AN EXPLORATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF HIGH-ACHIEVING SOMALI STUDENTS IN LONDON SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on Somali students in London who achieved better GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) results than is usual for their ethnic group. In general, the educational achievement of Somali children in the UK is a matter of concern. Recent statistics show that only 34 percent of Somali students gain pass grades at GCSE level. A combination of factors can explain this: many in the Somali community are refugees from conflict; they come from a country where the average level of education is low; they live in poverty; parents often do not speak good English or understand the school system. Nevertheless, some students do achieve better educational results. The research set out to explore the educational experiences of seven higher achieving students by generating life grids and by interviewing the students and their parents in their homes where ethnographic notes were made.

The result is seven stories about education from the perspectives of the parents and their children. The data were analysed within a conceptual framework developed by Tara Yosso whose work is based on critical race theory. She proposes a "cultural wealth" model of six "capitals" to reveal the strengths of students who are often seen as in a cultural deficit. This study revealed that capitals associated with cultural wealth fostered educational success.

The parents interviewed for this research had all been educated to at least secondary school level and had acquired a set of skills that allowed them to navigate complex social institutions and processes and draw on community networks and resources to support their children's educational achievements. Their privileged positions allowed them to shape their children's experiences. However, not all the students and parents experienced schooling as good. While they might lack English and familiarity with the English education system, it was clear that the schools were not meeting their needs. This study demonstrates that for these successful students, even when schooling was experienced negatively, more influential was that parents held a set of values that the young people also espoused. These values include having a high regard for educational achievement, being highly aspirational, and working hard. They are achieving by adapting to the system. This study makes policy and practice recommendations to all stakeholders so that the achievement levels and the school experiences of underachieving Somali students can be improved.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Aqoon la'aani waa iftiin la'aane
Waa aqal iyo ileys la'aane
Ogaada ogaada dugsiyada ogaada!
Oo aada oo aada walaalayaal oo aada!

Lack of knowledge is a lack of enlightenment
Homelessness and no light
Be aware, be aware of schools
And go to schools, go to schools
Brothers and sisters, go to schools

(Abdillahi Qarshe (1961) cited in Afrax (1994, p. 244)

The song above is by a renowned Somali singer and composer. The theme emphasises the critical importance of education for human well-being and equity among people. In this chapter, I set out the parameters of my research. My past experiences of Somali culture and Islamic identity shape my view of the world and my research study. I was born in Somalia to parents who did not have the opportunity to go to school but were nevertheless determined to make my life different and better from theirs by sending me to school.

My interest in the issue of educational underachievement began about 16 years ago. In the summer of 2005, I attended an educational awards ceremony in Southampton after receiving an invitation from a Somali father whose son was to receive an award that I thought was for high academic achievement. After the 18-year-old received his honour, I congratulated him and asked about his grades. The student told me that he achieved three Cs, which I would not have considered a 'high achievement'. Later, in conversations with his teachers, I learned that this young man was the highest achieving Somali in a school with the highest number of Somali students in the city and was given the award to motivate other Somali students. I was, of course, disappointed with this information and the prospects for Somali students in UK schools.

Three years later, when I moved to London, a city with substantially more Somalis than any other city in the UK, I decided to investigate the educational experiences of Somali students as part of my master's dissertation in social work. While pursuing my master's, several friends and I founded a charity organisation with the primary aim of tutoring and mentoring GCSE-

level Somali students. We offered six hours of tutoring and mentoring sessions each week to 24 students. We also organised regular sessions with Somali professionals from different academic backgrounds who spoke with the students and answered their questions about different career paths. We aimed to provide them with positive role models. We met students individually and offered support to improve their self-image, confidence and motivation. We set challenges in the hope of raising expectations of their potential, matched by greater achievements and attainment. This project lasted two years and was largely successful. Most students in the programme exceeded the grades predicted by their teachers and showed high levels of motivation to pursue further and higher education.

It was during this time that I realised the level of underachievement by Somali students in London schools. While not attempting to generalise, I also understood the impact community support might have in raising the achievements of this group (for further discussion, see 'researcher positionality' in the methodology chapter).

In the rest of this chapter, I explain the research parameters, establish the focus of and rationale for the study, set out the research questions, and make a claim about its significance before summarising the thesis chapter by chapter.

The Focus of and Rationale for the Research

In this thesis, I explore how biography and social and cultural circumstances, including schools, families and social networks, contributed to the unusually high achievement of a small group of GCSE-level Somali students in London schools. By focusing on this group, I hope to shed light on what policy and practice would support students in the Somali community who, more usually, underachieve.

Somalis inhabit countries in the East and Horn of Africa regions, namely: Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Others migrated and live in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Many may have nationalities other than Somali; for example, Somali populations in Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia are nationals of those countries despite their Somali ethnicity. Others may have dual nationalities, like those who migrated to the UK and other Western countries. For this research, the term Somali refers to ethnicity and not nationality. For example, students who participated in this research were all born in Europe and hold European citizenship. Still, they have identified themselves as Somali because their parents are ethnic Somalis born in Somalia.

Somalis have been living in the UK for over a century; however, their numbers increased after 1991 when a civil war broke out in Somalia, and significant numbers of people migrated to the UK. It is now estimated that up to 250,000 Somalis live in the UK (Harris, 2004; Sare, 2008). In literature, the education of Somali students in UK schools is dominated by a discussion surrounding the wide underachievement among this group, with the majority achieving below the national average.

While the focus of this study is Somali students, I make repeated reference to Black, Black-African and Black-Caribbean children and groups. The term Black is a contested concept, which has attracted much debate. The definition of who is Black varies from country to country and has evolved over time (Davis, 1994). Phoenix (1998) suggests that the term Black is contested because some of those included in the category and some excluded seek to change the usage of the term because, as Hall (1996) suggests, people have multiple identities simultaneously. Aspinall (2002) argues that Black has a precise meaning when used by an individual as a self-identifier. Still, the term becomes imprecise when used collectively for groups perceived to be sharing common ethnic attributes.

Black has been used to identify people who experience structural and institutional discrimination because of the colour of their skin, particularly people of African, African-Caribbean and South Asian origin (Maylor, 2009). Mirza describes Black as being:

> About a state of 'becoming' (racialised); a process of consciousness, when colour becomes the defining factor about who you are. Located through your 'otherness', a 'conscious coalition' emerges: a self-consciously constructed space where identity is not inscribed by a natural identification but a political kinship. (Mirza, 1997, p. 3).

In the UK census, Black refers to people of African, Caribbean, and any other Black/African/Caribbean background. And for this study, the term Black refers to people of Black-African heritage, including people from Somalia and of Black-Caribbean origin. The term also includes the political subjectivity conditioned by discrimination, considering that respondents of this study are first-generation Somali students and their parents who came to Europe as refugees and asylum seekers.

The academic underachievement of Black students has been a topic of concern among researchers for decades. Black students are underachieving in British schools and are less likely than their White peers to attain good outcomes in education (see the literature review in

chapter three). In particular, the educational attainment of Somali students is below the national average, and that gap grows at the end of secondary education (Bristol City Council, 2014; Demie et al., 2007; Strand, et al., 2010).

To put the discussion into context, it is important to define the terms educational achievement and underachievement. Although these terms are freely used in academic discourse, there's little agreement among researchers and commentators about their meaning. Gorard and Smith (2004) suggested that underachievement refers to differences of attainment between one group and another while Gillborn and Gipps (1996, p.1) assert that underachievement is a "relatively crude term relating to differences in group averages". Differences in the achievements of different ethnic and social groups do not establish anything about the potential of those groups (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). For example, one of those groups, such as Somali students, maybe achieving below the national average in a particular school or local authority (such as the proportion attaining five A*-C grades in their GCSE examinations), but students from the same group could be doing relatively well in some other schools or local authorities.

For this research, high achievement is defined as a higher performance level than expected for students of the same age, educational level, or experience. Underachievement is defined as attaining below the 2015/2016 national average of more than five A*-C GCSE grades, including English and maths. For example, in 2016, 56.9 percent of Somali students in Camden achieved five or more GCSEs at C or above grades, including English and maths, compared with 63 percent of all students in England (DfE, 2016).

Somali children's educational underachievement has been attributed to factors such as lack of parental support, social deprivation and the language barrier (Demie, 2006; Diriye, 2006; Kahin, 1997; Rutter, 2004). However, it is important to note that not all Somali students are failing. For example, 34 percent of Somali students are reported to have passed their GCSE exams compared with 58 percent of White British students (Demie, et al., 2007). With the underachievement of Somali students in secondary schools established, it seems that no research has been carried out to investigate explanations for successful Somali students. So, against this backdrop, the life and educational experiences of high-achieving Somali students in London schools was investigated for what enabled them to achieve.

This thesis is based on seven individual cases of high-achieving Somali students and their families who completed their GCSE studies in 2016. I visited the homes of these students, and they told me their life histories by way of life-grids and recounted their educational experiences in in-depth interviews. Additionally, one parent of each student gave an in-depth interview that encouraged them to reflect on what influenced the high achievement of their child. While each family case is distinct, I also conceptualise a collective case study of families of educationally high-achieving Somali students.

Because the students were highest achieving in schools where most of their Somali peers were underachieving, I needed a theory that could explain what enabled this group to become high achievers in the context of wider underachievement. I used Tara Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth framework (Yosso, 2005) to analyse the data because it challenges deficit models by identifying the resources and assets of communities of colour in the US, which are generally thought of as disadvantaged. It is founded on critical race theory (CRT), which confronts traditional interpretations of cultural capital. CRT doesn't regard Black and minority ethnic communities as deprived communities devoid of cultural capital. Instead, it views these communities as possessing cultural knowledge, skills and abilities, which are not acknowledged and recognised by society broadly, including the education system (Gillborn, 2010). I explored whether such community resources were evident among the Somali students in this study which supported their educational experience and contributed to their success.

Research Questions

1. Do the educational and socio-cultural perceptions, experiences and attitudes of high-achieving Somali students in London schools help us understand what would support the achievement of all Somali students?

To answer this question, the following sub-questions were asked:

1. What are high-achieving Somali students' perceptions and experiences of education?
2. What are high-achieving Somali students' attitudes towards education?
3. How do the parents of high-achieving Somali students perceive their children's education?
4. How do life histories and culture influence the education of high-achieving Somali students?

5. What other factors do students and families attribute to their success?
6. How does the theory of community cultural wealth illuminate our understanding of the educational success of Somali students?

The research questions above guided this study as I unpicked the community cultural wealth capitals (Yosso, 2005) that are evident in the students' and parents' accounts (see the theoretical framework in chapter 3 and conceptual discussion in chapters 6 and 7).

Significance of the Study

This study is important because many Somali students are in a constant battle to overcome barriers that lead to academic underachievement. This underachievement has serious social, political and economic ramifications because research indicates that underachievement in school is a risk factor for becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (Dorsett and Lucchino, 2014). Research in the 1970 British birth cohort study indicated that having become a NEET, risk factors increase for young people between the ages of 16 and 18 - a young male who has been in this group for six months or more is three times more likely than average to have mental health issues, five times more likely to have a criminal record and six times less likely to have any qualifications (SEU, 1999). Understanding what contributed to the high academic achievement of a group of students may help parents, schools and policymakers to devise ways of supporting and raising the educational experience and attainment of low achieving Somali students in UK schools. No literature explains why some students were high achievers, despite their socio-economic and educational disadvantages. This thesis attempts to fill in that gap and explain the factors that contributed to that high achievement. Moreover, Yosso's framework has never been applied to Somali students, and I was eager to find a way of challenging the deficit view of Somali students. This study intends to offer hope to the Somali pupils who are underachieving within the UK education system.

The Organisation of the Thesis

Following this chapter, there are two literature review chapters. The first (chapter 2) focuses on the Somali community both in Somalia and the UK to explain their history, education and culture and how this influences how they encounter the education system in the UK. The chapter offers an understanding of what shapes Somali parents' attitudes towards education

and the mismatch between the education system in Somalia and the UK. It gives background information on the complex migration history of Somalis and motivations for their migration to the UK. The chapter also provides background of Somali school students in the UK.

Chapter three discusses the systematic underachievement of Black students and, more specifically, issues raised by research on the achievements of Somali students in UK schools. Topics critically reviewed include the background of Somali students in UK schools; their achievement levels; factors that contribute to underachievement such as educational disadvantage, race, class and gender; Somali parents' lack of understanding of the British education system; and the lack of educationally-successful role models. The literature in this chapter points to a widespread disadvantage among Somali students. Most literature uses a deficit model, so the chapter ends by offering a detailed explanation of Tara Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth, which is conceptualised as a critical race theory that challenges the traditional explanation of deficit of cultural capital.

Chapter four outlines the methodology and methods used in this research study. The chapter first justifies a qualitative, interpretative methodological approach that combines life history, case study, and ethnographic observations, showing how it is congruent with my research aims. Secondly, the chapter explains how I accessed and selected my research participants. Thirdly, the chapter presents the three methods of data generation that I used: student life grids, parent and student interviews and participant observation. Fourthly, the chapter explains how I conducted the research in an ethical manner, including my research positionality. Lastly, the chapter describes how I set about analysing and interpreting the data sets I had generated.

Chapter five, which is the first empirical chapter, shows the patterns of enablements for and constraints on educational achievement that played out in the students' lives, without yet applying the theory of community cultural wealth. The chapter introduces the seven individual cases of students and their families. The chapter then reveals what was learned about the families' composition and backgrounds, attitudes to and experiences of education; and, other salient information. The chapter finds that despite having had educational enablements derived from home, constraints still operate. Nevertheless, the chapter reveals that students overcame these constraints by utilising the support they received from their families.

Chapter six, the second empirical chapter, uses Tara Yosso's overlapping forms of capital to explain the findings and illustrate Somali parents' perspectives and recount their efforts to mobilise their resources to support their children's education. While doing so, the chapter identifies Yosso's (2005) six forms of capital and how these varied forms of capital have fostered educational success among Somali students in this study.

Chapter seven is a mirror chapter of chapter six - this time it takes the students' perspective - to show how students took what was offered by parents and converted it into educational achievement. The chapter shows students navigated and transcended the educational landscape to create successful personal and educational outcomes by drawing from different forms of capital in the community cultural wealth. The chapter first discusses the quality of schooling for the seven students, students' school mobility, their perceptions of UK education - fitting in with peers and relationships with teachers. The chapter shows that despite the quality of education offered, these students succeeded in education.

Chapter eight concludes the thesis and offers an analytical summary through the conceptual lens. It goes on to discuss the implications for social and educational policy and practice and makes some recommendations. Finally, it presents the contribution to both conceptual and practical knowledge that the research makes. The chapter argues that the underachievement of Somali students is an issue of social justice. The responsibility to raise the achievement levels of this group of students lies with parents, community leaders, schools, local authorities, and the government.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW 1 – THE CONTEXT

Introduction

It is important to examine the historical background of the Somali families who are the focus of my study. The migration history of this community and their numbers in the UK is discussed, followed by the background of Somali students in the UK. I intend the reader to understand the background and enter into the experiences of the London-based Somali students and their parents who are the focus of my study. The chapter is in three main parts. The first part discusses how education has played out in the Somali context because it is important to appreciate the attitudes to education of the parents of the students who are the focus of my study. The second part charts the movement of Somali people from their own country to settling in the UK, it shows how war and chaos is a defining characteristic of the lives of the parents and students in my study; how it is difficult to grasp the size of the Somali diaspora; and what we know about the experiences of Somali community in Camden. Finally, I focus closely on what we know about Somali school students in the UK.

Somali Culture, Language, and Education

Somalia is in the easternmost part of the Horn of Africa. It borders Djibouti to the northwest, Ethiopia to the west, Kenya to the south, the Gulf of Aden to the north and the Indian Ocean to the east. At over 3,300 kilometres, Somalia has the longest coastline on the African continent, connecting the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The country stretches 637,657 square kilometres with an estimated population of 12,316,895, according to the United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] (2014).

In 1991, armed factions toppled a military regime that ruled the country since 1969. Following the collapse of the state and after another thirty years of conflict and weak government, Somalia remains very poor on every measurable index.

Every country has an educational history and culture which influences attitudes, and these are relevant to my study. Somalis are a nomadic pastoralist society renowned for their oral culture and rich poetry. In the absence of a written script, oral communication was a vital means for passing knowledge and information from one generation to another. Somalis still use poetry to communicate important information and to characterise their culture, and express their feelings. The famous classical poet, Salaan Carrabey, wrote in one of his poems:

Afku wuxu la xoog yahay magliga, xawda kaa jara' e.
The spoken word has the force of a dagger.

While a common Somali proverb says:

Uli way qabowdaa erey se ma qaboobo
The pain of a stick passes away, but the pain of a word lingers.

Large numbers of the Somali population rely on pastoralism to make a living. This community has less access to education because making a livelihood is an absolute priority and is under stress due to the harsh climate and because of a lack of schools in rural areas. Samatar (2009, p.8) wrote, "if not also a nation of nomads, the Somalis are a nation in which nomadic pastoralism plays a dominant role in the life of the people." However, the number of people earning their livelihoods as pastoralists has been declining in recent decades, and they are now estimated to constitute about a quarter of the population (UNICEF, 2016). Conflicts, irregular rainfall and the absence of effective government have contributed to the movement of people from rural to urban areas.

Following the collapse of the military government in 1991 and the subsequent civil war, the entire education system of Somalia was destroyed. This has denied an entire generation the opportunity to go to school. Anyone who was of school age during the early years of the war, and those born after the war, are all affected. It took many years before an attempt was made to re-establish the education system by developing private primary, secondary and higher education institutions. Fortunately for many students who were unable to pursue education during the war, the vacuum created by the absence of national government was successfully filled by an individual and community-based private education system. Primary and secondary schools were established all over the country, despite the absence of a national curriculum and the different mediums of instruction.

No credible data on literacy rates is available due to the instability that has existed in the country since 1988. Nevertheless, UNICEF in 2015 estimated 30 percent of Somali children were going to school. After almost thirty years of instability and weak central governments, one can assume no progress has been made in increasing the literacy rate from where it was 30 years ago when the central state collapsed.

Many Somali children attend Quranic schools, both in rural and urban areas before they reach school age. Quranic schools teach children the Arabic alphabet and how to read the Islamic holy book, the Quran. Children also memorise verses and chapters from the Quran, enabling them to recite it from memory. However, many parents keep their children in the Quranic schools after they reach school age because "Quranic School may be seen as an alternative to primary school due to various possible factors, including: the desire of parents to give their children a religious education; non-availability of a formal school nearby; and the lower cost of Quranic School" (UNICEF, 2016, p.65).

The collapse of the state and the subsequent conflicts have changed most aspects of Somali life. An entire generation has lost the opportunity to have a proper childhood and education.

> Restoration of regular schooling is critical if Somalis expect to survive the present upheaval and envision a hopeful future. Education can provide structure and stability for children who have been traumatised by war. It is the starting point for creating a skilled workforce that can compete in the global economy. Education fosters the intellectual discipline necessary to solve problems, and the civic virtues essential for good governance. Good education can help reduce gender inequalities, child exploitation, and the likelihood of future violence in the wider society (Cassanelli and Abdikadir, 2007, p.91).

Many of today's parents are among those who missed out on formal education. Moreover, since the process of migration is long and complex, many were on the move and didn't get an opportunity to go to school after leaving Somalia. Strand et al. (2010), who studied the challenges of raising the achievement of Somali, Turkish and Bangladeshi students, reported that in their sample, no Somali parent had gone to school in the UK. An Open Society Foundation (2014, p.99) study, which profiled the Somali communities in Camden and Tower Hamlets, suggested that information "translated into Somali [by service providers] [was] underutilised, as older generations may not be literate as they have not received any formal schooling".

Unlike the first wave of Somali migrants in the UK who were predominantly young men who left their families to earn a living and whose circumstances did not permit them to advance their education, those immigrants who arrived after the civil war in 1991 came with their families and were able to receive free education for their children. Nevertheless, their arrival was far from smooth as most families arrived in the UK via refugee camps in neighbouring

Kenya or Ethiopia, with some children receiving provisional education. Others never went to any type of school, and therefore needed to learn the basics such as how to hold a pen (Diriye, 2005). Usually, children who came to the UK were placed with their age group in schools with better-educated classmates who had been studying for several years and spoke English. The newly arrived Somali children often could not speak, read or write English or any written alphabet (Demie, et al, 2007). It is against this background which I expand on the next parts of the chapter that we need to consider the notion of underachievement.

History of the Somali Community in the UK

The Somali population in the UK has been increasing for the past three decades. However, the Somali presence in Britain dates back more than 100 years when the British colonial powers in Aden, Yemen, started to employ young Somali men as seamen. The first sailors who came to the UK settled in the port cities of Cardiff, Liverpool, Bristol and London, (El-Solh, 1991; Kahin, 1997) but most wanted to accumulate as much money as possible and to return to their nomadic life to start a family (Hanley, 1993; Harris, 2004). While some fulfilled their ambitions and returned home, most did not earn enough money to enable them to go back to Somalia. Most of this group decided to settle in the UK but frequently travelled back home to invest their money or start a family. Supporting their relatives back home was another contributing factor to their frequent travels (Kahin, 1997).

The community grew after the Second World War when more Somalis joined the merchant ships or migrated to work. During this time, the economic boom in Britain coupled with decreasing job opportunities in the merchant navy encouraged many Somali seamen to move to cities further north, such as Sheffield, Birmingham and Manchester, where the steel industry was expanding, and labour was in great demand. They were able to make use of their manual skills and worked in the steel industry and on-board ships (Diriye, 2006). At this point, many of the seamen were joined by their families (Kahin, 1997; Valentine and Sporton, 2009). Until the 1960s, the Somali community in the UK had been predominantly male, with families left at home (Rutter, 2004).

Most of the Somali community currently living in the UK arrived after the collapse of the Somali state in 1991. Most of these arrivals comprised refugees and asylum seekers who fled to neighbouring countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia before migrating to the UK (Harris, 2004). Migration has been a complicated and long journey for many who moved between

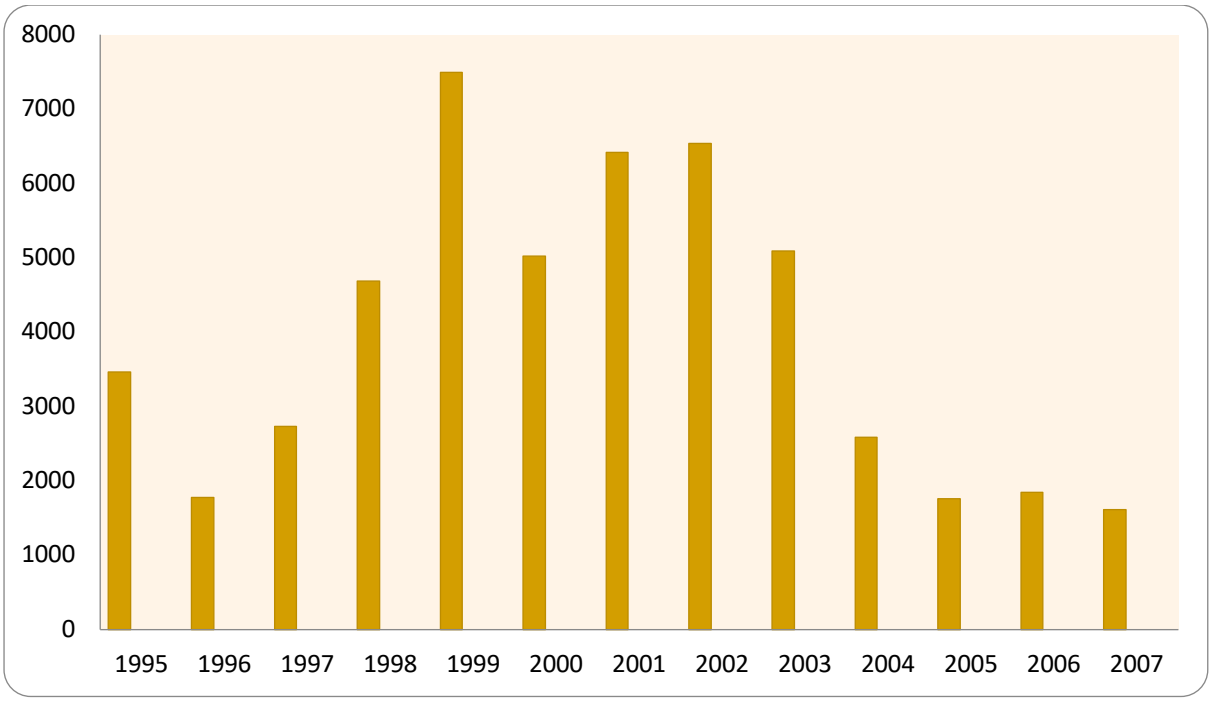
different countries in Africa and the Middle East before finally claiming asylum in the UK. The migration process often proved dangerous and sometimes involving smuggling (Kahin, 1997). Those migrating made difficult decisions, often leaving their families back in Somalia or in refugee camps in Kenya or Ethiopia. Most Somalis who arrived in Britain settled in London, Manchester, Sheffield, Cardiff and Birmingham, where they had relatives or friends (Sporton, et al., 2006).

The UK Somali Diaspora

The Somali community in the UK has a diverse history and migration context, which should be considered when trying to understand the lives and experiences of Somali children currently in the UK (Sporton, et al., 2006). Somalis are not an ethnic category in the British census; therefore, their numbers are uncertain. An Information Centre About Refugees and Asylum in England (ICAR) survey in 2004 presented in the House of Commons suggested a low level of participation by the Somali community in the 2001 census. Nevertheless, estimates of the actual number of Somalis in the UK vary considerably, with some in the early 2000s estimating the number to be 95,000 to 250,000 (Harris 2004; Sare, 2008), with the majority living in the greater London area (Holden, 1999). The 2011 census said 101,000 individuals born in Somalia lived in the UK (ONS, 2011), 65,333 in London (Paccoud, 2013). However, many believe the actual number of Somalis in the UK is much higher because the census did not consider the UK-born children of Somali origin and those born elsewhere.

Between 1988 and 2003, some 54,420 asylum applications from Somalia were lodged by the Home Office. This does not include dependants of asylum-seeking adults (Rutter, 2004). Many of the civil war immigrants came to the UK during the 1990s through family reunions.

Figure 2.1: Number of asylum applications made by Somalis from 1995-2007



Source: Home Office (2008)

Home Office statistics show that the number of asylum seekers from Somalia declined from 2001 to 2011. For example, in 2001, 6,419 Somalis applied for asylum in the UK. This number continued to decrease every year until 2011 when only 581 Somalis applied for asylum. However, this doesn't mean that Somali migration to the UK has stopped. Dependants join family members who have already been granted asylum.

Over the past 15 years, many Somalis who gained citizenship in other European countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark have migrated to the UK. Somalis came to the UK to reunite with family members from whom they were separated during the civil war and also to join settled Somali communities in Britain. Somalis who gain citizenship of EU countries have the right to move and work freely within the EU, just as any other EU citizen [before Brexit] (Sporton, et al., 2006). As Harris writes, "the UK hosts the largest Somali community outside Somalia, and the UK is described by Somalis as a 'meeting point', a 'more intercultural society' than many of the (European) states Somalis leave behind" (Harris, 2004, p.24).

Despite the large number of Somalis living in the UK, they have remained largely invisible, and their needs neglected by local and national policymakers. This is largely because of the failure to recognise Somalis as a distinct ethnic group in the ethnic monitoring system (Cole

and Robinson, 2003; Diriye, 2006; Harris, 2004). Others (Diriye, 2006; Harris 2004) have argued that this apparent lack of recognition is caused by the social invisibility of Somalis compared with the African Caribbean community in Britain.

> Both groups suffer racism, but African Caribbeans are perceived to be part of British society … It is not the volume of research on African Caribbeans (although this is considerable) that gives them a public presence, but their high visibility in a wider society. Somalis too are rendered visible by their dress. But the social distance between Somalis and … British culture increases their isolation. There is therefore a dissonance between the amount of information, which actually exists, and what is believed to be known (Harris, 2004, p.13).

If Somalis are recognised as a distinct ethnic group perhaps their needs might have been better addressed by local and national authorities.

Somalis in Camden

It is thought that 90 to 95 percent of the Somali community in Camden came to the UK after 1990 (Khan and Jones, 2002). The exact number of Somali residents in Camden is not known; however, using the place of birth as a guide, the 2011 census showed that 1.31 percent of the borough's population were born in Somalia (Open Society Foundation, 2014). The foundation also reported that in 2007 the Somali population in Camden was estimated at 6,000 to 8,000.

> Using "place of birth", the distribution of Somali residents across the wards showed that St Pancras and Somers Town had the highest percentage—3.16 percent—followed by Kilburn with 2.32 percent. Hampstead Town had the lowest percentage (0.12 percent). Except Frognal and Fitzjohns, all wards showed an increase in the proportion of residents saying they were born in Somalia in the 2011 Census compared with that of 2001 (Open Society Foundation, 2014, pp. 27-28).

According to borough statistics, in 2015, five percent of the population spoke Somali, with 1,500 Somali students who had English as an additional language in borough-maintained schools (Camden Council, 2015).

Somalis in Camden share the same challenges as the wider Somali community in the UK: educational underachievement, unemployment, housing problems and communication and

cultural barriers (Khan and Jones, 2002). Somalis have also been traumatised and disproportionately affected by the recent wave of knife crime in London. In the first two months of 2018, London witnessed 16 knife killings with the victims being "disproportionately male, teenage (five) and Somali in origin" (Mount, 2018, para 8). This is harrowing for Somali parents in London and Camden in particular.

From 17-21 May 2018, two young Somali men were killed by knives in London (Speck, et al., 2018). On 20 February 2018, Sadiq Adan Mohamed, 20, and Abdikarim Hassan, 17, were stabbed to death in the Kentish town area within one mile of each other, one with a samurai sword. Another Somali was wounded in the same evening (Townsend, 2018). It was reported that Sadiq Adan Mohamed's brother was killed in September 2017 in a similar knife attack in Camden, and his cousin was stabbed to death in 2013 (Mount, 2018). Sadiq's mother, quoted by the Daily Mail, said: "We came to this country for peace and we found only blood.". The mother further added:

> "My family have been attacked with guns and knives on the estate and other places in London. Sometimes we were robbed. They told us if we told the police and they went to prison, they would be out in six months and take more revenge (Burrows, Simons, and Davies, 2018).
>
> Sadiq was a student at Middlesex University studying Business while working part-time at Tesco according to his mother" (Burrows, Simons, and Davies, 2018).

Some of the headlines following the February 2018 knife violence showed the sentiments of Somali parents in Camden.

"Police abandoned us, say Somalis in wake of London knife killings" – Guardian, 25 February 2018

"Somali families: We are living in fear in wake of knife murders" – Camden New Journal, 21 May 2018

"Camden stabbings: 'Stop using knives begs grieving mother" – BBC, 21 February 2018

As explained in the literature above, due to their socio-economic background, most Somalis in London live in social housing in areas identified as rife with rival gangs who fight turf wars. Parents who fled from violence continue to experience violence and are fearful that

their children might be the next victim of knife crime. Some parents have concluded that Somalia, which is still dominated by terrorist violence, might be safer for their teenage sons than the streets of London.

Background of Somali School Students in the UK

The actual number of Somali students in UK schools is unknown because:

> [N]ational data collection does not require the separate identification of ethnic groupings within the overall Black African group. There is therefore no comprehensive national data available specifically on the attainment of Black Somali students (Strand, et al., 2010, p.67).

However, some local authorities use an extended coding system (as shown in Figure 2.2 below) when collecting data about students attending their schools. For example, a pupil classified as Black African in the ethnic category could be classified as Somali, Nigerian or Ghanaian in the extended coding system. Approximately 29,000 Somali students were found to be attending London schools in 28 local authorities in 2007, but estimates suggest that there were over 35,000 Somali students in the 32 London local authorities during the same year (Demie, et al., 2007). This makes Somali students the largest ethnic group in the Black African category, as shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Number of Black African students in the 27 local authorities using extended Black African ethnicity codes for 90 percent or more of their Black African students in 2005 (excluding the City of London).

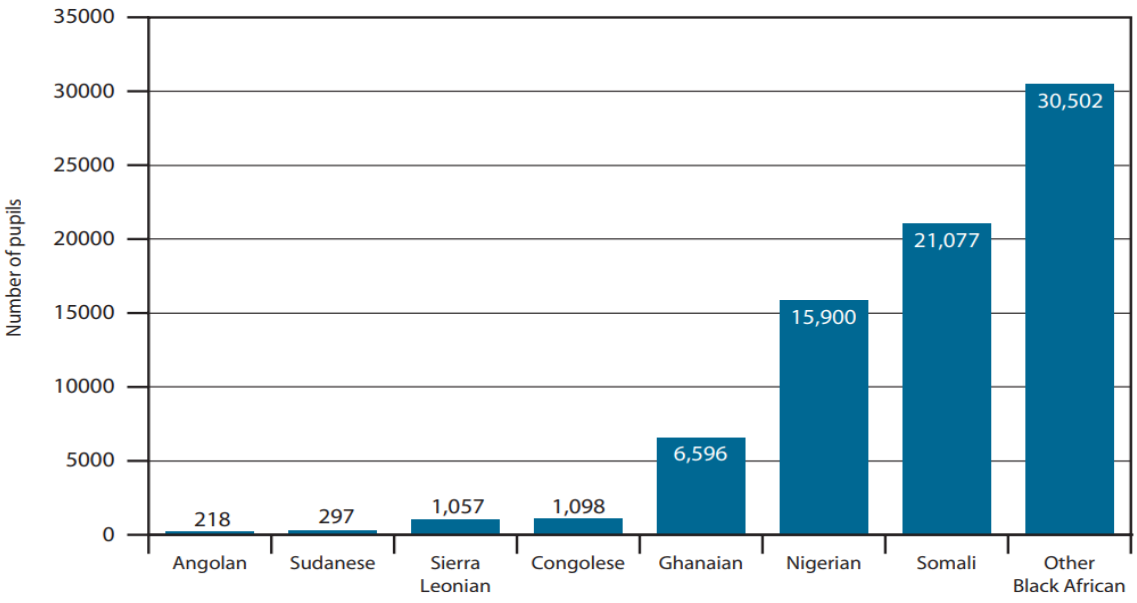


Figure 2.2 shows that, apart from the 'other Black African group', the largest group in the analysis is Somalis. Over 21,000 students in these 27 local authorities are classed as Somali (DfES, 2006, p.12).

Some Somali children in British schools came directly from Somalia and did not have any formal education before their arrival. Others spent many years in refugee camps in neighbouring countries. When these children came to Britain and started school, they were placed with their age group, despite not knowing English. Many had never even held a pen. There are also large numbers of Somali students who were born in the UK and others who were born in other European countries but moved to the UK (Diriye, 2006; Kahin, 1997; Rutter, 2004).

