity around the impact of poverty and how this affects the internalised and externalised presentation of CYP within the education system which in turn leads to confusion about how to support these CYP. The findings also show that EPs are aware of the unique skills they can use to help ameliorate poverty and to reduce systemic power imbalances, yet they describe barriers to being able to carry out their role, largely related to power and status of the profession alongside current difficulties with ways of working and capacity within the EP workforce. It seems more empowerment and

presence of EPs at high level strategic contexts would be helpful, as well as more agency within schools. Enhancing the strategic element of the EP role would further enable the amelioration of poverty for CYP across all ecosystemic levels. There is an absence of existing research in this area specifically relating to the EP role. This study provides an important insight into the issue of LSES for CYP and how this links to the role of the EP, but it is only the beginning of the story and the voice of the child and families' needs further exploration as well as research into the perceptions of school staff around the role of the EP and the difficulties which CYP from LSES face.

Chapter 3: Research Practitioner: a reflection

Introduction

In this section I will reflect on my experience of researching at this level and the thoughts and feelings I had at different stages of the process. I will write in the first person to indicate my active role in my reflexive research process. I will share my motivations for undertaking research on CYP from LSES, linking personal and my past professional interests to the wider research process. I reflect on my underlying ontological and epistemological position, and on the learning process as a developing researcher.

First encounter of the 'Problem'.

I grew up in a working-class town in Salford, Manchester and so I have developed an interest in this topic over the course of my lifetime. As my Mum had me at a very young age, I lived with my maternal Grandparents until I was around seven years old and then for various periods of my life. They were a big influence on me and my values.

I started my PGCE in primary education in 2003 at Liverpool Hope University and during my teacher training placements I worked with children and families from LSES. From very early on, I found I had a skill for building relationships with these families and children. When I qualified as a teacher, I got a job at what turned out to be a relatively affluent school and it was here I had my first encounter with an attitude I found puzzling. I remember sitting in a staff meeting as a new (optimistic) NQT and a more experienced teacher saying with genuine outrage something along

the lines of “it’s dreadful, some children in this school are not eating at a dining table at home, whatever are we going to do?”. I remember feeling silently embarrassed and sinking down in my chair and thinking “but I always had my tea on my knee, is that bad? Should we have had a dining table?”. I later recounted the story to my grandma who gave it short shrift and said, “I’ve never heard such rubbish in my entire life, the kids get fed don’t they? What if you don’t have room for a table?”. I encountered similar attitudes and judgements of families over the years during my career in primary education and I encountered these attitudes at all levels and, most worryingly, from within school leadership teams which I was a part of as my career progressed.

I spent a lot of my teaching career working in schools in central London. My last role in primary education, before embarking on the doctorate was as assistant head for inclusion in a school with high levels of CYP from LSES. The assistant head position incorporated the SENCo role but also included overseeing provision for children with English as an Additional Language, safeguarding and, most relevant to this research, overseeing the funding and provision for children in receipt of the pupil premium grant or the ‘disadvantaged’ children which seems to be the accepted shorthand in schools. It was in this role that I first noticed the disconnect between the difficulties which CYP from LSES face and other wider agencies. I also knew that despite the funding there was often a lack of clarity around the best approaches to help these particular children. We had a wonderful supportive link EP, but I did not view her as the person to speak to about the impact of LSES (at the time) and I definitely did not see her as somebody to ask about the strategic element of my role (my view on this has completely changed over the last three years!). I want to be

clear that this was not down to the EP's practice but was down to my limited view of her role with CYP from LSES at the time.

Why am I Doing this Topic?

I can pinpoint the moment I gained clarity about the magnitude of this issue. A few years ago, I was chatting about my previous role with children eligible for the pupil premium grant to my Grandmother. I told her that sometimes we buy school uniform for the children of families who cannot afford it. She casually said, "oh yes I know all about that, I passed all the exams to get into Manchester Girls Grammar, but I didn't go because my Mam couldn't afford the uniform". Two things struck me about this, firstly my Grandmother's acceptance of this as just a fact of life and secondly, that this must have occurred over eighty years ago. It felt like a depressing full circle moment which indicated to me that nothing has really changed at all for CYP from less affluent backgrounds. This casual comment stayed with me.

Is this Psychology?

