“It’s just misunderstood kids”. School exclusion, SEND and the reproduction of inequality.

Dr Stephanie King

University of Derby

Kedleston Road,

Derby.

DE22 1GB.

s.king2@derby.ac.uk

https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7758-946X

https://www.linkedin.com/in/stephanie-king-059756110/

The.author.reports.there.are.no.competing.interests.to.declare.

Dataset available on application from https://doi.org/10.17631/RD-2024-0022-DDAT

Abstract

As young people from marginalised groups continue to be over-represented in the school exclusion statistics in England, this article explores the ways that school-excluded young people describe their experiences and the structural inequalities that school exclusion both represents and perpetuates. Drawing on interviews with young people who have experienced exclusion from school, this article highlights themes of individual blame and marginalisation. The relationship between SEND support and disciplinary systems is noted as a current challenge, leading to some young people being excluded for their behaviour before their needs related to their marginalised identities have been met. To conclude, more monitoring of who is being subjected to disciplinary sanctions in school is recommended, alongside a call for a more empathic approach to education.

Keywords: school exclusion, marginalisation, SEND, SEMH

“It’s just misunderstood kids”. School exclusion, SEND and the reproduction of inequality.

Introduction

School exclusion is both a symptom and a cause of wider social inequalities. In England, the pattern of exclusion from school is predictable, with young people from marginalised groups being more likely to be excluded from school. This includes young people who are identified as having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) being significantly more likely to be excluded from school than their peers (Black 2022). This trend continues despite the apparent protections in law and policy.

Although this study focuses on school exclusion in England, it has implications more broadly for those school systems where disciplinary practices are disproportionately experienced by young people from marginalised groups. This paper contributes to the body of work that platforms the voices of young people on the margins of school systems. Through critical analysis, the complexities of school exclusion as both a symptom and a cause of wider social inequalities are explored.

Findings and analysis published here are drawn from a PhD study completed in 2024 (King 2024). In this study, school-excluded young people attending an East Midlands alternative provision (AP) were interviewed about their experiences of school and their plans for the future. Based on the findings, I argue that neoliberal over reliance on measurable outcomes and neoconservative approaches to school discipline lead to an under-resourcing of support for SEND and an escalation of school exclusions. Furthermore, young people experiencing this system come to absorb the idea that they do not belong in school and accept individual blame for this systemic failing. A focus on individual blame does not help to explain or address the structural inequalities that school exclusion both represents and perpetuates.

This article contributes to our understanding of the causes and impact of school exclusion by highlighting the lived experience of young people who have been excluded from school. Drawing on the work of Archer (1995, 2007, 2016), It offers a novel approach to analysis of the wider social and cultural structures that combine to underserve young people from marginalised groups. Finally, this article joins the call for a more compassionate school system that rejects neoliberal market-driven goals and neoconservative discipline to focus on human flourishing and emancipation.

School exclusion in England

In England, school exclusion (also known as expulsion) is used as a disciplinary tool for managing behaviour (Department for Education 2025). Officially a last resort, permanent exclusion removes the young person from the school roll after which they are commonly educated in specialist units or AP. The AP sector is difficult to define (Pennacchia et al.) but offers educational placements away from school sites, often with a focus on vocational or therapeutic activities. Some young people are not officially excluded from school but are also educated exclusively in AP (Gill, Quilter-Pinner, and Swift 2017; Education Select Committee 2018) as AP is "increasingly being used to supplement local SEND systems" (Department for Education 2023, 5). These young people no longer have access to their school staff or facilities and instead are educated alongside those with an official exclusion, thus I regard them as 'functionally excluded'(Gill, Quilter-Pinner, and Swift 2017) and include them in this study.

Despite much public and professional concern, including an Education Select Committee report (Education Select Committee 2018) and government review (Timpson 2019), the number of young people excluded from school has continued to rise. In the autumn term of 2023/4 (the latest statistics available), there were 4,200 permanent exclusions in England

(Department for Education 2025). This was a 3% increase on the same time the previous year and the latest in a consistent rise since the pandemic. Of particular concern is the rise in exclusions from primary schools (McGough 2024). Although this figure represents a small proportion of the whole school population, for those thousands of children and young people excluded from school each year, the impact is profound. It is also important to note which communities are most affected.

Young people from groups who may be seen as marginalised are proportionately over-represented in the school exclusion tallies. These groups include: recipients of free school meals (FSM)[1], students racialised as black and Gypsy/Roma/Traveller (GRT), those identified as care-experienced (sometimes known as looked after children) or having SEND, whilst economically-disadvantaged white boys make up the largest overall group (Department for Education 2025). Black (2022) offers a more thorough explanation of these statistics, highlighting the importance of intersectionality across marginalised groups.

Being excluded from school is an indicator for limited life chances, including likelihood of unemployment, involvement with crime and suffering poor health (Gill, Quilter-Pinner, and Swift 2017; Timpson 2019; Obsuth et al. 2023). Longitudinal data shows that exclusion from school in adolescence has potential for long-term effects on health, dissatisfaction with life and health-related lifestyle factors (Obsuth et al. 2023) and links between school exclusion and unemployment and lower earnings in early adulthood (Madia et al. 2022). Failing to address these trends means that school exclusion acts as a further tool in reproducing social inequalities, as marginalised young people are denied access to mainstream school (Perera 2020) and are exposed to the additional risks associated with being excluded from school.

[1] Entitlement to FSM is based on family income and so being a claimant of FSM is used as a proxy measurement for poverty. For a critique of the usefulness of this measure, see Campbell and Cooper (2024)

In this way, school exclusion continues to both represent and reproduce social inequalities.

Although the pattern of school exclusion remains consistent(Department for Education 2025), much debate about school exclusion is framed in individualistic terms. In schools, behaviour management relies largely on behaviourist responses to observable behaviour (Condliffe 2023; Jones et al. 2023; Thomson and Pennacchia 2016) which maintains focus on the individual, rather than wider school culture and practice. This discourse does little to explain why certain groups of people are more likely to be excluded than others.