All Somali children are affected directly or indirectly by the experiences of the civil war in Somalia. Those born there witnessed the war, and those born outside were indirectly affected by their parents and other adults in the household who experienced the war. Researchers who interviewed Somali parents reported that some children had been found to show signs of trauma and manifest behaviours such as difficulty settling in, lack of motivation, aggression or irritability, withdrawal and depression (Demi et al., 2006; Diriye, 2006; Kahin, 1997; Rutter, 2004).

Some local authorities in England have collected Somali-specific data about the educational achievements of this group, which shows a pattern of continuous underachievement compared with all other ethnic groups. Somali students were found to be the lowest-achieving group across all key stages in most subject areas (Demie et al., 2006), and there's "strong evidence that Somali students may generally be falling further behind the average achievements of the majority of their peers" (Demie et al., 2007, p.5).

Researchers and commentators have explained that factors such as lack of parental support, social deprivation and a language barrier are the root causes of this underachievement (Demi, 2006; Diriye, 2006; Kahin, 1997; Rutter, 2004;). I will discuss these factors in detail later. However, it is important to note that not all Somali students are failing. For example, 34 percent of Somali.[1] students are reported to have passed their GCSE exams (Demie, et al., 2007). With the underachievement of Somali students in high schools established, the

[1] It is not known how many of these students were born in the UK.

research reported here explored the educational experiences of high-achieving Somali students in London schools to shed light on what enabled them to succeed.

Conclusion

Unlike most Black and African migrants who arrived in this country as regular migrants, Somalis arrived in the UK as refugees and asylum seekers, escaping traumatic events. Many had multiple moves and stayed in refugee camps in other countries before their arrival in the UK. Many continued to struggle after they arrived in this country, facing denials of their asylum claims and lack of shelter and employment. Moreover, as Somalia is not an English-speaking country and with a high illiteracy rate among Somali adults, many struggled to adjust to life in the UK, integrating into the community and supporting their children's education. The following chapter discusses the literature available on the Black and Somali educational underachievement and factors that affect their educational attainment.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW 2 – EXPLORING BLACK AND SOMALI EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT

Introduction

> "The education system is unable to offer appropriate support [to Somali students]. It is believed that this leads to many children dropping out of school, being excluded and generally underachieving in education" (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009, p.8).

This literature review explores both policy and scholarly literature about Black and Somali heritage students' educational achievements in UK schools. The argument that unfolds in the chapter is that race and class intersect to disadvantage Black school students, particularly in an education system that labels them as underachievers. I propose that the discourse of deficit contributes to educational underachievement and that an alternative lens is needed to understand educational (under)achievement. The chapter is in four main parts. First, Somalis belong to the Black African category in the UK census; therefore, Somali school students' educational experiences and circumstances can be discussed in the broader context of the underachievement of Black students in UK schools. In this section, I consider the UK government's policies towards newly arrived migrants and evidence of Somali educational underachievement. Secondly, in the largest part of the chapter, I focus on literature concerning the many socio-economic, linguistic and cultural factors thought to contribute to the educational underachievement of Black and Somali school students. Third, I challenge the explanations for underachievement, which focus mainly on deficit and discuss racism and prejudice in the education system on the basis of more critical literature, which leads on to the fourth and final part, which argues that Tara Yosso's concept of community cultural wealth might explain how some Somali students succeed against the odds by drawing cultural wealth from their families and communities.

The Underachievement of Black Students in the UK

This section explores how UK governments' policies towards migrants have contributed to the underachievement and marginalisation of Black students in UK schools and how even those policies designed to mitigate an 'achievement gap' have limited effect.

The 'Windrush Generation'

Commonwealth citizens who arrived from the Caribbean to the UK between 1948 and 1971 are called the 'Windrush generation' after a ship that brought the first large group responding to the British government's encouragement of immigration to rebuild the country after WW2. However, when the ship Empire Windrush arrived in England in June 1948 carrying 492 skilled workers from Jamaica, there was a panic in the government. The Privy Council issued a memo advising the Foreign Office that no special efforts should be made to support the new arrivals from the ship to discourage an influx of people from the Caribbean islands (Winder, 2004). That same year the British parliament enacted the British Nationality Act, which gave Commonwealth citizens the same right as British citizens to settle in the United Kingdom (Eddo-Lodge, 2017). They attracted media attention in early 2018 when it became apparent that thousands of them were being denied services such as health care; had lost their jobs; and were at risk of deportation because they were being asked to produce immigration documents that they didn't have (Al Jazeera, 2018). This scandal led to the resignation of the then home office secretary and the prime minister issuing an apology. It also shed light on the negative experiences this generation had in the UK. Tomlinson (2008, p.19) asked:

> [W]hat might have happened had the government provided anything resembling the political leadership that had been forthcoming for white workers? The situation for black and Asian migrant workers and their children and the attitudes of a white majority might have been considerably different over the next five decades, and an education system able to prepare all young people for a globalised world might have begun to develop.

The grandchildren of the Windrush generation, particularly Black Caribbean children, continue to suffer inequality in education. Statistics from the Department for Education for the school year 2015/2016 show that "[b]lack Caribbean pupils were permanently excluded at

3 times the rate of White British pupils" (DfE, 2017, para 3). Black Caribbean children were also found to have achieved the lowest GCSE grades in English and Maths in the 2015/2016 school year (DfE, 2017, figure 1).

In the unfolding narrative of the Black Caribbean people in the UK, the racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence in April 1993 became a defining moment for race and racism in the UK. Stephen was a Black Caribbean teenager whose parents migrated to the UK from Jamaica in 1960. Five White racists attacked him at a bus stop in South London. Following the murder, the suspects were not charged, and the police were heavily criticised for the conduct of their investigation. The Conservative government at the time refused to allow a judicial review (Tomlinson, 2008). An inquiry led by Sir William Macpherson was launched in 1998 when the Labour government came to power. Macpherson reported that the police investigation into the murder was "marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership by senior officers" (Macpherson, 1999, p.365). The author made many recommendations, including "consideration be given to amendment of the National Curriculum aimed at valuing cultural diversity and preventing racism, in order to better reflect the needs of a diverse society (Macpherson, 1999, p.382).

Black Educational Underachievement

Bernard Coard (1971) first brought Black students' underachievement and exclusion to the public attention when he published a pamphlet, *How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System: The Scandal of the Black Child in Schools in Britain*. Coard's book, which consisted of nine chapters and brought both qualitative and quantitative evidence of the widespread abuse of Black students, described a system that gave IQ tests to Black Caribbean students who had migrated in the country in the 1950s and 60s. Many of these students found it difficult to answer many of the questions due to their different life experiences compared to the local population for which the IQ test was designed. As a result of the outcome of the IQ test, disproportionate numbers of Black Caribbean children were labelled as educationally subnormal. These children were placed in special schools and never returned to mainstream education, severely affecting their academic progress and prospects. Coard concluded that Black Caribbean children were underachieving because of systematic and institutional racism in the education system.

The journalist Polly Curtis wrote in the Guardian newspaper on 1 February 2005 about Geoff Palmer's experience by way of illustration. He had arrived in London from Jamaica in 1955 and was 15 years old when he was taken to the local school where he was given a routine IQ test: "'I'd just travelled 5,000 miles from Jamaica. The test asked me 'How does Big Ben indicate the time? …] The questions meant nothing to me. Absolutely nothing.'" Palmer was told he was "educationally subnormal" and sent to a special school where students were trained to be cleaners. Palmer happened to be good at cricket, and it was not long before he was spotted by the headteacher of a local grammar school. The educationally subnormal student from 1955 is today Professor Geoff Palmer, OBE, of Heriot-Watt University.

Following Coard's publication, the 1977 House of Commons Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration officially acknowledged that Black children were underachieving and demanded that:

> As a matter of urgency, the government should institute a high level and independent inquiry into the causes of the underachievement of children of West Indian (African Caribbean) origin in maintained education and the remedial action required (HMSO, 1977, para. 57).

As a result, the Labour government's education secretary, Shirley Williams, established a Committee of Inquiry in 1979 to report on the education of students of minority ethnic groups. The Committee was tasked with paying particular attention to the educational needs and attainment of school students of Caribbean origin. The Committee, which Anthony Rampton led, published its interim report, *West Indian Children in our School*s, in 1981. The report concluded that racism, racial prejudice and discrimination were partly to blame for the underachievement of Black Caribbean school students and that they were stereotyped as low achievers. The report was unpopular because its message did not sit well with the media, which criticised and dismissed the report even before publication. The report also came out shortly after race-related riots broke out in Brixton, which later spread to other parts of the country. Mark Carlisle, education secretary in Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government, sacked Anthony Rampton and appointed Lord Michael Swann. In 1985, Swann released an 851-page report *'Education for all'* which acknowledged that Black Caribbean and some Asian students were underachieving and established that IQ is not a factor in the underachievement of Black Caribbean children. Instead, the report suggested that

underachievement was largely caused by prejudice and discrimination directed towards children both in and outside of school. The report further suggested that society faced two fundamental problems: 1) eliminating the discriminatory attitudes of the White majority towards the Black and minority ethnic communities, and 2) developing an education system which ensures that all students achieve their full potential. The report stated that:

> A multi-racial society such as Britain's would function most effectively and harmoniously on the basis of a pluralist society that enables, expects and encourages members of all ethnic groups, minority and majority, to participate fully in reshaping the society as a whole within the framework of commonly-accepted values, practices and procedures (Swann Report, 1985, p.243).

Since then, the educational underachievement of Black students in British schools has been debated in the public domain for almost half a century. Both government reports (DCSF, 2007; DfES, 2006; LDA, 2004; Macpherson, 1999; Rampton, 1981; Swann, 1985) and academic research (Blair, 2001; Demie, 2001; Gillborn, 1990; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Gillborn et al., 2012; Hallam and Rhamie, 2003; Meighan and Harber, 2007; Richardson, 2007; Troyna, 1984) confirm that Black students are underachieving within the UK education system: they are less likely than their White counterparts to attain good outcomes. This literature confirms a long-held concern within the Black community and beyond that disproportionate numbers of Black students underperform in school examinations compared with their White peers (Mamon, 2004).

In 2002, a major conference in London, *London Schools and the Black Child*, organised by the MP Diane Abbott and supported by the London Development Agency (LDA), convened influential Black political and civic leaders as well as 2,000 Black parents, students and advocates. Speakers raised their concerns about the lack of initiatives addressing the continuing underachievement of Black children, with some advocating for Black school students to be taught separately. Trevor Phillips, the then chair of the London Assembly, criticised the double standard that existed in the education system, saying, "It is astonishing to me that for 200 years, Anglicans who are mostly White Catholics, White Jews and latterly Sikhs can all have their schools, without complaining. The minute Black people and Muslims want to have their schools, suddenly it's a threat to civilisation." (LDA, 2002, Conference Report, p.19).

Evidence from individual local educational authorities (LEA) shows that Black school students begin school performing highly in Key Stage 1, start to decline in Key Stage 2, continue to fall in Key Stage 3 and are below that of other ethnic groups by Key Stage 4 (OFSTED, 2002). In 1994, only 21 percent of Black students received five GCSE A*-C grades compared with 43 percent of White students. In 2004, 34 percent of Black students and 55 percent of White students received five A*-C grades (Gillborn, 2008). The latest available data also suggests that Black students continue to achieve below other ethnic groups and below the national GCSE level (DfE, 2019).

The reasons put forward to explain this underachievement are wide-ranging and complex. Factors that were identified include teacher's low expectations and stereotyping (Cozier, 1996; Demie, 2003; Rampton, 1981; Swann, 1985). Others have blamed institutional racism, the lack of support from Black parents to schools and a national curriculum that is not inclusive (Gillborn, 2002; MacPherson, 1999). Demie and McLean (2007, p.417) attributed a "lack of knowledge and awareness" of teachers and policymakers about the "culturally diverse nature" of the Black and other ethnic minority communities served by the school system in England. There is also evidence that school-based factors such as recruiting Black teachers who can also serve as role models have a significant influence on the achievement of Black students (Maylor, 2009).

The New Labour government that came to power in 1997, which had a pre-election slogan of "education, education, education", affirmed its commitment to social justice and racial equality by introducing various initiatives such as the 'Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative which involved providing additional resources to schools such as learning mentors, units working with students at risk of exclusion and enhanced ICT facilities (Kendall et al*.,* 2005); the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) to alleviate the educational disadvantage experienced by minority ethnic students (Tomlinson, 2005); and, the 'Aiming High' programme to remove barriers and improve the attainment of Black and minority ethnic students (DfES, 2003). These initiatives were proven successful in reducing the attainment gap between students in receipt of free school meals and those who are not because schools have managed to utilise the available funding in narrowing the gap; nevertheless, this remains a short-term success because "evidence remains that over the past 50 years, the socio-economic attainment gap has not been narrowed" (Shain, 2016, p. 16).

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat government that came to power in 2010 inherited a school system which was heavily invested in by the previous Labour government; and despite the coalition government making widespread spending cuts in all sectors, it protected the spending on education (Lupton and Thomson, 2015a). The coalition introduced a policy programme for schools set out in the 2010 White Paper: The Importance of Teaching (DfE, 2010b) which subsequently became law as the Education Act 2011. The new policies maintained free early education for 3- and 4-year-olds and expanded it to include 2-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds (West, 2015). The coalition government also introduced a pupil premium grant given to schools to decrease the attainment gap of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (West, 2015). The pupil premium started at £488 per student in 2011/2012 and increased to £1,300 and £935 for primary and secondary school students respectively in 2014/2015 (Lupton and Thomson, 2015b). Despite the intended benefit of the education reform of reducing inequality, Greany and Higham (2018) in their study carried out between 2014 and 2017 of 47 school case studies found that "school leaders regularly felt incentivized to prioritize the interests of the school over the interests of particular groups of, usually more vulnerable, children." (p. 12).

Both the Labour and the Coalition governments made education a priority and introduced policies aimed to support the disadvantaged students. However, from the perspective of my research, the policies of neither Labour nor Coalition governments appear to have had an impact on the experience of Black students. So, although the 2010 White Paper is seen a detrimental turning point in the government reform of teacher professionalism (Evans, 2013), this observation does not influence my analysis. For example, fifty years after Coard's 1971 publication, Black school students continue to be twice as likely to be identified with special educational needs (SEN) than their White peers (Hick, 2005); are four to 15 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school (Wright, et al., 2005); and continue to achieve below the national average (DfE, 2019). Therefore, one would argue that "despite [the] rhetoric of inclusion, new ways have developed of excluding Black children from full participation in mainstream education. The school curriculum continues to be anglocentric, and teachers are even less likely to be trained to teach in a multi-racial society than in the 1970s." (Tomlinson, 2005, in Richardson 2007, p.87).

While the underachievement of Black students is established and persistent, students with Somali heritage lag far behind most other students – a gap that grows even wider at the end of

secondary education. In the next section, I explore research on Somali students in UK schools.

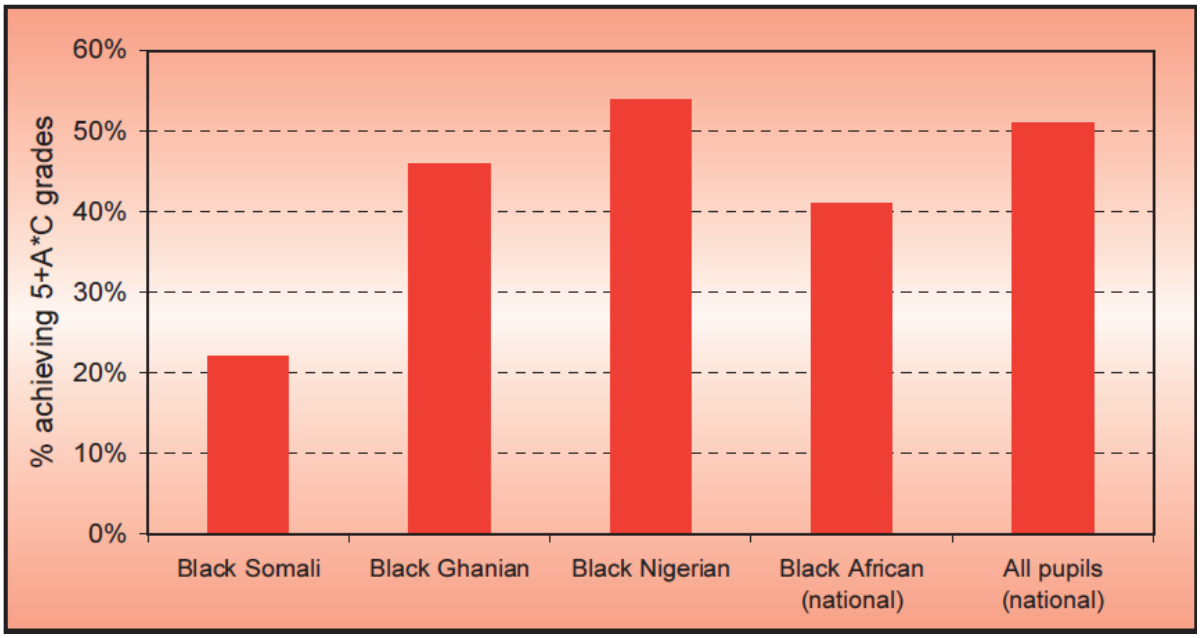
The Underachievement of Somali Students in UK Schools

Placing Somali school students within the broad Black African ethnic group to monitor educational progress masks their underachievement. However, more recently, a few London local authorities[2] began to collect data on Somali students in their schools. One study was Demie et al's (2006) which the London Borough of Lambeth commissioned to investigate the educational achievement of African heritage students. There were 12 case-study schools, and quantitative and qualitative methods charted the attainment levels at the end of KS2 at age 11 and GCSE examinations at age 16 for all students. It was concluded that Somali students were underperforming within the Black African category as well as when compared with the local authority and national averages. The research also found that Somali children formed one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups in London.

The DfES (2005) collected data from local authorities in England that classified 90 percent of their students using an extended coding system (for example, students from the Black African category are sub-divided into different ethnic groups such as Somali, Nigerian, and Ghanaian). Twenty-five local authorities, including 16 in London, applied the extended coding to Black African students in their schools. This showed that within the Black African category, there was significant variation in the attainment of students at GCSE level: 22 percent of Somali students gained five A*-C grades compared with 46 percent of Ghanaians and 54 percent of Nigerians. The latter group achieved above the overall national average of 51 percent.

[2] The Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit has recently begun collecting Somali students' data from Lambeth-maintained schools. The research unit has also collected Somali students' data from 28 local authorities in Greater London. The Bristol Local Authority has also published the attainment of Somali students in local-authority-maintained schools.

Figure 3.1: Percentage of School Students from Black African Sub-groups Achieving 5+A*-C GCSE or Equivalent - National Data 2003



Source: Lambeth Council (2006, p.43).

In the London Borough of Ealing, where 79 percent of students attending Ealing-maintained schools were from Black and minority ethnic groups, and 55 percent did not speak English as a first language, there were 3,925 Somali students in Ealing-maintained schools in January 2009, the largest cohort in London. Somali students accounted for nine percent of the total pupil population in Ealing schools and represented the third largest ethnic group. A borough-commissioned study selected seven case-study schools, all with high Somali students, including five primary schools, one secondary and one early learning centre. Performance data analysis of all students in the LA and attainment comparison in terms of ethnic background and gender were made. A range of documents and reports were collected, and school staff, parents and students were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. The study reported that the educational development of Somali students was lower than that of all students at all levels. Only 34 percent of Somali students in Ealing schools attained five A*-C grades, including in English and maths, compared with the borough average of 53 percent. The Somali students' achievement in Ealing remains well below that of any other ethnic group, although the figure has improved by 12 percent since 2006.

Figure 3.2: Summary of attainment and progress of KS4 Somali students in the London Borough of Ealing between 2006 and 2008.

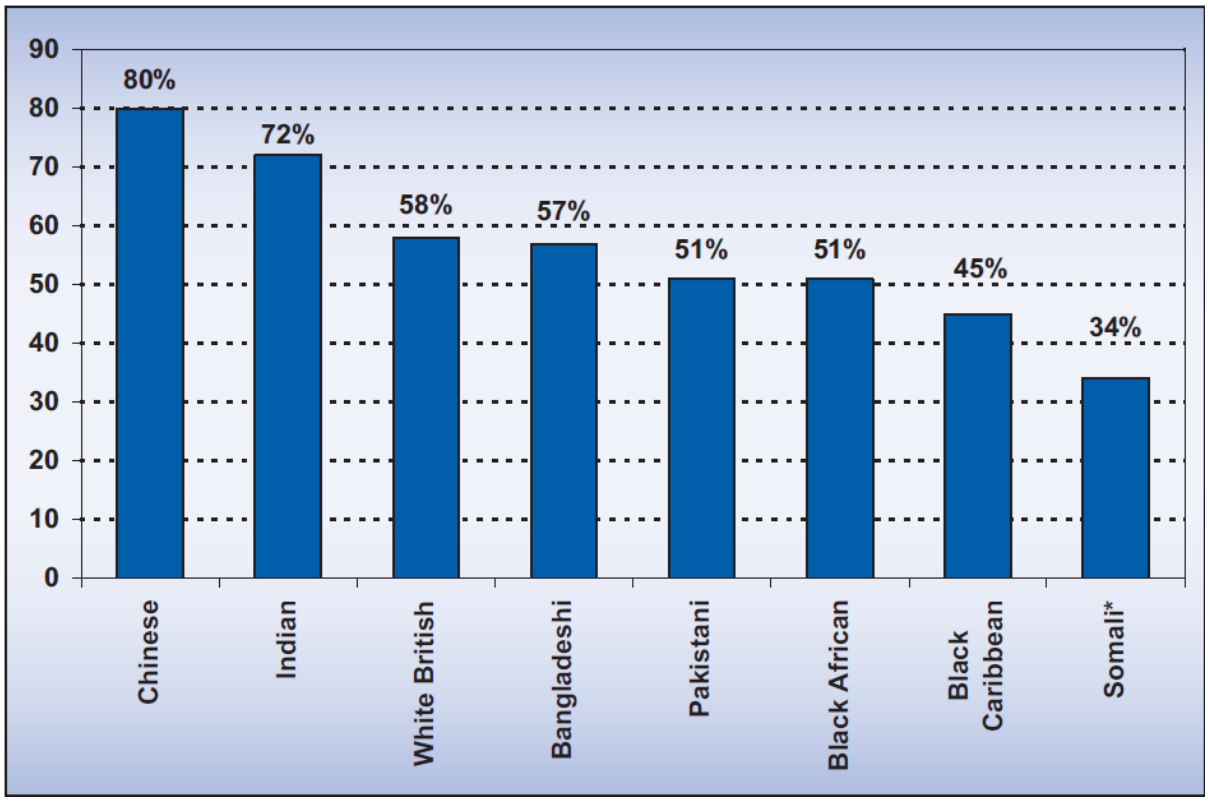
Group	Key Stage 4				
	5A*-C inc EM			KS2-4 Eng 3 levels prog	KS2-4 Mat 3 levels prog
	2006	2007	2008	2008	2008
All pupils	49%	50%	53%	75%	68%
Boys	47%	47%	49%	70%	68%
Girls	51%	52%	57%	80%	69%
FSM	27%	34%	36%	62%	72%
Mobile	42%	38%	28%	47%	61%
White British	54%	50%	57%	69%	61%
Indian	58%	62%	62%	82%	81%
Pakistani	49%	52%	53%	79%	71%
Black Caribbean	31%	26%	41%	65%	57%
Somali	22%	30%	34%	72%	61%
Somali boys	14%	25%	31%	72%	63%
Somali girls	27%	34%	36%	72%	59%

Source: Ealing Council (2009, p.15).

Demie and McLean (2007), using a case-study approach, studied seven primary and two secondary schools with high number of Somali students in Lambeth, supported by an ethnographic study of the school and home experiences of Somali children. Three complementary methodological approaches were adopted to explore performance and the views of teachers, Somali parents and their children about their schooling and education. Performance data analysis; focus groups; parent, pupil and community group interviews; teacher interviews; case studies; and observations were used. The main findings from the empirical data suggested Somali children were underachieving, and their outcomes at each key stage were considerably below those of all other ethnic groups.

The above is supported by findings from data collected from schools in 10 different local authorities in London. The findings confirm that Somali students are falling further behind all other ethnic groups. This data (as shown in Figure 3.3 indicates that the achievement of Chinese students on average is almost three times higher than that of Somalis (Demie et al., 2007).

Figure 3.3: Somali GCSE performance compared to the other main ethnic groups in England, 2006.



Source: Demi et al (2007, p.5).

Another study by Strand et al. (2010), which looked at the achievement of students from Bangladeshi, Somali and Turkish backgrounds in English schools that use the extended coding system, found that 32 percent of Somali students achieved five A*-C grades in GCSE exams, and only 16 percent attained five A*-C GCSEs including English and maths. In contrast, 59 percent of White British students attained five A*-C grades, and 48 percent achieved five A*-C grades, including English and maths. The results were drawn from exam results of 16-year-olds in 2006. Although the sample included only 98 Somali students, it gave a picture of their achievements.

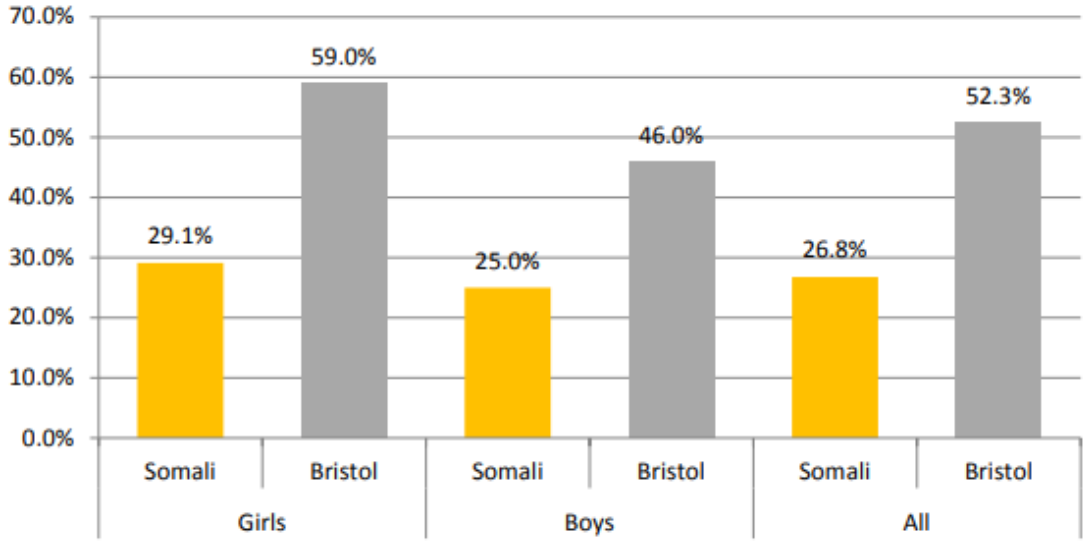
Figure 3.4: Student exam results at age 16 by ethnic group (LSYPE, 2006).

Ethnic Group	Measure	Estimate	Standard Error	Unweighted Count
Bangladeshi	Five GCSEs A*-C	58	.019	708
	Five GCSE A*-C incl. English and maths	41	.017	708
	Total points score	-.06	.042	708
Pakistani	Five GCSEs A*-C	53	.022	922
	Five GCSE A*-C incl. English and maths	40	.024	922
	Total points score	-.10	.036	922
Somali	Five GCSEs A*-C	32	.037	92
	Five GCSE A*-C incl. English and maths	16	.024	92
	Total points score	-.52	.073	92
All other ethnic groups	Five GCSEs A*-C	58	.011	3786
	Five GCSE A*-C incl. English and maths	47	.012	3786
	Total points score	.05	.027	3786
White British	Five GCSEs A*-C	59	.008	9896
	Five GCSE A*-C incl. English and maths	48	.009	9896
	Total points score	-.01	.019	9896

Source: Strand, et al. (2010, p.69).

A more recent report by the Bristol City Council (2014) found that Somali students achieve below the city council and national average in all key stages. Somalis constitute the largest Black and ethnic minority (BME) group in Bristol, with 2,853 Somali students accounting for 5.3 percent of all children attending Bristol Local Authority-maintained schools and academies.

Figure 3.5: Percentage of students achieving five or more GCSEs (including English and maths) in 2013. There were 72 boys and 55 girls of Somali origin who sat for the GCSE exams.



Source: Bristol City Council (2014, p.7).

As shown in Figure 3.5 above, the GCSE attainment of Somali school students is half that of the Bristol average, with only 26.8 percent receiving five or more GCSEs, including English and maths, in 2013. Somali students were achieving significantly lower results than the local authority average in all key stages.

The London Borough of Brent, which is home to a large Somali population, also revealed in a report released in 2017 that Somali students were achieving below the national average in GCSE exams. Statistics from the inner London Boroughs of Camden and Tower Hamlets from 2011/2012 indicated a similar picture. In Camden, 63 percent of girls and 54 percent of boys achieved five or more GCSEs, including English and maths. In Tower Hamlets, 70 percent of girls and 49 percent of boys received five or more GCSEs, including English and maths, against the England average of 86.3 percent for girls and 79.8 percent for boys (Open Society Foundation, 2014). Somali boys in Tower Hamlets achieved 30 percentage points below the national average, while boys in Camden achieved 25 percentage points below the national average. This draws a stark picture of the state of Somali students in UK schools.

Figure 3.6: Students achieving five A*–C grades at GCSE, including English and maths, 2011–2012.

	Girls	Boys
England (all pupils)	86.3%	79.8%
London borough of Camden (British-Somali pupils)	63%	54%
London borough of Tower Hamlets (British-Somali pupils)	70%	49%

Source: Open Society Foundation (2014, p.51).

The underachievement of all Black students, Somalis in particular, is attributed to various factors, many of which are inter-related. Scholarly literature about how race and social deprivation appear to influence the educational outcomes of children is discussed in the next section.

Factors Affecting the Achievements of Somali Students in UK Schools

In the sub-sections below, I discuss factors identified in the literature; some apply to all Black groups, while others are specific to the Somali community. I discuss first socio-economic factors: poverty, housing and mobility, single-parent households and gender; and, secondly, linguistic and cultural factors: English as an additional language; parental involvement, lack of role models, and the multiple identities of Somali youth.

Socio-Economic Effects on Educational Achievement

Poverty

The impact poverty has on the achievements of school students was made clear in a study commissioned by the Sutton Trust (2009) which revealed that only 22 percent of students eligible for free school meals attained five A*-C grades in GCSE in 2006 compared with 52 percent of students not eligible for free school meals. Sewell (2009), in his book, argues that child poverty is a key factor that causes underachievement in Black students, drawing on universal evidence which suggests that children who have access to better housing, healthcare, educational materials, and toys are more likely to outperform. In addition to the multi-dimensional effects of poverty, schools in deprived socio-economic neighbourhoods

where Black students are more likely to live are five times more likely to be designated in the UK inspection regime as 'in special measures' because of an unacceptably poor quality of education (Lupton, 2005)

For Somali families, poverty means lone parents, overcrowding and an unemployment rate as high as 82 percent (Demie et al., 2007; IPPR, 2007). Most Somali families live in overcrowded accommodation in deprived areas. There is often little, or no space to do homework or concentrate due to excessive noise levels (Demi et al., 2006; Diriye, 2006; Rutter, 2004).

> The children are in constant stress. In some homes there is one room, which is the sitting room for the adults, reading room for school children and also a playground for the toddlers, how do you think a child would be able to learn in such an environment? There is stress, there is lack of space and they are always struggling for privacy in every moment and this will definitely affect their learning and development (Diriye, 2005, p.47).

Like other refugee and migrant communities, many Somali families send money home to support family members left behind. Although this is a long-held tradition, it adds to the financial hardships many are already experiencing. Lack of resources also means that they cannot provide enrichment activities for their children or even learning materials such as a computer or access to the internet (Kahin, 1997; Rutter, 2004).

Demie et al's (2007) study found that Somali school students were the most disadvantaged group when compared with all other students in the borough - 100 percent of Somali GCSE students were eligible for free school meals; 87 percent were not fluent in English; and 44 percent were mobile (moved accommodation frequently). Ninety-two percent of Somali KS2[3] students were also eligible for free school meals, with 82 percent not fluent in English and 55 percent mobile.

[3] Students aged between seven and 11.

Figure 3.7: Somali students eligible for free school meals in an inner London local authority, 2006.

	KS2 Cohort	GCSE Cohort
Eligible for free school meals	92%	100%
Bilingual stage 1-3- Not fluent in English	82%	87%
Mobile	55%	44%

Source: Demi et al. (2007, p.15).

Research suggests a strong association between children's social class and educational success (Mamon, 2004; Maylor et al., 2009). Government statistics indicate that school students from deprived socio-economic backgrounds underachieve, regardless of ethnic background (Gillborn, 2008; Gillborn, et al., 2012). In many cases, as Amin, et al., (1997) pointed out, researchers fail to consider the influence of the socio-economic background of students when making comparisons of academic achievement and the fact that Black and ethnic minority students "are more likely to belong to socio-economic groups which will increase their academic disadvantage" (Amin, et al., 1997, p.4). However, Strand's (2008) analysis of ethnic minority achievement data from a longitudinal study found that Black children's underachievement is less well explained in terms of social class (Demack, Drew, and Grimsley, 2000; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). Weekes and Wright (1998, p.21) explained that "social class factors do not override the influence of ethnic inequality". Moreover, Gillborn and Mirza (2000) revealed that Black Caribbean middle-class students underachieved in schools and were the lowest-achieving middle-class group. In some cases, African-Caribbean middle-class students barely matched the attainment level of working-class students from other ethnic backgrounds (Archer and Francis, 2007; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). The fact that Black students from middle-class backgrounds are not safe from educational inequalities (DfES, 2007; Strand 2007) led Gillborn (2008, p.53) to conclude that "an exclusive focus on inequalities associated with class profile is of most benefit to White students where class inequalities are most pronounced."