As my curiosity had been sparked around LSES and its effects on children, I put it forward as one of my areas of interest very, very early in the doctorate course process. My other area of interest was refugee children as I had worked with many refugee families and their children during my career in London plus, I had selected refugee children as an essay topic in the first year of the doctorate and had become very interested in Papadopoulos's (2007) psychological immune system. I felt this had some parallels with CYP from LSES in that not all children seemed to respond to their particular difficulties in the same way. Once the area of research was finalised, I began to consider the research area further and had some reservations. Is this even psychology? What is psychological about this? Is this not more sociology? Maybe I have made a huge mistake.

I did not have a clear research question initially and so I read broadly around the subject in preparation for the research proposal and literature review. The more I read the more it became clear that this topic is most definitely relevant to psychology. Despite my experience working closely with families from LSES, I had not quite realised the extent and multifaceted nature of the impact LSES can have. I suppose reading the research enabled me to articulate what I knew and felt viscerally throughout my teaching career.

Broadness of the Topic

I found the broadness of the topic overwhelming. Obviously, there is a historical and global context to poverty, and I had to make certain decisions in order to give an adequate overview within the scope of this thesis. Pinning down exactly what aspect of poverty I wanted to research took me some time and it all just seemed unwieldy. The more I read the more I lost the clarity. I did know that I wanted to include the EP role and so initially I intended to do a study using a multi perspective interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) which incorporated a teacher, a child, a SENCo and an EP. Phenomenologists seek to describe lived experience and how participants make sense of a particular lived experience. As I thought about it more, I decided that the lived experience of poverty as a phenomenon was not quite what I was looking to explore. As well as this, I had discovered through my reading that there was an absence of research around the role of an EP and their experiences of working with CYP from LSES. I took this question to a supervision session and as a result of this meeting and discussion I came to the conclusion that perhaps I should focus purely on the EP role and its link to CYP from LSES. After much consideration I felt that multi perspective IPA would ‘dilute’ this huge gap in the literature which I

had identified and that the dearth of literature around the EP role and LSES needed to be addressed with appropriate industry. Therefore, to get the depth and richness of data I started to consider thematic analysis of the EP role as it relates to CYP from LSES.

However, I still had reservations about this methodology. My main worry was that it seemed too simple to do a straightforward thematic analysis of EPs and their role. I then started to think of ways to make it 'more complex', such as wondering whether I should do a content analysis of policies relating to Pupil Premium for each LA (which may not exist). I eventually realised that I was 'putting the cart before the horse' and trying to make the research process more complex for complexities sake rather than for the value it brings to the exploration of the research area. I realised that there is true value in purely considering EP views of the role of the EP and their experiences of working with CYP from LSES and I needed to have the courage of my own convictions and follow my instinct. The role of the EP and how it relates to LSES is an area completely neglected across the literature and therefore a deeper, richer engagement with the data which I hoped to gather holds great value and constitutes a meaningful contribution to the literature base. I decided to prioritise the depth and richness of the data with the goal of gaining a full understanding of this aspect of the EP role.

Narrative Literature Review

The decision to do a narrative literature review occurred after I became overwhelmed with the literature. Initially I started with a systematic literature review, but the results from searches were vast, I felt overwhelmed by the amount of literature but conversely, I felt like none of it addressed the role of the EP. I was also aware that

poverty is such a vast topic that I needed to make sure I could situate it and give it an appropriate context and relevance to CYP and the EP role.

I met with my research supervisor in the first summer break to discuss this and realised that I was trying to embark on the wrong type of literature review for what I was trying to achieve. My supervisor suggested a narrative literature review may give me the flexibility I needed to glean relevant information from the research and to create the correct focus needed for my particular research area. A narrative review gave me control over the elements I wished to highlight in terms of the historical and social context. I was also freer to make decisions about relevant lines of enquiry. Initially I thought of the organisation of the narrative literature review in terms of Bronfenbrenner's ECT (1979, 2005). In fact, I stuck to this quite rigidly at first. However, I began to find this a bit restrictive and eventually just used the framework to guide my thinking rather than explicitly setting out my literature review around each system. The framework helped me to consider the broad global, cultural and socio-political aspects of poverty and how it affects children and then the more direct influences of the socio-political context for children in England. I could then situate the EP role within this.

Child Voice

A glaring omission across the research base is the voice of the child and to some extent the voice of the family. Person centred approaches (Gray & Woods, 2022) are something I have been passionate about throughout my previous career and current training and practice. Person centred approaches (Gray & Woods, 2022) are also integral to SEND provision in England for example, in the EHCP application process "Children, their parents and young people should feel confident that their views will

be listened to and that they are equal partners in the *process"* (SEND Code of Practice, 1.3). Omitting these voices from my research was therefore difficult for me. I held in mind the hope that this research can still help enhance practice for CYP from LSES.