Education policy and the role of school exclusion

Archer contends that education systems are "the result of compromise and concession"(M. S. Archer 2016, 5) where competing ideologies and demands are worked through to produce a system that "does not conform closely to what anybody wanted" (Ibid.). There is an in-built contradiction for schools when they have responsibilities for both a punitive disciplinary systems and a duty to care for mental health and emotional wellbeing (Corcoran and Finney 2015). Competing priorities can lead to a lack of support for some young people.

The SEND system is chronically under-funded with extended waiting lists and often parents must become activists or SEND experts with special competence (Ryan and Runswick-Cole 2008) in order to advocate for their children. They have to "wade through a treacle of bureaucracy, full of conflict, missed appointments and despair" (House of Commons Education 2019, 3). The degree of bargaining power people have in this process is "endowed in wider society by virtue of family, class, gender and ethnicity"(M. S. Archer 1995, 10). The structures of the SEND system serve as additional

barriers for families from marginalised groups, such as those from particular ethnic groups, on low incomes or from deprived areas (Chatzitheochari and Butler-Rees 2022; Hutchinson 2021; Nevill, Savage, and Forsey 2022). Young people whose needs are not identified and supported may then be subject to school disciplinary systems as their difficulties intensify (Parker et al. 2016). Thus, despite apparent protection in law, young people with SEND continue to be over-represented in the school exclusion statistics.

A revised SEND code of practice(Department for Education 2015) attempted to improve recognition and support of young people with SEND. The category of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) moves away from a focus on behaviour and onto needs, although with the resulting risks of medicalising the problem and still falling back on within-child deficit explanations (Hickinbotham and Soni 2021).

Pursuing labels and diagnoses do not necessarily help to understand the causes of distressed behaviour or the best ways to support those young people (Bodfield and Culshaw 2023). However, a failure to recognise support needs can lead to young people facing punitive sanctions for their behaviour which in turn can trigger trauma responses (Jones et al. 2023) and potentially lead to further behaviour incidents. This highlights a key tension in education currently, as the desire to make schools more inclusive runs parallel to a move towards more punitive behaviour policies. Schools' efforts to support students with SEND can stand in direct conflict with the adoption of behaviourist approaches to discipline requiring conformity of behaviour modified through the use of punitive sanctions (Condliffe 2023; Jones et al. 2023). The 'will to punish' (Parsons 2005) is still in evidence in many school disciplinary processes (Mills and Thomson 2022). Some young people experience the school system as unjust (Condliffe 2023), but some simply accept the narrative of themselves as people who do not belong in school, as seen in this study.

Methods

This research project was motivated initially by my own years of experience working as a teacher with young people who have been excluded from school. Many of the young people who I taught in this time were from marginalised groups, from areas of high deprivation, were racialised as from minority ethnic groups, had SEND or had experienced family adversity and trauma.

It was important to me to ask young people about their experiences of school exclusion and for my research to give them a platform to speak. In collecting these stories, I wanted to demonstrate the respect that I believe should be a core principle of inclusive education (see Bombèr 2007; Warin 2017).

Critical realist philosophy aims to use social sciences to bring about change that enables people to flourish. I draw on the work of Archer (1995, 2007, 2016) to deepen my understanding of the interaction of structure, agency and culture in the education system. In this way, I bring together lived experience of school exclusion with an analysis that focuses on the unseen structures through which inequalities are reproduced.

The fieldwork setting

Data collection for this study was conducted in February to July of 2021 at an East Midlands alternative provision (AP). The curriculum at this AP centres on outdoor activities. Some vocational qualifications are offered but with an emphasis on the practical. No 'core' subjects are offered at this AP as all of the young people attending have other education provision either in a mainstream school or at other APs. Located in an ex-coal mining area, young people travel to this provision from across the region.

I attended the AP for two days a week and joined in the activities. Through this relationship-building, I identified young people who were officially or functionally excluded from school and invited them to give interviews.

The interviews

A total of 20 interviews were conducted with 14 school-excluded young people aged 12-16 and 3 AP staff. I asked young people to tell me what they had experienced at school, the lead up to and moment of exclusion. I also asked what kinds of support had helped in school or that could have avoided exclusion. The data presented here represents part of a larger data set collected in this study.

As well as amplifying the stories of school-excluded young people, I was interested in the structural inequalities of school exclusion. I asked participants for their own thoughts on why certain groups are more likely to be excluded from school. These wider questions opened the possibility of a discussion that moved away from the individual to the social aspects of school exclusion.

Interviewing "entails an asymmetrical power relation"(Kvale 2007, 14) and I was sensitive to this. To avoid being intrusive or upsetting, I did not question participants about family adversity or diagnosis of SEND but asked follow-up questions if this was offered, to ask how the young people thought that these factors had affected their school experiences. From this questioning, four of the young people shared that they had a diagnosis of ADHD, one of autism and one of epilepsy. Two identified as having neuro-divergent conditions. Several of the young people talked about difficulties in school suggesting ongoing SEMH needs such as difficulties managing anxiety, friendships and emotional outbursts. One of the young people was living in the care system, others talked about disrupted home lives parental absence, illness, substance use and involvement in crime. Five of the participants had experienced

significant bereavements. All of the young people in this study had experienced additional needs in school which led to support or interventions such as 1:1 in class support, adapted timetables, forest school and inclusion units.

Parents and relevant schools were informed but the ultimate choice to be involved with the project belonged to the young people. Ethical approval was granted through university processes, in line with BERA ethical guidelines (British Educational Research 2018). All names of people and provisions have been changed to protect privacy. I took care to ensure that interviews took place in settings that were familiar to the young people and that they were aware that they could leave at any time, change the subject or refuse to answer a question. Follow up support was offered through the AP staff and links to external organisations.

Interviews were carried out within the school day, sometimes in snatched moments, outside and in a variety of locations. The population in AP can be very transitory and so there was a need to take opportunities for interviews as they arose. One outcome of this was that the interviews were done in places that felt like a reflection of the setting and circumstances in which they happened, and so for staff and the young people were a less obvious intrusion into their daily routines.