Housing and Mobility

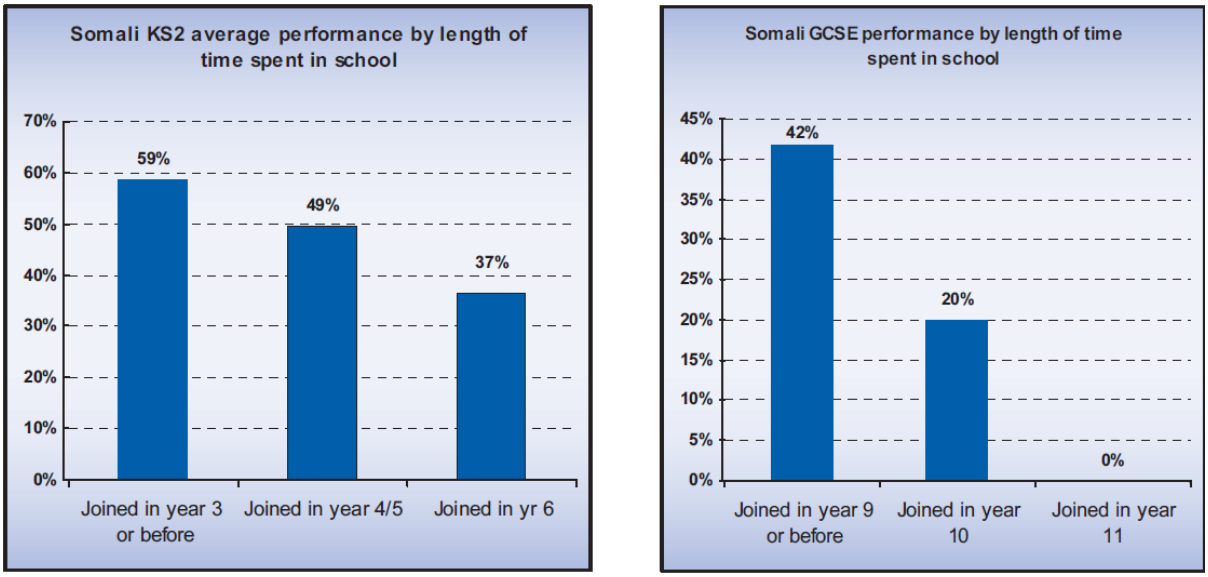
Pupil mobility is recognised as having an adverse effect on achievement in school (Demie, 2002; DfES, 2003; Dobson and Henthorne, 1999). The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED, 2002) defines pupil mobility as the total movement of students either joining or

leaving school at a time other than the usual time of joining and leaving. Various researchers have shown that groups who move frequently tend to be poor or dispossessed migrants from overseas, including refugees and asylum seekers. (Dobson and Pooley, 2004; Machin, et al., 2006).

Somali families often preferred to live close to their relatives and friends, increasing the likelihood of mobility. Many Somali families who initially settled in countries such as the Netherlands and Sweden and gained citizenship there, moved to the UK to be close to relatives or for their children to study in English. These multiple relocations have had an impact on the education of their children.

Demie et al. (2007) have studied the achievements of Somali students who were at school at the start of KS2 and GCSE and those who joined later. Forty-two percent of those who joined before year Nine gained five A*-C grades at the end of secondary school. This compared with 20 percent of those who joined in Year 10 and none of the group that joined in Year 11. The study also showed that, on average, students who joined the school in Year Three (age seven) did better than Year Five (age nine) arrivals, who in turn achieved better than those who joined in Year Six (age 10). This suggests that students who arrive when they are younger do better than those who arrive later in their studies.

Figure 3.8: Somali KS2 and GCSE performance by the length of time spent in school, 2006.



Source: Demi et al. (2007, p.14).

Ealing Council (2009) reported that 12 percent of Somali students joined schools maintained by the local authority as casual admissions between January 2008 and January 2009, higher than the borough average of 7.7 percent. The study further reported that in 2006/2007, 15 percent of Somali students joined Ealing schools after the academic year had begun. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) reported in 2007 that about 80 percent of Somali families in the UK lived in social housing, which is associated with poor health, poor employment and a range of other outcomes linked to poverty.

Single Parent Households

Black children are more likely to be from single parent households compared with children from other ethnic backgrounds. Fifty-seven percent of Black Caribbean and 44 percent of Black African students were found to be living in single parent households compared with 12 percent of Indian students and 22 percent of White students (DfES, 2006). Strand, et al. (2010, p.128) reported that Somalis have "a greater proportion of lone parent families". Lone parents often refer to Somali mothers in families where fathers are absent. The Somali community, which has been strongly affected by the civil war, has experienced trauma, forced migration and various other problems (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009).

> Since migrating to the UK, the role of women has been changing in many ways. Increasing numbers of women are taking on single parent roles as a result of family and marital breakdown, as well as responsibility for the care of dependants in Somalia. (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009, p.8).

Living in a lone parent household does not necessarily cause underachievement. However, as Strand (2007, p.36) argues, it is a "significant risk factor", because "single parent households have on average lower income, greater levels of parental stress, and less time for educational input to the child, all of which may impact negatively on educational attainment." These factors, combined with low educational levels and language barriers, particularly among mothers, hinders Somali parents' ability to support the education of their children.

As socio-economic factors alone may not adequately explain the underachievement of Black students in British schools, I will also discuss gender because it is a significant indicator in the complex picture of educational attainment (DfES, 2007).

Gender Differences in Educational Achievement

Examining educational attainment data by gender shows that more girls achieve the crucial benchmarks of success than boys in key examinations such as the GCSEs (Archer and Francis, 2007; Demack, Drew, and Grimsley, 2000). The latest available data suggest that girls have been outperforming boys since 2007 at GSCE level, including English and maths, with 58.9 percent of girls gaining five or more A*-C grades compared to 49 percent of boys (DfE, 2016). This gender disparity in GCSE achievement has also been observed within the Black group.

> The gender gap at GCSE does seem to vary by ethnic group, with Black Caribbean and Black Other pupils having wider gender gaps than other ethnic groups. In particular, Black Caribbean and Black Other boys are the least likely of any ethnic group to achieve 5+ A*-C passes, but the Black Caribbean and Black Other girls are not disadvantaged to the same extent. (DfES, 2007, p.4).

In 2006, 54.6 percent of Black girls achieved five A*-C GCSEs compared with 40.3 percent of Black boys, a difference of 14.3 percentage points compared to a difference nationally of 10.1 percentage points (Maylor et al., 2009; Rollock, 2007). Although Black girls outperformed Black boys by a wide margin, this doesn't mean they are doing well in school. In fact, they are performing well below their White counterparts. In 2006, 7.4 percent more White girls attained five A*-C GCSEs compared with Black girls. When comparing White and Black Caribbean in the same year, the difference rises to 9.6 percent (Rollock, 2007). Black girls are achieving below the national average for girls, despite doing better than Black boys. It is fair to say, therefore, that Black girls are as equally disadvantaged as Black boys. Several authors suggest that Somali girls achieve better results than boys (Diriye, 2007; Kahin, 1997; Rutter, 2004). An Ealing Council-commissioned study found that Somali girls outperform Somali boys by a small margin. In 2008, 36 percent of girls achieved five A*-C GCSEs, including English and maths, compared with 31 percent of boys. These findings confirm the gender gap in achievement that exists nationally.

More recent data from Camden and Tower Hamlets (2011-2012 school year) shows that Somali girls outperform boys in the GCSE exams. In Tower Hamlets, girls scored 21 percentage points (70 percent) higher than the boys (49 percent). The performance for girls in Camden was 63 percent compared with 54 percent for the boys. However, the Somali girls are still underachieving against the national average for girls. The average GCSE attainment for Somali girls from the two boroughs was 66.5 percent compared with 86.3 percent for the national average for girls.

There's evidence that many Somali parents have lower educational expectations for girls than boys. Strand et al. (2010), who explored the barriers to improving the achievements of Somali, Turkish and Bangladeshi students in England, found that some "parents do not expect that their daughters will work after completing their education. They also consider interrupting their daughters' education upon marriage" (Strand, et al., 2010, p.25). That a woman's role is as a homemaker is a widespread belief among culturally conservative communities. In the Somali tradition, men are expected to be breadwinners. As a result, some parents have higher aspirations for boys – investing more in their education than they do for girls. This systematically prejudices girls' right to education and denies them access to employment and better living conditions for their families. Notwithstanding, cultural beliefs are changing. For the past three decades, in Somalia, women have been playing prominent roles in business and politics – breaking barriers. Likewise, the literature available about the Somali community in the UK shows an absence of fathers – and mothers trying their best to support their children's education.

In the two further sub-sections below that deal with factors that might explain Somali school students' educational achievement, I discuss the specific challenges that Somali students face with the English language, and their parents' difficulties with the complex British education system.

Linguistic and Cultural Factors

English as an Additional Language

The Somali language is spoken in most Somali households in the UK. Students learn English as an additional language (EAL). There have been studies in the UK (Demie and Strand, 2006) that examined the relationship between English fluency and student achievements

while controlling for gender, age, mobility rate, free school meals and ethnic background. They found that students who spoke English as an additional language performed significantly below those for whom English was a first language or were fluent. In the study, no bilingual stage one students attained five or more A* -C GCSE grades compared with 17 percent of stage two students; 41 percent of stage three students; and 62 percent of stage four students.[4]

A study by the London Borough of Lambeth (2015) also suggested that language barriers are an obstacle for Somali students, particularly at KS1 and KS2, if they are not fluent in English. The language barrier also affects children born in the UK but are not fluent in English because they are not exposed to it at home. As shown in Figure 3.9 below, the Lambeth study indicates that only 13 percent of Somali students were fully fluent in English at KS1. However, the data shows a significant improvement at KS4 where 62 percent were fully fluent, as they had picked up English while in school.

Figure 3.9: Social characteristics of Somali students in Lambeth schools by Key Stage Cohorts, 2014.

Key Stages	Total Cohort	Gender		FSM (%)	EAL	
		Boys (%)	Girls (%)		Stage 1-3 Not fluent in English	Stage 4 Fully fluent in English
Key Stage 1	134	60%	40%	51%	87%	13%
Key Stage 2	151	51%	49%	49%	49%	51%
Key Stage 4	55	54%	46%	69%	25%	62%

Source: London Borough of Lambeth (2015, p.12).

Studies on English fluency carried out in North America, for example, Cummins (1991, 1992) and Cummins and Nakajima (1987), may explain the delay in Somali students becoming fluent in KS1 and KS2. The studies found that the amount of time it takes to learn

[4] In England, the curriculum is constructed in five Key Stages: Stage 1 - Foundation year and Years 1 to 2 - for pupils aged between 5 and 7 years old; Stage 2 - Years 3 to 6 - for pupils aged between 8 and 11 years old Stage 3 - Years 7 to 9 - for pupils aged between 12 and 14 years old; Stage 4 - Years 10 to 11 - for pupils aged between 15 and 16 years old; and Stage 5 - Years 12 to 13 - for pupils aged between 17 and 18 years old.

English varies, but on average, it takes two years to become fluent in everyday English and up to seven years for fluency in academic English.

OFSTED guidelines in relation to English fluency appear to have been adapted to reflect the findings of the above-mentioned studies:

> It takes on average five to seven years to become fully competent in a second language, although will vary in the spread with which they acquire this competence. Fluency in spoken English is usually achieved with two years, but the ability to read and understand more complex texts containing unfamiliar cultural references and to write the academic English needed for success in examinations takes much longer (OFSTED, Inspecting English As An Additional Language, 2001, p.5).

The Lambeth study clearly shows that Somali students have poor English fluency early in their schooling; nevertheless, they gradually develop fluent English at the end of secondary education. A majority (62 percent) of these students are fluent.

Parental Involvement in Education

Language problems and lack of understanding of the British education system are among the issues parents face when getting involved in their children's schooling. In the UK, children pass from one stage to another according to their age, but in Somalia children move through the stages according to their ability. If they are not progressing, they will remain in the same year group regardless of their age. As a result, parents often believe that their children in the UK are progressing because of their ability.

Kahin (1997), commenting about the difference between the UK and Somali education systems, states that the British system of education "hinders a flexible response to the many children who need more time to acquire literacy and linguistic skills. Somali parents occasionally suggest that a child be put down a year because of their low language and literacy" (Kahin, 1997, p.68).

Many parents cannot support their children because they have no formal education or do not speak English (Diriye, 2006; Kahin, 1997; Rutter, 2004).

> While some parents do keep a keen eye on their children's progress, others have no understanding of their work, no connection with the school, and therefore do not know how to offer support. Parents – often single mothers – may themselves have a low level of education and command of English, and feel intimidated and confused by the school environment (Harris, 2004, p.47).

In Somalia, teachers shoulder the entire responsibility for educating children. The only time parents visit their children's school in Somalia is when they receive a complaint about their children's behaviour (Guerin et al., 2004). Somali parents often avoid contacting schools, fearing that they might be interfering with the work of teachers. Teachers, meanwhile, are frustrated about the lack of parental involvement - not understanding that parents are reluctant to contact school out of respect for the teachers. In the UK, however, parents are encouraged to participate in the process of educating their children and develop strong links with the school.

Jones (1998) studied the home and school numeracy experiences of five Somali children in a reception class in a London school. An ethnographic methodology was used in the study, and participant observations were made in school and students' homes. Unstructured interviews were conducted with teachers, parents and siblings of the children. Clear evidence of formal teaching and learning at home were observed, contrary to the informal setting at reception classes. Children received strong support from parents and siblings at home and, as a result, did well in class. However, there were few toys or play materials available at home for the children. Although teachers observed Somali parents helping their children with their schooling, they still believed that the parents were not interested in their children's education. This perception was based on some Somali parents not attending parents' evenings or interacting with teachers. Nevertheless, the study found that the parents' poor English and lack of understanding of the education system were the reasons why Somali parents were not communicating with teachers. Parents encouraged their children to have high respect for teachers as Somali culture dictates. At home, children are expected to do as they are told, contrary to in the classroom environment where children are encouraged to take the initiative.

Teachers' perception that parents are not interested in their children's education might lead to teachers having low expectations of Somali children. Similarly, the conflict of the two

cultures might cause Somali children to become confused and leave them unable to reconcile school and home expectations. The findings of Jones (1998) study were contrary to other studies that found home-related factors account for the underachievement of Somali school students.

Another barrier to parent-school communication is the difference in the concept of time in Somali and host communities. Schools often send letters to remind parents about upcoming parents' evenings or other meetings; however, due to their strong oral traditions, Somali parents do not make use of calendars and end up missing the meetings (Koch, 2007). Moreover, Parents who do not speak English are unable to help their children with homework. This also affects the school-parent relationship as parents find it difficult to approach teachers and school staff to discuss their children's education (Demi et al., 2006; Diriye, 2006; Kahin, 1997; Rutter, 2004).

Lack of Educationally Successful Role Models

The Somali community in the UK remains isolated from mainstream British culture (Kahin, 1997). Somali adults interact mainly within the Somali community, and they have minimal interaction with the wider society. There is also a lack of positive educational role models since many fathers do not speak English and spend most of their time at restaurants and cafes chatting with fellow Somalis (Kahin, 1997).

With a high unemployment rate (Demie et al., 2007; IPPR, 2007), many men turn to the addictive stimulant khat[5] when they can't find a job. "They look normal but are in hell inside. They are awake all night and in bed all day. Many therefore have mental health problems" (Demie et al., 2007, p.18). Despite the ban on khat, it continues to be used in the UK. "According to researchers studying the Khat ban at the University of Hertfordshire there were 510 seizures of the plant in England and Wales in 2015-16 - amounting to over 11,500 kilos of Khat" (BBC, 2017).

The apparent lack of positive role models is something that Somali youth share with the

[5] Khat is a plant commonly used by Horn of Africa and Yemeni communities. Users chew the plant for its stimulant effect. The UK government has in 2014 classified khat as a controlled class C drug under the misuse of drugs act.

Black community in general. A REACH[6] report (2007) highlighted the lack of positive role models among Black males, which may be contributing to their underachievement. The report further stated that Black boys in Britain face serious challenges in every sector in society. They are less likely to achieve their full potential at school, less likely to find employment and are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system than their White peers. The report recognises that parents play a critical role in supporting the education of their children; however, it proposes that schools can do much more to help young Black students with their education.

Multiple Identities of Somali Youth

There have been many debates about the effects that Black youth sub-culture, particularly their masculinity, has on their progress at school.

> "The term Black is, in itself, a construction, that its use as a descriptor or classificatory concept is contested. The term White is similarly constructed. It is also recognised that these categorisations implicitly imprison individuals within the closed dialectic of race" (Grosvenor, 1997, p.10).

At a descriptive level, the term Black refers to individuals of African and Caribbean ancestry (Sallah and Howson, 2007). However, anyone trying to understand the contemporary meaning of the concept of Black needs to acknowledge the historical marginalisation of, and discrimination against, Black people in the UK.

For the past half-century, the prominent cultural theorist Stuart Hall has immensely contributed to the conceptualisation of Black identity. He constantly argued to not think of identity as singular but multiple (Wright, 2016). Hall (1992) and Gilroy (2000) have led debates about the changing representations of Black and Black culture. These debates are seen as the first moment in the Black cultural debate where a common Black identity is developed in response to the pervasiveness of being constructed as people of lesser ability. The second phase was one which recognised and respected the diversity and differentiation of Black people.

[6] REACH is a government-funded role model programme aimed at addressing the low achievement of Black males. This programme ran for three years (2006-2009) during the Labour government and was discontinued.

> What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category ‘Black’, that is, the recognition that ‘Black’ is an essentially politically and culturally constructed category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantee in nature (Hall, 1992, p.254).

Therefore, the contemporary meaning of the concept of Black needs to be understood not simply through the category of ethnicity but the interconnections between the latter and gender, class and sexuality (Hall, 1992).

Sewell (1997) links the masculinity of Black boys and schooling experience. He says that Black students are viewed positively in the popular culture in urban areas and viewed negatively in the classroom setting. Sewell suggests that teachers view Black boys as aggressive and a threat to authority. The teachers also blame the boys' culture and their background for the failure of the school. He states, "[t]eachers are so wedded to the function of schooling that they will defend it irrespective of its failings" (p.4).

Alexander (1996), who researched how black Britons create their cultural identities, explains that Black masculinity is not an alternative to powerlessness but a social location.

> Most studies have, however, regarded black masculinity as an alternative to social status, rather than as an extension of it. 'Black macho' has been portrayed, therefore, as differing in kind rather than degree from the wider gender power relations within society at large. Machismo becomes a symbol of, and a substitute for, the lack of power, rather than constituting an aspect of that power [...] Black masculinity is then perhaps best understood as an articulated response to structural inequality, enacting and subverting dominant definitions of power and control, rather than substituting for them. (pp.136-137).

Somali youth in the UK struggle to balance their multiple identities, particularly their Islamic faith and the widespread Black masculinity culture. While Somalis share race and skin colour with the Black community, they practice Islam which is not the predominant faith of the

Black Caribbean and Black African communities. Valentine and Sporton (2009) interviewed fifty Somali youth in Sheffield aged between 11 and 18 years. They observed that Somalis live in Pakistani Muslim neighbourhoods in the UK because both share the Islamic faith. These young Somalis:

> [D]isidentified as black because they are not from the Caribbean and recognised their inability to fully accomplish hegemonic black masculinity/femininity (for example, because of their Muslim names and religious observance), while also disidentifying with any attempts by their black and white peers to position them in relation to Pakistani Muslim cultural identities (Valentine and Sporton, 2009, p.740).

While Somali boys prioritise their faith as Muslims over their racial and gender identities, Frosh et al. (2002, p.152), who conducted 45 interviews with 11 – 14 year olds in 12 schools in London reported that White boys described Somali boys as "Black wannabes" who aspired to be associated with being Black and enjoyed the perception of being viewed as cool, smart and tough. Valentine and Sporton (2009) similarly found that the Somali boys they interviewed:

> "Were caught between competing subject positions at school. On the one hand, by playing football, disrupting lessons and so on, many of them were implicitly positioned within hegemonic social narratives of 'cool' black masculinity. On the other hand, as Muslims, their faith, as well as their residential location" (p.739).

To navigate the competing identities of either being labelled as Black or Muslim, Somali youngsters interviewed by Valentine and Sporton preferred to be identified as "being Somali".

Despite the popularity of hip hop and rap music among Black youth, which allegedly promotes the attitude of getting rich or die trying, respondents of a small-scale 2008 study[7] I conducted among Somali students in London schools revealed that boys thought that having a good education would help them have good careers, a good lifestyle and generally be

[7] Small-scale study (Master's dissertation) that explored the educational experiences of Somali boys at GCSE level. The study interviewed eleven 11-16-year-old boys.

successful in life. The boys stated that having a good education instils values, which would enable them to help and support others.

Summary of Factors Affecting the Achievements of Somali Students in UK Schools

In the sections above, I have presented an account of how Somali educational achievement is shaped by complex and intersecting socio-economic and cultural factors associated with poverty, race, gender and class. Some of these factors overlap with explanations for underachievement with other Black groups; some are specific to the Somali community who come from a country with poor literacy rates and from a war-torn environment.

Yet, however convincing these explanations might be, in the main, they position Black groups who are persistently outperformed by their White peers as in deficit. Another lens is needed so that problems associated with misunderstandings and misrecognitions are not perpetuated. For example, as discussed above, Somali parents are not by any means uninterested in their children's education, but they have a different experience of schooling, leading to behaviours that are misinterpreted as lack of interest. Similarly, Black youth are not by definition unaware of the benefits of a good education. So, next, I review more critical literature which focuses on how racism contributes to the underachievement of Black students. This includes how schools do not take their duties towards Black students seriously and how factors within the schools contribute to the underachievement of Somali students.

Racism in the UK Education System

There is a body of evidence that shows many of the unequal outcomes for Black students occur by way of the schooling system. Research shows that inequality within the UK education system disadvantages Black and minority ethnic students (BME) (Gillborn, 2008). For example, BME students are less likely to be admitted to elite universities, even when they are as qualified as White applicants (Boliver, 2013).

Studies about the educational experience of Black students in British schools used to focus exclusively on the issue of underachievement (Wright et al., 2010). However, since the term underachievement is contested within the area of race and education, Wright (1987) argues that the term underachievement became synonymous with widespread failure among Black students and implies that all Black students are destined to fail; and, that the educational experience of Black school students is best explained by the concept of educational

inequality. This conclusion is borne out by research by Gillborn and Gipps (1996), who reviewed data from a range of local educational authorities that provided details of the attainment of minority ethnic students, and by Archer and Francis (2007), who combined a review of data from minority ethnic students and case-study research. Both studies found that Black school students' experience suggests injustice rather than unavoidable variation in performance. BME students experience racism in school – even Chinese students who are high achievers reported that racism is an everyday experience for them in school. Troyna (1984) argued that the use of the term underachievement signals shifting responsibility away from the education system to the students and parents rather than recognising the failure of the education system in meeting the needs of Black students.

Research that reviewed the attainment levels and exclusion of 5-16-year-old minority ethnic students in England has shown a clear correlation between exclusion and underachievement (DfES, 2006). There has been increasing concern among the Black community and policymakers about the high number of permanent exclusions faced by Black students in schools (Wright, et al., 1998). Despite a reduction in exclusions in recent years, Black Caribbean students are more likely than any other group to be excluded from school. The latest statistics from DfE show that three times more Black Caribbean school students were permanently excluded than their White counterparts (DfE, 2017). A REACH[8] report published in 2007 raised concern about schools not fulfilling their responsibilities towards Black students.

> Many of those interviewed during the REACH project expressed concern that the system itself was stacked against Black boys; through low teacher expectations, an exclusive curriculum and poor exclusion policies. This concern is supported by many academics' work highlighting the need for schools to take more seriously their duties towards Black students (REACH, 2007, p.8).

There are many theories about why Black students are disproportionately excluded from schools. The centuries-old image of Black people as behaviourally dangerous and being

[8] REACH is a government-funded role model programme aimed at addressing the low achievement of Black males. This programme ran for three years (2006-2009) during the Labour government and was discontinued.

educationally inferior continues to exist. The image depicted in the media of Black students as underachievers and disruptive is likely to influence teachers' perceptions (Blair, 2001). Moreover, Black students continue to be disproportionately labelled as having special educational needs (Demie et al., 2006). In 2009, Somali students in Ealing secondary schools had the highest special educational needs, with 38 percent in the special needs category (Ealing Council, 2009).

Like any other member of society, teachers bring a set of cultural norms and practices into the classroom, which will undoubtedly shape their conscious and subconscious behaviour and attitudes (Ross, 2002). Gillborn (2000) argues that Black students are seen as less able compared with their White peers; they are also more likely to be seen as disruptive, unmotivated and coming from homes that are not supportive of their educational needs. Demie (2019) drew on focus group discussions and interviews with headteachers, teachers, parents and students to reveal that some teachers intentionally mark down their students, are openly prejudiced and patronising or have low expectations based on their racial background. In a telling extract below, a departmental head describes the reactions of Black students, particularly when teachers give their estimated grades – a prediction of their performances in the coming examinations.

> I found it quite strange that the kids had their estimated grades, because they then came back at you and gave you earache – you know, would challenge you in the corridor, and so you were under threat. You know, 'why have you only given me that grade,' you know? Because kids, you know, have different perceptions of themselves, they have no understanding, you know, and some of them live in a cloud cuckoo land. I mean we've got, we had a whole period where we had Afro-Caribbean kids running around with gold-rimmed glasses on with plain glass in them because they thought it made them look more intelligent, you know, they really had a high inflated opinion of themselves as far as academic achievement, and this is fact. I mean there were a whole group of kids that put on glasses and wandered round the corridors with gold rimmed glasses on because they really felt that they were sort of A/B. (A Faculty Head quoted in Gillborn & Youdell, 2000, p.141).

Even without racist attitudes, teachers' perceptions of their students' home environments and their parents influences their conceptualisation of underachievement. With most Black students coming from a deprived socio-economic background, teachers expect these students to underachieve (Dunne and Gazeley, 2008). Furthermore, teachers assume children's underachievement "must lie with the pupils and/or their families rather than the education system itself" (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000, p.7).

Moreover, Kuyok[9] (2010) argues that teachers have even lower expectations when it comes to Somali students because these children are labelled as refugees. "Being labelled refugees reinforces the negative perception that refugee students are underperformers." (p.70). Kuyok (2010) further argues that these low expectations also affect the Somali parents: a teacher told one parent that "as a Somali, it is satisfactory for her child to get a low grade" (p.71). The effect of lowering expectations leads to both students and parents becoming complacent about school. Kuyok (2010) further suggests that the labelling of Somali students as refugees is not limited to those who were born outside the UK; even those born in the UK were sometimes categorised as refugees.

There is a wide literature about the educational experiences of refugee/migrant children in UK schools, (e.g, Hek, 2005; McIntyre and Hall, 2020; McIntyre and Neuhaus, 2021; Pinson and Arnot, 2007; Rutter and Jones, 1998; Rutter, 2006) however, this literature review doesn't draw from the available literature on refugees/migrant research because it refers to children who are recently dislocated from their natal homes. Despite the parents of the students in this study migrating from Somalia as refugees and asylum seekers, their children were born in the UK and other European countries. This study chose to locate the young people within the broader Black group who they share race and have much closer experiences compared with the refugee/migrant communities in the UK who are from diverse backgrounds and of diverse histories and experiences.

The media fuels prejudice against refugees and migrants. Some parts of the British press propagate negative stories about Somalis in the UK. The stories published may be true; however, they often blame the entire community rather than the individual/s who are members of that community. Some of the headlines from the British press include:

[9] The study is drawn on evidence from a Ph.D. study by the author.

"Somalian[10] rapist who held sharp piece of wood to teenager's throat and told her 'you can't be a virgin because you're White' is jailed for 11 years" – Mail Online, 9 February 2018

"CRIMINAL COMPO: Violent Somali migrant with 30 convictions for knife attacks and robberies wins £80k payout for being in prison 'too long'" – The Sun, 10 November 2017

"Somali gang jailed for the systematic rape and abuse of vulnerable schoolgirls in Bristol" – The Telegraph, 1 November 2016

"MP wants 'Somali drug gangs' out of Bournemouth" – BBC, 2 August 2012

"Somali gangs bring back terror to the tower block" - ECO News, 16 November 2011

"Somali gangs build Crime Empire in Britain" - Daily Star, 11 April 2010

Such stories have a cumulative effect on readers and might also have a negative influence on the self-esteem of Somali students and their perceptions about race.[11] Ali and Jones (2000, p.11) noted that the perception that Somalis are low achieving and negative stories in the press have caused some schools to "avoid taking Somali students fearing for the effect that they would have on the test scores and league table positions".

In sum, it is established that Somali students are underachieving in school, and the literature points to multiple socio and economic deprivations as the cause. At the same time, it has become evident that the education system should accept responsibility for reproducing unequal outcomes for different groups of school students and generate policies and practices that challenge it.

[10] The correct adjective to describe a single person of Somali heritage is 'Somali', when plural, it becomes 'Somalis'

[11] I remember a young male relative who was attending university in London who spent hours each day reading online comments by the public on negative stories in the press about Muslims, the Black community and Somalis. It made him angry, and when I asked why he reads the comments, he said he wanted to know people's thoughts about Muslims, Black and minority ethnic communities.

However, not all Somali students are underachieving, and some are high achievers. It seems no research exists that explains the factors that contribute to their high achievement. Against this backdrop, I have used the community cultural wealth framework of Tara Yosso (2005), which shifts the research lens away from the deficit view of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, instead considering their cultural and social wealth. By using the community cultural wealth framework, seven students and their parents were asked to recall the students' educational experiences, which revealed their community cultural wealth assets rather than their deficits.

Theoretical Framework: Community Cultural Wealth

This section introduces and explains Tara Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth, which is conceptualised as a critical race theory that challenges the traditional explanation of deficit of cultural capital. Applying this model to high-achieving Somali students conceptualises the cultural wealth Somali school children, and their families possess and use to overcome challenges in the education system that they face as Black immigrants from challenging circumstances.

For many years, researchers, academics and policymakers have commented that Black and minority ethnic (BME) students lack the cultural know-how to succeed in education (Carter, 2003). Pierre Bourdieu's (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) social reproduction theory has focused on the relationship between family, social class and education, revealing how education plays a significant role in aiding the reproduction of social inequality. Cultural capital represents the cultural norms and practices transmitted to children through family socialisation which become ingrained and difficult to escape, Bourdieu uses the term *habitus*. Habitus is the possession or inheritance of culture and discursive practices that reflect one's class position. Cultural capital can be translated into wealth and power within the education system varying by social class because the education system assumes that all students possess middle-class or privileged cultural capital. This makes it difficult for students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds to succeed.

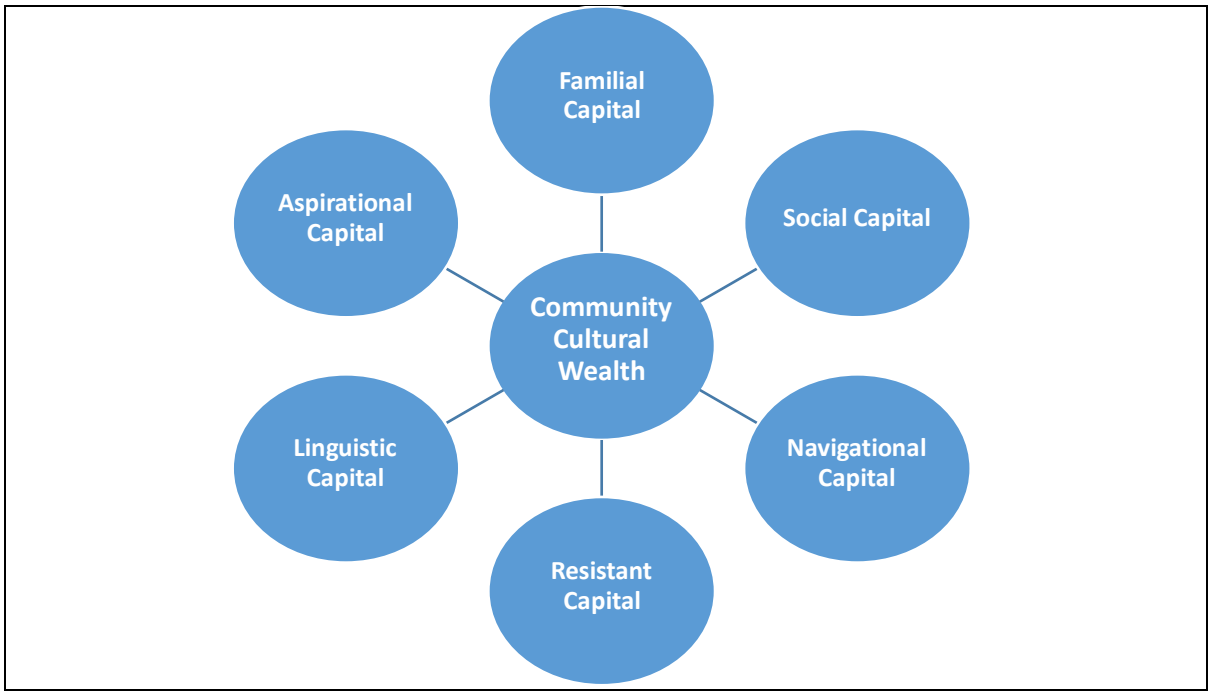
> By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the education system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that

> relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture. (Bourdieu, 1977a, p.494).

This is how inequality is reproduced within the education system in industrialised countries. As discussed, Black and minority ethnic students are more likely to belong to poorer socio-economic groups. They are more likely to underachieve in schools where the dominant culture is White. Although Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital might be useful in explaining the existence of the persistent gap in the academic achievement of social classes and ethnic groups, other researchers have more recently extended Bourdieu's theory to Black and minority ethnic groups.

Villalpando and Solorzano (2005) extended Bourdieu's concept to black and minority ethnic communities in the United States by proposing the concept of cultural wealth which "identif[ies] individual indicators of capital that have rarely been acknowledged and used as assets in examining the cultural and social characteristics of populations of color" (Villalpando and Solorzano, 2005, p. 18). Tara Yosso (2006, p.46) also works with the concept of cultural wealth but distinguishes the two concepts of capital and wealth by noting that "cultural capital is accumulated, like a deposit in the bank, but cultural wealth is meant to be shared." She extends Villalpando and Solorzano's cultural wealth theory by proposing the concept of community cultural wealth (Yosso 2005, 2006). She challenges the traditional application of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, providing, as an alternative, community cultural wealth. Rather than focusing on what marginalised groups do not possess, this theoretical framework emphasises the values and resources possessed by minority ethnic groups and shifts the focus to the various knowledge, skills and abilities nurtured by families and communities of colour. Yosso (2006) suggests that resources and assets found in minority ethnic groups have the potential to support students in their pathway to educational success. She identifies six types of community cultural wealth that students from minority ethnic groups utilise in dominant institutions to achieve academic success and which I used to explore the high educational achievement of Somali school students. They are: aspirational, familial, social, linguistic, navigational and resistant.

Figure 3.10: Model of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005)



1. *Aspirational capital* is the ability to sustain hopes and dreams despite real or perceived barriers. This form of capital recognises that students and their families can dream beyond their current circumstances.
2. *Familial capital* is nurtured through kinship networks, including cultural and family knowledge and history. It involves feeling kinship beyond the immediate family.
3. *Social capital* is "networks of people and community resources" (Yosso, 2005, p.79). The capital comes in the form of community support and all other resources received by communities of colour.[12]
4. *Linguistic capital* is the social and intellectual tools gained through communication in different languages or styles. BME students come to school equipped with "multiple language and communication skills. In addition, these children most often have been engaged participants in a storytelling tradition, that may include listening to and recounting oral histories" (Yosso, 2005, p.78). This form of capital also refers to the ability to communicate through visual arts, poetry and music.
5. *Navigational capital* is a set of skills that help individuals and families manoeuvre unequal social institutions. This includes the skills and tools communities of colour use navigating through systems not designed for them to succeed.

[12] Yosso (2005) uses the term "communities of color", which refers to all ethnic groups other than White. This is similar to the term BME, which is widely used in the UK.