Intersectionality

I was conflicted when thinking about whether to fully address intersectionality throughout this research especially as it is touched upon by participants within the interviews. The majority of my working life in central London schools was with CYP from very diverse heritages and from global majority backgrounds, for example the last school I was employed at had 89.7% children with EAL. Therefore, I absolutely knew this was a vital aspect of this research area and I have met and worked with the very CYP impacted by intersectionality and therefore, am motivated to represent these children who I feel I have advocated for in the past. On the one hand it is a vital part of EP practice and an area I am passionate about. On the other hand, it is such an important area of research that I came to the conclusion that intersectionality needs its own rich research to purely explore the impact of intersectionality on CYP from LSES. I also hope that by informing practice through this research that practice is then enhanced for all CYP with protected characteristics. I know that LSES and other protected characteristics are not mutually exclusive, and culture can be defined as "the values, norms, and traditions that affect how individuals of a particular group perceive, think, interact, behave, and make judgments about their world" (Chamberlain, 2005, p. 197). In other words, I hoped that by conducting this research I could inform the broader picture of cultural competence and sensitivity in practice (Sperry, 2012).

Ontology and Epistemology

Research paradigms are an area I struggled to get to grips with. Originally, I considered a critical realist ontology. I had the impression that CR ”just fits everything”. I had also read a document called "why everyone should be a critical realist” (Fryer, 2020). I also saw it as a ‘catch all’ epistemological position. I did not want to just ‘fall back’ on this ontological approach and I was also aware that my particular area of interest strayed into other disciplines.

I really had to spend time reading around research paradigms and felt it was at the very limits of my understanding. I still wavered between social constructivism and CR. This also became clearer as I settled on the nature of the research and had devised my research question.

The research is an exploration of EPs’ subjective views of the impact of poverty and as I read more broadly about poverty it became clear that there were several different positions, ideas and definitions of what it is actually is. As well as this, there is disagreement about which words best describe it and how to measure it. Therefore, it seemed to me that the concept of poverty was most definitely socially constructed and the further I got into the project, the more I cemented my thinking around this. Calling poverty socially constructed is not to deny the limited resources and lack of material wealth and associated difficulties some people suffer, but as I got deeper into the philosophy around poverty, particularly the writing of Bourdieu, there were many concepts which were socially constructed such as ‘cultural capital’. for example. Social constructivism holds that characteristics such as gender race and class and ability are products of human definition (Subramaniam, 2010).

Therefore, it seemed to ‘fit’ my research.

Admittedly, my understanding of ontology and epistemology has been ‘hazy’ throughout the doctorate, and I think, in a way, as I worked more on my research and developed my understanding of what I want to achieve this actually helped my understanding of research paradigms whereas I think that is actually supposed to happen the other way around. One of the most salient moments of talking about LSES which made me think about how it was socially constructed was when asking EPs to define it during the interviews and one participant referred to a debate which was happening around the time I was collecting data when the Prime Minister was repeatedly asked to define “what is a working person?”, this really solidified my thinking around accepted definitions in society and how they are socially constructed.

Recruitment and EP Background

Initially I wondered whether I should recruit just EPs from LSES backgrounds, but I decided that the main aim of the research was to get EPs perceptions of working with the CYP from LSES rather than the influence LSES has had on them. I decided to focus on the experiences of EPs as a group rather than limiting it to EPs from LSES as this would give a better representation and broader picture of the current state of practice around ameliorating poverty for CYP. The EP background was referenced in the initial questionnaire and also through the question schedule, but I did not want the EP background to be central to the research, my main aim was to keep the roles impact on the child as central as possible. One EP expressed on the form that although she does not identify as being from LSES now, she definitely did as a child. I wondered whether I should have worded my questionnaire differently

and had two stages to the identification of SES for participants. I think were I to conduct the research again, I would refine this question.

Making EPs Feel Uncomfortable about Defining Poverty

A surprising aspect of the interviews was the discomfort EPs felt when defining poverty. EPs indicated feelings of guilt and also expressed that they felt that they were leaning on stereotypes to articulate this information. The EPs had great insight into why they found this difficult and although I had considered the emotional impact that talking about poverty may have on the EPs from the perspective of things they may have experienced personally, I had not considered the professional discomfort this would cause. I realised that the participants were comfortable to talk about their own background but defining LSES in relationship to the children was difficult for them which was surprising to me and an aspect I had not pre-empted.