Some young people were initially wary of new adults. Being a regular presence at the setting and joining in with group activities helped the young people to decide for themselves whether they wished to be interviewed and what they were willing to share. Engaging in activities at the AP also helped me to build relationships with the staff, who became advocates for my research with the young people.

Identifying participants

The focus of this study was young people who have been excluded from school. However, in line with the national picture, many of the young people attending this provision had not been officially excluded from school. Some were functionally excluded, having all of their education in AP with little continuing relationship with or expectation of returning to their mainstream school. Through conversation with AP staff and the young people I found young people who were educated solely in AP, either officially or functionally excluded from school.

Three AP staff members also gave interviews, two had attended this provision themselves as school-excluded young people. In centring the voices of the young people, staff interviews are referred to sparingly to deepen, and occasionally contradict, the perspectives offered by the young people who remain the main focus of this study.

Data analysis

I conducted a reflexive thematic analysis of the data. Fryer(2022) offers a model for thematic analysis, adapted from Wiltshire and Ronkainen (2021) which was in turn built on Braun and Clarke's (2022) more commonly used approach. In this way, the method that I use here is not a departure from established reflexive thematic analysis, but a development of it which aligns more closely with a critical realist analysis. This analysis searches for possible explanations that bring together personal experience with an understanding of societal pressures and structural inequalities which are elements of school exclusion. With these factors in mind, I considered and reviewed potential causal explanations for my findings.

Findings

In this section, I present findings focused on individual blame and marginalised groups, in particular the relationship between SEND, family adversity and school exclusion. I begin by exploring the difficulties around identifying additional support needs.

Identification of SEND

There are often concerns about whether having a 'label' of SEND or a specific need will lead young people to excuse themselves for poor effort or behaviour in school (Bonnello 2016). Similarly, school teachers may reduce their expectations of students who have SEND, especially those from more disadvantaged backgrounds (Chatzitheochari and Butler-Rees 2022), which can result in stigma and limited opportunities. The young people in this study tended to have SEND but not to offer this as a primary explanation for their difficulties in school. Four young people shared that they had a diagnosis of ADHD, one of Autism, one of epilepsy and two identified as having neuro-divergent conditions. Others described having struggled academically and needing extra support in lessons including 1:1 support, adapted timetables and time in inclusion units.

***SK**: Why is it that you struggle with the work do you think?*

***Stacey**: It's reading and keeping myself on that paperwork.*

***Eddie**: Well I had to have a teacher with me, he had to start coming into every lesson to help me write and help me do my work.*

***Samuel**: I'm better with my hands, I'm just bad with pen to paper.*

Often a diagnosis of SEND was mentioned later in the conversation, not offered as the primary reason for their difficulties in school. For example, Joseph had spoken mostly about his family and his dislike of school before turning to ADHD as a factor.

***Joseph**: When I was in primary school it was like the main thing where I couldn't focus in school.*

Dan agreed to a second interview to help me to review some of my findings. He hadn't mentioned SEND in his original interview.

***SK**: Lots of people mentioned having special needs. So autism, ADHD, dyslexia, epilepsy.*

***Dan**: I've got all of them, apart from epilepsy.*

Some of the young people described how their SEND affected their experiences in the classroom. Often the conversation about what was difficult in school related to a sense of individual difficulties, rather than institutional failings. These young people were able to identify some of the ways in which having SEND made them feel incompatible with the demands of the classroom.

***Samuel**: It probably has because like my brain compared to like your brain. My, my brain works at 5 thousand mile an hour. All the time. No*

stop but. Sometimes you can be chilled out but my brains going [whoosh] on a go fast.

***SK**: What makes school hard?*

***Dan**: Sitting down. Cause when I'm in a classroom I always like stand up and walk around.*

***Rhys**: I can't, I've not got the attention span to sit there for long enough to put it down on paper, I don't like doing it.*

Several of the young people in this study described difficulties in getting their SEND recognised. Sometimes this meant that difficulties with behaviour were identified before their other needs.

***Joseph**: They didn't believe I had ADHD and they didn't try and help me get diagnosed with it or anything so I could get help with it. So then my mum had to do it all on her own, so it took us about three years. So it took me since year 4 to year 6 to get diagnosed with it.*

***TJ**: I don't think I got diagnosed ADHD before [exclusion]. Because it took three years to diagnose me with it.*

As suggested by Lawson et al. (2022), early identification of additional support needs may have helped some of these young people to find ways to access the learning in the classroom before their behaviour led to disciplinary sanctions.

Some of the young people in this study felt that teachers were unaware or unsupportive of their needs.

> ***Rhys**: It's just misunderstood kids, they're just kids with ADHD and autism like and the teachers don't understand that they just can't, I can't help that I can't do it, I haven't got like, I can't concentrate that's not my fault. But the teachers just see that 'ah, he doesn't want to do it, he's refusing to do it, he doesn't like doing it'.*

Others had disjointed levels of support as they changed schools.

> ***Jordon**: It was in [primary school] where they told my mum you need to see someone. That was the school that was good to me. They helped me out, they told [secondary school] that I need keyworkers but they don't listen.*

AP staff were more aware of the link between SEND and school exclusion. Two of the AP staff had been excluded from school themselves and both described having found schoolwork difficult. Ryan was later recognised as dyslexic.

> ***Ryan**: If you struggled to read like myself. When they're getting me to read books. You think, I'd rather set on fire than read it. I wasn't reading it for no one.*

The barriers to identification and diagnosis of SEND can lead to young people being noticed in school for their behaviour rather than their support needs (Parker et al. 2016). The processes are complex, underfunded and vary across

age ranges and geographical areas (Sinclair and Zaidi 2023). There are also race and class implications, with black, GRT and poor and care-experienced students more likely to be identified at school level as having SEND (Department for Education 2018), but less likely to access higher levels of support (Hutchinson 2021; Nevill, Savage, and Forsey 2022). These disparities highlight the complexity of the SEND system in England. Many of the young people in this study had been identified as having SEND but were nonetheless excluded from school, thus demonstrating that the policies aimed at better support for SEND failed to protect them from school exclusion.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health

Within the SEND Code of Practice(Department for Education 2015) there are four identified areas of need, including social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH). Several of the young people in this study spoke about struggling to manage relationships at school, or experiencing anxiety, stress and strong emotions. During the period of fieldwork, Lucy shared with the group that her recent absence was due to an attempted overdose for which she had been hospitalised. Others talked about their mental health in interviews.