6. *Resistant capital* is the willingness to challenge inequality and subordination. Resistant capital is the self-belief and self-worth that communities of colour hold despite the inequalities they face.

Yosso's work was mainly carried out in the United States within communities of colour. However, her theory is relevant to the debate that exists in the UK because of a common trend of educational underachievement of Black and minority ethnic students in both the UK and US and the way that the focus is on the deficits of these students rather than on the inability and reluctance of dominant systems and structures to accept and work with the knowledges that they come to education with.

I adopted Yosso's framework after I completed the collection of data. I initially turned to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital as a theoretical framework; however, after coming across Yosso's community cultural wealth, I decided that her framework is more explanatory of the data I generated for this study.

Community cultural wealth explains how communities of colour navigate the inequality that exist within the education system by accumulating and mobilising various forms of capital. In doing so, BAME groups defy the barriers that exist in the education system. This study's interest is in gaining an understanding of what contributes to the success of a group of high achieving Somali students in the presence of wide underachievement among Somalis in secondary schools, and it is guided by the community cultural wealth theory in explaining this group's success in education.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the wide underachievement among Black and Somali students in UK schools. It provides the latest available statistics on the achievement of Somali students in schools which indicates that the majority are failing at the end of secondary school. The complex and intersecting socio-economic and cultural factors attributed to the underachievement of Somali students are discussed, while pointing out that such analyses inevitably portray these school students and/or their parents as lacking in knowledge, understanding or attitude. The chapter highlights the racism and prejudice that Somali students face within the education system. Finally, it introduces Yosso's concept of

community cultural wealth which provides the theoretical and conceptual framework for my study of high-achieving Somali students who are from a community with a wealth of knowledge, rich history, culture and sense of pride in their country and who with their parents strove to overcome barriers and difficulties to succeed educationally.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS OF DATA GENERATION

Introduction

This research aimed to understand the unusually high achievement of a small group of 17-18-year-old Somali students in London schools after they had completed their GCSEs. As I explained in the previous chapter, I decided to mobilise the concept of community cultural wealth to explore what supported and contributed to the students' educational achievements as a counter to a largely deficit view of Black and minority students' capacity for education.

The chapter is organised in five main parts. I first justify a qualitative, interpretative methodological approach that combines life history and case study, showing how it is congruent with my research aims. Secondly, I move on to explain how I accessed and selected my research participants. Thirdly, I discuss the three methods of data generation that I used: student life grids, parent and student interviews; and participant observation. Fourthly, I explain how I ethically conducted the research and include a sub-section on my position in the research. Fifthly, and finally, I describe how I set about analysing and interpreting the data sets I had generated.

Methodological Approach

Qualitative, Interpretative Paradigm

To understand the methodological foundations and methods used in my research, it is important to distinguish between the two terms – methodologies and methods. Moses and Knutsen (2012) provide a useful analogy, saying, "think of methods as tools, and methodologies as well-equipped toolboxes" (p.3). My toolbox contains case study and life history and here I justify this combination.

This study was conceptualised within the qualitative interpretive paradigm as seeking "to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of the participants" (Creswell, 2013, p.19). Interpretive research is focused on understanding phenomena from the perspective of participants and from observations about how they live their lives (Schwandt, 1994). This approach assumes that reality is socially constructed rather than objectively true: this means

that what I heard and saw might be differently interpreted by another researcher. Therefore, my role was to reveal this reality by understanding social relationships (Cavana et al., 2001) in schools, homes, and social networks and their influences on the high-achieving participants. Interpretivists claim that humans have consciousness, enabling them to think and make sense of their environment (Erickson, 1986). This approach allowed me to make close contact with research participants - students and their parents - which generated a greater understanding of how their lived experiences shaped the education of the students (Bryman, 2008).

Creswell (2007) suggests that qualitative methods are useful when studying respondents who may be vulnerable because of their race, economic status, gender and individual differences. This applied to the students who were still young and their parents who had a background of being refugees. Furthermore, the qualitative approach allowed me to use my own observations, to conduct semi-structured one-to-one interviews to collect rich and informative data about the students' and parents' lives (Corbin and Straus, 2008), and to develop ideas about each student as a case of high educational achievement in a group which tends to underachieve, as well as thinking of them as a collective case of families of high-achieving students. So, within a qualitative, interpretative paradigm, the two methodologies I employed were life history and case study.

Life History

Life history methodology is increasingly used in social sciences research because it offers a way of understanding how biography shapes lives. Goodson & Sikes (2001) suggested that life history methodology is appropriate when seeking answers to questions related to why the life of someone has taken the course that it has and what has influenced the life of someone. This methodology was appropriate for this study because I sought answers to why the education of the group this study investigated has taken a different course to the majority of students from the same ethnic background. It was likely that biographical detail would reveal what influenced their educational achievements.

Life history research focuses on individuals' understanding and recollection of events, circumstances and decisions that have had a substantial influence on their life trajectory. Stake (1995) suggests that the case study researcher is a biographer focused on some parts of an individual's life. This research study generated life histories of seven post-GCSE Somali

students to explore how social and cultural locations, including schools, families and social networks, have influenced high achievement.

Documenting a life history involves triangulation in order to understand the content that has been omitted and the subjective meanings given to the narrated events. In this study, there are multiple data sets that allowed me to build the life histories (a) student life grids, (b) student and parent interview data, and (c) participant observations of the student's families and home.

Case Study

To undertake this qualitative investigation, I decided to make use of the idea of 'cases' to help me understand what factors support educational achievement in the context of Somalis living in the UK. This study involves seven high-achieving students and their parents in a specific socio-economic environment. So, I have conceptualised each family as a case of high educational achievement at school within the Somali community in London.
Yin (1984, p.23) defines a case study as:

> "[A]n empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used."

The multiple sources of evidence used in this study are life grids, student and parent interviews, student educational records, and participant observations; all interpreted in the light of my own experiences of education and life.

Case-study research is regarded as appropriate when researching a multi-facetted phenomenon. It allows exploration of "how" and "why" questions (Benbasat, et al., 1987; Yin, 1994). An exploratory case study was used in this research as it focused on the participants' (students and parents) experiences what they meant to them. This approach provides a deep insight into "the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt, 1994, p.118). The case study methodology seemed to me an appropriate way to combine data generated from interviews with and observations of the seven students and their parents in their natural setting; and to explore the interactions between school, family, peers, and community, and how these interactions influence

educational achievement. As a result, I gained an understanding of the educational experiences and life histories of these students.

Although I conceptualised each student and his or her family as a case as I analysed and interpreted the data, finally, this study falls into the category of a collective case of high achievement of school students of Somali heritage because the participants were cases of the same phenomenon (Stake, 1995 and Silverman, 2010). Thinking of the seven students and their families as a collective case study allowed me to use my conceptual framework to make some 'fuzzy' generalisations (Bassey, 1999) about how the real-life contexts of the participants' lived experiences during the course of their schooling shaped their capacity to achieve unusually high for their group. I have been able to present the unique example of this group of students and their real situations, offering some explanations of their high achievement (Cohen et al, 2007), which also has relevance for educational policy and practice.

Access to and Selection of Students and Their Parents

Purposive sampling was used in this study to select participants. Creswell (2005, p.204) suggested that "in purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon." The case-study students in this study achieved the highest grades during the school year 2015-2016 among Somali students in the London borough of Camden. Therefore, purposive sampling allowed me to choose participants based on the information known about them (Denscombe, 2007), specifically their GCSE grades. Since the available data suggests that most Somali students fail their GCSE exams, extreme or deviant sampling techniques allowed me to select a group of individuals who were not the norm among their peers. Although gender was not a selection criterion in this research, the high achieving case-study students were a mixture of boys and girls: four boys and three girls participated in this study. It was indeed difficult getting a group because these students were the only high achieving students. The London Borough of Camden is one of the few boroughs that records Somali-specific data, so I decided to draw my case-study students from schools maintained by this borough. It was also selected because it is one of the most diverse boroughs; has a large number of Somali families, and my connections there made it possible to gain access to data and the participants.

Maygaag[13] is a Somali-run charitable organisation in Camden that runs various activities to support Somali youth in the borough including supplementary classes for students. The organisation holds an educational achievement award ceremony annually to recognise the academic success of Somalis in the borough who have successfully passed their GCSE studies. The highest achieving students receive awards during this ceremony, often well attended by parents, students, the Somali community and local authority representatives. All state schools in the borough provide the GCSE results of Somali students to Maygaag along with the students' contact information. The organisation then tabulates the results and identifies the highest achieving students from the data.

I have in the past worked with Maygaag as a volunteer and know the director and staff. I contacted the organisation and met the director in August 2016. I briefed him about the purpose and aims of my research. I told him that I wanted to interview high-achieving Somali students in the borough who had recently completed their GCSE studies and I wanted his organisation's support. The director told me that his organisation has worked with various researchers in the past who were investigating low achievement. Following my meeting, I sent an information sheet (see appendix 2) and a copy of the university ethics committee's approval letter (see appendix 1) to the director. He assured me verbally that his organisation would be happy to facilitate my research.

Maygaag provided me with a list of all Somali students whose grades they had received from the schools – a total of 116 students. The list was anonymised and did not contain names and addresses. It listed the schools, the subjects they had taken and their grades. I went through the list and chose the 10 highest-achieving students in terms of the number of A*, A and B grades they had achieved. I attended the awards ceremony and was introduced to six students from the top ten (including the three highest-achieving students) and their parents (individually) by staff members from Maygaag. Although the top 30 students were called to the stage during the ceremony to be given an award, not all were present, and not all can be classified as high achievers if national achievement statistics are a true measure.

Maygaag tried to contact the remaining four students who did not attend the awards ceremony; however, three were away on holiday, and one family did not respond to phone

[13] Names used are pseudonyms.

calls. I then selected the student who attained the eleventh highest position among the Somali students in the borough and Maygaag secured his permission to participate. After further reviewing the students' grades, I concluded that students outside the top 11 could not be described as high achievers for my purposes because none of them attained A*s or As, so I decided to limit my study to seven students. I will profile the students and their parents in the next chapter.

I made follow-up phone calls, arranged to meet the students and their families, and arranged interviews between 4 July and 2 August 2017. As someone who is bilingual in English and Somali, I asked the students which language they preferred to speak with me. The students were comfortable in English. Although I was interested in the whole family situation, I was eager that the students would feel as free as possible to express their experiences and feelings. The Somali community is mainly Muslim, and girls are expected to avoid engaging with strangers, particularly men, in unfamiliar situations. Boys are viewed as men and are expected to explore unfamiliar situations. Young Somali girls mainly stay at home when not in school or with their parents. I gave the students a choice about where they would be most comfortable being interviewed. The three female participants chose to be interviewed at home - parents gave private space for their daughters to express themselves. However, the interviews with the four boys were held at community centres or cafés in Camden. I do not believe that interviewing girls at home produced different data set to that of the boys because, despite being at home, parents were not in the same room the interviews were conducted.

After each student interview, I interviewed one of their parents at home. This was done 1) to make the interview setting as natural as possible for the parent 2) to observe how the family lived their lives, and 3) where possible to interact with siblings and other family members. Similar to the students, I gave the parents the choice to be interviewed in English or Somali, as discussed below.

Methods of Data Generation

Data was collected in the form of life grids from students, in-depth interviews with students and parents; observations of student homes and neighbourhoods; and attainment records from schools. These methods allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of participants'

subjective experiences, while the visits to the family's homes were intended to provide contextual information. I discuss each data collection method below.

Students' Life Grids

A life grid (See appendix 7) has been used as part of the data collection methods in this study because I wanted to see students in the contexts of their whole lives. So, the interview process was in two parts: 1) a life grid and 2) an in-depth interview. A life grid is a visual tool that maps the important life events of participants, and it allowed students to recall past events and experiences easily. Abbas, Ashwin, and McLean (2013) suggested that "designing a life-grid involves debate about what data is needed, how it will be organised and what will be compared at the end" (p.322).

The grid was produced in four A4 sheets and was designed to collect systematic "information regarding age, gender, families' educational achievement" (Abbas, Ashwin, and McLean, 2013, p.323), background information about their parents (I confirmed the students' account with the parents) and retrospective experiences of their three educational stages – pre-school, primary and secondary. Three of the participants (Malik, Ayaan, Sumaya) completed the grid and the interview on the same day with a short break in between the two interviews, while the other four completed the grid and the interview on two different days. This was because it took a little longer for the grid for three students (Abakar, Tahir, Kadija) while Yahya engaged in a long conversation after the grid recounting his experiences in Saudi Arabia. Tahir and Kadija had activities planned after they completed the grid and so I arranged a separate meeting for the interview. For Abakar and Yahya, I considered the time they spent writing the grid and the subsequent informal conversation we had, and I requested from them an interview on an alternative day. I did this because I could see they were already tired, and I thought it would be better if I interviewed them when they had more energy and better concentration. During the interviews and when analysing the data, I did not observe any difference between those interviewed right after the grid and those interviewed on a different day. However, for me, it was easier to remember aspects in the grid and relate them to the interview conversation when the interview was conducted on the same day. When the interview was conducted on a different day, I read the life grid before the interview to refresh my memory. I sat with the students when they wrote the life grid and supported them in

producing it. I planned this session to last 60 minutes, but some students took as long as 90 minutes because they were explaining in detail past events that should be included in the grid.

Producing life grids before the in-depth interview was highly useful for me in establishing a friendly relationship and trust with student respondents. Producing the life grid before the in-depth interview also helped me relate the information students were telling me during the interview to the life grids which I had in front me. This allowed me to process and make sense of the information from my in-depth interview with the students. It also allowed me to cross-check information in the grid with the discussion in the individual in-depth interview.

In retrospect, I think it was a methodological weakness not to use life grid as a data collecting tool with parents because their experiences shape their attitudes and views towards their children's education. However, at first, I had thought of the parents' as supplementary rather than core data.

Following the completion of the life grid, there was another session of individual in-depth interviews which I discuss below.

Student and Parent Interviews

I conducted interviews with seven students and parents (one for each student). Interviews took place between 4 July and 2 August 2017, some at home and others in public places. I used English and Somali to interview participants. The interviews with students were all in English, which they spoke fluently. Four of them were born in London, two in the Netherlands and one in Sweden. Students who were born outside the UK moved before starting primary school, making English their primary language. As discussed in the literature review, most Somali students are not fluent in the English language at KS1; however, as they progress to KS4, most become fluent.

In contrast, all the parents were born in Somalia and moved to Europe after civil war broke out in 1991. Of the seven parents interviewed, four were mothers and three fathers. I interviewed the four women in Somali as they were not confident being interviewed in English. The three fathers were interviewed in English as they felt confident in expressing themselves using English. The mothers' decision to be interviewed in Somali may have been influenced by the fact that I could speak the Somali language. Perhaps they might have been willing to be interviewed in English had the researcher been non-Somali speaking. When

interviewing in Somali, knowing both languages helped me to make the questions as close in meaning as possible. The Somali transcripts were translated into English. I then asked a third person to translate the scripts back in Somali to ensure the accuracy of the translation. Minor discrepancies were found.

Prior to the start of the interview, all participants consented to take part in the interview and signed a consent form (see appendix 5). I asked participants permission to record the interviews so that I could remember what we had discussed and have a full record of the interview (Creswell, 2005). There were no objections. I also took notes. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The range of topics that I discussed with the student and their parents included (a) the students' perceptions and experiences of education, (b) the students' attitudes towards education, (c) the perceptions of Somali parents about their children's education (d) any outside groups of individuals that students and their parents thought might have influenced the high achievement of students (e) any other factor that may explain the high achievement of the Somali students in the study. (See student interview guide in appendix 8 and parents in appendix 9).

Interviews are a main data generation method for qualitative researchers attempting to provide detailed descriptions of individuals and events in their natural settings (Weiss, 1994). As interviews are interactive, interviewers can press for more complete and clear answers, probing any emerging topics. Therefore, interviewing broadens the scope of understanding of the investigated phenomena because it is more natural and less structured than, for example, a questionnaire that uses Likert-scale responses.

Kvale (1996) has developed a basic guide for conducting successful interviews. The semi-structured interview was particularly useful in this research Bouma (2000) writes that "the semi-structured interview provides the greatest opportunity to find out what someone thinks or feels, it is usually guided by an interview schedule that lists key questions to be asked, or topics to be covered, in the interview" (p. 181). (See interview guide for students in appendix 8 and parents in 9). This study's intention to capture the lived experiences of Somali students and their parents made the semi-structured interview most relevant. The semi-structured interview has guidelines with topic areas to be covered, rather than structured interviews, which have a fixed set of questions (Newby, 2010). This is not to suggest that I did not have pre-determined questions; however, I permitted myself to alter the order of

questions depending on what was most appropriate. After interviewing the first participant, I reviewed the transcript and then decided to reorganise the order of the questions. The semi-structured interview also enabled me to change question-wording or to provide explanations. Questions that seemed inappropriate with a particular interviewee could be omitted or additional ones included (Robson, 2002). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask for clarification and follow up questions. This is particularly important in order to clarify people's understanding of a question or to enrich their explanations so that the study generated rich data. This was important because I wanted to explore subjective meanings that the students ascribed to in their schooling experiences, for example, whether they felt they belonged in the school and their relationship with teachers and peers.

Despite the clear benefits of interviews, I was aware that my interviewees might not want to disclose all their feelings and thoughts. The interviewer is in search of truth or multiple truths, but at the same time, both the interviewer and interviewee bring their "often unconscious experiential and biographical baggage with them into the interview situation" (Cohen et al, 2000, p.120). In this case, I share a lot in common with the group interviewed, for example, being from a similar ethnic and cultural background and labelled as a refugee/asylum seeker. Even those Somalis who were born in the UK are, according to my observations, given such labels. The students live in London, a city where I studied and lived for many years and which I consider home. Despite these commonalities, there are many differences, such as age and occupation.

Mason (2002, p.66), discussing the importance of the researchers examining their role in the research, stated:

> If you choose qualitative interviewing, you are highly likely to conceptualise yourself as active and reflexive in the process of data generation and seek to examine this rather than aspiring to be a neutral data collector. While most qualitative researchers do have this kind of aspiration, it is important not to underestimate the reflexive challenge posed by analysing your own role within the research process.

At the beginning of each interview, before I asked the questions I was interested in, I asked students about their interests, hobbies and plans for the future. I did this to create a familiar environment and build a rapport. The approach worked well as the students appeared

comfortable during the process of the interviews. With the parents, it was even more interesting. Since I lived in Somalia and arrived from Mogadishu days before I started the interviews, all seven parents were very interested to know my experiences of living in Mogadishu, considering the insecurity there. Telling them the current state of the city they grew up in was important to them. This exchange of information made them comfortable, and all seven parents opened up and appeared comfortable.

Throughout the interview process, I exercised critical awareness in relation to the fairness of the questions and the way they were delivered to the interviewees. As Bell (1999, p.140) observed, "the same question put by two people but with different emphasis and in a different tone of voice can produce very different responses." Offering the participants a choice of language for the interview ensured that they had as unambiguous an understanding of the questions as possible and could answer in their most comfortable language.

Participant Observation

I made visits to the family homes, twice for the girls' families because I arranged the student and parent interviews separately, and once for the boys' family homes because I interviewed the boys outside their homes. I, therefore, visited their homes once, which coincided with interviewing their parent. I made holistic observations of how the families lived their lives naturally, including the type of homes students lived in, the family home setting, any educational resources available at home, and the relationship between students and their parents and siblings. Also observed was the neighbourhood families lived and the resources available in the local community that may have contributed to the high achievement of the students in this study. I asked each student to walk with me one day in their neighbourhood and show me places that were memorable to them, their nursery and primary schools, the playground and the local market. This allowed me to place the family home in a broader context.

Marshall and Rossman (1989, p.79) define participant observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study". I observed participants in their natural setting, learned about their activities and studied the interactions of each family member (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002). Observing student-parent interactions contributed to my understanding of parental involvement of their children’s education. For me, coming from the same community, I was able to establish a rapport with

student participants and other family members, blending in and interacting with them, speaking Somali except for interviews, which meant they acted naturally while I was there (Bernard, 1994). It is a Somali tradition to offer tea to visitors, and in line with this tradition, I had tea and coffee with the families. I was not merely an observer, but actively interacted with all members of the households in order to get a wider perspective of the family dynamics, and their experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards education. For this reason, I regard my research as participant observation. During the research process, I kept a research diary, an essential part of undertaking qualitative research. It is particularly useful prompting to reflect on different aspects of doing research and the role of the researcher within the construction of research knowledge (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001).

I undertook participant observation because being part of the social world under study enriches understanding of it (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). While at the family homes, I made observations of whether there was a study room, a study table for the student, a study computer/laptop for the students, books, and any other study material available to students. Participant observation also enabled me to gather verbal data and non-verbal expressions and see how individuals interacted and behaved (Schmuck, 1997). DeWalt and DeWalt (2002, p.92) stated that "the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method." This study was interested in the lived experiences of Somali students and their parents, therefore using participant observation combined with other methods was a useful tool in gathering rich and meaningful data.

Ethical Conduct of the Research

Ethical considerations in research are always important. When doing research that discusses personal and sensitive topics such as race, family and educational achievement, gaining the trust of participants considering the ethical conduct of the research is critical. As Marshall and Rossman (1999) stated: “The qualities that make a successful qualitative researcher are revealed through an exquisite sensitivity to the ethical issues present when we engage in any moral act” (p. 90). For this study, all issues relating to the ethics of conducting this research were carefully thought of. I also secured approval to conduct this research from the ethics committee of the School of Education, University of Nottingham (See appendix 1) prior to starting the data collection. I read the British Educational Research Association’s Ethical

Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2011), the Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics of the University of Nottingham and the Data Protection Act (1998) where relevant to my study.

Since this study was conducted with young people and their parents, ethical implications were considered and incorporated into the design. I made sure that their rights to make personal decisions were respected. I talked to the young people, gave background information about my research (see information sheet for students in appendix 3) and invited them to participate in my research while explaining the voluntary nature of their participation. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child states that "the child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice" (1989, article 13). In respecting the children's autonomy, independence, and wishes and feelings (Tinson, 2009), I gained their consent before gaining consent from their parents (see participant consent form in appendix 5). I also gained consent from the parents.

Gaining consent from a parent or a child did not mean that the process had ended because consent is an ongoing process and must be negotiated over time while allowing children and their parents to withdraw from the study (Tinson, 2009). Alderson and Morrow (2004, p.11) state that ethics “is concerned with respecting research participants throughout each project, partly by using agreed standards”. While I am a researcher, at the same time, I was conscious that as an older and more educated member of the community, the young participants might have felt obliged to participate in the research. Keeping this in mind, I had to explain and remind participants that their participation in the study was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw at any time.

After meeting the participants, I explained the objectives of my research. The information sheet for students was in English (see appendix 3), while the parental information sheet was in English (See appendix 4) and in Somali. The consent forms allowed those students selected to choose whether to participate in the study or decline. All students agreed to participate in the research after reading the consent form. All participants signed the consent form (see appendix 5).

Since student participants in my research were young people, I had to apply a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. I only started data collection after the clearance certificate was received from the service by the university and myself.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the actual names of the students, their parents and schools they attended are not used in this thesis. Instead, each student, parent and school are given a pseudonym to ensure that no one can trace their responses back to them or know that they participated in the study. Participants were informed that their data will be kept securely in a password protected computer folder. I also told them who would have access to the data, informing them that only myself and the university supervisor will have access to the data. Bouma (2000) stressed the importance of researchers sensitively handling participant information.

> All our dealings with other people raise ethical issues. Thus, the key to identifying ethical issues in research is to take the position of a participant in the research you propose and ask yourself: How would you feel if you were asked these questions, observed doing things, or if your records and papers were examined for research purposes? How would you want researchers to handle and report on the information they have about you? (p.191).

Responding to Bouma, I thought that if I was an underachieving student, I would have been worried about questions I might be asked and how my information would be kept. If I was a high achieving student, I would have been happy to share my ideas, and I would not have been worried about how my information was kept since I would have been proud of my achievements.

I am fairly confident that the thoughts of those invited to participate in the study were like mine because none of them refused to take part in the study. Similarly, all participants agreed that their interviews could be audio recorded.

Researcher Positionality

Central to being ethical in my qualitative research design was my role as an insider researcher who shares culture, ethnicity and religion with both parents and students, and as a result is potentially biased. The distinction between insider and outsider positions is emphasised by

Merton (1972, p.21) who says that “insiders are members of specified groups and collectives, or occupants of specified social statuses. Outsiders are the non-members.” Menter et al. (2011, p.62) stress that “bias is to be avoided because it reflects covert distortion of the ‘reality’ that the research is seeking to analyse.” Johnson (1997, p.283) suggested that researchers ought to be careful of the potential threat of “researcher bias” to validity. In examining the validity structure of this qualitative research, I am conscious that reflexivity is an important strategy in understanding what my researcher bias might be. Through reflexivity, "researchers become more self-aware, and they monitor and attempt to control their biases" (Johnson, 1997, p.284). When considering reflexivity in the context of this research, I share many experiences with the participants - being Black, Muslim, and a refugee. My identity is, in many respects, the same as that of the respondents. This influences how I feel about them and their experiences and shapes how I interpret what they say to me. Having myself from marginalised groups research, this group helped me shed new light on the data generated.

I was also conscious that the young participants did not see me as a researcher only but also as a role model to them. Similarly, during our conversations, I developed an affinity and felt as though they were my younger siblings. Despite being a role model and ersatz sibling, I also acknowledge the significance of the power dynamic between me as a researcher and the participants. I am an adult, a professional and a doctoral researcher, while the focus participants in this study are children studying for their A-levels. I was also aware of the age and knowledge difference. I was particularly aware of Somali culture, which dictates that you don't show disagreement with older and more knowledgeable people. As I explained, I kept reminding the young people that their participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and that they can decide to withdraw from participating even if their parents want them to participate. I also explained to them that understanding their experiences could help solve the problem of educational underachievement in the Somali community in the UK.

The power dynamic was not confined to the young people only. It also existed between the parents and me. As a community member, professional and doctoral researcher, the parents might have been obliged to accept participating in the research. Nevertheless, similar to the student participants, I reminded the parents of the voluntary nature of the research. On the other hand, every parent wanted me to impart advice to their child on succeeding in higher

education. So, I shared my higher education experiences with the students and gave them a piece of advice in how to succeed in the higher education system.

Although I am an insider researcher in relation to parents by sharing language and Somali origins, I am somewhat of an outsider to the students because they were born in Europe. I speak Somali as my mother tongue, and they speak English as theirs. Bridges (2001, p.372) pointed out the "polarity" of the insider/outsider identity of the researcher means "the insider researcher will always be something of an outsider in his or her own community by virtue of becoming a researcher." Some cultures are very private, including the Somali culture. It is, therefore, not easy for families to open their homes to researchers. In the beginning, some parents appeared suspicious and untrusting; however, after explaining the nature of the research and sharing my background information with them, they opened up and started to agree to participate in the research.

Analysing and Interpreting the Data

Four data sets that were analysed: 7 student life grids (e.g. in appendix 7); 7 student interview transcripts; 7 parent interview transcripts; and, 7 participant observation field notes (e.g. in appendix 10).

I analysed the data sets to present 7 case studies of families drawing on all three data sets (life grids, interviews, participant observation). I used the thematic analysis in NVivo to analyse a collective case study applying Yosso's community cultural wealth.

Analysing qualitative data is inevitably interpretive because, unlike the positivist tradition, qualitative data analysis involves an active researcher who interacts with the data. The view held by Cohen et al. (2003) is that the greatest worry in data analysis is choosing between maintaining a holistic view of the data or having fragmented data. In this study, I analysed data to understand that different data sets are best understood in context and in relation to one another to gain a coherent and holistic view in the end.

Analysing the Interviews

The theoretical framework used to interpret the findings of this study came after I had conducted the interviews. I found Yosso's community cultural wealth a better model that can

be used to interpret the data than the theoretical framework I initially planned to use, which was Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003), once data collection from interviews has been completed, the next stage is analysing the data using coding. After completing the interviews, I uploaded the interview data on a computer and listened to each interview in its entirety before I started to transcribe. The English interviews were transcribed in English, and interviews done in Somali were transcribed in Somali. I then translated the Somali interviews into English. After transcription of all interviews had finished, I started to read each transcribed interview line by line and noted my comments about interesting or specific views a participant held. I then created a codebook – the same for both students and parents (see appendix 11) that contained three parameters: 1) framework which comprised the six capitals of the community cultural wealth which I found useful in explaining the data; 2) codes that were derived from each of the six cultural capitals; and, 3) descriptions of codes which helped the coding process proceed more easily. By using a codebook derived from an existing theoretical framework, this study employed a deductive approach because the analysis is framed by Yosso's theory rather than starting with the data.

I used a qualitative data management tool called NVivo to manage and organise the data. NVivo allowed me to identify patterns (codes) in the content of interviews and discover deep insights into the data. It helped me make connections of the existing and emerging themes from the data. Tara Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth was adopted in this study to analyse the data. The six forms of capital in Yosso's framework: aspirational, familial, social, linguistic, navigational and resistant, were useful in identifying the unique and varied forms of strength (capital) that provided an explanation for the high educational achievement of the students in this study.

For example, aspirational capital explains how students maintained motivation to succeed in education, made decisions to pursue further education, build career goals, and have high hopes and dreams for the future despite structural barriers. Transcribed interviews were discussed with my research supervisor who has experience in ethnographic and biographical research. Several research supervision sessions were used to re-examine the data and themes that emerged. This measure was taken to provide a credibility check for the research findings, interpretation and analysis.

Once I completed the thematic analysis, my interpretation of the data was also filtered through my own experiences of being a Somali refugee who has been an active member of the community and in the past supported secondary school students of Somali origin in London schools.

In chapter five, I present the cases without reference to the thematic analysis and theory to maintain a holistic view of the family cases. In chapters 6 and 7, I present the analysis according to the Yosso framework and show how the cases work as a collective case of mobilising community wealth.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed how I adopted a case-study methodology to provide deep insight into the educational experiences of seven high achieving Somali students in London schools after they had completed their GCSE studies. The study utilised multiple methods and strategies to collect the data: life grid, in-depth interviews and home and neighbourhood observations. Spending time in the homes of these students enabled me to understand how the students and parents perceived their social world and how they worked to overcome barriers in the education system. This naturalistic approach was very useful as I sought to understand Somali students and their parents' perspectives and meaning underlying their behaviour (Hammersley, 1992). Using the thematic analysis in NVivo helped analyse the data sets as a collective case study while applying Yosso's community cultural wealth. Since student participants in this study were children, this chapter details how I adhered to all ethical guidelines to protect the rights of participants.

Chapter 5 introduces the seven family cases by providing pen portraits of the students and their families. The chapter shows patterns of enablements and constraints in the educational achievements of the seven students.

CHAPTER FIVE: FAMILY CASES – PATTERNS OF ENABLEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

Introduction

This chapter aims to show the patterns of enablements for and constraints on educational achievement in the students' lives. I start by presenting a table with relevant student characteristics. Then, one at a time, I introduce as pen portraits the seven individual cases of students and their families drawn from the findings of the life grids; interviews with students and parents about their life histories and experience of education; and ethnographic observations during family visits. I reveal what I learned about the families' composition and backgrounds, attitudes to and experiences of education; and, other salient information. I discuss what emerges from the seven case studies as a collective case in terms of enablements for and constraints on life chances through education before applying Yosso's theory of community wealth in the following two chapters, first to parents and then to students.

Student Profiles

Here, I highlight features that indicate the material and cultural resources that the students possessed: their places of birth; the composition of the household; whether they moved home; school mobility; their GCSE grades; their educational status at the times of the interview; their future aspirations; parents' educational level and occupation; siblings who went to university; and, type of dwelling.

Table 5.1: Demographic Information of Student Participants[14]

Name of student and parent	**Abakar**, son of Baabakar and Basra	**Malik**, son of Dahir and Sahra	**Ayaan**, daughter of Faiza and Ahmed	**Sumaya**, daughter of Muhibo and Fowzi	**Tahir**, son of Umaya and Hassan	**Kadija**, daughter of Seynab	**Yahya**, son of Siyad and Asha
Age	17	17	17	17	17	17	18
Gender	M	M	F	F	M	F	M
Place of birth	London	London	Sweden	Netherlands	Netherlands	London	London
School attended and OFSTED inspection judgment	Harrison (Required improvement)	Bellevue (Required improvement)	Harrison (Required improvement)	Bellevue (Required improvement)	Harrison (Required improvement)	Redmond (Good)	Wood Hill (Good)
GCSE grade and ranking amongst Somali students graduated from Camden.	7A* 3A (ranked 1st)	5A* 5A (ranked 2nd)	4A* 6A (ranked 3rd)	2A* 7A 1B (ranked 4th)	2A* 3A 2B 2C (ranked 9th)	2A* 8B 1C (ranked 10th)	3A 4B 2C (ranked 11th)
Mother's level of education	College	College	Secondary	Secondary	College	Bachelors	College
Father's level of education	Masters	Bachelors	Masters	Secondary	Secondary	Bachelor	PhD
Mother's occupation	Teacher's Assistant	Carer	Homemaker	Homemaker	Carer	Foster Carer	Homemaker
Father's Occupation	Engineer, UK	Political advisor (Somalia)	GP, Sweden	Not known	Driver, UK	N/A	Professor, Somalia

[14] The name of interviewed parent is underlined.

Sibling who went to university	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Type of dwelling	Apartment, social housing	Apartment, social housing	Apartment, social housing	Apartment, social housing	Apartment, social housing	Apartment, social housing	Apartment, social housing
The number living in the home	6	8	6	6	5	6	6
Career goal	Medical Doctor	Economist	Medical Doctor	Medical Doctor	Businessman	Script Writer/Author	Economist

Table 5.1 above shows that four of the students were born in London; while the other three were born in EU countries, they moved to London before starting school. Thus, all had had the opportunity to speak English early in life. All have educated parents who can be conceptualised as a cultural resource associated with the educational success of their children (Marks, Cresswell and Ainley, 2007). Yet, they lived in social housing, and none attended an outstanding school. In the family cases below, I expand on the students' social, economic and cultural circumstances at the time of the interviews in July 2017. The order in which they are introduced is according to their GCSE grades.

Pen Portraits of the Seven Students and Their Families

Abakar and Family

Abakar was a 17-year-old born and raised in London. He scored the highest GCSE grades among the Somali cohort in the Borough in 2016, attaining seven A*s and three As (including English and maths). He was studying for A-Levels in biology, chemistry, physics, and maths and planned to become a medical doctor. He lived with both parents (Baabakar and Basra) and three younger siblings – two brothers and one sister. Baabakar and Basra were born in Somalia and came to the UK as refugees in the early 1990s. They went to school in Somalia, where they completed up to secondary education. Both pursued further and higher education in the UK, with Baabakar completing a master's degree in engineering and working as an engineer in the London transport facility, while Basra completed a diploma at college and was employed as a teaching assistant in a local school. So, Abakar is from a professional family.