Naïve Researcher

According to Small (2009) qualitative researchers work cyclically identify new distinctions become intimate with the data and construct deeper meaning. When conducting the semi structured interviews, I tried to be conscious of my positionality. Yip (2024) sees this as a person's identities and standpoints informing how a person interprets the world based on opinions values and experiences.

Therefore, I tried to be conscious of what I was bringing to the role of researcher. There were two elements to this, firstly I am a TEP and so brought some thoughts and feelings to the role. I also had a long history in schools and in school leadership which is in fact partly what prompted me to conduct the research. I was conscious that I would be 'bringing' this with me to the interviews. Braun and Clark (2006) see

this subjectivity as central to the process and so I tried to embrace it and let my values, experiences, and theoretical assumptions shape the analysis. For example, due to my work experiences, I know the SEND COP (2014) inside out and therefore was bringing this knowledge of what is expected from schools. I was also aware that certain families and children I had worked with were very much 'in the room with me'. One unintended benefit of conducting this research has been that I got one on one time with EPs with far more experience than me and so I actually found that I learnt a lot. It almost became an unintentional CPD session, and I consider it a privilege to have been able to have this 1:1 time with such experienced EPs. In terms of positionality, I was very aware that in this context when asking about the EP role I was definitely not the expert.

Analysing the Data

Familiarisation

I vastly underestimated how long analysing the data would take. I ended up with nearly eleven hours of data and so analysing it became another overwhelming part of the research process.

I started by purely listening to the interviews several times. I allowed myself to be very passive at this stage and just listen. Initially I intended to transcribe by hand as I felt that this would enable me to engage more closely with the interviews. As my interviews were conducted on Microsoft Teams, the transcript function automatically kicked in. After the first couple of interviews, I read the transcripts and noticed that they were inaccurate in a lot of places and so I listened to the recordings again and corrected the transcripts produced by Microsoft Teams. After the first two I realised that correcting the transcripts was also facilitating my engagement with the

interviews and so I continued with this strategy which veered a little from my initial intention.

I decided the best approach was to read the transcripts (once corrected) and keep reading them. As I am an inexperienced researcher, I felt that after the reading stage I needed some sort of intermediary stage before I leapt in to coding the data. I decided to read again and I 'bolded' anything that jumped out at me. I did not interpret on any level but just bolded the text using the function on word. After this, I still felt overwhelmed by the data and so I went through it again and this time noted down in a notebook by hand exactly what the participants were saying. No interpretation as such just paraphrasing and summarising as a way to further engage with the interviews to remove the pressure of interpretation at this stage.

Generating Initial Codes

Next, I began to try to interpret and make meaning. This I did by printing out all the transcripts and noting at the side my broad interpretations. Something about engaging with physical paper felt more comfortable than trying to code on a screen. Next, I began the coding of the data. By this point I knew the data very well and therefore had a sense of the meaning across the data. However, this was still a long process. I trialled several ways of organising and tracking the codes. I initially tried to record and organise the codes using excel but this approach felt 'fiddly' and cumbersome and so I devised a system of my own to track codes across participants (appendix D).

On further analysis certain codes held the same interpretive meaning and so they were grouped into one single code. I still ended up with what felt like a lot of codes and I did some broader reading around the 'ideal' number of codes and came to the

conclusion that there is no definitive answer, and I needed to have the courage of my own convictions. I went back over my data several times to look over the codes. I also left the codes for a period of a few weeks and came back to them with a 'fresh' perspective to see if they still 'fitted'.

Generating Themes

I read over the interviews and read over the codes. I decided again to take a practical and hands on approach, and I sorted the codes by printing them out and then cutting them up and physically sorting them into groups of meaning. I stuck them on coloured paper and then moved them around (appendix E). I then generated the theme names. I then left them on the wall for a couple of weeks and returned to them.

Reviewing Themes

I then looked again at the themes with a clearer lens. This time I wanted to orient my analysis back to the research question. I considered the themes with this in mind and found that on the whole the research question had been addressed but that one theme ran throughout all the others and so this original theme (inequality) was 'swallowed up' by the other themes. I named the themes in pencil as I wondered whether these would change. I also highlighted short comments or phrases which I felt might potentially help to illustrate the themes and subthemes in my thematic map.