> ***Joseph**: They put me on medication and I didn't like that, like I wanted to kill myself.*

> ***Samuel**: If it weren't for here [AP], I'd probably be dead.*

> ***Stacey**: I'd go to the door [of the classroom]. And my anxiety at that time was not good. I was trying to sort it by myself, but it didn't work.*

At the time of the study, Rhys was in Year 12 in a specially commissioned Post-16 placement and had been educated solely in AP since Year 5 of primary school. He described having always felt overwhelmed by school. Similarly, Lucy described having always had difficulties interacting with others in school although she was able to complete primary school with the support of a dedicated 1:1 member of staff. It was common amongst this group of young people to have found school overwhelming, provoking anxiety, avoidance and emotional outbursts suggesting ongoing SEMH needs.

Adverse family experiences

In addition to their difficulties with learning, several of the young people in this study had experienced bereavement and unsettled family lives. An increased understanding of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) helps to highlight the potential impact of such experiences, in terms of brain development, behaviour and educational attainment and mental health (Bombèr 2007; Herzog and Schmahl 2018; McDoniel and Bierman 2023). In turn, ACEs can impact on the ability of the young person to cope with the demands of school, although the exact relationship is under-researched and current explanations lack the required nuance(Goodall, Robertson, and Schwannauer 2020).

Joseph recalled being taunted at school about the death of his father.

> ***Joseph**: Well, my dad died when I was like two … And people used to try and cuss me for it, so I just used to bang them out.*

There was a lasting impact on the family of their loss.

***Joseph**: My mum's got like problems with like in her head and stuff. Cause of what happened with my dad.*

Joseph had experienced a series of losses in his early life, and the loss of a trusted adult at school when that teacher moved on to a new group became yet another. His story serves to emphasise the way in which seemingly small changes at school can be amplified by the things that the young person is dealing with away from school. Trauma can reduce the window of tolerance (Corrigan, Fisher, and Nutt 2011), to make dealing with challenge more difficult, and can lead to shut-down or apparent over-reaction. This perhaps goes some way to explaining "why people do not respond in uniform fashion under the same structured circumstances" (Margaret Scotford Archer 2007, 11). Young people who have experienced ACEs may respond to challenges at school in ways that are unexpected or interpreted as excessive (Bombèr 2007; Goodall, Robertson, and Schwannauer 2020), potentially leading to disciplinary action by the school.

Whilst Stacey had a number of health problems, she identified her difficult family situation as the main reason she had struggled at school.

***Stacey**: It was all family problems. My mum left and then it [was] all just hard to keep my emotions inside.*

Stacey highlighted the importance for her of family in influencing her experiences of school. Parental engagement is a dominant factor in school success. When families are in crisis, their capacity to offer support for education may be lessened, with potential knock-on effects for the children. Timpson (2019) acknowledged the difficulties for schools and parents in these circumstances to work together, but also identified this relationship as key to reducing exclusions from school.

Some of the young people in this study had a family history of difficulties in or not completing school. Finn's dad had experienced his own challenges as a young person.

> ***Finn**: Cause his parents died when he was young, so he was going through a very difficult time … he just wasn't in the right mind to be learning, school and mainstream especially. Imagine how hard that was to deal with … Yeah, he went to borstal for a bit.*

Finn felt that his dad had hoped for better for him, but nonetheless he had also had a difficult school career. Even though Finn was an articulate and potentially academically capable student, he had, like his dad, been excluded from school. George (who declined to be recorded) also gave the impression that it was usual in his family to be excluded from school, but seemed unconcerned about that.

This seemed not to be the case for Lucy, whose family experiences of school were more positive. Lucy's mum worked in education, had done well in school and had been proactive in her choice of secondary school in a bid to avoid further conflicts.

> ***Lucy**: my mum didn't want me going to any local secondaries because I already had loads of problems with loads of people there. So my mum sent me to a different secondary.*

Parental choice has been much lauded as a way to improve school standards, by introducing a competitive market in which parents are the customers. However, evidence shows that parents who are themselves more educated, who have a higher socio-economic status and who come from

less disadvantaged communities have made the most gains from this system (R. Allen, Burgess, and McKenna 2014). Whilst the rhetoric is of more choice, parental control and school improvement, in reality this marketisation of schools has created structures which reinforce social inequalities .

Not only is family important in shaping experiences of school, but the school experience also in turn has effects on family life. Some of the young people described the impact on the family of their difficulties at school.

> ***Lucy**: Since I was in primary, my mum had to quit all of her jobs. Cause I was being kicked out of school that much and needed picking up that much, she had to quit her job.*

> ***Geeno**: She [mum] was in school more times than I went in!*

Jordon and Geeno both had extended periods of home education, with responsibility falling on their mums. Jordon described his volatile behaviour and the conflict this sometimes caused at home. Despite their difficulties, Jordon felt supported and protected by his mum. He explained that she had to choose how to respond to his problems at school and to prioritise family life.

> ***Jordon**: Obviously she don't want to ruin her relationship over school. No point falling out with me for the rest of her life just over me going to school.*

These young people highlighted the strains placed on families when there are difficulties at school. There is a financial impact not only from the implications

of maintaining a job whilst being available for attending meetings, collecting from school and home-schooling, but also from the additional costs of educating a child at home. For families who are already facing challenges or on low incomes, having to withdraw from work and the additional financial burden of exclusion from school serves to further perpetuate their marginalisation. Despite these challenges, the development of positive relationships between home and school is regarded as a protective factor in reducing school exclusions (Timpson 2019) and seen as central to a more relational approach to school discipline (Jones et al. 2024).