As the first-born, Abakar's parents invested time, effort, and money supporting his education. He started education at four years old when his parents took him to 'Kumon'[15] where he started to learn English - spelling, writing, reading, and also maths. This private tuition support which began at nursery level, continued throughout his education up to his GCSEs. When Abakar started secondary school, his parents didn't think that local tuition centres provided the quality of tutoring they wanted, so they decided to take him weekly to a particular tuition centre which they'd heard had a good reputation and which was many miles

[15] A method that teaches mathematics and reading to young children.

away from their home. Both parents encouraged him to do his homework regularly. They established good relationships with the school, getting to know the teachers by regularly communicating with them and attending parents' evenings.

Abakar attended the same school from nursery through the end of primary school. At age 11, he applied to a grammar school and passed the entrance exam but was not admitted because his home fell outside the school's catchment area, making him feel 'devastated'. His parents also 'desperately' wanted him to get into grammar school because they would have sent him to private school if they could afford it. Instead, Abakar attended a local comprehensive school which 'required improvement'.

Throughout primary and secondary schools, I was told by both Abakar and his father that Abakar was a 'high achiever' often attaining a top place in his class. Abakar and his parents were delighted by his outstanding GCSE achievement. When I met them after he received an award for his achievement, Abakar told me that, although he had worked hard, he did not expect that he would attain the highest grades among Somali students in the Borough. His father, though, told me that he anticipated that his son would do exceptionally well, knowing how hard he had worked throughout his secondary school years, in particular during his GCSE studies, even though at times he was worried that Abakar's peer network might negatively influence his education effort.

The family had moved home only once while Abakar was in primary school, less than a mile from their previous residence. At the time of the interview, the family lived in a three-bedroom flat in a three-story council property, with Abakar sharing a room with his younger brothers. In the living room, there was a reading table, a laptop, and internet connections available to Abakar. Also visible in the family's living room was a bookshelf containing books of a variety of subjects – primary and secondary textbooks, A-Level textbooks, novels, and some engineering books.

When I asked Abakar to take me to his neighbourhood, he showed me his nursery and primary school – a brick-walled one-story old building. I visited the playground he used to play in while young and the local grocery stores. There were various social-housing blocks in the neighbourhood where there was a lot of knife crime in the summer of 2018, the year after my interviews.

Somali was spoken at home by the parents, while the children mixed Somali and English – sometimes the way they blended the two languages made it sound like a new language. Abakar spoke good Somali though not as fluently as he spoke English. Although father Baabakar came across as strict and disciplinarian during the interviews, I observed him as warm and sociable at home. There were jokes and banter between the family members.

Malik and Family

Malik was a 17-year-old born and raised in London. He scored the second-highest GCSE results among the Somali cohort in 2016, attaining five A*s and five As (including English and maths). He was doing A-Levels in biology, chemistry, and economics and planned to pursue economics at university. He lived with both his parents (Dahir and Sahra) and five siblings - two older than him - and his maternal grandmother. Dahir and Sahra were born in Somalia and moved to the UK as refugees separately in the early 1990s. They went to school in Somalia, where they completed up to secondary school. Both continued education in the UK, with Dahir completing a bachelor's degree and Sahra completing a diploma in college.

Dahir was working in Somalia as a political advisor to a Somali politician and visited the family twice a year, and this is when I interviewed him. Dahir had been a community activist in London and actively engaged with community issues. In the past, he also run a supplementary school that supported students from refugee backgrounds, particularly Somali students. Sahra was working as a carer.

One of Malik's two older sisters completed a university degree in 2018, while the second sister was starting her second year of university at the time of the interview. Malik's family was highly supportive of his education. His father told me that he regularly encouraged his son, even resorting to offering material rewards of a phone or a trip abroad for a top position in his class. Malik received private tuition in his early education and resumed private tuition from year nine through to year 11. Malik told me that he'd expected he would attain high grades because he worked hard for it. His father told me that since he had been involved in supporting the education of Somali students in the recent past, he wanted his son to attain the highest among Somali students so that his son would be a good role model for other Somali students. He said he knew that only Abakar could outperform his son because he worked harder - the two families are friends.

During the interview, Malik constantly mentioned one teacher in year 7 who was very supportive of his education: this teacher was the only one mentioned. Malik had a wide network of friends, some of whom he'd kept since nursery school. Living in the same house since starting school and not changing schools helped him maintain a stable network of friendships. He walked with me in their neighbourhood. He had gone to the same primary school as Abakar, and they lived pretty close in a neighbourhood of many social-housing estates.

The family lived in a four-bedroom council property, and Malik shared a room with his younger brother. There was study space for Malik and his siblings in a corner of the living room. He also had a reading table in his room. Malik had a personal laptop, iPad, and internet connection at home. There was a bookshelf containing a variety of books. There also were A-Level textbooks on the study table in his room.

Malik and his siblings spoke a mixture of Somali and English at home, while the parents spoke only Somali. Malik's older sisters were not at home during my visit. Malik, his siblings and his parents lived a typical Somali family in Europe, having a satellite dish TV with various Somali TV channels that air daily news and contents from Somalia and Somali regions in the Horn of Africa.

Ayaan and Family

Ayaan was a 17-year-old born in Sweden. Ayaan scored the third-highest place among the Somali cohort for the GCSE results of 2016, attaining four A*s and six As (including English and maths). She was taking A-Levels in biology, chemistry, and maths and planned to pursue medicine at university and become a cardiologist. Ayaan told me that she wants to become a medical doctor; her mother later told me that Ayaan wants to become like her father, a physician.

Ayaan's parents (Faiza and Ahmed) were born in Somalia and moved to Sweden as refugees. After gaining Swedish citizenship, the family moved to the UK in 2004 when Ayaan was an infant. Faiza went to secondary school in Somalia and had not pursued further education in Sweden or the UK. She was a homemaker. Ayaan's father went to school in Somalia and continued his education when in Sweden. He studied medicine and worked as a general practitioner in London. Ayaan's parents were separated.

Ayaan lived with her mother and three older siblings – two brothers and one sister. The family valued education, and Ayaan's older brother and sister went to university. Ayaan told me that she had a good experience at school, particularly secondary school. Her mother, Faiza, told me that when the family arrived from Sweden, they had a hard time understanding how schools work in the UK. When the family moved to London, her older children attended secondary school. It was only Ayaan who started primary school after the family moved and settled. Faiza said that it took a few years for her to understand the school system, which was late for her older children but beneficial for Ayaan.

From year one up to the end of year 11, Ayaan had private tuition. From year 1 to year 3, she attended Kumon, where she got support with English and maths; from year 4 to year 9, she attended a tuition centre to get support with English, science, and math. From year ten until the end of her GCSE studies, she had a tutor coming home supporting her with maths, English, and science. Ayaan credited all her educational success to her mother, never mentioning her father.

The family lived in a three-bedroom flat in an old council property not far from the town centre. Ayaan shared a room with her older sister. A study area, a study desk, a laptop, and an internet connection were available to Ayaan. Many books, including A-Level books were visible to me at the time of the visit were.

After arriving from Sweden, the family moved home three times during Ayaan's primary school years; however, they had not moved during secondary school. Every time the family moved, Ayaan changed school and was unable to keep old friends. Ayaan spoke a mixture of Somali and English at home; she can speak Somali well, although not as fluently as English.

I walked with Ayaan in the vicinity of her house, where there were playgrounds and grocery stores. Unlike the boys, I did not ask Ayaan to walk further because I wanted to respect her community's culture of protecting girls and not allowing them in a male company without a family member. However, I spent some time walking around the neighbourhood myself and saw many social-housing buildings.

Sumaya and Family

Sumaya was a 17-year-old born in the Netherlands. Sumaya was fourth among Somali students who received their GCSE grades in 2016, attaining two A*s, seven As, and one B

(including English and maths). Sumaya was doing her A-Levels taking Biology, Chemistry, Psychology, and English Language and planned to become a medical doctor.

Sumaya's family lived in the Netherlands as refugees and moved to the UK in 2003, after becoming naturalised Dutch citizens when she was a small child. Both Sumaya's parents (Muhibo and Fowzi) went to school in Somalia and completed secondary education. Sumaya's parents separated when she was starting secondary school in England. Her mother, Muhibo, was unemployed at the time of the interview. The family didn't contact her father, and he was not in employment when last in contact.

Sumaya is the third eldest and lived with her mother and four siblings – two brothers and two sisters. Her mother Muhibo was 'passionate' about education. One of Sumaya's brothers completed an undergraduate degree while another brother was starting the second year of university studies. Sumaya's two sisters are younger than her and were still in school. Sumaya had the least private tuition of the seven case-study students: only two months during all her schooling years. The family's financial circumstances didn't permit them to send her private tutoring more than her mother saw as crucial, just before her GCSE exams. Nevertheless, Sumaya received support from her older brothers, who helped her with homework and exam revisions. When I asked about her schoolteachers, Sumaya said they were generally good but mentioned only one geography teacher who was supportive of her education.

During years 10 and 11, Sumaya told me that she worked hard for her grades. She put away her smartphone and used only an analogue phone to avoid the distractions associated with social media. Sumaya was very proud of her educational achievements and pointed out that she did well despite not receiving private tutoring, which was common among Somali students. Her mother appeared to regret not sending Sumaya to private tutoring earlier, speculating that had she sent her daughter to private tuition during years 10 and 11, perhaps she would have achieved higher grades than she did. Nevertheless, Muhibo was proud of her daughter's achievements which she attributed to her own encouragement and moral support.

The family had moved home during Sumaya's primary school years when they were new in the country. Sumaya told me that she had a good network of friends, some of whom she'd had since her primary school years. The family now lived in a three-bedroom apartment in a sizeable social housing complex. It took me a long time to find the flat because it was in a large complex, making it difficult for a visitor to find it easily. I had to phone the family, after

which they waved to me from a window so that I could see where they lived. Sumaya shared a room with her sisters. Despite the small living space available to the family, there was a study area, a study desk, a laptop, and an internet connection available to Sumaya. She also had access to books. I could see primary, secondary, and A-level books in the living room.

I asked Sumaya to walk me in her neighbourhood. There were local amenities a few minutes' walk from the state. The estate itself was large, old, and untidy. Sumaya was bi-lingual, speaking Somali and English equally well.

Tahir and Family

Tahir was a 17-year-old who was born in the Netherlands. Tahir was among the top 10 highest achieving Somali students in this cohort, attaining two A*s, three As, two Bs and two Cs (including English and maths). He was taking A-Levels, studying maths, physics, and economics. He wanted to pursue business studies at university and to establish his own business.

His family moved to the UK before his first birthday. Both of his parents were born in Somalia and moved to the Netherlands as refugees, moving to London after gaining Dutch citizenship. Tahir's mother (Umaya) was young when the war started in Somalia and, as a result, did not access education in Somalia. When she arrived in the Netherlands, she claimed to be older than her actual age (she was 16, but she claimed to be 19), fearful of being taken into care as a child if she told her actual age. As a result, she missed formal education. Nevertheless, Umaya studied the English language at a college in London. Tahir's father (Hassan) completed secondary education in Somalia. Umaya worked as a carer and Hassan as a driver.

Tahir lived with both of his parents and his two sisters – one older than him and one younger. Tahir was bi-lingual but preferred to speak English than Somali. At the time of my visit, his father was asleep after night-shift work; however, the rest of the family were there. Tahir's mother (Umaya) was 'passionate' about education. Although she did not get an education herself, she wanted her children to have the best possible educational opportunities. She sent Tahir to private tuition his entire schooling from year 1 to 11: he had had 17 hours of private tutoring a week which cost much money that the family could hardly afford. Umaya said that she was not able to support him and his sisters with homework; that is why she resorted to the private tuition that filled that gap. Umaya constantly encouraged her son's education. She had

offered him money for any A* and A he received on his GCSE grades, explaining that he had received £150 for any A* he attained in a science subject and £100 for any A grade. Tahir's parents were separated many years and were reunited with the family the year before my interview. Umaya told me that her husband did not take part in the education of their children. Tahir gave all credit to his mother for his educational success.

As the only son in the family, Tahir's mother was more worried about his educational success than her two daughters. She told me that it is because when he gets married, he will be the breadwinner of his family as dictated by Somali tradition. Therefore, believing that her daughters' future husbands will have to shoulder all the needs of their family, her daughters' education was not as critically important.

In hindsight, Tahir acknowledged that he did not revise for the exams as he should; he had not expected to receive a C grade, expecting at least a B grade. His mother echoed his sentiment, saying that she expected him to achieve higher than he did. Nevertheless, she was not disappointed with what he achieved. Talking about schoolteachers, Tahir told me that he was only fond of his math teacher, who joked with him for his entire secondary school years and helped him in his education.

The family lived in a three-bedroom apartment in a relatively new built modern housing association building at the heart of town. The building complex was well maintained and very secure. Since it was a few minutes' walk from the town centre, the family had easy access to local amenities and transport systems. Tahir had his room, and there was ample living space. Tahir and his siblings had plenty of study space. He also had access to a computer and an internet connection. A-Levels books and old books of the primary and secondary curriculum were stacked on a bookshelf in the family's living room. The family moved home once while Tahir was in year six, but they have not moved since. His neighbourhood is pleasant and safe: on the day I walked around, there was a band playing folklore music and dance, the area was vibrant and multicultural.

Kadija and Family

Kadija was a 17-year-old born in London. She was among the top 10 highest achieving students in this cohort, attaining two A*s, eight Bs and one C (including English and maths). Kadija was happy with the GCSE grades she attained, while her mother was proud of her daughter's achievement. Kadija was doing her A-Levels, studying English literature, history,

psychology, and sociology and wanted to study English at university to become a scriptwriter.

She lived with her mother and four siblings – three sisters and a brother, all older than her. Kadija's parents were born in Somalia, and both went to school and university in Somalia, graduating from the Somali National University with a bachelor's degree. The family moved to the UK after the civil war started in the country. Kadija's mother (Seynab) was a teacher in Somalia, and her father was a professional working for the Somali government. However, after coming to the UK as refugees and not knowing the English language well, they could not secure good jobs similar to those they had had in Somalia. While in the UK, Seynab went to college and received an English language diploma and a teaching certificate. She now worked as a foster carer. Kadija's parents separated when she was young, and her mother raised her. Her father died when Kadija was in year 11. Kadija's brother was at university studying outside of London, while her sister was also studying at a university in East Anglia but was home during the interview.

The family were highly educated. She had parents who graduated from university and two older siblings who were at university. Her mother, a qualified and experienced teacher, has supported her throughout her education, particularly subjects that did not require a very fluent language. Her siblings also supported her with schoolwork. In year 11, Seynab enrolled her daughter at a local tuition centre where Kadija received support with science and maths.

While many Somali parents coach their children to study specific courses that the Somali community desired to be valuable, such as medicine, engineering, or economics, Seynab supported her children to study any course of their choice. Similarly, most Somali parents are reluctant to send their daughters to a university in a different town or city. Seynab allowed her daughter to study in East Anglia. At the same time, Kadija wanted to apply to universities in London and outside of London, knowing that her mother would not object to moving away from home to study outside London.

Kadija went to a school where most students were from ethnic minority backgrounds. She told me that she got on well with schoolteachers and she had a good experience. Nevertheless, she was not specific about the support she received at school. She also had a good network of friends, some of whom from pre-school years. Kadija was bi-lingual but preferred to speak English.

The family lived in a three-bedroom apartment in a large social housing complex. Kadija shared a room with her mother. There was a study area, although it was tiny and not conducive for private study. Kadija had access to a computer, internet connection, and books. The family had lived in the same house since Kadija started school. When Kadija walked with me outside, I could see many Somali-origin children playing in the courtyard and children of South Asian descent, and no white children. Next to their building were several other council properties. After a short walk, I returned Kadija home, and I walked myself further for about a mile, I observed that there more social-housing buildings, although not as large as the one Kadija and her family lived in.

Yahya and Family

Yahya was an 18-year-old born in London. He was a high achiever but not among the top 10 in the cohort studied. He was in eleventh place. Yahya attained three As, four Bs, and two Cs. He was doing his A-Levels at college, studying English literature, history, and economics and wanted to pursue economics at university. Yahya was multilingual, able to speak English, Somali, and Arabic. He spoke English and Somali equally well.

He lived with both of his parents and three siblings - two sisters and a brother, all older than him. Yahya's father (Siyad) went to university in Somalia and pursued postgraduate education in the UK, completing a master's degree and a Ph.D. He used to teach in a university in London. However, he moved to Somalia and was teaching in a university there at the time of the interviews. He was in London visiting the family when I interviewed him. Yahya's mother (Asha) went to school in Somalia, completing secondary school. She also went to college in London, obtaining a diploma in the English language. She was a homemaker at the time.

His father had stints working abroad in the past, for example, in Saudi Arabia as a lecturer at one of the universities. He took Yahya and his older brother to study in Saudi Arabia, where he started year 7 in an international American school. He remained until year 10, when he returned to London. Siyad told me that he took them to Saudi Arabia because he wanted to keep an eye on their education; nevertheless, Yahya told me that the multiple moves and changes of schools back and forth caused him to get confused trying to deal with two different education systems. Particularly when he returned to London and started UK GCSEs straight away after a school that used the American curriculum. Yahya was disappointed with his GCSE grades. He told me that he had expected better. Likewise, his father told me that he

expected better grades for his son. The school and curriculum changes Yahya underwent may have negatively affected his grades.

Education was highly valued by Yahya's parents, who supported their children's education. All of Yahya's three siblings went to university, and Yahya was on course to attend university after completing his A-Levels. Siyad told me that he not only supported his children, but he was involved in the past in supporting the education of refugee children. He served as a school governor for many years and advocated for the educational needs of refugee students whose needs were not met by schools. Siyaad told me that he had a good relationship with schoolteachers and used to receive Yahya's progress on email regularly. When he is in the UK, he visited the school and met the teachers to maintain contact. Yahya was also taken to private tuition by his mother during his primary school years. He attended private tuition in years 10 and 11 after returning from Saudi Arabia.

Yahya's family lived in a three-bedroom council property in an area close to the town centre. The building appeared newly refurbished and contained small blocks. Yahya walked with me in the neighbourhood, and throughout our walk, Yahya talked about his experience in Saudi Arabia and not so much about his experience in London. The area they lived in was close to the town centre where all amenities are available. The family had moved to this home when Yahya was in primary school and remained to stay there. Yahya shared a room with his older brother. There was a study area and a study table. Yahya also had access to a laptop, internet connection, and books.

A Collective Case of Enablements and Constraints

It can be seen from the individual family cases that the students were educationally enabled by parents and sometimes siblings who were often educated beyond the secondary level and by being members of families who put a high value on education. Most had been given practical and symbolic encouragement in the form of private tuition - a significant investment for parents. They had spaces at home to study, even if homes were small. They had low school mobility, which is predictive of doing better (Ou and Reynolds, 2008) than those who have multiple moves, which many Somalis do (Dobson and Henthorne, 1999; Demie, 2002, 2007; DfES, 2003; Dobson and Pooley, 2004; Ealing Council, 2007; and Machin et al. 2006). Moreover, they enjoyed the benefits of being bilingual. However, constraints are evident. The students come from refugee families, with all the social and psychological disadvantages

that accompany that status, and they did not live in affluent areas of the city; rather they lived in deprived areas often associated with poorer schooling and educational underachievement. The two tables below summarise enablements and constraints of the seven students' educational achievement as they appeared in the interview, life-grid, observational and secondary data.

Table 5.2: Educational Achievement - Enablements in the Data

	Abakar	Malik	Ayaan	Sumaya	Tahir	Kadija	Yahya
Enablement							
OFSTED rating for the school						√	√
Good social experience at school	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Stable home	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Stable school	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Parent educated beyond secondary	√	√	√			√	√
Siblings educated beyond secondary		√	√	√	√	√	√
Parents strongly value and encourage education	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Loving parent (s)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Grew up with both parents	√	√			√		√
Bilingual	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

How Educational Achievement is Enabled Within the Collective Case

It can be seen from Table 5.2 that all the students enjoyed two important characteristics associated with educational achievement. The first, which I identified earlier, is that all came from families where education was strongly valued and encouraged. As well, as parents having high expectations, this value and encouragement took various concrete forms: all parents provided adequate places to study at home; all had to a greater and lesser extent invested in private tuition; all attempted to build good relationships with the school, seeking information about their child's progress; developing knowledge about the UK educational systems and the difficulties of navigating it; and, some offered material rewards. The second common educational enablement was a good social experience of school, which derived from finding enough peers like themselves, seeing great diversity around them; and, having teachers who did not show discrimination and showed they cared about their progress.

The other characteristic shared by all seven students was loving, warm parents and family life, providing a basis for self-esteem and confidence both socially and cognitively. Three grew up in single-parent families often associated with lower educational achievement, but in these cases (Ayaan, Sumaya and Kadija), other enablements countered this effect. Moreover, along with the other students (except for Yahya), all three had stable home and school environments, which can be difficult for refugees to achieve, especially when they are single parents. Yahya did move around, but in a privileged manner, which resulted in his having multicultural and speaking multiple languages (he also has three older graduate siblings)

Taken together, loving parents who value education, stability and a feeling of belonging at school appear to offer a firm basis for educational success. Being bilingual is also common to all the students and is added as educational enablement because there is strong evidence of its cognitive benefits (Byrd, 2012; Lazaruk, 2013).

Of the remaining enablements in Table 5.2. the level of parents' education is strongly associated with educational achievement (Grissmer, Kirby, Berends & Williamson, 1994), and five of the students had parents who were educated beyond secondary school. Of the two who did not, Sumaya's siblings went to university; and, Tahir's mother was strongly encouraging and sent him to private tuition throughout his schooling. All students had siblings at university, except Abakar, whose siblings were younger than him: this is further evidence of the strong value placed on education within the families.

Table 5.3: Educational Achievement-Constraints in the Data

	Abakar	Malik	Ayaan	Sumaya	Tahir	Kadija	Yahya
Constraints							
OFSTED rating for the school	√	√	√	√	√		
Cramped living conditions		√		√		√	√
Deprived area	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Parents refugees	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Single parent			√	√		√	
Parents not educated in the UK			√	√	√	√	
Many moves of home			√				√
Many moves of school							√

The Constraints on Educational Achievement Within the Collective Case

While these seven students did enjoy enablements that are unusual for the Somali community in the UK, the constraints still operated and could predict underachievement. As can be seen from Table 5.3, all students came from refugee background homes with parents of the seven students coming to Europe as refugees escaping war in Somalia. In addition to their refugee background, all the students lived in public housing in areas of relative social deprivation and violent crime of inner London. Four students (Malik, Sumaya, Kadija, and Yahya) lived in cramped accommodation, making private study more difficult. Three students (Ayaan, Sumaya and Kadija) came from a single-parent household. The parents of four students (Ayaan, Sumaya, Tahir, Kadija) were not educated in the UK, which made it more difficult for them to understand how the UK education system works.

All students (except Kadija and Yahya) attended schools assessed to be requiring improvement by OFSTED. Two of the students (Ayaan and Yahya) had many home moves during their schooling, depriving them of stability and maintaining school and friendships. Yahya also had many moves of school not only within the UK but also overseas.

Despite all these constraints, the seven students, while drawing their families' support and community cultural wealth, beat the odds and achieved remarkable educational success in their GCSE studies.

Conclusion

That the seven students' parents had achieved a high level of education and stable lives can be conceptualised as accumulated community wealth capitals, allowing them to navigate through the education system and support their children's school experience and achievements. The students remained in the same school and maintained positive relationships with teachers and peers, contributing to their feeling of belonging to the school, which predisposes them to learn. Despite educational enablements, constraints still operated, which were barriers to the educational experience of the students. Notably, given certain family characteristics, the quality of education at school matters less than social and emotional acceptance.

In the following two chapters, I will show how the data is enlightened by analysing it through the lens of Yosso's community cultural wealth. I show how the different capitals are mobilised in the lives of parents and students to support educational achievement. This framework helped this study shed light on the support parents and families offer to their children and how students utilise this community cultural wealth.

CHAPTER SIX: HOW PARENTS' COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH SUPPORTS THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Introduction

My research focused on the educational journeys and experiences of seven high-achieving Somali students who had just left London schools. I aimed to shed light on their educational success in the context of wider underachievement among Somalis who attend UK secondary schools. To do this, I drew upon a community cultural wealth framework (Yosso, 2005) to discuss the unique and varied forms of strength (capital) that might explain educational achievement. As set out in chapter Three, community cultural wealth consists of the six forms of capital that families of colour use to survive institutional neglect: familial, navigational, social, linguistic, aspirational, and resistant. These forms of capital are not static and distinct but instead inform one another (Yosso, 2005). This study adds to the growing literature that seeks to challenge the stereotyped deficit thinking about Black students (Crozier and Davies, 2007; Demie, Mclean and Lewis, 2006; Gillborn, 2008; Gillborn et al., 2012; Maylor, 2014; Rhamie, 2007; Richardson, 2007; Rollock et al., 2014; Strand, 2008; Vincent et al).

The community cultural wealth framework explains how communities of colour have built and used generational resources to survive, adapt, thrive and resist within social structures and institutions, including schools (Huber, 2009). In the last chapter, I revealed how, among other enabling factors, the parents' comparatively high level of education and professional positions allowed them to navigate the education system and shape their children's experience. In this chapter, I explore my collective case study in more depth to show how the capitals associated with cultural wealth fostered educational success. In this, the first of two chapters, I take the parents' perspective and recount their efforts to mobilise their resources to support their children's education; in the second chapter, I take the students' perspective to show how they took what was offered and converted it into educational achievement. The six forms of capital inevitably overlap; nevertheless, I discuss each capital separately.

Familial Capital

Familial capital refers to the cultural and historical knowledge that students draw from their families and kinship networks (Yosso, 2005). Parents and students talked about family capital and the positive contribution family made in the educational success of the students, which is consistent with the literature on the role of the family in achieving educational success (Benner, Boyle, and Sadler, 2016; Ellington and Frederick, 2010; Garrett, Antrop-Gonzales, and Veles, 2010; Tang, Kim, and Haviland, 2013).

Educational Level and Occupations of Parents

This section explores how the parents' educational background and occupations shaped their perceptions of and attitudes to education and how this contributed to their children's achievement. I make this exploration from the point of view of familial capital.

Abakar, Malik, Kadija, and Yahya's families lived in the UK for over 20 years. The remaining three families lived in other EU countries for over five years before moving to the UK while their children were still very young. These parents were early arrivals in Europe after the war broke out in Somalia. Unusually for most Somali refugees, these parents had knowledge and experience of education before arriving in the UK.

The parents of the seven students interviewed were all born in Somalia and had formal education while there. They all completed secondary level education, and two fathers and one mother [mother and father of Kadija and father of Yahya] had bachelor's degrees from the Somali National University. This level of education in adults coming from Somalia is highly unusual because Somalia's literacy rate was only 24 percent in 1990 (the last time Somalia had a functioning government that provided basic services such as education) (Abdi, 1998).

After arriving in Europe, four fathers and four mothers continued to pursue their education. Some enrolled in further education in colleges to learn English and social care. Others embarked on higher education. Malik's father obtained a bachelor's degree; Abakar and Ayaan's fathers had master's degrees; Yahya's father completed a PhD. Four mothers obtained college-level education in English and social care. So, the parents of the seven Somali students had themselves achieved an unusually high

level of education, signalling that they highly valued education and suggesting an intergenerational effect.[16]

The parents' occupations were more mixed, and it should be remembered that as refugees, they would have difficulty securing work in the UK, even if they were highly educated. Only three of the fathers were working in the UK at the time of my interview, two of them in high-status professions: Abakar's father was an engineer, Ayaan's father was a general practitioner, and Tahir's father was a driver. Two fathers worked in Somalia in high-status occupations: Yahya's father was a university professor, and Malik's was a political advisor to a regional government in Somalia. Sumaya's father's occupation was not known to the family because he was separated from them, and Kadija's father had died. All the working mothers worked in the UK, but in jobs that were markedly lower status than the fathers: the mothers of Ayaan, Sumaya and Yahya were full-time mothers; the mothers of Malik, Tahir and Kadija were carers; and, Abakar's mother was a teaching assistant. The educational and occupational differences between mothers and fathers probably reflect the deep-rooted societal and cultural beliefs in the Somali community with low educational expectations for women. Men are expected to be the breadwinners while mothers care for children. Nevertheless, it should be noted that of the seven high-achieving students, three (Ayaan, Sumaya and Kadija) were young women.

Overall, the parents had attained above-average educational backgrounds for Somalis of their generation. The parents of these seven high achieving students were models of high educational achievement themselves, which can be understood as aspects of familial capital, which many Somali refugees do not possess (Diriye, 2006; Kahin, 1997; Rutter, 2004). This experience of education shaped how these parents came to understand the UK education system to which I turn next.

Parents' Perceptions and Experiences of the UK Education System

All the parents linked success in life to educational achievement, and they were motivated to transmit these values to their children. For example, Sumaya's mother observed that "Education is important. Someone who does not have an education is

[16] I did not collect data about grandparents or why the parents had unusually high levels of educational achievement compared to others in their generation.

similar to someone who is blind. So, it's important for someone to have had education." Yahya's father equated education to light, saying:

> "Education is an essential part of life. For example, in Somali you say "aqoon la'aani waa iftiin la'aan" [without education is without light]. This means education is a progress, life and it helps. Education is essential." (Yahya's father, 22 July 2017).

Ayaan's mother also saw education as beneficial down the generations "It's important for someone to get education. It's important for his children. It's important for his career. Someone who is educated will be able to teach his children." Malik's father saw education as most essential, saying:

> "Education is a very important part of an individual's life and that is what shapes a person's future. So, I think education is a very important issue for anyone who wants to have a good future in his life or for her life." (Malik's father, 16 July 2017).

Like their children, all the parents interviewed generally had a positive perception of the UK education system. Sumaya was born in the Netherlands and came to the UK before her third birthday. Her mother spoke highly of her daughter's UK schooling experience.

> "She had positive experience because the school was good, she had good teachers and good friends. The school is called Bellevue and I have never seen any teacher who I can say was not good. Also, I haven't seen any teacher who complained about her. She loved school and she was loved at school" (Sumaya's mother, 15 July 2017).

Similarly, Kadija's mother said, "She had a good experience because she has never been in trouble at school, even in the playground. She was happy to study something new. She was patient when studying."

Malik's father believed his son had a positive experience of school, saying.

> "He was very happy at school and he had good experience, that's why he is doing his A Levels at the same school. He didn't leave the school. The school he has done in his GCSE is the same one he is currently doing his A Levels. He has good rapport with the school, teachers and everyone." (Malik's father, 16 July 2017).

Ayaan's mother recalled her daughter's positive experience in school, saying, "Her teachers used to praise her during parents' evenings. She was also volunteering at her school, so she had a good experience at school."

Yahya's father praised his son's teachers: "At school he had good teachers, good tuition and also the programme at school. I went many times to his tutors and teachers and I actually found them very nice people, very helpful, giving good assignments."

Nevertheless, all the parents found the UK education system complicated. All the parents had attended school in Somalia and were familiar with the education system there. However, even the parents who had pursued further and higher education in the UK found the system difficult to navigate.

The three families (Ayaan's, Tahir's and Sumaya's) who migrated from the Netherlands and Sweden expected to find a similar education system in the UK and were surprised to find it different. Ayaan's mother, who moved from Sweden, explained her experience when she first arrived in the UK.

> "It was difficult for me to understand when I arrived in this country in 2004 from Sweden. It took hard work to understand the system. It was only after I registered my children in private tuition that I came to understand the system. Despite the challenges at the beginning, I am now familiar with the UK education system" **(**Ayaan's mother, 26 July 2017).

Tahir's mother, who moved from the Netherlands, recounted her early experience of understanding the education system and how that experience was useful to her when her children started school:

> "My family moved to the UK before me. My mother had three children who are younger than me, and I used to go to parents' evening and other school

> meetings with my teenage siblings who were going to secondary school. As a result, I became familiar with the education system. Had I not had that experience, I think it would've been difficult for me to understand the system when my children started school" (Tahir's mother, 23 July 2017).

Sumaya's mother, who moved from the Netherlands, explained her difficulty in understanding the education system. "Initially it wasn't easy for me to understand the UK education system and the different levels, however, it became somewhat easy after it has been explained to me." Kadija's mother, a graduate and a teacher in Somalia, explained the difficulty Somali parents face in understanding the teachers because of the language barrier.

> "The language teachers use is difficult for us to understand, it's beyond the level of English we can understand. We may understand 10 or 20 percent. We attend parents' evenings but actually we don't understand the teachers. Even interpreters that are brought in to support parents do not interpret everything. They just interpret the main points." (Kadija's mother, 24 July 2017).

Malik's father, who served as a governor in different schools, had the best understanding among the parents about the challenges and opportunities faced by Somali students in the UK. He was fortunate to get to grips with the education system early on. Discussing his own experience, he says, "I had the understanding of what needed to be done for my children. Malik knew what we wanted him to do, and he is bright and actually good in his education." Malik's father thinks that parents' lack of understanding about the education system is partly to blame for the low achievement of most Somali students in British schools, saying, "I understand there are many young kids who didn't do well and there are many factors why they didn't do well. Some of the reasons could be the parents' lack of knowledge about the education system.

The parents' educational background helped them navigate the education system and enabled them to understand how the school system in UK works. This knowledge parents gained is familial capital which in turn contributed to the educational success of their children. So, Somali parents without a strong educational background will find it difficult to help their children navigate an alien education system. The familial

capital of the parents, namely, their attitudes toward education, their own educational background and the importance they attached to educational achievement shaped the parents' involvement in their children's education.

Support at Home

Using the familial capital lens, this section discusses what parents did to motivate their children and to support their education and experience: the creation of a conducive environment for learning at home; drawing on personal experiences as learners and teachers to achieve; drawing on cultural resources, like the 'Somali method' to achieve; establishing positive interactions between parents and children about their education; and, the importance of establishing educational supportive interactions between home and school - in other words, to manage the home/school boundary effectively.

Existing literature shows that parental involvement is critical in promoting the academic success of Black students (Bush, 2002; Floyd, 1996; Herbert, 1998). The support parents interviewed offered to their children came with the expectation that they would do well in education, become successful adults and support their own children. The mother of Kadija said, "The support she [Kadija] received at home helped her significantly, and I expect that she will support her children the same way in the future."

In all the homes I visited, I observed a conducive environment to study: study table, books, computer and internet access, supportive siblings, and parents who had high expectations of these children pushed them to do their homework. These parents understood that unlike the education system in Somalia, where the school shoulders the entire responsibility of educating the child, in the UK, close cooperation between home and school is the standard. The parents' efforts included ensuring their children completed homework and revised for examinations.

Parents understood that support at home was instrumental in their children's education. Kadija's mother, who has been a teacher in Somalia, said she used her teaching experience when helping her daughter at home.

> The support she received from home and the way she was taught was a Somali method. I taught her in the Somali method, and at school she learned in the

> British system. Nevertheless, if she didn't receive support at home, she might not have succeeded the way she did (Kadija's mother, 24 July 2017).