Defining and Naming Themes

I gave my themes names by directly writing on the sheets of paper on the wall. I took these themes and subthemes to supervision, and we had a discussion about potentially rearranging the themes so that they were underpinned by Bronfenbrenner's ECT (1978, 2005). I spent some time doing this and reading

around the rationale for underpinning my thematic map with a framework. I maintained the same codes but tried to arrange them into the different systems as outlined by Bronfenbrenner. I wanted to attach my themes to a framework as this felt 'safe' to me. Unfortunately, I could not make them fit and so in another supervision session we talked this through and decided to continue with the original themes.

Writing Up

I realise that Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate for analysing the findings as they are written, effectively combining the findings and discussion sections. As I am a new researcher, I took the decision to veer away from this way of writing up my findings and instead I found it easier to 'tell the story' and then write up the discussion section. I also took the decision to separate the findings and the discussion sections. This was for two reasons; I wanted the story and the voices of the EPs and their views of the difficulties the CYP face to have clarity and no interruption. The researcher also felt that there would be more flexibility in the analysis in terms of 'broadening the lens' if the two sections were separated rather than being restricted by the layout of the themes. The researcher also felt that more reflexivity could be applied when developing insights and links to research and psychological and social theory if the sections were separated. The researcher acknowledges that this was also driven by personal preference. My rationale is discussed in the methods section. However, I had followed Braun and Clarke's six step process (Braun & Clarke, 2021) so closely that I worried that I was making a mistake separating out the findings and discussion sections, but I felt that this led to more clarity for me personally.

Personal Reflections

I have found the process of researching and writing a thesis challenging to say the least. My undergraduate degree was in classics and English and so not helpful! However, what did help was choosing an area of research which I am passionate about and despite the challenges of the process I have enjoyed it. I enjoyed the data gathering and although analysis was overwhelming and far more time consuming than I ever imagined, I did enjoy it and was very absorbed in it at the time. The most challenging aspect was probably the write up. Parts of the write up were incredibly challenging and I had moments where I questioned whether I could achieve what I wanted to and I worried I was going to do the EPs I had interviewed and the children I had worked with in the past a disservice. I had some huge feelings of doubt, and I remember saying to my husband that “I just can’t do it, the rubbish, rough schools I went to have finally caught up with me”. But of course, that was the very reason I needed to carry on!

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Appendices

Appendix A. Email to Principal Educational Psychologist

FAO: Principal Educational Psychologist
Address
Date

Dear [Sir/ Madam/ name of PEP],

I am a trainee educational psychologist studying at the University of East Anglia. I am conducting research into the experiences of EPs working with children from Low Socioeconomic backgrounds. I am writing to enquire whether you would be willing to give permission for me to recruit participants from your EP team, and if so, whether you please could share the attached recruitment poster with them on my behalf.

Qualified EPs in England will be invited to participate should they meet the below inclusion criteria:

1. Are currently practicing in England.
2. Have been working as an EP for two years or more
3. Are a fully qualified Mainscale/Senior/Principal EP.
4.

Participation will involve an online interview via Microsoft Teams, answering questions related to their experiences in working with children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Prior to the interview, the researcher will send a short form to gather demographic information, this is to provide further information about the sample. Completion of this form is voluntary. The interview can take place at a time convenient to the individual and will take approximately 60-90 minutes. All information, including the identity of local authorities, will be kept confidential and anonymised for the final report. For further information, please reply to this email, (L.Bancroft-Prescott@uea.ac.uk) or to speak with my research supervisor, Imogen Nasta Gorman, please email I.Gorman@uea.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request, I would be very grateful for your support.

Best Wishes,

Lisa Bancroft Prescott, Trainee Educational Psychologist (University of East Anglia).

Appendix B. Recruitment Poster

University of East Anglia

Participants Wanted for Doctoral Study!

Title: The Impact of Poverty on Children and Young People and the Role of Educational Psychologists.

Research Aims:

1) To explore how Educational Psychologists (EPs) feel about the function/impact of their current role when working with children from low socio-economic status backgrounds. (LSES).

2) To explore how EPs working with children from LSES consider the impact poverty may be having on these children and how far/how they feel they can ameliorate this.

It is hoped that this study will provide clarity around ways EP practice can have a positive impact on the educational experiences of children from LSES.