A deficit model

Although the young people in this study were mostly identified as having SEND and several had adverse experiences within the family, the way that they described their difficulties tended to be very individualised. This tended to be presented in ways that placed a deficit in the young people – identifying things they were not good at or could not cope with – rather than a questioning of school expectations or the possibilities for support or adaptation in the classroom. Some young people spoke of being unable to manage the demands of school.

> ***Joseph**: I couldn't cope being in that school all the time.*

> ***Dan**: I went to this other school and I really struggled there.*

Some of the young people found the academic work in school challenging.

> ***Rhys**: I'm not very good at paperwork.*

***Eddie**: When I used to do like maths and everything, I couldn't really do it proper so I needed someone to help me.*

***Samuel**: I can't do pen to paper writing.*

Whilst the young people sometimes attributed their difficulties in school to SEND, often these difficulties were presented as personal quirks or character traits.

***Stacey**: It's like just going in circles with me.*

***Jordon**: I'm weird like that.*

The way that these young people described their difficulties placed the focus on the individual.

Only one interview, with Alex (who declined to be recorded), included a discussion of the school's performance or status. She described the school as a 'bad school' that people did not want to send their children to. Alex felt that she and her friends from the school's inclusion unit had been badly let down by its closure. This conversation stood out as rare in its acknowledgement of factors beyond the failings of the young people themselves. Instead, explanations for school exclusion tend to focus on individual blame.

Individual blame

Young people in this study tended to offer individualised explanations for their difficulties at school, focused on their own behaviour or perceived deficits as learners. One of the notable commonalities across the data was the negative language that young people used when they spoke about themselves, which suggests that they have absorbed and internalised the messages of individual responsibility promoted in a neoliberal / neoconservative school system. They regularly described themselves as 'naughty' when explaining why they had got into difficulties at school, as shown in the examples below.

***Rhys**: I was like the naughty kid.*

***Stacey**: Probably three weeks in, I started to be naughty.*

***Finn**: I started to get more naughtier.*

In addition, more extreme language was often used when the young people reflected on how they had behaved at school.

***Samuel**: I was a little shit basically.*

***Jack**: I was a twat! I was horrible.*

***Lucy**: I was just a little dickhead!*

I was struck by the strength of the language that the young people used about themselves. Their words suggested they often saw themselves as irredeemable, difficult to manage and as people who did not belong in the classroom. This makes the experience of being excluded from school more understandable and reasonable – for the teachers as disruptive students are removed, and for the young people as they accept that they do not belong in school. These accounts of exclusion from school were rooted in an understanding of behaviour that focuses on individual responsibility. They offer examples of how school "ignores, excludes or stigmatises"(Ball and Collet-Sabé 2022, 6) those who do not conform or seem to belong. AP staff member Ryan shared this view.

> ***Ryan**: It's like they want a specific kid and if you don't meet that criteria, you're left behind and there's no help for you.*

The young people in this study tended to accept explanations for their exclusion that focused on their own deficits. They did not experience a sense of belonging in school.

School belonging

The negative ways in which the young people in this study described themselves were also reflected in how they imagined others saw them. The young people expressed a great deal of hostility towards teachers, but they also felt hostility *from* teachers.

***Joseph**: All the teachers hated me, that was another reason why I moved, cause like I was just naughty and they didn't really like me.*

***Samuel**: Basically, the teachers just didn't like me. Because I was different to everybody else.*

This antagonistic relationship with teachers – although several of the young people recalled teachers who had helped them – reflects the narrative of personal deficit and individual blame. Respectful relationships were very important to the young people, but they saw this as something rarely achieved in school. The way that the young people described feeling hated by teachers shows their vulnerability: they have absorbed the message that they do not belong in school. When I asked if they wanted to go back to school, most said that they did not.

In accepting the idea that they cannot be kept in school because of their own personal deficiencies, the young people began to see exclusion from school as a fact of life. They had mostly rejected the idea that school could be reformed or that more could have been done to support them. In this way, it can be seen that the individualising of blame and inconsistent support for young people identified as having SEND come to contribute to a perpetuation of inequalities through school exclusion.

Discussion

In the introduction to this article, I set out a position that the school system is failing to support the needs of some young people from marginalised backgrounds who then accept the premise that they do not belong in school and so come to see exclusion from school as both inevitable and welcome. I now return to this argument in more detail.

The intersectionality of class, SEND and other aspects of identity is complex. Whilst the young people in this study did not place their own experiences of school exclusion in the wider context of structural inequalities, they nonetheless tended to conform to the national profile of those excluded from school (Department for Education 2025). They were mostly male, from low socio-economic backgrounds, identified as having SEND and with experiences of family adversity which meant some had social services involvement. Due to the location of the fieldwork setting, most of the participants in this study were White British.

The identification of SEND, the types of SEND identified, and the level of support for SEND are all affected by the social status of the young person and their family (Department for Education 2018; Hutchinson 2021; Nevill, Savage, and Forsey 2022). Some of the young people in this study described long waits and difficult journeys to having their SEND recognised. This had an emotional and financial impact on their families as parents are called into school for meetings and often feel alone in navigating dual disciplinary and SEND systems.

Several of the young people in this study discussed how having SEND had been a barrier to success in school and this became a contributing factor in their eventual exclusion from school. Whilst some had diagnoses or EHCPs, it seemed that there had been a lack of support or adjustment in school to meet the needs of these young people. Instead, they became known for their behaviour and experienced punitive school disciplinary systems which led to exclusion from school.

In contrast with SEND support, disciplinary systems can move quickly and rely on different forms of evidence, leading to behaviour pathways and school exclusions before support needs are fully recognised or supported. Schools and parents may even come to see exclusion as the most effective way to access the required support (Parker et al. 2016; Tawell 2023).