By 'Somali method' Kadija's mother reflects what in my observation is a common perception among the Somali community that the British education system is laissez-faire and that learning takes place with little external supervision with students studying independently. This is in contrast to how students are taught in Somalia, where there is little independent study and teachers employ what can be called a transmission method. Understanding the difference is an important part of understanding the values and goals of the system.

In my small sample, both fathers and mothers mobilised familial capital and were fully involved in their children's education. Some parents divided the tasks. The father of Abakar explained that his wife supported their son's education during his primary school years while secondary school was his responsibility. This father helped his son with his homework and gave him old exam papers to give him a feel of the kind of questions that may come up during examinations.

> When he was young my wife used to sit down with him and make sure he did the homework, and when he finished his primary school then that's when I stepped in to support him with all the homework. We used to get past examination questions. […] Just to stretch him and try and see if he could answer those questions (Abakar's father, 9 July 2017).

Exposing students to previous exam papers allows them to anticipate the kind of questions that may come up in their exams. It also allows them to practice and prepare for the time pressure in examination settings to prevent any panic on the day.

Malik's father, who worked and spent most of his time in Somalia, explained how he kept up to date with his children's progress in school.

> I am away most of the time. I am on the phone on a daily basis and read daily reports from his teachers through email. If there are any concerns, I call home and discuss what the issue is, whatever it is. But I think when I am here [UK] and when I am away [Somalia] it is the same for me because I am always

> involved in my children's education. I am aware of how they are at school and at what level they are (Malik's father, 16 July 2017).

The involvement of fathers who are out of the country may be prompted by the mothers' lack of confidence in speaking English and their lack of familiarity with the education system. Three of the fathers (Abakar's, Malik's, and Yahya's) studied in the UK so were familiar with the system.

The mother of Tahir was a unique case. Her husband, Tahir's father, was not engaged in his children's education, despite her encouraging him to get involved. This may be because, despite graduating from secondary school in Somalia, he did not continue studying in the UK. Limited English and a lack of understanding of the education system may also have dented his confidence. As a result, Tahir's mother had shouldered the entire responsibility of supporting her children's education. She discussed the different levels of support required at the primary and secondary levels.

> At the primary level it was smooth and quiet. I used to take him to school and attend parents' evenings. There were no concerns. Everything was good. When he started secondary school, I increased my involvement. I started to follow up his progress regularly. I used to contact his group tutors who sent regular reports. There was a Somali member of staff who I used to contact when I needed to, so it was good (Tahir's mother, 23 July 2017).

Parents contribute where they can, but when they do not have the history or experience to draw from, those roles have to be filled by others drawing from their own experience. When there is no one to do this, it means that form capital is missing.

Various studies have reported that many Somali children live in single-parent households with no father figures (Demie et al. 2007; Diriye, 2006; Kahin, 1997; Rutter, 2004). In this study, three out of the seven families (Kadija's, Sumaya's, and Ayaan's) were a single-mother household, with two fathers absent from home after the couples separated and one father deceased.

Three of the parents interviewed for this study, two of whom are fathers (Yahya and Malik's fathers and Sumaya's mother) suggested that mothers are more involved in

their children's education. The involvement of one knowledgeable parent mitigates other disadvantages.

> It is only the mother that encourages and says, 'Move forward and never look backward'. I told her to study. It is the mother who leads. If I didn't push her, she would not have been where she is. So, I think it's me who directed her to the path of success (Sumaya's mother, 15 July 2017).

Yahya's father explained the important role Somali mothers have played in their children's education.

> The achievement of Somali children is 90 percent, or I can even say 100 percent, because of mothers. They are involved in their children's education. I remember one private tuition [centre] which was established somewhere, teachers there always used to see mothers with their children, and they used to say, 'Why do we see only mothers? Where are the dads?' This is what they said because mothers are always at the centre of children's [lives] (Yahya's father, 22 July 2017).

Malik's father, who was a community worker in the past and managed a supplementary school[17], agreed that often the success of students is down to their mothers.

> When I used to run a supplementary school to give boost to young Somalis and other refugee community who were coming to this country with no background of education, when I go to parents' evenings, most of the time 99 percent of them were Somali mothers. So, there's big disparity [with fathers] and I hope some in the community will rectify (Malik's father, 16 July 2017).

Even when children come from a single-parent household, having one parent – in this case mothers – who are very involved in their children's education mitigates the educational disadvantage experienced by their children.

All the parents interviewed expected the efforts they made to be matched by their children making efforts. All expressed the belief that hard work was an indispensable

[17] A community-based initiative that offered weekend classes to support the educational achievement of Somali and refugee students.

element for succeeding in education. Ayan's mother said, "She did hard work because she was putting every effort. […] Without such effort she would not have attained the grades she did."

Hard work is a value espoused by both parents and young people. Sumaya's mother draws a comparison between students who work hard and those who don't:

> Those who achieved well have worked hard. Anyone who wants to achieve well ought to work hard. A child who is on Snapchat all night and one who spent the entire night studying will of course not achieve similar grades. There are few exemptions where some children, despite not putting much effort in studying, yet again score high but mostly children who achieve well are those that put much effort in studying (Sumaya's mother, 15 July 2017).

Sumaya's mother expected her daughter to do well because of this hard work.

> She put a lot of time in education. […] When I wake up in the morning, I used to see her sitting at the table studying. She used to say, 'I have a tough exam coming up, so I got to prepare for it.' So, for her to achieve this was expected (Sumaya's mother, 15 July 2017).

Abakar's father explained the importance of good and regular communication with children and instilling in them the belief that a good education is necessary for a good future. Abakar attained 7As* and 3As in his GCSEs.

> Communicating with the child all the time and being a friend with him makes a big difference and also telling him that if you behave or if you study hard and you get good grades and you get a good job, you can then have a good future and a big house. So, he knew that by achieving the highest he would actually be able to build his future (Abakar's father, 9 July 2017).

Malik's father explained that commitment is required for a student to succeed. Talking about his son's commitment, he said, "He was committed, and he was trying very hard. He had the ability to do well but also, he had the commitment to enhance his ability" (Malik's father, 16 July 2017).

All parents, including parents of underachieving students, possess aspects of familial capital; nevertheless, the parents interviewed espoused a strong value of education that they constantly communicated with their children. They were able to mobilise these values to support their children's education and navigate the education system.

Navigational Capital

Navigational capital is a set of skills that help individuals and families manoeuvre within social institutions and systems which are not designed to support the success and well-being of communities of colour (Yosso, 2005). In this section, I have identified two aspects of navigational capital: the first is the ability to build a relationship with teachers in the schools their children attended. The second is the parents' ability to understand the problems of others in their community. Most Somali parents lack the ability to navigate the system that the parents of high achieving students have because they are educated themselves.

Building a Relationship with Schools and Teachers

Previous research has established how parent-teacher relationships have positively influenced students' academic achievement (Catsambis, 2001; Crozier, 2006; Landeros, 2010). Various researchers have commented that there is a lack of relationships between Somali parents and teachers (Demi et al., 2006; Diriye, 2006; Kahin, 1997; Koch, 2007; Rutter, 2004). They say that parents do not attend parents' evening, often because they do not speak English or understand the system. However, in my study, all parents interviewed had regular and positive relationships with teachers and the school in general. This translates to navigational capital because having good communication with school enables parents to manoeuvre around challenges that face them and their children at school.

Sumaya's mother explained the positive relationship she had with the school and how this helped her keep abreast of her daughter's progress at school.

> I had a good relationship with the school and with the teachers. I used to attend all meetings and closely followed the level she was in and the progress she was making. The school used to communicate with me and send me information about her. The school also regularly told me what grades she was

> achieving and whether she needed to attend after school club (Sumaya's mother, 15 July 2017).

In contrast to literature findings that most Somali parents do not contact schoolteachers and administrators (e.g. Guerin et al., 2004), the parents interviewed for this study regularly attended parents' evenings. Khadija's mother never missed a parents' evening, and she explained that she established a positive relationship with schoolteachers and administrators by doing so.

> From year one to GCSE we never missed attending parents' evenings. She was a well-behaved child and responsible. When she was in year four, I wanted to transfer her to a school closer to home, however, her school suggested that I leave her with them. I agreed and left her in her old school. Kadija was mature. She never missed class or submitting homework. She also never had a conflict with a teacher (Kadija's mother, 24 July 2017).

Yahya's father, a career academic, discussed how he found his son's teachers supportive while away working in Saudi Arabia.

> I went many times to his tutors and teachers and I actually found them very nice people, very helpful, giving good assignments. I was in Saudi Arabia and while my sons were here for two years, I used to get information from [their] teachers and sometimes they used to call me (Yahya's father, 22 July 2017).

The parents in this study supported their children by striving hard to understand the education system and establishing a good relationship with the school and teachers (see parents' perceptions and experiences of the UK education system section above). This also made them have insights into the difficulties other Somali parents and their children face in the education system, which I turn next.

Parents' Insights into the Difficulties of Other Somali Children and Parents

Knowing the English language, understanding how the school system works and maintaining good communication and relationship with teachers was essential for parents in their efforts to navigate the education system and better support their children's education. Nevertheless, not all Somali parents are in possession of

navigational capital. This information is important for the purpose of this study because I am trying to see high achievers in their context and what distinguishes them from the context of other Somali students who do not do so well – how utilising navigational capital helps parents and students manoeuvre the education system that was tailored to the needs of communities other than them.

Because of their navigational capital in understanding how best to work with a school system that was not easy to understand, parents interviewed for this study also revealed their concern for children born in Somalia and being educated in the UK. The parents realised their families were lucky and privileged compared to others in their community.

Kadija's mother, in particular, shared her insights gained by living in a large complex of flats with many Somali families. She described how every aspect of the children's new lives seemed strange - from the cold weather to the classroom setting and the school routine. She also implies that the system is uncaring.

> Some children coming from Somalia who had never been to school sat in year nine when they come to UK. These children were expected to perform the same way as other year nine students - to speak the same way, to behave the same way, to sit the same way. These children encountered many problems: English language was a problem; culture was a problem; the routine was a problem; and the fact that they were Black and different was a problem; the weather and the environment were problems. No one checked to see how this child was feeling. Then three years down the line, you would see this child drop out of school and become a delinquent because he was influenced by other delinquents (Kadija's mother, 24 July 2017).

She heard from her neighbours about the difficulties they were having understanding UK school, so she believes that schools should educate parents about how the system works, particularly how children are assessed, which is difficult for less-educated parents to understand.

> Parents who are well educated, who are professionals with a good income, know the education system and have expectations of their children. On the other hand, most parents who attend parents' evening do not understand the

> levels of progress of their children. The school does not educate parents about the complicated system of assessment. For example, some children are in level two or three and others are in level five at the end of year six. So, when these children start secondary school they will be separated because they are at different levels. If parents do not know what is expected of their child and do not know about the different stages, then they will not know if their child is underachieving. They will only realise when their child achieves D or E in GCSE and that's when they ask their child, 'what happened? Why did you achieve D, E?' Some parents say, 'my child will take IGCSE, others say their child will take Btech without understanding these are not really GCSE. This is because some parents are not educated **(**Kadija's mother, 24 July 2017).

Kadija's mother said that even parents who were educated in Somalia and have teaching qualifications like herself have difficulty understanding the complex UK system. She compared the experience of immigrant parents with a language barrier with native parents or parents who have been in the UK for a long time, who know the system and speak English.

> Those of us who came to this country did not get an explanation about how the education system works. Native people or those who lived in this country for a long time know about the education of their children. They follow the levels their children are at and offer support if their child is lagging behind to make sure they make satisfactory progress. Those parents who know the system can take advice from teachers, unlike those of us who have a language barrier (Kadija's mother, 24 July 2017).

She also drew attention to the differences between the education systems in the UK and Somalia, particularly how students in the UK progress according to their age rather than the system in Somalia where students progress according to their ability. Kadija's mother said the age-based education system means that students of different abilities sit in the same class. In her view, less capable students will develop low self-esteem, get left behind and drop out due to their negative school experience.

> The systems here in the UK and in Somalia are very different from each other. Education is the same, but the methods used are different: be it curriculum,

> teaching methods or how to assess students. Where I am from, students' progress according to their educational ability. No one considers the emotional needs of the child because to develop the education of the child is more important. When the children receive good education, then they get their self-confidence back. However, here in the UK, children progress according to their age and every child knows that they will move on every year to the next year, even though they might not know one plus one equals two (Kadija's mother, 24 July 2017).

Malik's father, who ran a community support centre in London for refugees and asylum seekers, believed that the UK education system was only designed for the native people. "The education system in the UK is very good. I think how the British education system is good for the British people is a good thing and a way to follow. It is a system which is set up for the British citizens." He said it was difficult for the newly arrived Somali community to understand the education system and for British schools to understand the Somalis. Discussing his experience working with Somali parents and schools, he said:

> It has been an uphill task to make the Somali community understand the British education system as well as make the British education system understand the needs of the Somali community, whether it is families, parents or the children **(**Malik's father, 16 July 2017).

In his view, schools fail to understand the needs of Somali children and instead label them as having special educational needs.

> You will see someone who is the age of 12 or 13 coming from war-torn Somalia and who has never been to school. This young person is not only lacking the understanding of the British education system, but this person is lacking the whole education and the classroom system which they don't understand. The education system in this country was not ready for such people. That's why we always used to have the schools classifying most Somali children in the special educational needs category, while they did not have any special educational needs and may have been smart young kids.

> They didn't understand the education system in the UK and the system didn't understand the needs of these children (Malik's father, 16 July 2017).

The observations above are supported by research which shows that Black students continue to be disproportionately labelled as having special educational needs (Demie et al., 2006), particularly Somalis as evidenced by an Ealing Council report in 2009 revealing that 38 percent of Somali students in Ealing secondary schools had special educational needs (Ealing Council, 2009).

When refugee families arrive in the UK, parents are usually busy claiming asylum, which may have taken many months or even years. Other priorities are getting a roof over their heads, securing a living, and adapting to an entirely new environment. Moreover, until a decision is made on their asylum application, these families are not even sure whether they will be allowed to remain in the UK. As a result of these challenges, education is not a priority for many parents. Tahir's mother explained her family's own early experiences when they came to the UK.

> My younger siblings came to this country while they were adolescents and teenagers. They were aged 12, 15 and 18. My youngest sibling, a brother, was 12 years old when the family arrived, and he was placed in year seven although he didn't even know how to write. He was not given any special preparation or anything, he was just placed straight in year seven while the school year was about to end. So, he wasn't happy. One day he came home from school crying, other days he came home upset and sometimes he came home after he was excluded and sent home. He didn't understand the English language, so he was frustrated. He didn't even know if teachers were praising him. He continued with the school up to year 11, but he didn't achieve well. There was no support for students. The Somali community was new in the country and they didn't understand the system (Tahir's mother, 23 July 2017).

As families stayed in the UK longer, they settled into more permanent accommodation, became used to the education system, and learned the English language. As a result, their children's school experiences improved. Ayaan's mother said her children who started secondary school when the family first arrived in the UK from Sweden struggled at school, Ayaan, who started year one in the UK at a

time when the family had settled well, had a more positive experience than her older siblings.

> When we arrived in UK, one of my children started year 10 and the other started year eight. It was a time that I wasn't familiar with the education system and they also had language problems, so their schooling and achievement was different to that of Ayaan (Ayaan's mother, 26 July 2017).

Yahya's father agreed that secondary school-age children coming directly from Somalia during the civil war were particularly disadvantaged because they had difficulties learning a new language and were put into year nine or 10, which was their first ever experience with formal education.

> I remember some 15 or 20 years ago, Somali students used to fail in schools because it was a time when parents had run away from Somalia because of the conflict. In those days it was only mothers that came with the children. The mothers themselves were not able to speak English. They even had difficulty getting the help they needed - housing, education etc. Children who were in year eight, nine or 10 had the most difficulty because a child who has no experience of schooling was asked to sit with his age group. Slowly they were left behind because they couldn't catch on (Yahya's father, 22 July 2017).

The parents also understood the challenges faced by other Somali parents in their relations with school. Malik's father pointed to a problem that Somali parents don't speak to teachers.

> In Somalia, the school has the entire responsibility of educating children. You send your children and you don't worry about them. The school looks after them, the school teaches them, and the school tells them whatever they need to do. But it is different in this country. Parents and families have to have a big input in order to make their children achieve higher (Malik's father, 16 July 2017).

The parents in this study were not only able to manoeuvre the education system in their pursuit of supporting their children's education, but they were also aware of the

challenges other Somali parents and students were facing in schools by not being able to navigate the education system.

In the next section, I discuss social capital and how the community, at least in symbolic terms, positively influenced students' educational success.

Social Capital

Social capital is a form of capital that Yosso (2005) defines as "networks of people and community resources" (p.79). In this section, I discuss how parents and students interviewed for this study used social capital by making use of the community resources – particularly private tuition - to raise educational achievements.

Private Tuition

There has been an increase in the number of students using private tuition. A survey of 11-16-year-olds conducted by the Sutton Trust/Ipsos-Mori published in July 2018 showed that 27 percent of students in England and Wales were using private tuition, reporting that the number of students receiving private tuition had doubled since it started collecting data in 2005. Students in London were more likely to receive private tuition than other cities, with 41 percent having received it. Thirty-three percent of students surveyed reported having received private tutoring to help them with a particular GCSE exam.

All seven students I interviewed had received private tuition during their secondary education. Private tutoring was a form of community resource because the tutoring services parents chose for their students are run by Somalis and other minority ethnic tutors. As detailed below, tutoring services provided information to students and parents about how the education system in the UK works. Although the tutoring services were purchased, it served as a community resource because they relieve parents of the difficult task of helping the students with homework which some parents are not capable of due to lack of familiarity with the education system. They also help the students navigate the complex education system in the UK.

The mother of Sumaya explained how parents invest in their children by offering tuition support, saying, "The children you have seen who achieved well have been

invested in. There are after school clubs, but most children have been privately tutored [and] parents paid for it."

Tahir's mother explained the reasons that parents offer private tuition to their children.

> In this country, three subjects are compulsory, English, science and maths. He [Tahir] always had [private tuition] support with these three subjects. Since English is not my first language and I cannot support him, I made sure he received support with these subjects. I used to pay £120 every week for nine hours of science and eight hours of the other two subjects combined. I invested that money in him. To invest in a person is better than any other investment, because you get the outcome of what you invested in (Tahir's mother, 23 July 2017).

The father of Abakar said his family paid a considerable sum to support their son's education. "We even used to pay sometimes £500 a month for him just to prepare his GCSE exams."

Abakar and Tahir had private tuition support throughout their schooling. Abakar (the highest achieving student) had private tuition from reception until he had completed his GCSEs.

> When he was four, we used to take him to extra classes in the evening, especially Kumon[18] where he learned English and maths, practising different level of the English language whether it was spelling, writing, reading and also maths […] until he was in year six. Then he started secondary school and he was getting tuition to learn a bit more English, science and maths. At the same time, he was receiving support from me at home (Abakar's father, 9 July 2017).

Tahir's mother paid for private tuition support throughout his schooling.

> I started looking for places that could support his education. I found Kumon, and he studied there for almost two years. When he was in year two, I

[18] A method that teaches mathematics and reading to young children.

> transferred him to Harrogate Tutors tuition centre. From year two up to year 11 he had continuous private tuition support (Tahir's mother, 23 July 2017).

The parents of Abakar and Tahir paid a significant amount of money privately tutoring their children. These students not only had educated parents, but they also had comparatively wealthy parents. So, Tahir and Abakar had not just community wealth but also had material wealth. However, most parents are not able to afford this. As discussed in the literature review, the Somali community in the UK is among the most deprived communities with a high unemployment rate. Sumaya, the fourth-highest achieving student with 2As*, 7As and 1B, comes from a single-parent household and received only eight weeks of private tutoring just before she sat for her GCSE exams. Her mother believes more private tuition support might have improved her daughter's results "I thought to myself that if I had taken her to private tuition earlier, maybe she could've attained As in all subjects."

The parents in this study all had positive perceptions about private tuition support, linking it with achievement. Tahir's mother explained that when a teacher with whom her son had a very positive relationship told her that he did not require private tuition, she ignored the advice.

> The teacher asked me why I was wasting my money because he said he was confident that Tahir would get A in maths. I told the teacher that Tahir doesn't do any work at home, so I am sending him to the tuition centre so that he does some work. The tuition centre helps students concentrate and also gets confidence. It also helps with timing. If the student doesn't practice the exam, it will be difficult for him to utilise the time available to him during exam **(**Tahir's mother, 23 July 2017).

Kadija asked her parent for private tuition. "She [Kadija] asked us for support with private tuition and we said 'yes'. We supported her having private tuition as a family."

Four of the students (Abakar, Ayaan, Malik, and Tahir) went to a tuition centre in Enfield, North London, some distance from Camden, where they lived. This centre was popular among Somalis in London, and students came there from across London. This centre was run by Pakistanis but had Somali tutors, and there was a perception

among the Somali community that it had more qualified tutors than other centres. This perception, coupled with aggressive advertising on popular Somali TV stations in the UK, persuaded many parents to take their children there.

Research on private tuition has produced mixed results. Nevertheless, Mischo and Haag (2002) in Luxembourg and Ireson and Rushforth (2005) in the UK found that private tutoring improved school performance. For Somali students' private tuition might seem to be a key reason why some do better than others, but this might not be as straightforward as it seems. It might simply be an expression/symbol of the high value, sacrifice and 'investment' placed on education by parents, which makes the students want to repay their parents with hard work. It could also be that since none of the parents attended secondary school in the UK, private tutoring compensates for the gaps in their support of students since they have little understanding of the UK curriculum.

Parents of underachieving students themselves had social capital and were aware of the private tutoring available in the community. However, few can access private tuition for their children because of the cost associated with sending children to private tutoring.

Next, I discuss linguistic capital and how it was an important contributor to the educational success of students.

Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital refers to the "intellectual and social skills" that allow students to use more than one language (Yosso, 2005, p.78). The Somali students in this study were bilinguals and multicultural who lived in one of the most diverse boroughs in the country. Storytelling, language and culture - essential elements of linguistic capital is discussed next.

Storytelling, Language and Culture

Yosso recognises the important role storytelling plays in the lives of students of colour and the influence these stories can have on their educational success. Because I adopted Yosso's community cultural wealth as a theoretical framework after data collection, linguistic capital was not a prominent topic of discussion during the

interviews. This section mainly offers commentary which builds on earlier sections of the community cultural wealth framework.

The students and parents interviewed had exposure to multiple languages. They live in a country where English is spoken. All of them come from homes where Somali is spoken. Two of the students were born in the Netherlands and one in Sweden and, although they were young when they moved to the UK, they had some exposure to the language of their birthplace. Furthermore, it is a common Somali tradition that children are taught Arabic when they are young to enable them to read the Holy Quran. This does not necessarily make them Arabic speakers, but it allows them to read and write in Arabic. They also memorise the Quran. So, the students bring these language and memorisation skills to the school.

All the parents interviewed could also be considered bilingual. The four interviews with mothers were conducted in Somali because, while they knew some English, they were not confident they could fully express themselves. In contrast, the three fathers all spoke in English during the interview and were also fluent in Somali. All three had studied at UK universities and had professional occupations, giving them the ability and the confidence to express themselves in English compared with the mothers who did not attend UK universities.

The parents understood that students coming from homes where English is not spoken needed to have a strong English foundation in order to succeed in their education. Kadija's mother explained by saying, "As long as a child has a good foundation in English, then her answers to questions will be strong because language is important." The early years support Kadija received from her family aided her in her primary and secondary level education and encouraged her to choose English literature in her A Levels. Her mother said, "Reading at a young age helped her throughout her schooling years. She is now doing English literature at A Levels and the reason is because she did well in English, receiving A* and passing all other subjects in GCSE including French."

Over twenty years ago, Kahin (1997) estimated that only 25 percent of the adult Somali population in the UK was literate. Illiteracy and lack of English have prevented some Somali parents from supporting the next generation's education

(Diriye, 2006; Kahin, 1997; Rutter, 2004). Some parents have used their multilingual children as interpreters to help them with correspondence and accessing healthcare and other service providers (Kahin, 1997). By doing so, students learn important skills and competencies, including understanding the source language and translating it as accurately as possible into the target language.

Oral literature plays an important role in Somali society and culture. The written Somali language was only developed in 1972. Before that, Somalis used oral literature for thousands of years as a medium of communication and as a way of preserving traditions. Some consider Somalis to be great poets, "but they are equally great storytellers. Their stories reflect the kind of values they cherish. They, for example, put a premium on loyalty, courage, fairness, intelligence, and generosity. Their stories depict the tasks, the preoccupations and contradictions that Somali society grapples with, and attempts to explain to its members. It is through oral narratives that children are inducted into their culture." (Ahmed, n.d. p.7).

All the seven families I visited for this study had access to dozens of Somali television channels. These TV stations broadcast news, cultural films, and shows, oral poetry competitions and various other programs. The families use the Somali TV channels to help their children get exposed to the Somali culture.

Furthermore, parents also tell their children stories about life and education in Somalia and how fortunate they are to have been born in a safe country, have stable lives, and access free education. Ayaan's mother tells her children, "there's an opportunity here to get education compared to our country [Somalia] where services including the education system collapsed. So, it's easy to get free education here in the UK."

Parents telling their children stories of the difficulties Somali children face in Somalia and reminding them of their privileged position of having access to good quality education in the UK might motivate these students to work hard and strive to succeed.

In the next section, I discuss how the aspirational capital of the parents made children work hard, have high hopes for the future and persist in the face of many constraints.

Aspirational Capital

In addition to the support parents offered to their children at home, parents had high aspirations for their children. Yosso (2005) defines aspirational capital as the ability for communities of colour to maintain high hopes and dreams despite real and perceived barriers.

All the parents interviewed had high aspirations for their children, wanting them to get the highest possible GCSE grades, do A-Levels and enrol in top-ranking universities. For example, three parents (Yahya's, Mailk's and Abakar's fathers) wanted their children to go to Oxbridge. None of the students mentioned Oxbridge, although they aspired to attend a good university.

All parents interviewed except Faiza (Ayaan's mother) expected that their child would be among the highest-achieving students and receive a top award. The father of Abakar, the highest-achieving student among the Somali cohort who sat GCSE exams in 2016, had high hopes for his son and had done everything possible to help his hopes and dreams to come true.

> For every parent who has a child going to secondary school. They are worried about the anxiety of their children not achieving the levels. They want to go to university. We were determined to make sure he achieves the highest level possible he can, and so that meant extra work for him, more exercise in terms of exam papers making sure that he focuses the education. […] Hopefully he would go to one of these universities, maybe Oxford or Cambridge, but I want him to get the highest education on the highest level (Abakar's father, 9 July 2017).

Yahya's father hoped that his son would go to one of the top universities in the country. "He wants to go to Oxford so it is time for him to achieve good marks that will allow him to get to the best universities. He is aiming high, very high." Yahya's father, who holds a Ph.D which he obtained from a UK university, suggested Oxford for his son. Kadija's mother shared her daughter's high hopes. She said of her daughter, "She is now preparing to get into a good university such as Oxford, Cambridge, East Anglia and other good universities." Malik's father believes his son can go to one of the best universities in the country:

> He is already doing some extra work at his school to prepare him to get into a good university. He wants to do economics, that is what he likes. He chose it himself saying he wants to do economics and also, he aspires to get to one of the best universities in this country. He has got the chance to get it and he is trying very hard to get it. That's why we were sending him to do extra work. He went to Harrow School for a whole one week, people from Oxford and Cambridge came to mentor them. He aspires to get to one of the best universities and also to be an economist (Malik's father, 16 July 2017).

The aspirations of the four parents that their children attend Oxbridge is in the face of an admissions system that results in very few students from poor socio-economic backgrounds and minority ethnic communities. After more than 100 MPs wrote to Oxford and Cambridge universities in 2018 pressing them to accommodate students from under-represented backgrounds, Oxford released data showing that in 2017 just two percent of university admissions were of students from Black UK backgrounds while the proportion of Black and minority students was 18 percent in 2017 (Busby, 2018).

Of course, in many cases, education is a means to an end. The reason parents wanted their children to attend prestigious universities is for them to have good and high paying careers, so they can have a better life for themselves and their families and can better support their parents in old age as dictated by culture.

Resistant Capital

Yosso (2005) defines resistant capital as the willingness to challenge inequality and subordination. Resistant capital is the self-belief and self-worth that communities of colour hold despite the inequalities they face. According to Yosso, the source of this form of capital are the parents, the community and any historical legacy of engaging in social justice.

All the parents interviewed espoused resistant capital by challenging the deficit view of Somali students as underachievers. Despite multiple constraints of being refugees, Black, belonging to relatively poor socio-economic status, and living in a

disadvantaged area in London, these parents did not accept the status quo. They supported their children to ensure social mobility of their children.

The parents also supported other parents who could not support their children's education and advocated for them at school during parents' evenings. All these efforts translate into resistant capital.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined how the parents had supported their children's education, which has been examined through the lens of the concept of community cultural wealth. Such support was instrumental in students' success. It is important to remember that parents of underachieving students possess community cultural wealth capitals such as familial and social capitals but are unable to mobilise these capitals to support their children's education.

In the next chapter, I discuss how the seven students in this study converted their parents' community cultural wealth into attaining success in education.

CHAPTER SEVEN: HOW STUDENTS CONVERTED THEIR PARENTS' COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH TO EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

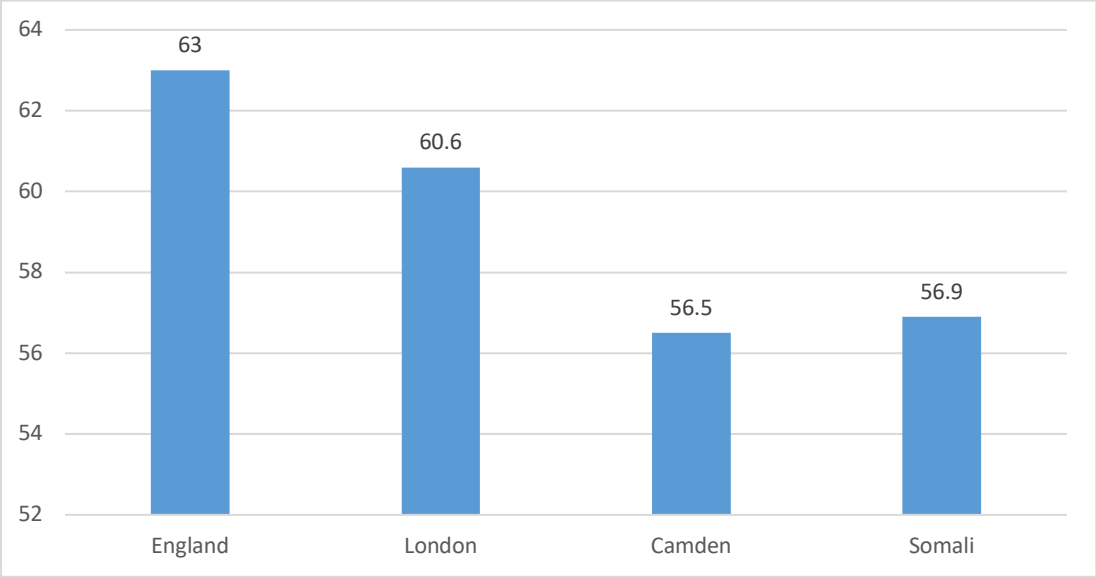
Introduction

This is a mirror chapter to the previous and shows how the students mobilised the parents' capitals and converted it to educational success. Before exploring this, I present a section on the quality of schooling because this is an important context for arguing that the seven students succeeded despite the schooling offered.

The Quality of School Education

I will explain the types of schools attended by the seven students, the demographics of students in the schools attended by respondents, and the schools' standards as reported by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Figure 7.1: Students achieving five or more A*- C GCSE grades, including English and maths in 2016.



As shown in figure 7.1 above, in 2016, 63 percent of students in England who sat for the GCSE exams attained five or more A*- C GCSE grades, including English and maths. In London, the figure was 60.6 percent, while in Camden 56.5 percent of students achieved five or more GCSEs at C or above grades including English and

maths (DfE, 2016). For the Somali students in Camden the figure was 56.9 percent[19]. All London boroughs had better GCSE outcomes for their students than Camden, except Lewisham, Croydon and Greenwich. While 56.5 percent of students in Camden attained the 5+ GCSE benchmark, their counterparts in Kingston upon Thames, a wealthy southwest borough, attained 75.7 percent (DfE, 2016), showing how wide the attainment gap is between different local authorities with different socio-economic demographics.

The 116 Somali students who sat for the GCSE exam in Camden in 2016 attended seven different schools[20]. The pass rate in these schools differed with one school (Ports Wood[21] with only 9 Somali students and none of the top ten high achievers) having 88.9 percent pass rate for Somali students compared with only 28.6 percent of Somali students at Wood Hill[22] (with only seven Somali students and one student among the high achievers in this study) who attained five or more A*- C GCSE grades, including English and maths. Yet, Ports Wood is assessed to be 'requiring improvement' by OFSTED; while Wood Hill is judged as 'good'. Students' home background is undoubtedly a factor that contributes to high achievement because the one student in this study from Wood Hill came from a professional background.

The seven students interviewed for this research attended four different secondary schools in Camden. One school (Bellevue) rated by OFSTED as requiring improvement was a high-achieving school for Somali students, with 82% of the seventeen Somali students at the school achieving pass rate. Another school (Harrison), rated by OFSTED as requiring improvement, had the highest Somali students (37 students). Of the 37 students, 64.9% had passed their GCSE. The other two schools achieved low for Somali students. For example, only 37.5% of the 16 Somali students at Redmond passed, while 28.6% of the seven students at Wood Hill passed.

Three of the students [Abakar, Ayaan, Tahir] who achieved first, third, and fifth respectively among the Somali students in Camden attended Harrison Secondary

[19] This is based on the 116 students whose data I received from Maygaag community organisation and from which I selected participants.
[20] All names of schools are anonymised, and names used in this thesis are pseudonyms.
[21] None of the seven students attended this school.
[22] Only Yahya attended this school. Yahya was not in the top ten among the Somali students who sat for GCSE exams in 2016.

School, a comprehensive mixed school which has over 1,100 students, the majority from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds including Black or Black British, Asian or Asian British and Bangladeshi. The school, which was inspected by OFSTED in 2017, was found to have 'average' GCSE outcomes in 2016 - the year the interviewed students sat for their GCSE exams. Despite this, the inspectors found that:

> The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not make sufficiently rapid progress. This is because teachers do not consistently anticipate or plan more challenging tasks that will push these pupils on at a faster pace. Where teachers' questioning is too accepting of low-level responses, then this further slows pupils' progress (OFSTED, 2017, p.5).

In Harrison, more students than average for all schools were eligible for pupil premium funding, which is additional funding given to publicly-funded schools in England to improve the performance of disadvantaged students. More students than average had special educational needs or had care plans. In its report, OFSTED concluded that the school required improvement in all aspects. So, Abakar, Ayaan, and Tahir did not have the advantage of attending a high-performing school; in fact, it could be argued that the school was a constraint on educational achievement.