Inclusion Criteria:

- **To be a fully qualified (HCPC registered) EP/Senior EP/Principal EP.**
- **Have been working in England as an EP for two years or more.**
- **To be currently practicing in England.**

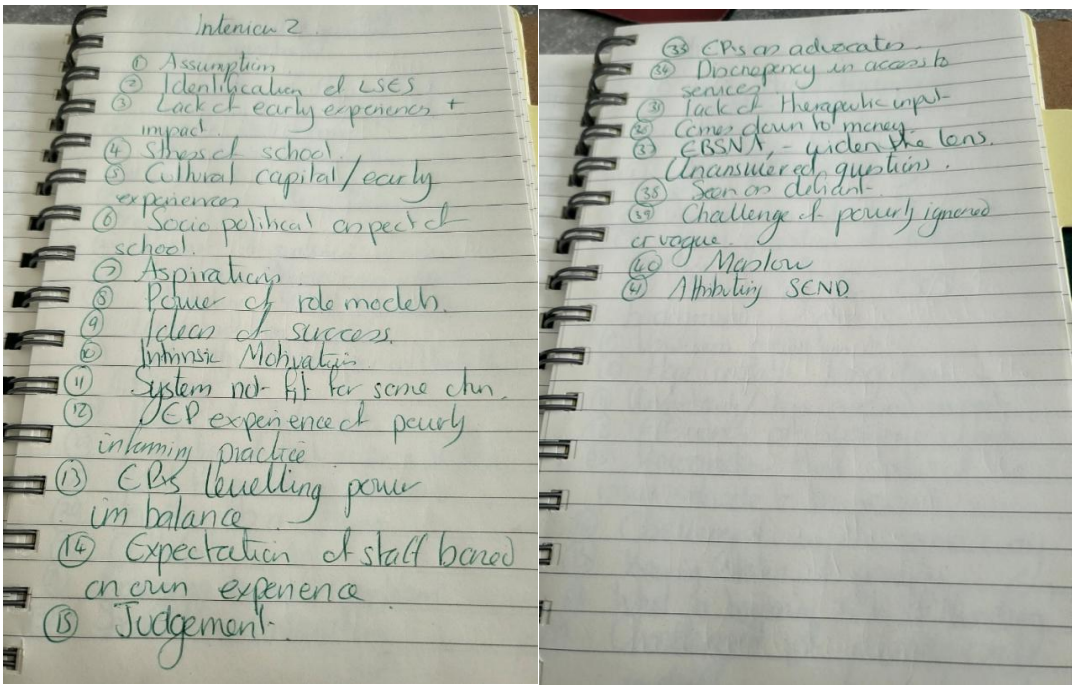
Participation will involve an online interview on Microsoft Teams. The interview will last approximately one hour. Participants will be asked to complete a demographics information sheet although this will be optional.

For more information or to express interest in taking part please email the researcher, Lisa Bancroft Prescott on:

L.Bancroft-Prescott@uea.ac.uk

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).

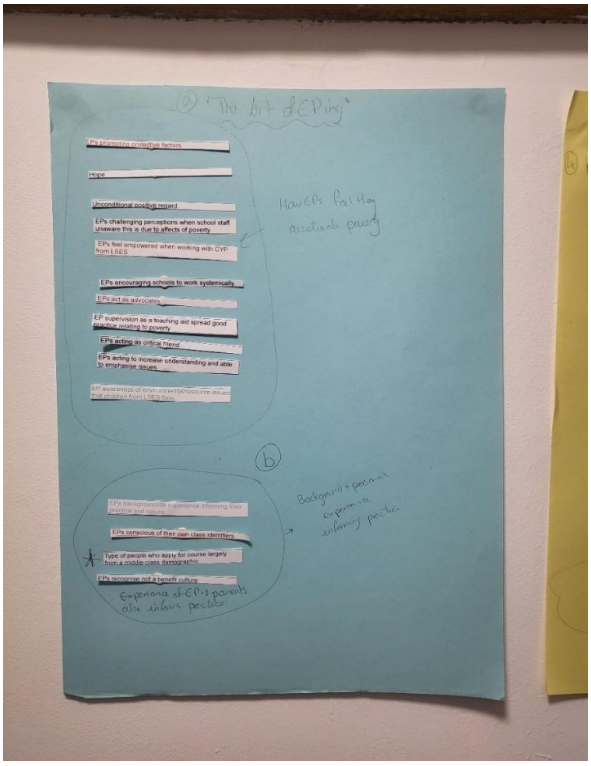
Appendix C. Early Example of Initial Impressions/Thoughts Interview 2