Approaches to inclusion, including the SEND Code of Practice(Department for Education 2015), are often still based on a deficit model (Hodgkinson and Burch 2016) which locates the problem within the young person. Following a deficit model leads to support and intervention that focuses on the needs of the young person in isolation from wider structural factors. In this way, efforts at inclusion can leave school systems unchanged (Levinson and Thompson 2016). In addition, the school exclusion process requires a focus on the wrong-doing of the young people without asking questions about how their support needs have been met (Murphy 2022). These parallel systems maintain an emphasis on the individual rather than wider systems.

Persistent disruptive behaviour is the primary reason given for school exclusions(Department for Education 2025), although the way that this is understood varies across and within schools (Tawell 2023). Taking a relational or trauma informed approach to managing behaviour might include interventions such as nurture groups alongside whole school changes such as reviewing curriculum and teaching methods and reaching out to the wider school community (Jones et al. 2024). Amongst the young people in this study, there were several instances of a school or AP member of staff making a difference through personal connection and relationship building. Such relationships not only protect against school exclusion at the time but can have a lasting effect on the young person and their behaviour in and out of school (Jones et al. 2024). However, variations in understanding and implementation of behaviour policies lead to contradictions and trade-offs in relation to behaviour and school exclusions(Tawell 2023).

Neoliberal school systems focus on the individual in a competitive environment and neoconservative behaviour policies further promote the notion of individual responsibility (Prendergast, Hill, and Jones 2017), without the context of social and cultural inequalities. Despite some efforts to adopt a more relational approach, there remains a prevalence of behaviourist understandings of behaviour as something to be managed rather than understood(Jones et al. 2023). This was reflected in the way that the young

people in this study narrated their stories of school exclusion with an emphasis on individual blame and positioning themselves as people who could not be educated in mainstream classes.

These school-excluded young people tended to regard themselves as incompatible with school due to their own perceived flaws, describing themselves as naughty and as practical learners ill-equipped for the classroom. But explanations relying on within-person deficits cannot offer solutions to the persistent exclusion of young people from marginalised groups.

There has been limited (successful) support for such young people despite a number of reports and policy initiatives (see for example, DfE 2015, DfE 2022, Timpson 2019). Although the young people in this study could identify that their difficulties may be factors in their exclusion from school, they did not necessarily see this as a reason why schools might offer more support. Instead, having SEND and adverse family experiences tended to reinforce the young person's view of themselves as people who did not belong in school. These school-excluded young people expressed neither a view of themselves as part of a collective, nor as agents of change within the school system and so tended to demonstrate agency through a rejection of school and a welcoming of exclusion from school. Having taken on the messages of individual deficit, these young people saw exclusion from school as inevitable and a reasonable consequence of their own failings.

Additional needs arising from adverse childhood experiences, poverty, family adversity and SEND are common amongst the school-excluded (Department for Education 2025; Timpson 2019). Young people in this study described having difficulties at school related to these challenges and feeling unsupported or penalised. This demonstrates that schools need to find ways to better identify and support young people who are facing challenges, especially those from marginalised groups.

Whilst family difficulties such as bereavement may not be directly linked to social disadvantage, the impact on families who may have fewer support networks or be facing other challenges such as unemployment and poor housing means that family adversity is compounded by poverty(Calder 2016). Similarly, neoliberal marketisation of the school system which makes parents into consumers has been shown to disadvantage those parents who belong to marginalised groups (Prendergast, Hill, and Jones 2017) although successful partnerships with parents can make a difference to school experiences and outcomes (Jones et al. 2024). The young people in this study came from disadvantaged communities and families which had experienced loss and adversity. Exclusion from school both reflects and compounds these identities

The tendency to individualise responsibility for behaviour in school (Parsons 2005) allows these wider inequalities to be overlooked. Awareness and monitoring of the profile of students in a school who are identified as requiring additional support and of those who are subject to school disciplinary systems would help schools to track and then address these trends. For example, recording the proportions of students who are eligible for free school meals, have SEND, are care-experienced or belong to ethnic minority groups who are held in detentions, sent to internal exclusion units, excluded for fixed periods and permanently would highlight where schools are reproducing these inequalities through disciplinary systems. A recalibration of school support and disciplinary systems may help to redress the balance. However, findings suggest that a more fundamental reform of the English school system will be required in order to fully remove these structural inequalities.

[illegible]

Jones et al. (2023) champion a compassion in schools which is supported by the stories of these school-excluded young people. They were able to identify

education professionals who had been significant in their lives: teachers, TAs and AP staff. As reflected in the literature (see Condliffe 2023; Hickinbotham and Soni 2021; Levinson and Thompson 2016), building positive and respectful relationships has been key for these young people. Interventions targeting school belonginess for the most vulnerable groups have been shown to be effective, although this remains an under-researched area (K.-A. Allen et al. 2021)

A whole school ethos of care (Warin 2017) that includes the wider school community (Jones et al. 2024) and a professional love (Grimmer 2021) that allows vulnerable young people to feel safe and cared for are powerful tools. Alternative, collaborative ways to evaluate provisions as suggested by Johnston and Nolty (2023) may help to move away from mechanistic neoliberal approaches and towards systems which more fully recognise the value of the work done in AP. However, reforming AP must accompany parallel reforms in mainstream schools if we are to move away from a model where only after exclusion from school can young people access the support and education that they need.

The pattern of unmet needs related to SEND, community disadvantage and family adversity amongst school-excluded young people leads to a segregation of young people from marginalised groups into vocational AP with fewer possibilities of academic pathways and a greater long-term risk of the limited outcomes associated with school exclusion. The school exclusion process is understood and implemented differently according to context and interpretation (Tawell 2023) but focuses on the behaviour of the young person, not on the profile of their needs and how they have been met (Murphy 2022), reinforcing the narratives of individual deficit and blame. In this way, the failure of inclusive schooling, SEND support and school discipline systems to keep marginalised young people in school continues to reproduce the inequalities seen in wider society.

References

Allen, Kelly-Ann, Negar Jamshidi, Emily Berger, Andrea Reupert, Gerald Wurf, and Fiona May. 2021. "Impact of School-Based Interventions for Building School Belonging in Adolescence: a Systematic Review." Educational.Psychology.Review 34: 229-257. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-021-09621-w

Allen, R., S. Burgess, and L. McKenna. 2014. School.performance.and.parental.choice.of.school¿secondary.data.analysis¡.Department for Education (London). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/275938/RR310_-_School_performance_and_parental_choice_of_school.pdf.