Similarly, two of the students [Malik and Sumaya], who respectively achieved the second and fourth highest results among the Somali students in Camden, went to Bellevue, a comprehensive mixed secondary school with over 900 students. The school, which OFSTED inspected in 2016 (the last year of GSCE studies for Sumaya and Malik), was found to be requiring improvement in all aspects. Bellevue's OFSTED (2016, p.1) report stated that "not enough pupils are making good progress across a wide range of subjects. Too many pupils underachieved in 2015 in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11." The report further indicated that:

> "[T]eaching does not consistently support pupils to make good progress. The most able are not always challenged sufficiently well. Some teachers do not provide specific advice for pupils about how to improve their work, and check that pupils respond" (p.1).

The school was also inspected in 2013 and was also found to be requiring improvement. It was last inspected in 2018 (after Sumaya and Malik completed their

GCSEs) and was this time assessed to be overall "good" but was still found to be underachieving in English and mathematics. More students than the national average spoke English as an additional language, and the proportion of students eligible for pupil premium funding was higher than the national average. Despite many students underachieving in their GCSE and teachers not sufficiently challenging and supporting students, Sumaya and Malik achieved success in this school.

The five highest achieving students in this study attended schools that OFSTED assessed as 'requiring improvement' and where there was not enough support for students. My argument is that this educational environment can be conceptualised as a barrier to high achievement. Nevertheless, as I will discuss in the next part of the chapter, these students overcame barriers, persevered and achieved success because they utilised the community cultural wealth of their families.

Of the other two students, Kadija went to Redmond, a comprehensive mixed secondary school with over 800 students. The OFSTED report of this school, which was inspected in 2018 and found to be good", showed that the two largest groups of students were from Bangladeshi and Black African backgrounds. Over three-quarters of students had English as an additional language. Three-quarters of students were also eligible for the pupil premium, a far higher number than the national average.

The OFSTED inspection was a "short inspection", with a full inspection taking place in 2012, where the school was also assessed to be "good". Nevertheless, OFSTED (2018) raised concerns saying, "outcomes for pupils dipped and in 2015 were below the government floor standards." (p.1). Despite this, the teachers in this school, unlike at Harrison and Bellevue, were challenging the most able students and were supporting their needs as reported by OFSTED (2018):

> "In the majority of lessons seen, activities were well planned by teachers to provide a high level of challenge for most-able pupils. Staff demonstrated strong subject knowledge and were using this effectively to meet pupils' learning needs." (p.3).

Yahya attended Wood Hill boys' secondary school, which has over 800 students. The school, which was inspected in 2017, was assessed to be "good" yet was found to have achieved below the national average in the 2016 GCSE exams. Around half of

the school's students spoke English as an additional language, and the number of students eligible for free school meals was significantly higher than the national average. OFSTED also found that "pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (including the most able disadvantaged) and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made less progress than other pupils nationally" (p.6). So, it might be that Kadija's and Yahya's schools enabled their achievement, depending on their individual experience of it. Nevertheless, none of the seven students interviewed had the obvious advantage of attending an 'outstanding' school.

Whether "requiring improvement" or "good", the schools attended by the seven students shared common characteristics: most students were of Black and minority ethnic backgrounds; most spoke English as an additional language; and a proportionally higher number than average were eligible for the pupil premium, indicative of disadvantage. Camden residents are 34 percent from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, according to the 2011 census (ONS, 2018). However, the schools attended by the seven students had a larger percentage of students from Black and minority ethnic groups. The reason may be that these schools are in areas close to social-housing estates. All seven students lived in social housing, generally occupied by families from lower socio-economic backgrounds. However, it might be worth observing that attending schools with such a demographic could be seen as an enabling factor in that the seven students would not (and did not) feel they were different from other students engendering a sense of belonging.

Somalis account for the largest refugee group in the UK (Vargas-Silva, 2016), and in 2006 the unemployment rate of the Somali community in the UK was estimated to be as high as 81 percent, with 80 percent of families living in social housing (IPPR, 2007). The children of families in deprived areas attend schools that are not of good standing. OFSTED's 2017 report suggested that schools with a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils do not improve to "good" or "outstanding", with 55 percent of schools in this category requiring improvement.

> A common factor in the schools that do not improve to good or outstanding is that they have a higher proportion of deprived pupils. Fifty-five per cent of the schools that currently require improvement have high proportions of pupils from deprived areas (OFSTED, 2017, p.31).

Here the OFSTED report seems to be shifting the blame from schools to the disadvantaged families, something that researchers started warning about nearly 50 years ago (Coard, 1971; Brown, 2005). Rather than acknowledging the system's weaknesses and the fact that students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds are disadvantaged in the education system, OFSTED appears to accept the notion that to be poor is a deficit. Therefore, it is acceptable for students from deprived areas to attend schools assessed to be poor or requiring improvements and students from affluent backgrounds to attend good or outstanding schools.

Lupton (2005) argues that the education system perpetuates the *status quo* of the inequality in education because schools in lower socio-economic areas require more funding to mitigate the multitude of challenges they face. Unless such funding is provided, these schools cannot be expected to compete with schools that can attract the best-qualified teachers, for example.

The students interviewed for this research study lived in deprived areas of Camden. Whatever the subtle differences between schools, these students were facing considerable barriers to educational achievement. I turn now to how the students succeeded despite not attending excellent schools.

Students Converting Parents' Community Cultural Wealth to Educational Success

Familial Capital

In this section, I discuss the possession of familial capital, which was particularly dominant throughout the interviews. The support and motivation students received from parents and parental aspirations and expectations for their children will be discussed. All the students acknowledged how the support and motivation from their families were key to their success. Abakar explains how his parents encouraged him to exert effort in his education in order to attain a good outcome.

> There was a lot of pressure from my family for me to do good, so every time I was trying to do something, they were like, 'You know you have your GCSEs. It is really important. If you fail your GCSEs you can't go anywhere', so there's a lot of pressure there (Abakar, 10 July 2017).

Abakar's comments add to the discussion I presented earlier that parental ambition and aspiration become a form of familial capital.

Kadija discussed how her family instilled in her a love of education. "I'm from the background that my family has taught me to love education and have put such importance on it." Kadija also recounted how her mother and the rest of the family helped her, saying, "When I was struggling with anything, I would go to my mum. She would help me a lot with maths. My sisters helped me a lot with English. Even in the subjects they weren't good in, they helped me."

Yahya told me how his father, who was working abroad, was still actively involved in his education:

> My dad, even though he wasn't there, he'd call me, whether on Skype or on the phone, to say, 'Let's do some work. Let me help you.' He's good at maths, so if I had a problem with maths he'll be like, 'Okay, this is how you solve it' step by step (Yahya, 12 July 2017).

Tahir lives with both his parents and his two sisters, one younger and one older. He acknowledges how crucial his mother's support was to his educational success.

> If I wasn't listening to my mom, for example, during the exam period, she took my phone off me and turned off the PlayStation. She wanted me to focus more. If she wasn't there, I couldn't have done as much as I did (Tahir, 14 July 2017).

Abakar, who received 7A*s and 3As in GCSE, believes that family support is important, but one must value and appreciate that support. "You can give something to people, and they may still not value it. So, education has to be valued by the person" (Abakar, 10 July 2017).

Sumaya and Ayaan similarly valued the 'pushing' of their parents. They acknowledged that the support offered by their parent was very crucial to their success.

Having briefly discussed how students used their familial capital in their education, I discuss in the next section the students' social capital and how having a peer network that was as hardworking as them was a positive influence on the educational success of Somali students in this study.

Social Capital

As discussed under the parents' chapter, private tutoring was a source of social capital for Somali students in this study. The seven students believed receiving private tutoring supported their education. Abakar believes that the private tuition he received throughout his education contributed to his success, saying, "I went to tuition for the majority of my secondary school and I see that it helped a lot. I did tuition for maths, English and science which were the majority of the GSCEs I did." Like Abakar, all seven students thought private tutoring was a strong influence on high achievement. Peer group network was also a social capital for the students, which I turn next.

Peer Group Network

The peer network provided social capital to the students in this study. The interviews with the students revealed that they had a sense of identification with a group. Nevertheless, they understood the influential factors their peer network played in their education and achievement.

Camden is home to ethnically diverse communities. According to the 2011 census, 34 percent of Camden residents were from Black and minority ethnic communities. Sixty percent were born in Britain or Ireland, with the remaining 40 percent born elsewhere. Residents of Camden speak 163 languages and dialects. After English, five percent speak Somali (ONS, 2018).

The diversity of residents in the borough is reflected in the student population. The students interviewed for this research attended four different schools with diverse populations. The students' peer networks also reflected this diversity. Kadija said that her friends "came from a mixture of all different backgrounds. They came from different age groups as well."

The students understood how their peer networks could have either a positive or negative influence on their education. Some of their friends were hardworking and motivated to achieve, while others were not.

> A lot of them had good ideas about education [and were] focused, and there were a few of them who were kind of lost. They didn't know what they were doing but just going to secondary school because they had to go. [A] majority of my friends, they did well, and they got good results in GCSEs (Abakar, 10 July 2017).

Yahya explained that some of his friends did not put the needed effort into their education as they believed there were other ways to succeed in life.

> Some of them say education is not important. Some of them think they can get a different way of succeeding in life. But then some of them think that education, they want to go to university, they want to get a job, and all of this. So, it's mixed (Yahya, 12 July 2017).

Despite having friends who were motivated to succeed and others who were not, the students were careful about who they spent their time, choosing those who were motivated over those who were not.

> There were people who I didn't like hanging out with because of their attitude. It's like they don't care. I want to succeed. I want to do well. So, the people you hang out with determine how well you do because some people can drag you down (Ayaan, 26 July 2017).

Kadija said her friends were hardworking and put effort into their education.

> The friends that I was especially close to, even though they came from different groups, they were the ones who had a hunger for education and who wanted to try hard as well. They might have not been doing amazingly well but they were still putting in the effort (Kadija, 24 July 2017).

The students chose friends who were hardworking and had a hunger for education. Most of the students interviewed were friends or knew each other, despite attending

different schools. Malik discussed how his friends did in school, saying, “Some have done really well, and others didn’t do so well. Those who did well were more than others.”

Students and parents alike were mindful of the influence of a negative peer network on their education. Tahir explained that his mother was worried he might make the wrong choices. “There were times they thought I couldn’t pick the right friends. They were just worried because I am their only boy and they felt that I could be easily influenced.”

The findings from the study reveal that students demonstrated social capital. They were mindful of the influence friends can have on their education. They maintained positive peer groups and avoided associating with friends who were a distraction to their education.

Having both familial and social capital, the students also managed to navigate the education system using their navigational capital, which I discuss next.

Navigational Capital

The students in this study were able to navigate an education system not designed to support their success and in which the majority of their peers failed to navigate and succeed. Despite Black students having high exclusions in schools (DfES, 2006; DfE, 2017; Wright, et al., 1998) and been seen as disruptive and unmotivated by their teachers (Gillborn, 2000), the students in this study were able to establish positive relationships with their teachers. None of the students and their parents reported that they had an exclusion in their schooling. Fitting in and having such a good relationship with their teachers served as navigational capital, which in turn contributed to their success, as discussed in chapter six about parents and their navigational capital.

The educational experience of Somali students in the UK is intertwined with their migration history. All seven students interviewed for this study were either born in the UK (Abakar, Malik, Kadija and Yahya) or came to the country from EU countries when they were very young (Ayaan, Sumaya and Tahir). So, these children had different educational experiences than their parents and children born in Somalia and

came to the UK at an older age. For example, all the students interviewed had access to education. They could speak English when young, while those born in Somalia and came to the UK when older must struggle to learn English and contend with an unfamiliar education system. However, this does not mean that the experiences of all UK-born Somali students or those born in other EU countries and who migrated to the UK are positive. Evidence shows (see literature review chapter) that Somali students, in general, are underachieving in schools.

Quality of Relationships with Peers and Teachers

Here I discuss the educational experience of the group of students I interviewed in terms of the quality of their relationships with peers and teachers because of the evidence of how enabling good relationships can be. For example, research by Craggs and Kelly (2017) found that a sense of belonging resulted from the positive relationship the students developed with their peers. An empirical review by Robinson (2014) found that having friends and feeling valued was necessary for students to feel that they belonged at school and that having a positive relationship with teachers and receiving necessary support at school was related to the feeling of belonging. Goodenow and Grady (1993) defined belonging as acceptance and being valued at school by teachers and fellow students.

Ayaan stated, "most teachers knew me for five to six years; they know what I am like and who I am. So, it was nice, and I liked the support from them." All the students attended schools with a diverse student population. Their capacity to fit in at school depended on how they managed their multiple identities and their relationships with their peers and teachers.

Fitting In with Peers. Somalis identifying as Muslim, Black and African inhabit multiple overlapping identities (Frosh et al., 2002; Valentine and Sporton, 2009). They practice the Islamic religion and share that faith with many of the Asian communities in the UK, such as Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and others. Many Somalis identify with their Islamic faith, while others identify themselves with their race, Black or Black African. As a result of these multiple identities, Somalis do not fit any of the cultural ethnic minority groups in the UK. Although they are Black, they do not share the Christian faith practised by most Black British people. While they share a religion with Asians, race and cultural practice between the two communities differ.

The hybrid identity of Somali students may mean that they are fluid in their friendships.

When I asked Abakar whether he felt as if he belonged at school (Harrison), he explained that he was very comfortable because there were a lot of people with Muslim, Somali and Asian backgrounds whom he identified with. For example, Harrison, the school Abakar, Ayaan and Tahir attended had the highest number of Somali students sitting for GCSE in 2016 – 37 students in total.

> I liked the environment a lot. There's a lot of people from my background, like the majority of the school. They are Muslim as well, you got a lot of Somalis, a lot of Asians as well, and I liked the environment (Abakar, 10 July 2017).

Congruent with a study that found that Somali youth prioritise their faith as Muslims over their racial and gender identities (Frosh et al., 2002), Abakar identified most with his Muslim background. Kadija, too, was happy that most of her school's population were from minority ethnic backgrounds.

> I have felt comfortable because everyone has had to accept each other because there are people from so many different parts of the world. We all learned from each other and it was comfortable because no one was discriminating against each other because there were mainly ethnic minorities (Kadija, 24 July 2017).

When Sumaya was asked if she felt she belonged at school, she stated, "Yes, definitely. Because quite a few people from primary school as well went there, so it was a comfortable environment."

So, all the students felt they belonged because the schools they attended had large numbers of Black and minority ethnic students. This experience was independent of the OFSTED rating. Moreover, two of the schools where four of the students attended had comparatively large Somali students, which allowed them to group as they share a unique identity. Abakar says, "At secondary school most of my friends were Somali boys who I used to hang around with. There would be few [other] nationalities I hung around with." Malik, like his peers, felt he belonged in his school because he didn't

feel out of place, saying, “There have been a lot of Somali students like me, so I felt comfortable.”

When Kadija was asked about her school and her friends, she replied:

> The school, it has mainly Bengali students, and then the second biggest group of students would be Somalis, but then you also have loads of people from different backgrounds. You have students coming in from Malaysia, Mexico and you also have White students, Caribbean students, other black African students. You have a big range as well. […] I was spending time with them [Somali students] but the thing with the Somali students that I was friends with, they were mainly all in one group (Kadija, 24 July 2017).

Tahir's friends mainly were Somalis, but he was also comfortable having friends from other ethnic backgrounds. "It is like there were groups of people [he names three students] and other people in my class. I was friends with everyone, and I was comfortable when I was with other people.” The three students Tahir mentioned are all Somalis, showing that he was most comfortable having close friends from the same ethnic background.

However, fitting in was not a straightforward task. As a Somali who understands the culture and has been working with the community for over a decade, I observe that Somali parents want to preserve their culture and shield their children from being assimilated by the dominant culture. As I will discuss below, these parents take their children to private tuition centres and by extension, to mosques and Quranic schools.

Nevertheless, it is about how the social aspect of school worked for these students. So, their relationship with peers and their sense of being part of the school can be construed as enablers.

Students’ Relationships with Teachers. Students told me that their teachers were mostly White from Britain and other European countries such as Greece and Italy. However, ethnicity and cultural differences were not barriers to maintaining a positive relationship between teachers and students. Kadija explained the importance of having teachers who are not discriminatory and who understand the backgrounds of their students, “If you have teachers who are not going to be prejudiced towards

you and understand you and your background [then] you have everything you need to help you get to where you want to be" (Kadija, 24 July 2017).

OFSTED reports of two schools (Harrison and Bellevue) indicate that teaching was not supporting students to make good progress and that teachers were not giving students appropriate advice on how to improve their work. Nevertheless, the quality of relationships was experienced as good and very important to the students interviewed for this study (OFSTED has not made observations on this). All the students interviewed had positive perceptions about their teachers, saying they were supportive and recognised their achievements by praising them if they did something positive such as answering a question correctly or achieving high marks. They also encouraged them to exert more effort when they fell short of their teachers' expectations.

Abakar described how his teachers motivated him to do well. "The teachers were saying, 'You have high standards, you should be getting the A*s and the As. I will be disappointed if you don't get that'. So, there was a lot of pressure to perform and get the grades." Ayaan said her teachers combined being tough but also caring about her education outcomes, motivating her to aim high. Ayaan gave her views on the characteristics of a good teacher.

> My form tutor, I didn't like him at the beginning because I thought he was too tough, but he cared about me as well as being tough. Also, my head of year, who was my maths teacher for the last two years, he cared. What makes good teachers is how much they care about their students and about the subjects they teach (Ayaan, 26 July 2017).

Tahir recounted his highly positive relationship with his maths teacher, who was highly supportive.

> The teachers were good, particularly my maths teacher. He was sometimes making jokes but most times he was serious and that teacher he helped me a lot. The thing that I remember about secondary school is my maths teacher (Tahir, 14 July 2017).

Despite having a positive relationship with his teachers, Tahir's mother recalled one of her son's teachers accusing him of being overconfident. "I remember his teacher saying, 'Tahir is full of confidence, a fake confidence' and that 'He should be humble in order to do well'. Sometimes I used to think that the teacher's perception was wrong." The teachers' comments might express a stereotype held by teachers towards "overconfident" Black students. Blair (2001) suggests that this stereotype explains why the rate of permanent exclusion from school for being aggressive and having behavioural problems is higher for Black students than for White. The latest statistics from DfE (2017) show that Black Caribbean students were permanently excluded three times more than their White counterparts.

Sumaya's geography teacher left a positive impression on her. She remembered how helpful he was and how he motivated her to put more effort into her education. She says, "He was just an all-around good teacher. Supportive. I think he kind of knew what I could achieve, so he pushed me."

It was remarkable that no students had negative stories about their teachers. Having been an active community member and a supplementary teacher for GCSE Somali students in London schools for two years, I heard Somali students recounting negative experiences with teachers many times. The lack of negative stories from the participants of this study might not mean that they never had a bad experience of a teacher, but that in their school careers as a whole, the positive experiences outweighed the negative and that they were disposed to think well of their teachers when asked.

Linguistic Capital

As explained in the linguistic capital of parents in chapter six, this study adopted Yosso's community cultural wealth framework after data collection. Therefore, discussion relating to linguistic capital hardly came up during the interviews. As a result, this section and that of parents discussed above lack detail. This section mainly offers commentary which builds on earlier sections of the community cultural wealth framework.

All of the seven students were bilingual who spoke English and Somali. As discussed in detail under the 'linguistic capital' of the parents' in chapter six, the seven students

had a warm relationship with their parents who spoke Somali at home. The family homes were typical Somali families – eating Somali dishes and having access to dozens of television channels broadcasting from the UK, Somalia and Kenya – all broadcasting in Somali. Having been able to speak in Somali make the children maintain close with their culture and community. Furthermore, having access to Somali speaking TV channels enable them to be in tune with their culture and affairs back home in Somalia, although they have never been there. Linguistic capital helps the students establish positive self-identity, which supports self-esteem and educational success. Research has shown that having positive self-esteem contributes to student achievement in education (Redenbach, 1991; Rubie, et al 2004).

Having familial, social, navigational, and linguistic capitals enabled these students to aspire and dream big by having aspirational capital, which I discuss next.

Aspirational Capital

Yosso (2005) defines aspirational capital as "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (p.77). Existing research shows that educational aspirations are positive predictors of academic self-efficacy, and academic self-efficacy is, in turn, a predictor of academic achievement (Roeser, Midgley, and Urdan, 1996; Uwah, McMahon, and Furlow, 2008). The students interviewed for this study had high educational aspirations despite persistent education inequities. I discuss how students maintained high hopes for the future despite barriers. I then discuss student perspectives on their hard work to achieve success. I lastly discuss student persistence in achieving their desired goals and dreams.

Maintaining High Hopes for The Future

The ability to hold on to hopes and dreams for the future and to maintain a sense of self-worth, despite the inequality and barriers, was evident throughout the interviews with the Somali students and their parents as discussed earlier. These dispositions amount to aspirational capital. Responses revealed an overlap of aspirational and resistant capitals, in that students keep their hopes and dreams by preserving a sense of self-worth despite barriers. I will discuss resistant capital in the next section.

All of the students interviewed had high hopes for the future. All were studying for A Levels, with four attending high-performing colleges. Most had enrolled in science and maths courses. There is a widespread perception among the Somali community that to be considered successful, one has to be either a doctor or engineer. This perception can be seen in my group of students in which three of the seven wanted to study medicine at university. All the participant students wanted to pursue higher education and study for a professional career. Abakar, Ayaan, and Sumaya wanted to become medical doctors; Malik and Yahya wanted to be economists; Kadija wanted to be a scriptwriter; Tahir aspired to be a businessman.

Abakar describes how he tried hard to get into grammar school but was unsuccessful because his home fell outside the school's catchment area.

> I went to Bellevue School in Camden. It wasn't my first choice for schools. I applied for a grammar school in Barnet but because it was too far away, I didn't get accepted, even after I passed the 11+ exams (Abakar, 10 July 2017).

In his A Levels, Abakar enrolled in four science and maths courses (see student profiles) in order to increase his chances of either getting into medical school or studying engineering.

> The A Levels I chose to study, biology, chemistry physics and maths, were the ones I was thinking that when I go to university In sha'Allah [God willing], those will be like the main courses I will be doing: engineering and medicine, so those four cover both of them. Those four A Levels, they allow me to do either of those courses whichever I want to choose. So, now, I am done all the exams, I am thinking what I enjoy more is the biology and chemistry side, so I am thinking of dropping physics and going to medicine (Abakar, 10 July 2017).

Abakar wants to specialise in surgery after his medical training, saying: "In 10 years' time, I can be, like, a surgeon. I see myself working in a hospital definitely."

Sumaya also wants to study medicine. She believes there is a connection between succeeding in education and getting good jobs.

> Education opens up pathways for you. Without education, how are you going to distinguish between people? In terms of certain jobs as well, you need the highest-achieving people for certain jobs. Without education you can't do that (Sumaya, 15 July 2017).

Kadija, who received an A* in English literature at GCSE, hopes to become a creative writer. "I will either be working for a magazine, publishing things, or I will be part of a company where I would be able to help write scripts for film or TV." Tahir aims to become an independent businessman. "I want to be my own boss someday and with that I also want be looking at doing trading."

All students aspired to go to good universities and become professionals in various fields. For aspirations to materialise, hard work is required. The following section discusses the efforts students put into homework and preparing for tests and exams.

Working Hard to Succeed

All the students interviewed demonstrated aspirational capital by working hard. Except for Malik, all other students said schoolwork was not easy for them, particularly studying science and mathematics during their GCSE preparation. The students did not mention any specific difficulties that might be unique to them, such as speaking English. My impression was that feeling pressure to study hard during secondary school is not unique to the interviewed students. They share these experiences with fellow students. They worked hard because they understood that would determine the grades they received. Ayaan put it succinctly when she said, "I had to work hard like everyone else but it's how much effort you put into something that really determines the outcome."

The students knew that self-motivation was needed to do well in school and that no support system could help them succeed in education without hard work. Kadija said, "If you don't want to push yourself and if you don't want to try, you're not going to achieve anything."

Every student interviewed had stories to tell about their experience of doing homework. Some thought that homework had a purpose and contributed to their understanding of the subject matter.

> When I got into GCSEs I realised, 'Oh my God, the homework that I do at home is actually going to help me in lessons.' The teachers aren't giving it to me just because they have to. Then, I actually made a point, because the teachers, they would have a schedule what days to give in and then I would remember that. I know when to give in the homework for this subject, for that subject. I would force myself to remember and do it myself (Kadija, 24 July 2017).

Three of the boys interviewed did not like doing homework because they were involved in sports and computer gaming. They put less effort into their homework than the girls. Others found homework relatively easy and did it in class or just before class.

> I can speak from experience. When I was in school, some people are the type to go home and do their revision. But then there are some people that would go home, and they'd be like, 'I'll do it later. I'll be outside with my friends' or 'I'll be playing PlayStation' or 'I'll be doing this or that.' No matter if they are very, very smart or just normal, or maybe even very low, if they put in the hard work, especially at a time like GCSE, but if they try their best and put in the hard work, they got good grades (Yahya, 12 July 2017).

When discussing his approach to homework, Yahya compared his years in Saudi Arabia and the UK. Homework was a permanent fixture in both educational settings. Despite not liking it, Yahya worked hard and did his homework.

> I've always had a lot [of homework], and it kind of stresses me out in the same sense. In Saudi Arabia and here, they give you a lot of homework. Every lesson, you come in: homework, homework, homework, all the time. Then sometimes you feel like, 'I want to rest', but you can't, because you've been given the homework. But then it's like love and hate. I hate it, because it's a lot of work, but I love it, because if you do the homework and you always hand it in, and you do it to your best quality, then when you come to the exams, you can do them easily (Yahya, 12 July 2017).

Homework was often tricky for Sumaya, and she had to read the assignment many times to understand it, though she stressed that she had no problems understanding English. This was clear from her results, as Sumaya achieved an A* in English and an A in English literature.

> I think, how I dealt with it was, what I learned in school, I would go home and go over it multiple times, make sure I understood it. Sometimes I would read ahead, so I know what's coming up and stuff. That's how I personally dealt with it. So, it wasn't easy, it wasn't like you float through it. You have to work towards it. But it's not impossible. […] There was obviously a lot of homework, but I knew I had to complete it, in order to understand what we were learning. So, I would come home, rest for a bit, and then, just get straight into it, basically. Because, the earlier you finish the homework, the earlier you can start revising the content. So, that's how I looked at it (Sumaya**,** 15 July 2017).

In the section above, I discussed how the students used navigational capital by using strategies to navigate through the school system and achieve high. For example, the significance of homework and its place in school is a form of navigation. The next sub-section discusses how the interviewed students demonstrated persistence capital in their pursuit to succeed in education.

Persistence in Achieving Success

An important component of supporting students' success in education is devising a strategy that focuses on persistence. For students to achieve their desired goals, they need persistence. During the interviews, many students recalled the pressures they felt during their secondary education, particularly during their GCSEs. The students devised strategies such as asking their parents for private tuition and reducing the time they spent with their peers and on gaming and social media in order to focus on their education.

Four of the students (Sumaya, Yahya, Ayaan, and Tahir) felt that there was too much homework, particularly during the GCSE years. They also had a desire to succeed. They, therefore, devised a strategy of remaining persistent.

> It was weird at the beginning because I never had that kind of setting before where there's tension and so much pressure to achieve. In the beginning that put me off, I didn't want to revise because there was a lot of pressure. The beginning part of the revision, there was hard stuff but as you go along, it gets much easier. If you make it fun, something you enjoy and something you're interested in, it's a lot easier. (Ayaan, 26 July 2017).

Ayaan understood that there would be challenges along the way and that she needed to be resolute to achieve well. "Mostly, like, at the beginning you need to understand that you're not going to do well some of the time, but you need to carry on and be determined to reach your goal."

Kadija was scared at the prospect of doing GCSEs. She based her perceptions on what others had told her. "I was kind of scared because I was, like, 'Oh my god, it's GCSEs, it's here now. Everything they've been telling me from primary school, GCSEs'." She suffered personal tragedy during her GCSEs. Her father had cancer and was ill throughout her GCSE years. He passed away weeks before her exams started. Despite the tragedy, Kadija persisted and did well, attaining 2As, 8Bs and 1C.

Sumaya also persisted, continuing to revise because she understood that this was a pre-condition of achievement. "Revision, a lot of the time. (laughter.) I had to, because that was the only way I knew I would get my grades. So, a lot of the free time was revision time, basically."

Abakar remembers when his father felt the school was not pushing him hard enough and asked the teacher to give him extra work. Also, a form of navigational capital, as discussed earlier in the chapter.

> You don't get a lot of support [from school], so with my parents they had to keep on contacting the teachers and telling them 'Can you push my son, he feels all the work is too easy. Can you give him extra work, so he gets challenged?'" (Abakar**,** 10 July 2017).

The persistence of these students appears to have paid off because they succeeded in education, achieved good grades, and got access to good A-Level colleges. In the sub-section below, I discuss how the students' demonstrated resistant capital by

overcoming the negative label attached to Somali students in the UK as low achievers.

Resistant Capital

The students in this study achieved highly in the context of low achievement amongst Somali students in the UK. These students demonstrated resistant capital by having the desire to achieve for themselves and challenging the stereotype that Somali students in the UK are underachievers. This is in line with Lundy (2003) suggestion that Black students see high achievement as a way of challenging White supremacy. These students achieved not only high but also have high aspirations of wanting to study in some of the best universities in the UK. The seven students were motivated to have career pathways such as medicine, engineering, and economy, which challenges the people's negative ideas about the stereotypical image of them.

The students converted their parent's community cultural wealth to success in education. Having parents who were well educated compared to the typical Somali parent in the UK, the students had access to information otherwise not available to most other Somali students. Access to information allowed them to choose their Sixth Form colleges strategically, with some attending to good Sixth Form colleges at the time of the interview.

Students attended schools with significant Black and minority ethnic student populations; three attended a school with most of its students Black and minority ethnic. Students were aware and commented about the racial make-up of student populations in their schools. They commented that their teachers mainly were White. Although I did not ask students directly if they felt discriminated against, no students stated they felt any discrimination.

Nevertheless, Kadija, who attended a school that had a majority student population from Black and minority ethnic and teachers who were mostly White explained the importance of having teachers who are not discriminatory and who understand the backgrounds of their students, “If you have teachers who are not going to be prejudiced towards you and understand you and your background [then] you have everything you need to help you get to where you want to be.” By achieving high

despite many constraints and challenging the status quo, these students demonstrated resistant capital.

Conclusion

What this chapter revealed is that the seven students succeeded in education despite the quality of education received. They made the most of their parents' community cultural wealth, the contributions of their parents and the community network. The students had high hopes for the future and aspired to go to good universities and become successful professionals. The values of hard work, high hopes and the persistence to succeed in the face of many challenges were espoused by the students. They understood that hard work and persistence is required for their hopes and dreams to come true. These values were foundational to their high achievement. Such values and aspirations are likely to support the seven to succeed in higher education and get the jobs they want. Achieving high in education and aspiring to have a promising career is challenging the stereotype of Somali students as low achievers.

It is important to remember that despite their possession of community cultural wealth, most Somali parents cannot mobilise their community wealth in navigating the education system to support their children. This study argues that the education system in the UK should take more responsibility in the education of Somali students. This study proposes recommendations for key stakeholders in the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The problem that this thesis examines is what explains the unusually high educational achievement of a few secondary school students in the context of generally low educational achievement of students from the Somali community in the UK. Much of the literature relating to Somali students in UK secondary schools suggests that their underachievement is explained by various factors, including lack of support from home; parent's lack of understanding of the education system; the education system neglecting the needs of this group of students; and low expectations of what they can achieve. In order to explore these explanations, my study focused, conversely, on how academically high-achieving Somali students attain academic success when so many of their peers do not. My study employed Tara Yosso's (2005) theory about community cultural wealth to explain the data and understand what contributed to the success of this group of students. I believe this research has confirmed that the high achieving Somali students did not experience of lack of support at home or lack of parental understanding of the education system because of the advantage of their parents' education. So, with the support they received from their parents, these students overcame the other two constraints: the education system neglecting their needs and the low expectations of what they can achieve.

This concluding chapter offers an analytical summary of the findings through the conceptual lens. Then it briefly touches on what can be deduced from this study in supporting Somali students who are underachieving. It then discusses the implications for social and educational policy and practice and makes some recommendations. Finally, it presents the contribution to both conceptual and practical knowledge that the research makes.

Analytical Summary of Findings

The findings from this study show that some Somali students can achieve relatively high when both student and parent make extraordinary efforts which they are able to do because of the specific advantage of the previous generation having an education. In this study, achievement could be understood as the result of mobilising community cultural capitals rather than as the result of high-quality of their pedagogical

experience, though ‘fitting in’ in multicultural, diverse schools might also have been critical to success. Analysis of the data showed that aspirational, familial, navigational, resistant, social, and linguistic capitals were assets that students transferred across fields of interaction to achieve within dominant institutions in an unfamiliar culture.

Yosso’s (2005) various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static but rather represent dynamic processes that build upon one another as a part of community cultural wealth. Analysis of these overlapping forms of capital, which were apparent in this study, offers an explanation of how this small group of Somali students successfully navigated the education system. The seven students recounted how they used their skills, abilities, resources, and wealth of knowledge not only to survive in the education system but also to thrive and achieve at a high level.

Evidence of familial and social capitals emerged in interviews with parents and students. Parents’ understanding of the education system and their own educational background enabled them to support their children’s education. Families’ emotional and financial support enabled students to acquire skills and practice behaviours that facilitated academic success. Parents accessed community resources to support their children’s education at an early stage, making use of private tutors from the community to raise the achievement levels of students. Tuition centres that students attended and its symbolic power of sending a further message to the students about how highly valued educational achievement can be conceptualised as a community resource among the Somali community in London. The students also sought advice from teachers and community members.

Students established positive relationships with their teachers and staff in educational settings, successfully managed peer groups and developed an attitude of academic perseverance. Students were able to convert their navigational capital into behaviours and mindsets that promote academic success.

These young people were from an underprivileged community that came from a refugee background and were Black and Muslim with experience of some family and schooling instability. Moreover, the five highest achieving students in this study attended schools that OFSTED assessed as ‘requiring improvement’ and where there

was not enough support for students; there was not a culture of high achievement; and, the system appears to expect adaptation to it rather than accommodating the needs of this group of students. However, despite the barriers associated with these characteristics, students converted their aspirational capital into motivation and maintained hopes, dreams and ambitions for the future. The students were willing to challenge the failure narrative that is often ascribed to Somali students. They worked hard to achieve success in secondary school and aspired to attend good universities.

Resistant capital, which is the knowledge and experience utilised to challenge inequality and discrimination, did not appear to be part of the academic success of this group of students. These students tended to remain within groups with which they felt comfortable and supported. They lived in an inner London multicultural borough, and some attended schools where most students were from minority ethnic communities. Most of the students also attended a particular private tuition centre run by minority tutors, including Somalis, which was believed to offer a higher standard of tuition than others. The students' peer groups were mostly drawn from minority ethnic students. Most did not disclose maltreatment or discrimination due to race or religion. Only one student (Kadija) alluded to White students discriminating against Black and minority ethnic students in the school but avoided elaborating on the kind of discrimination or whether she had experienced discrimination herself.