Appendix D. Tracking Codes Across Participants

10. Importance of cultural capital	1 2 5 7 8 9 10
11. Schools as a positive influence	1 4 6 7 8 9 10
12. EPs background/life experience informing values.	1 3 5 6 7 8 9 10
13. motivation of school to act/put strategies in place influenced by economic background of CYP.	1 3 4 6 7 8 9
14. satisfaction when working with CYP from LSES.	4 5 6 7 8 9 10
15. EPs feel a power differential linked to parental affluence.	1 2 3 5 6 7
16. Systemic work linked to long term impact.	3 4 5 6 7 8 10
17. Feeling that 'higher status' would facilitate a positive impact	1 2 5 6 7 8 9
18. Feeling that they may not be seeing the 'right' children.	2 3 4 5 6 7 9 10

Appendix E. Organising Codes into Themes by Hand



Appendix F. Demographic Information Sheet

Demographic information sheet

Completion of this form is optional and choosing not to complete it will not prevent you from participating in the research. Your information will be stored securely and only accessible to the researcher. Your information will be anonymised and not traceable to you. If you are happy to complete part of all of this form, please do so and return it to the researcher prior to your scheduled interview via email (L.Bancroft-Prescott@uea.ac.uk).

Participant initials:

Please tick a box or highlight the text to indicate the following:

What is the number of years you have been working as a qualified Educational Psychologist?

0-2 years ☐

3-5 years ☐

6-10 years ☐

11-15 years ☐

15+ years ☐

What is your professional position? (Please tick all that apply)

I work within a local authority ☐

I work within a private/ independent EP company ☐

I work as an independent EP/ Locum ☐

I work part time ☐

I work full time ☐

I am a maingrade EP (qualified for 2+ years) ☐

I am a Specialist EP ☐

I am a Senior EP ☐

I am a Principal EP ☐

Other _____

What is your age?

up to 24 years ☐

25-34 ☐

35-44 ☐

45-54 ☐

55-64 ☐

65- 74 ☐

75+ years ☐

What is your gender?

Female ☐

Male ☐

Non-binary/ gender diverse ☐

my gender identity is not listed ☐

Do you identify as trans? Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say ☐

What is your religion or strongly held belief, if any?

Buddhist ☐ Christian ☐ Hindu ☐ Jewish ☐ Muslim ☐ Sikh ☐ Spiritual ☐

No religion or belief ☐ Other ☐ _____

How do you describe your ethnicity?

White - English/ Welsh/ Scottish, Northern Irish/ British ☐

White- Irish ☐

White- Gypsy or Irish traveller ☐

White- Polish ☐

White- Any other background ☐

Asian/ Asian British ☐

Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British ☐

Multiple ethnic groups ☐

Other ethnic group ☐ _____

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you identify as coming from a Low Socio-Economic Background?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Thank you for completing this form. If you have any questions or comments about this form, or your participation in the research, you can contact:

The researcher: L.Bancroft-Prescott@uea.ac.uk

The research supervisor: I.gorman@uea.ac.uk

Appendix G. Ethics Approval

University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich. NR4 7TJ

Email: ethicsmonitor@uea.ac.uk
Web: www.uea.ac.uk

Study title: The Impact of Poverty on Children and Young People and the Role of Educational Psychologists.

Application ID: ETH2324-2266

Dear Lisa,

Your application was considered on 24th September 2024 by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee).

The decision is: **approved**.

You are therefore able to start your project subject to any other necessary approvals being given.

Your project is approved BUT you need to review your PIS form as there are still some aspects that are missing in your form based on the feedback provided to you previously, e.g., supervisor details in the complaints process. You need to review the feedback, update your PIS and get this signed off by your supervisor before you can begin your project.

This approval will expire on **31st August 2025**.

Please note that your project is granted ethics approval only for the length of time identified above. Any extension to a project must obtain ethics approval by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) before continuing.

It is a requirement of this ethics approval that you should report any adverse events which occur during your project to the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) as soon as possible. An adverse event is one which was not anticipated in the research design, and which could potentially cause risk or harm to the participants or the researcher, or which reveals potential risks in the treatment under evaluation. For research involving animals, it may be the unintended death of an animal after trapping or carrying out a procedure.

Any amendments to your submitted project in terms of design, sample, data collection, focus etc. should be notified to the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) in advance to ensure ethical compliance. If the amendments are substantial a new application may be required.