Archer, M. S. 1995. Realist.Social.Theory¿The.Morphogenetic.Approach. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

---. 2016. "Morphogenesis: Realism's explanatory framework." In Structure?Culture.and.Agency¿Selected.Papers.of.Margaret.Archer, edited by T. Brock, M. Carrigan and G. Scambler, 1-35. London: Routledge.

Archer, Margaret Scotford. 2007. Making.our.way.through.the.world. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ball, Stephen, and Jordi Collet-Sabé. 2022. "Against school: an epistemological critique." Discourse 43 (6): 985-999. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2021.1947780. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01596306.2021.1947780.

Black, Alison. 2022. "'But what do the statistics say?' An overview of permanent school exclusions in England." Emotional.and.behavioural.difficulties 27 (3): 199-219. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2022.2091895. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13632752.2022.2091895.

Bodfield, Kalum S, and Aisling Culshaw. 2023. "The place for diagnosis in the UK education system?" Emotional.and.Behavioural.Difficulties 28 (4): 316-328.

Bombèr, Louise Michelle. 2007. Inside.I'm.hurting. 1st ed. London: Worth.

Bonnello, C. 2016. "How do I stop my child using autism as an excuse? ." Autistic not Weird. Accessed Web Page. https://autisticnotweird.com/excuse/.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2022. Thematic.analysis¿a.practical.guide. London: Sage Publications.

British Educational Research, Association. 2018. Ethical.guidelines.for.educational.research¡.BERA (London). https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018-online.

Calder, Gideon. 2016. How.inequality.runs.in.families. 1 ed.Policy.Press.shorts¡.Insights. Bristol: Policy Press.

Campbell, T. Cooper, K. . 2024. What's.cooking?.A.review.of.evidence.and.discussion.on.the.Free.School.Meals.(FSM).measure.in.the.National.Pupil.Database¡.Education Policy Institute. https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/FSM-Report-Strand-1-FINAL-1.pdf.

Chatzitheochari, Stella, and Angharad Butler-Rees. 2022. "Disability, Social Class and Stigma: An Intersectional Analysis of Disabled Young People's School Experiences." Sociology 0 (0): 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385221133710. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/00380385221133710.

Condliffe, Emma. 2023. "'Out of sight, out of mind': an interpretative phenomenological analysis of young people's experience of isolation rooms/booths in UK mainstream secondary schools." Emotional.and.behavioural.difficulties 28 (2): 129-144. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2023.2233193. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13632752.2023.2233193.

Corcoran, Tim, and Dave Finney. 2015. "Between education and psychology: school staff perspectives." Emotional.and.Behavioural.Difficulties¿Special.edition¿New. Psychologies.of.Behaviour¿Doing.education.differently? 20 (1): 98-113. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2014.947095. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13632752.2014.947095.

Corrigan, F. M., J. J. Fisher, and D. J. Nutt. 2011. "Autonomic dysregulation and the Window of Tolerance model of the effects of complex emotional trauma." Journal. of.psychopharmacology.(Oxford) 25 (1): 17-25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0269881109354930. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0269881109354930.

Department for Education. 2015. Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years. HMSO.

---. 2018. Special.educational.needs.in.England¿January.867❹.Department for Education (London). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/729208/SEN_2018_Text.pdf.

---. 2023. SEND Review: Right support, Right place, Right time. Government consultation on the SEND and alternative provision system in England. In UK. Parliament.8687_8688. London: HMSO.

---. 2025. "Permanent exclusions and suspensions in England." Last Modified 2025. Accessed Web Page. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england.

Education Select Committee. 2018. Education Committee 5th Report. Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions Volume 1. Report. In UK.Parliament.867❸_867❺. London: TSO.

Fryer, Tom. 2022. "A critical realist approach to thematic analysis: producing causal explanations." Journal.of.critical.realism 21 (4): 365-384. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767430.2022.2076776. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14767430.2022.2076776.

Gill, K., H. Quilter-Pinner, and D. Swift. 2017. Making.the.difference¿Breaking.the.link. between.school.exclusion.and.social.exclusion¡.IPPR.

Goodall, Karen, Hannah Robertson, and Matthias Schwannauer. 2020. "The relationship between adverse childhood experiences and educational disadvantage: A critical perspective." Scottish.Affairs 29 (4): 493-501. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3366/scot.2020.0339.

Grimmer, Tamsin. 2021. Developing.a.Loving.Pedagogy.in.the.Early.Years¿How.Love.Fits. with.Professional.Practice. 1st ed. United Kingdom: Routledge.

Herzog, Julia I., and Christian Schmahl. 2018. "Adverse Childhood Experiences and the Consequences on Neurobiological, Psychosocial, and Somatic Conditions Across the Lifespan." Frontiers.in.psychiatry 9: 420. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2018.00420. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30233435.

Hickinbotham, Laura, and Anita Soni. 2021. "A systematic literature review exploring the views and experiences of children and young people of the label Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)." Emotional.and.behavioural.difficulties 26 (2): 135-150. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2021.1894743.

House of Commons Education, Committee. 2019. Special.educational.and.disabilities¡. First.Report.of.Session.867❺.House of Commons (London). https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmeduc/20/20.pdf.

Hutchinson, Jo. 2021. Identifying.pupils.with.special.educational.needs.and.disabilities¡. Education Policy Institute (London).

Johnston, Craig, and Tara Nolty. 2023. "Outcomes beyond Evaluation: The Impetus and Measure of Relationships within Alternative Provisions." Youth 3 (4): 1183-1193. https://doi.org/10.3390/youth3040075. https://doaj.org/article/e648e882cb294518bdf69f9cab91f032.

Jones, Rebecca, Jana Kreppner, Fiona Marsh, and Brettany Hartwell. 2023. "Punitive behaviour management policies and practices in secondary schools: A systematic review of children and young people's perceptions and experiences." Emotional.and.Behavioural.Difficulties 28 (2-3): 182-197.

---. 2024. "Supporting behaviour and emotions in school: an exploration into school staff perspectives on the journey from punitive approaches to relational-based approaches." Emotional.and.Behavioural.Difficulties: 1-17.

King, Stephanie. 2024. ""You don't go here anymore": An Exploration of School Exclusion." PhD, Institute of Education, Nottingham Trent University. https://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/52656/.

Kvale, Steinar. 2007. Doing.interviews. 1st ed. Vol. 2.The.Sage.qualitative.research.kit. London: SAGE.

Lawson, Caron, Kate Prentice, Janine Jennings, and Kate Johnston. 2022. "First steps towards a mental health and neurodevelopmental screening of secondary school children following two fixed-term school exclusions in the UK." Emotional. and.Behavioural.Difficulties 27 (4): 280-296.

Levinson, Martin, and M. Thompson. 2016. "'I don't need pink hair here': Should we be seeking to 'reintegrate' youngsters without challenging mainstream school cultures?" International.journal.on.school.disaffection 12 (1): 23-43. https://doi.org/10.18546/IJSD.12.1.02.

Madia, Joan E, Ingrid Obsuth, Ian Thompson, Harry Daniels, and Aja Louise Murray. 2022. "Long-term labour market and economic consequences of school exclusions in England: Evidence from two counterfactual approaches." British. Journal.of.Educational.Psychology 92 (3): 801-816. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111%2Fbjep.12487

McDoniel, Meghan E, and Karen L Bierman. 2023. "Exploring pathways linking early childhood adverse experiences to reduced preadolescent school engagement." Child.Abuse.™ .Neglect 142 (1). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2022.105572

McGough, Kate and Dunkley, Elaine. 2024. "Primary school pupil suspensions in England double in a decade." BBC News. Accessed 07.01.2025. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz0m2x30p4eo.

Mills, Martin, and Pat Thomson. 2022. "English schooling and little e and big E exclusion: what's equity got to do with it?" Emotional.and.Behavioural.Difficulties 27 (3): 185-198. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2022.2092273. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2022.2092273.

Murphy, Rick. 2022. "How children make sense of their permanent exclusion: a thematic analysis from semi-structured interviews." Emotional.and.behavioural. difficulties 27 (1): 43-57. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2021.2012962. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13632752.2021.2012962.

Nevill, Thomas, Glenn C. Savage, and Martin Forsey. 2022. "It's a diagnosis for the rich: disability, advocacy and the micro-practices of social reproduction." British. Journal.of.Sociology.of.Education: 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2022.2145931. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2022.2145931.

Obsuth, Ingrid, Joan Madia, Harry Daniels, Ian Thompson, and Aja Louise Murray. 2023. "The Impact of School Exclusion in Childhood on Health Outcomes in Adulthood: Estimating Causal Effects using Inverse Probability of Treatment Weighting." British.Journal.of.Educational.Psychology 94 (2): 460-473. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12656.

Parker, Claire, Amelia Paget, Tamsin Ford, and Ruth Gwernan-Jones. 2016. "'.he was excluded for the kind of behaviour that we thought he needed support with...' A qualitative analysis of the experiences and perspectives of parents whose children have been excluded from school." Emotional.and.Behavioural. Difficulties¿Emotional.and.behavioural.difficulties.and.mental.(ill)health 21 (1): 133-151. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2015.1120070. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13632752.2015.1120070.

Parsons, Carl. 2005. "School Exclusion: The Will to Punish." British.journal.of. educational.studies 53 (2): 187-211. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8527.2005.00290.x. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-8527.2005.00290.x.

Pennacchia, Jodie, Mark Axler, Stephanie King, and Andrew Clapham. "Choice and diversity in governance in the English alternative provision sector: Implications for educational equity." British.Educational.Research.Journal n/a (n/a). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.4161. https://bera-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/berj.4161.

Perera, J. 2020. How.black.working_class.youth.are.criminalised.and.excluded.in.the. English.school.system Institute of Race Relations (London). https://irr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/How-Black-Working-Class-Youth-are-Criminalised-and-Excluded-in-the-English-School-System.pdf.

Prendergast, L. M., D. Hill, and S. Jones. 2017. "Social Exclusion, Education and Precarity: neoliberalism, neoconservatism and class war from above " Journal.for. Critical.Education.Policy.Studies 15 (2).

Ryan, Sara, and Katherine Runswick-Cole. 2008. "Repositioning mothers: mothers, disabled children and disability studies." Disability.™ .society 23 (3): 199-210. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590801953937. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09687590801953937.

Sinclair, F., and A. Zaidi. 2023. Analysis.of.the.consultation.responses.to.the.SEND. review¿right.support?right.place?right.time¡.Department for Education (London).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1139719/Independent_analysis_of_the_consultation_responses_to_the_SEND_review_right_support__right_place__right_time.pdf.
Tawell, A. 2023. "Enacting national school exclusion policy at the local level in England: is it black and white?" International.journal.of.Inclusive.Education ahead-of-print. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2023.2266746. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/13603116.2023.2266746?needAccess=true.
Thomson, Pat, and Jodie Pennacchia. 2016. "Hugs and behaviour points: Alternative education and the regulation of 'excluded' youth." International.journal.of. inclusive.education 20 (6): 622-640. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1102340. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13603116.2015.1102340.
Timpson, Edward. 2019. Timpson Review of School Exclusion. In UK.Parliament.867❸_867❺. London: TSO.
Warin, Jo. 2017. "Creating a whole school ethos of care." Emotional.and.behavioural. difficulties 22 (3): 188-199. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2017.1331971. https://search.datacite.org/works/10.1080/13632752.2017.1331971.
Wiltshire, Gareth, and Noora Ronkainen. 2021. "A realist approach to thematic analysis: making sense of qualitative data through experiential, inferential and dispositional themes." Journal.of.critical.realism 20 (2): 159-180. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767430.2021.1894909. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14767430.2021.1894909.