Approval by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) should not be taken as evidence that your study is compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. If you need guidance on how to make your study UK GDPR compliant, please contact the UEA Data Protection Officer (dataprotection@uea.ac.uk).

I would like to wish you every success with your project.

On behalf of the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee)

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Warburton

Appendix H. Debrief Sheet

The Impact of Poverty on Children and Young People and the Role of Educational Psychologists.

Participant Debriefing Information:

Thank you for taking part in this study, your participation is appreciated. The aim of this the study is to explore the experiences of qualified Educational Psychologists (EPs) who have worked with children from low socioeconomic status backgrounds (LSES) and their perceptions of how far they can/have had a positive impact on these children and young people (CYP). It is hoped that this information can provide some insight into what needs to be done to increase the positive impact of EPs on these CYP.

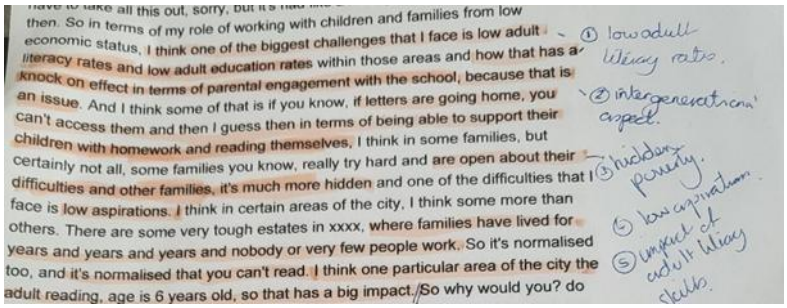
The information gained from your interview will be used to inform the researcher's thesis project as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology. The anonymised results may be published and used in presentations. It is hoped that findings will encourage more research into ways to help children from LSES achieve well at school and to identify ways EPs can further contribute to this.

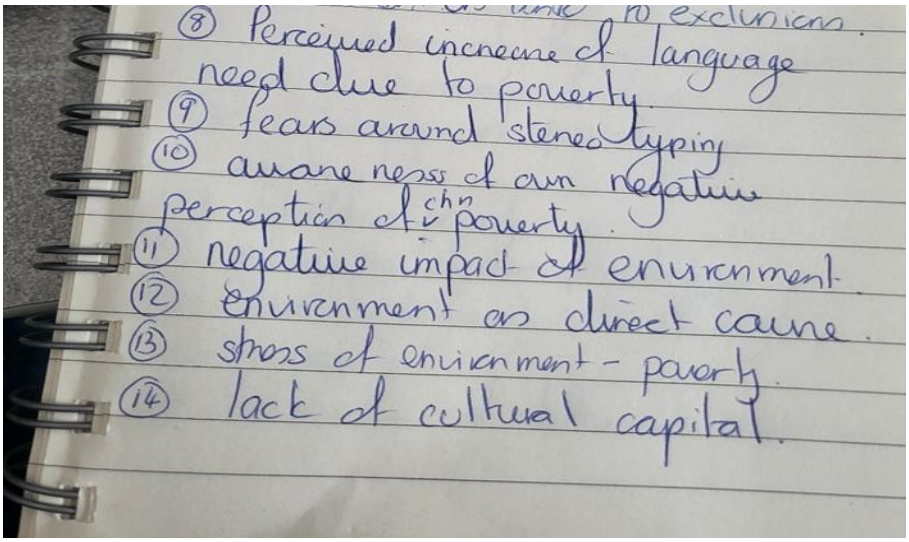
This is a reminder that the interview recording, and subsequent transcripts will be kept confidentially in a secure location only accessible to the researcher. The interview recording will be kept confidentially up to the point of transcription, at which point it will be deleted, and all transcribed information will be anonymised. You have the right to withdraw your data up to three weeks after the interview, as beyond this point there will be no identifiable link between yourself and your responses. If the conversation within interview has brought up any worries or if you are concerned about your wellbeing, you may wish to contact:

http://www.mind.org.uk/

https://www.educationsupport.org.uk

Appendix I. Examples of Early Coding Process

1. 

2. 

Appendix J Participant Consent Form

(First Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], **am** willing to participate in this research study.

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 or the local authority in which you currently work.) 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 the results of this study will be used in the way described in the information sheet.
- 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 consent to:

Completing a questionnaire YES ☐ NO ☐

Audio-recording YES o NO o

Reviewing transcripts YES o NO o

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: _____

☐ Email: _____

.....

Signature

.....

PRINT name

.....

Date