Linguistic capital was strongly evident in the interviews with students. The students and their parents were bilingual in Somali and English. They were multicultural, appearing well integrated into British society while retaining their Somali heritage. Despite coming from homes where Somali is spoken, none of these students had problems with the English language. Having the unique ability to identify with fellow Black students as well as with the majority-Muslim Asian students, the student participants were able to manoeuvre in more than one culture. Parents also used storytelling to educate the children about their cultural backgrounds and instil a culture of valuing education while reminding their children of their good fortune compared to their relatives back in Somalia.

Navigational capital was most important because it allowed both students and parents in this study to manoeuvre an education system not designed to support their success and in which the majority of their peers failed to navigate and succeed.

Research relating to high-achieving Black secondary school students from underprivileged backgrounds claims that this group of students may be successful because they gain White middle-class values and capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Fordham, 1988; Ogbu and Simmons, 1998). On the contrary, this study found that forms of capital derived from families and communities are converted into academic success. This small group of students beat the odds, not only achieving high marks in their GCSE but also registering in good A Level colleges and aspiring to attend good universities and go on to high-status careers.

In summary, the findings from this study show the seven students converting the capitals derived from the cultural wealth of their families and communities into academic success. Parents' involvement and support were invaluable resources in the educational success of their children, who attributed their success to their parents' attitude towards education. Invaluable resources for success that flowed from the mobilisation of the capitals of community wealth were the students' own attitudes, ways of thinking and personal attributes. However, while teachers were reported to be welcoming and friendly, few teachers were reported as influencing the success of the seven students, so the school and teachers did not emerge as key factors in driving the academic success of these students. This observation leads me to consider the social implications of my findings.

What Can We Extrapolate from How Somali School Students Achieve in the UK Educational System About How to Support Those Who Do Not?

This study found that the parents' comparatively high level of education and relative wealth allowed them to navigate the education system and so shape their children's future. The students took what was offered to them by their parents and converted it into educational success. All Somali students possess community cultural wealth capitals that are not recognised in educational institutions. Despite this misrecognition, parents of high-achieving students could mobilise their community wealth and successfully navigate the education system. This is not the case for most Somali parents because they come from households where multiple constraints operate – poverty, overcrowded living spaces, poor parental education, and lack of positive role models. These factors hinder students and parents from navigating an education system unfamiliar to them. So, despite their possession of community

cultural wealth capitals, structural/systematic constraints take the upper hand. This study intends to offer hope to the Somali pupils who are underachieving within the UK education system.

Social and Educational Implications of the Study Findings

Despite the dismal statistics of the underachievement of Somali students in London schools, some achieve good results. This study gives a voice to Somali students and their parents, who together navigated the UK education system and achieved academic success. It is therefore pertinent that policymakers, school administrators and other stakeholders listen to such students and their parents so that policies and strategies that support the education of underachieving Somali students in schools can be devised. As the parents' level of education was a critical factor, policies and practices need to be devised that support students and parents who cannot draw on this advantage.

It is not acceptable that the current education system is failing most Somali students. Those involved in the education of this group of students should be willing to reframe their thinking and practices. For this reframing to materialise, change must occur on multiple levels with all stakeholders: the students, parents, community leaders and organisations, schoolteachers and administrators, the local authority and the department for education. Each party involved has a role and is needed to contribute to challenging the underachievement of Somali students. I believe that if the recommendations of this study are implemented, a meaningful change in the lives of underachieving Somali students could be achieved.

Students

Enacting positive change is socially and educationally complex and challenging. Noguera (2003), who studied the role that culture, and environmental factors play in the academic achievement of African American males, suggested that "Black males are not merely passive victims but may also be active agents in their own failure" and "interventions designed to help them must take this into account" (p. 437). So, both achieving and underachieving Somali students can be active agents in their own (lack of) learning and their high/low academic achievement. Students should be supported to take ownership and responsibility for their learning. As the participants in this

study, they should work hard, have hopes and aspirations, and strive to succeed even when their educational experience is not wholly positive.

Parents

Parents play a critical role in their child's education. Somali parents need to recognise that in the UK, educating a child is a shared responsibility between school and home, unlike school systems where the school shoulders the entire responsibility of educating the child (as in Somalia). They should therefore recognise the value and importance of their contribution to their child's educational experience. This contribution consists of: establishing close working relationships with teachers and school administrators and working in partnership with them by attending parents' evenings, getting updates about their child's progress, ensuring that their child does homework regularly, and advocating for their child's educational needs. Parents can also play an active role in their child's education by getting involved and becoming members of the governing body and parents' associations. Somali parents should also share with their children stories from their culture and success stories of members of the Somali community in the UK and elsewhere to motivate their children to aim high.

Community Leaders and Organisations

This study found that private tuition was perceived to be contributing factor in the high achievement of the seven students. Parents believed that the private tuition served two purposes: 1) helping students learn and prepare for examinations, and 2) keeping educational pressure on students because they had to work hard since their parents had paid a premium amount of money for the private tuition. Most Somali families are low income and cannot afford to send their children to private tuition. The parents who can afford private tuition may possibly make other parents feel that they cannot beat the system. Community leaders should recognise that they have a role in raising the achievement levels of the underachieving pupils in UK schools. Community leaders and organisers should take part in educating parents about the UK education system – explaining what schools expect from parents. Community leaders and organisations could also establish supplementary classes intended to support the achievement of this group of students. Community leaders could be involved in

schools' governing bodies, so that schools and community have a vehicle for working together and also encourage Somali parents and prominent members in the community to volunteer and join schools' governing bodies.

School Teachers and Administrators

Their refugee background is a disadvantage to Somali students because schools that admit children from asylum-seeking and refugee backgrounds are not given the required funding to recruit good teachers and offer additional support teaching these students (McIntyre and Hall, 2020). Instead, the government "is currently reducing per capita funding in schools with high concentrations of [asylum-seeking and refugee] ASR students." (McIntyre and Hall, 2020, p.596). Despite these resource challenges, schools should make efforts to support this group of students, e.g. administrators and teachers should challenge the deficit view of this group of students. Schools should audit the attainment levels of Somali students in comparison with other groups. Schools could appoint bilingual Somali teaching assistants who can relate to the students' needs, attitudes, aspirations and concerns. This could be a resource on which the schools should draw as well. These teachers would serve as role models to Somali students and also help the school understand what life is like for these students. Having Somali teachers in school may help raise the expectations and aspirations of these students. Bilingual Somali teachers will be able to communicate with Somali parents who have language barriers. Schools should understand and respond to parents' desire to employ private tutors. Offering after school clubs that provide core curriculum and language support to underachieving students could stop the parents' need for private tutors.

Moreover, schools should take responsibility for educating Somali parents about how the UK education system works so that they have a full understanding of their role and are better able to support their children. School administrators should develop a strategy to strengthen links with Somali parents to encourage parents' active involvement and participation in their children's education and progress at every stage. They should also encourage parents to serve as school governors so they can play an active role in their children's education.

Extrapolating from OFSTED reports, teachers should be encouraged to develop a cultural understanding of all of their students. Teachers should have high expectations of these students, keeping in mind that "children are not born underachievers. Underachievement is learned behaviour, and therefore it can be unlearned" (Davis and Rimm, 1994, p.291). Teachers should recognise that these students can be successful and have the potential to succeed if given the right support.

Local Authority

“Schools can lead the way, but they cannot address the impact of wider social inequalities alone, and certainly not without significant investment” (Shain, 2016, p.16). Local authorities should record specific data on Somali students to monitor the educational attainment of this overlooked group. They should provide funding to schools with high numbers of Somali students so that schools can provide after school support to underachieving students. Local authorities and academy trusts (not under local authority) should provide Somali parents who need it with English language courses so that they can better support their children.

Department for Education

The Department for Education must examine the existing structures and practices that perpetuate the underachievement of Black students, including Somalis. It is crucial to recognise the urgency of the situation and no longer allow specific groups of students to fall behind in education. There must be a systematic recording of data relating to Somali students in schools to monitor their attainment levels at the national level. There needs to be greater accountability placed at the national policy level rather than leaving it up to individual schools to monitor the attainment levels of this group. Absence of such support from local and national level risks “the future of an inclusive society in England” (McIntyre and Hall, 2020, p. 597).

Contribution to Knowledge

This research makes an original contribution to knowledge in four ways. Firstly, the study contains new knowledge about how some Somali students converted the capitals derived from the cultural wealth of their families and communities into academic success. The study also reveals how students challenged the deficit view often ascribed to Somali students. By exercising their agency and putting education

first, they did well in school and aspired to attend good universities and to achieve high-status careers in the future.

Secondly, the study adds to the growing literature that seeks to challenge the stereotyped deficit thinking about Black parents in general and Black Caribbean parents in particular in the UK, which states Black parents do not value education, are disinterested in their children's education and do not support their children's education. This study illustrates how the interviewed Somali parents' cultural capital, including expectations, values and aspirations, influenced how they supported their children's learning at home. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that not only are Somali parents interested in their children's education and value it greatly but also that when they have the cultural resources, especially those gleaned from their own education, they are extraordinarily persistent in supporting and encouraging the education of their children.

Thirdly, the study reveals that the Somali parents in this study used private tutoring and invested heavily in their children's education by taking them to what they believe are the best tutoring centres in the city and paying money to sacrifice other things to provide high-quality educational support. This suggests that Somali parents, like White middle-class parents, use private tutoring to support their children's education because they value education and achievement. The private tutoring was found to be a contributing factor to the educational success of these children because it served two purposes: 1) it helped students learn and prepare for examinations; and 2) it put educational pressure on students because they had to work hard knowing how much money their parents had paid. The parents are driven to private tuition centres in the belief that schools are not structurally equipped to meet the educational needs of their students and the perception that private tuition centres offer better educational support.

Fourthly, the findings from this study can contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the pervasive problem of the underachievement of Somali students in UK schools and how the achievement levels of this group of students can be raised. This study makes policy and practice recommendations that may be useful in raising the achievement levels of this overlooked group. All stakeholders: the students, parents, teachers, administrators, the local authority and the department for education, have a role to

play in implementing these recommendations and facilitating meaningful change in the lives of underachieving Somali students.

Limitations

While this study highlighted what supported the achievement of Somali students in London schools, some limitations exist. The study adopted Yosso's community cultural wealth framework after data collection was completed. As a result, some questions which might have better explained some of the capitals were not in the interview schedule and participants were not directly asked. Perhaps if the study asked the participants what the community did for them; how they challenged inequality; and if they had an experience of discrimination, their responses might have given us a better understanding of their resistant capital which did not emerge in the interviews.

Another limitation was not to use a life grid with the parents similar to the students. Life grid with parents might have given us a better understanding of their life history and how this has shaped their attitudes to education and relationship with their children. I realised how important the intergenerational aspect is to passing on 'wealth'.

Further Research

Understanding what would support the high achievement of Somali students in London schools was a key motivation for my undertaking of this study. Most scholarly studies about Somali students in UK schools focus on deficit, it might redress the balance to extend Yosso's community cultural wealth framework to underachieving students and their families to understand the community capitals they possess and what prevents them to mobilise these capitals to better navigate the educational institutions. Understanding the community capitals underachieving students and their parents possess and the barriers to mobilising their community wealth would help develop a strategy that can help the students and parents mobilise their capitals to navigate the education system.

Conclusion

This study revealed that students could achieve high when parents and students mobilise their community cultural wealth and use it to navigate the education system. This is so, even when their schools are judged as in need of improvement. Nevertheless, most Somali students are underachieving in school. Although they possess aspects of the community cultural wealth capitals, it appears that underachieving students and their parents lack navigational capital because they lack experience of education and are, therefore, unable to manoeuvre an education system not designed to support groups like them.

Research has shown that underachievement is linked with high unemployment, involvement of crime and mental health illness, while good education plays an important role in lifting children out of poverty and social exclusion. With most Somali students underachieving, there's a worry that the vicious cycle of underachievement, unemployment, and social exclusion will remain in place among the Somali community in the UK.

Parents, schools, community leaders, local authorities, and the department for education share a responsibility to ensure that these students have access to the support and resource that makes lifting them out of this cycle of underachievement possible. If the students in this study - most of whom attended schools that required improvement, succeeded despite not having an education system that supported them, so can other Somali students who are currently underachieving. While literature points to multiple socio and economic deprivations as the cause of Somali students' underachievement, at the same time, it has become evident that the education system should accept responsibility for reproducing unequal outcomes for different groups of school students. This study makes policy and practice recommendations to all stakeholders so that the achievement levels and the school experiences of underachieving Somali students can be improved. This requires political will from policymakers and commitment from all stakeholders.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

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Appendix 1: Ethics Approval

2015/69/B

School of Education – Research Ethics Approval Form



Name Mohamud Yusuf Garre
Main Supervisor Monica McLean
Course of Study EdD
Title of Research Project: Case study of the educational experiences of high-achieving Somali students in London Schools

Is this a resubmission? Yes **Date statement of research ethics received by PGR Office:** 14/01/16

Research Ethics Coordinator Comments:

1. Thank you for addressing some of the issues we raised earlier and I note you have drafted a letter to the Somali Youth Development Centre as the gatekeeper to access your participants.
2. All information letters need to have the student's email address and give the supervisors' names and contact details as well as the ethics office.
3. Data storage needs to comply with the university's protocols and written on the information forms as well.

This project is approved.

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you and your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the University Research Ethics Committee. http://www/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-2011.pdf?noredirect=1 *If you have any concerns during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice and refer again to the School of Education's Research Ethics Committee.*

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Outcome:

Approved [X] Revise and Resubmit [ ]

Date: 27 January 2016

Appendix 2: Letter to the Director, Meygaag Community Organisation

11th January 2016

Dear (name of director),

As you are already aware, I am a doctoral student from the University of Nottingham, currently undertaking my research on educationally high-achieving Somali heritage students. My study will focus on students who completed their GCSE studies in 2015. This group is chosen because available data indicates low attainment among its members when compared with the national average and with most of the other ethnic groups in the UK. So that we can address the problem, it is important to gain understanding of the factors that contribute to Somali students doing well educationally.

The study aims to explore how social and cultural locations, including schools, families and social networks, have influenced high achieving Somali students' attitude to and experiences of education after they have completed their GCSEs. And to consider the significance of GCSE attainment in the educational progress of students towards further education and higher education.

The proposed study will be of eight individual case studies of pupils who have completed their GCSEs. The case study pupils will be the highest achieving Somali students in schools maintained by London Borough of Camden. I expect the case study pupils to be a mixture of boys and girls; however, gender is not a selection criterion because the study focuses on high achieving students regardless of their gender.

I ask your organization to grant me access to the high-achieving students' data, which will allow me to invite the highest achieving students to participate in my research. I also ask your organization's permission to allow me to do the interviews at your centre. I chose the centre because it is close to participants' homes and being a community centre is familiar to most students. I aim to conduct the interviews with selected participants during July and August 2016. The interviews will last approximately one hour per participant. I aim to record the interviews with a digital recorder simply because it will help me in my writing up stage at the end of my analysis and lead me to elaborate upon my interpretations about what the participants told me while in their company.

The identity of the participants, contact details, and the school they attend as well as responses to my questions will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be stored in accordance with the University of Nottingham policy and Data Protection Act (1998) and destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

Steps will be taken to keep participants' comments confidential. I will keep participant name and contact details in a password-protected computer file. This file will be

accessed by myself and my supervisor. The recordings and transcripts will be stored separately and will not include participant names.

I feel that at the end of my research, it will not be only me, the researcher, who benefits from the findings.,The Somali community and the local authority will also benefit through understanding what influences the education of high-achieving Somali students and whether anything can be learned from their experiences that might help Somali students who are under-achieving. For this reason, I believe that my research might help the Somali community and the local authority.

Thank you.

Mohamud Yusuf Garre
Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) Student
The University of Nottingham

Appendix 3: Information Sheet for Students

Case Study of the Educational Experiences of High-Achieving Somali Students in London Schools

I would like to invite you to take part in my research. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and it is up to you whether you decide to take part in the study or not. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully to help you decide whether you would like to take part. Your parents have also been asked separately to take part in this research, so feel free to discuss it with your friends and family. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will be doing the research?

I am a Somali, research student in the School of Education at The University of Nottingham. In order for me to complete my Doctorate in Education programme, I am required by the university to develop and conduct a research project.

My research project will be supervised by Professor Monica McLean and Dr Andrew Townsend of the University of Nottingham. My study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Education of the University of Nottingham.

What is the research about?

The research is designed to gain better understanding of the educational attitudes and experiences of high-achieving Somali pupils in London schools. The purpose is to inform ideas about supporting lower-achieving Somali students to do better.

Do you have to take part?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to take part or withdraw at any time.

What will happen if you agree to take part?

You will take part in an individual interview which will last approximately one hour. The interview will relate to your experiences at school, at home and in the community and how each have influence on your academic success. The interview will take place at a community centre in Camden (address provided). I would also like to visit your home and interview your parent/s.

Once the interview is completed, I will transcribe and analyse the information,and write up the research in my dissertation. I will share with you the findings of this study once fully completed. I feel that at the end of my research, it will not only me as researcher who benefits. I hope that Somali parents, schools and local authorities will

benefit from understanding influences that allowed you to be a high achiever compared to the majority of Somali students who are under-achieving in schools. Understanding factors that influence achievement might help parents and schools raise the achievement of Somali students in UK schools.

What are the risks if you take part?

Your identity and contact details, your school's identity as well as all of your responses will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

I will take the following steps to keep your comments confidential:

- I will keep your name and contact details in a password protected computer file. This file will be accessed by myself and my supervisors. The recordings and transcripts will be stored separately and will not include your name.
- I will give each person a code name so that I can keep track of which interview was given by whom.
- If I quote you in my dissertation, I will not use your name. I may mention your age in order to help people interpret the results of the research.
- I will not name your school in my dissertation. Instead I will describe the location of the research as 'secondary school in London'.
- I will not tell anyone else that you've taken part in this research. Only your parents will be informed of your participation in this research.

If you find it upsetting or uncomfortable to discuss certain issues during the interview, I will ask if you want to suspend the interview, or if you want to withdraw from taking part this study completely.

What if you change your mind?

You can withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason and no one else will know that you have done so.

What are the benefits of taking part?

I am sorry that I cannot offer you any payment for participating in this project. At the end of the project I will share the research findings with all participants, which I hope will be helpful and interesting. The aim of the project is to contribute to understanding what might help more Somali students do well in their studies.

What if there is a problem or I have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Education, University of Nottingham. If you have any concerns or complaints, you may contact the School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator; educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

I hope that I have answered all your questions. However, if you have any further questions please contact me at ttxmymo@nottingham.ac.uk.

Thanks, and regards,

Mohamud Yusuf Garre
Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) Student
The University of Nottingham

Appendix 4: Information Sheet for Parents in English

Case Study of the Educational Experiences of High-Achieving Somali Students in London Schools

I would like to invite you and your child to take part in the above research. Before you decide whether you want to take part, I would like to tell you more about the research.

Who will be doing the research?

I am a research student in the School of Education at The University of Nottingham. In order for me to complete my Doctorate in Education programme, I am required by the university to develop and conduct a research project.

My research project will be supervised by Professor Monica McLean and Dr Andrew Townsend of the University of Nottingham.

My study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Education of the University of Nottingham.

What is the purpose of the research?

The research is designed to gain a better understanding of the educational attitudes and experiences of high-achieving Somali pupils in London schools. The research is intended to inform ideas about supporting lower-achieving students.

Why is your child invited to take part?

Your child is invited to take part because he/she is considered to be a high-achieving student. I hope to talk to high-achieving Somali students who have completed their GCSE studies. I also hope to visit your homes and speak with you.

Do you have to take part?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary. You and your child can refuse to take part or withdraw from taking part at any time.

What will happen if you and your child take part?

Children who participate will take part in an individual interview which will last approximately one hour. The interview will be questions about their experiences at school, at home and in the community and how they think these experiences influence their academic success. The interview will take place at a community centre in Camden (address provided).

I would also like to visit you at home and interview you as part of this research project. The interview will be informal and will take approximately one hour. I am a

Somali speaking researcher and will be able to conduct the interview in the Somali language.

Once the interview is completed, I will transcribe and analyse the information and write up the research in my dissertation. I will share with you the findings of this study once fully completed. I feel that at the end of my research, it will not be only me, the researcher, who benefits. I hope that Somali parents, schools and local authorities will benefit from understanding what influences the education of high-achieving students so that the majority of Somali students who are under-achieving in schools can be helped to do better. Understanding factors that influence achievement might help parents and schools raise the achievement of Somali students in UK schools.

Are there any risks involved?

The identity of participants, contact details and the school your child attends as well as responses to my questions will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

I will take the following steps to keep participants' comments confidential:

- I will keep participants' names and contact details in a password protected computer file. This file will be accessed by myself and my supervisor. The recordings and transcripts will be stored separately and will not include participant names.
- I will give each person a code name so that I can keep track of which interview was given by whom.
- If I quote a participant in my dissertation, I will not use their real name. I may mention their age, or which year they study in school. This is to help people interpret the results of the project.
- I will not name the school participants are attending in my dissertation. Instead I will describe the location of the research as 'secondary school in London'.

If any participant finds it upsetting or uncomfortable to discuss certain issues during the interview, I will ask if she/he want to suspend the interview, or if she/he wants to withdraw from taking part this study completely.

What if your child or you do not want to carry on with the study?

Participants can withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason.

What are the benefits of taking part?

At the end of the project, I will share the research findings with all participants, which I hope will be helpful and interesting. The aim of the project is to contribute to understanding what might help more Somali students do well in their studies.

What if there is a problem or you have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Education, University of Nottingham. If you have any concerns or complaints, you

may contact the School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator; educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

I hope that I have answered all your questions. However, if you have any further questions please contact me at ttxmymo@nottingham.ac.uk.

Thank you.

Mohamud Yusuf Garre
Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) Student
The University of Nottingham

Appendix 5: Participant Consent Form

Research Title: Case Study of the Educational Experiences of High-Achieving Somali Students in London Schools

Researcher's name: Mohamud Yusuf Garre

Supervisor's name: Professor Monica McLean

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified, and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I understand that the researcher will visit me at home as part of the research project.
- I understand that data will be stored in a password-protected computer file. This file will be accessed by myself and my supervisors. The recordings and transcripts will be stored separately and will not include your name.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

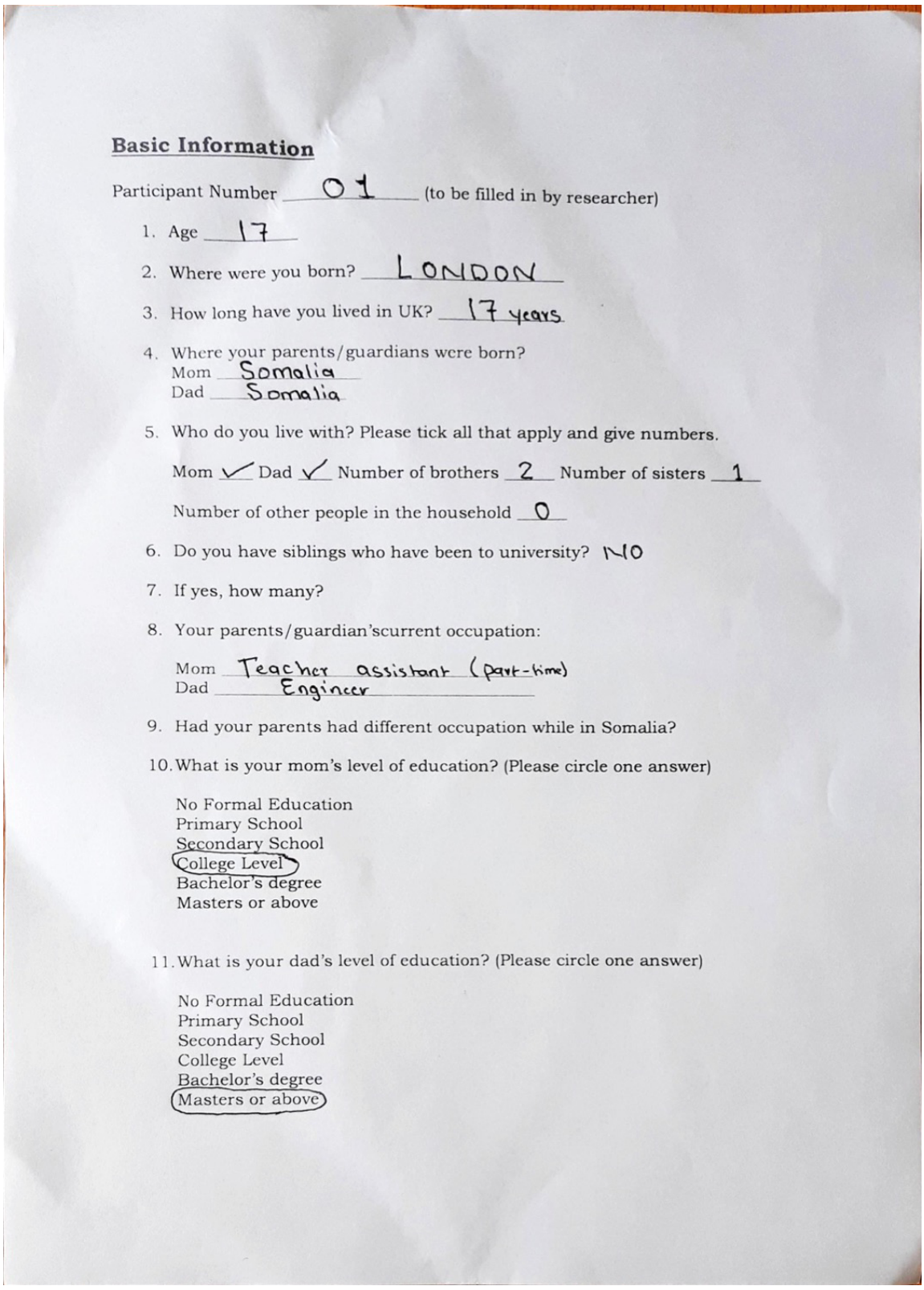
Signed …… (research participant)

Print name …… Date ……

Contact details

Researcher: *Mohamud Yusuf Garre,* ttxmymo@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: *Professor Monica McLean,* monica.mclean@nottingham.ac.uk
School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 6: Sample Basic Information



Basic Information

Participant Number 01 (to be filled in by researcher)

1. Age 17
2. Where were you born? LONDON
3. How long have you lived in UK? 17 years
4. Where your parents/guardians were born?
   Mom Somalia
   Dad Somalia
5. Who do you live with? Please tick all that apply and give numbers.

   Mom ✓ Dad ✓ Number of brothers 2 Number of sisters 1

   Number of other people in the household 0
6. Do you have siblings who have been to university? NO
7. If yes, how many?
8. Your parents/guardian'scurrent occupation:

   Mom Teacher assistant (part-time)
   Dad Engineer
9. Had your parents had different occupation while in Somalia?
10. What is your mom's level of education? (Please circle one answer)

    No Formal Education
    Primary School
    Secondary School
    (College Level)
    Bachelor's degree
    Masters or above

11. What is your dad's level of education? (Please circle one answer)

    No Formal Education
    Primary School
    Secondary School
    College Level
    Bachelor's degree
    (Masters or above)

Appendix 7: Sample Life Grid

Participant 1

	Pre-School	Primary School	Secondary School
Education	[redacted]	[redacted] School • Part of the Somali club • Issues with classmates early years (fighting etc.)	[redacted] SCHOOL • Part of gifted + talented group • Part of Build on Charity group • Highest grade in GCSE • Parents would ask teachers to give me extra work/ put pressure
Family	Only child Live with both parents	2 new brothers, 1 sister Live with both parents	Live with both parents

Parents' Education	Engineering Father Secondary Education Mother	Engineering Father Secondary Education Mother	Engineering Father College Mother
Parents' Employment	Father Engineer With [redacted] Mother House Keeping	Father Engineer With [redacted] Mother house Keeper	Father Engineer With [redacted] Mother house keeper

Education support at home		Dad used to do extra work with me at home. Maths + English Applied for grammar school ([redacted]) in year 6 and get help at home for 11+ test	Mum + Dad helped with school work Made sure I did all homework Used to keep in tough regularly with teachers. If I got bad feedback by teachers I would get punished somehow
Education outside of school and home (i.e. tuition)		Went to tuition for 11+ test in Year 6 As mentioned before, Dad was heavily involved in education. Also went to Madrasah for all of Primary	Went to tuition ([redacted] Tuition) for majority of Secondary School. Studying Eng, Maths, Sciences. Continued going to Madrasah until Year 11

Housing	Lived in [redacted] throughout Primary	Moved houses from [redacted] (10 minutes away). Did not change Schools	Stayed in home in [redacted]
Friends		Didn't have a lot of friends earlier in primary School, became more popular in later Stages.	Went to Secondary School with few of my original friends. Made a lot of new friends. Still in frequent contact with two friends who I met in Primary
Leisure	Liked problem-solving and building towers	Loved football, problem-solving and games	Became much more Social, Still liked playing football, gaming etc.

Appendix 8: Interview Questions for Students

School

1. Tell me about secondary school
2. Which secondary school did you go to?
3. Have you felt comfortable there? Have you felt you belonged there? How?
4. Who were you friends?
5. What were the teachers like?
6. Was academic work easy or hard? How?
7. What was it like for you when you do something well in school? (get good grades, answer a question correctly) What did your teachers do or say? How did this make you feel?
8. What was it like for you when you do something poorly in school? (bad test grade, give a wrong answer) What did your teacher do or say? How did this make you feel?
9. What do you think is the purpose of going to school?
10. Do you think education is important? How?
11. What was it like for you when you were studying GCSE?
12. What GCSE grades did you get? Give details of each subject.
13. Were you surprised at the GCSE results you attained?
14. Are there people or things that helped you get good grades? What are these? (e.g. private tuition/ particular teachers?).
15. Are there people or things that get in your way of getting good grades? What were they? How did you manage them?
16. What are you doing at school/college now?
17. Do you see a connection between what you're doing in school/college now and what you might do after you're done with school/college? Why? Why not?
18. Why do you think some students achieve well at school and others not?
19. Who were your friends while you were in secondary school?
20. Were your friends helping you in your education during high school? How?
21. Did your friends get in the way of you doing good in your education? How? What did you do about it?
22. How did your friends feel about school? Did they get good grades? Why/Why not?

Home

1. What was it like doing homework when you were in secondary schools?
2. What were your parents telling you about schoolwork?
3. Did your parents, family members or others help you with your homework? If so, how? When?
4. What was it like for you when you talk to your parents about school? What did you talk about? Did they ask you about school? Did they ask you about homework?
5. Did you have access to books at home? Did you have internet connection? If so, how did you use the books and/or internet?
6. Do you have a sibling/s that completed secondary school? Have they gone to do further and higher education?
7. Were your siblings helping you with your education during high school?

Peer Community and Leisure

1. What did you use to do during your free time?

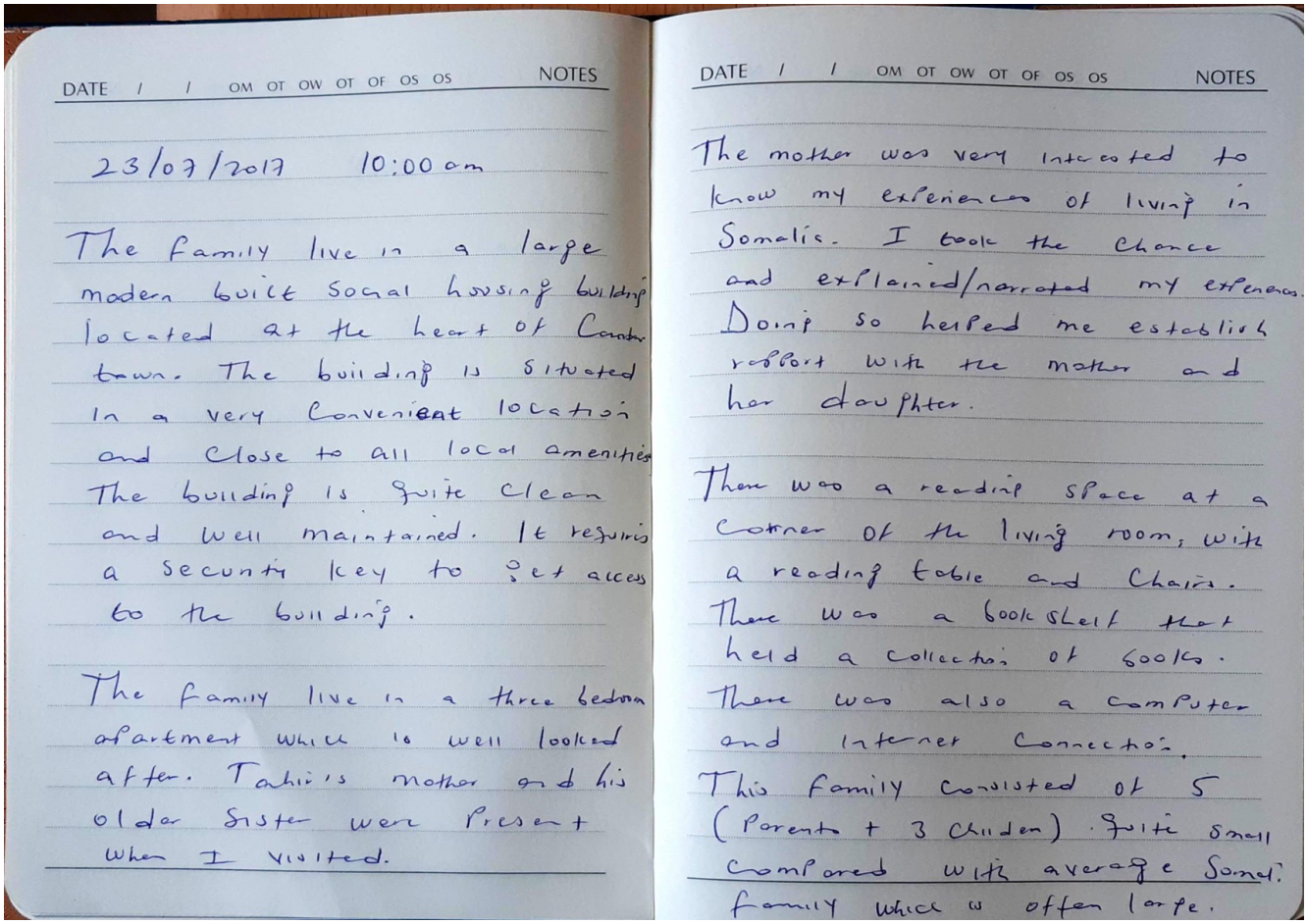
Future aspirations

1. Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?
2. What do you want to achieve after school/college?
3. What is important for someone who wants to achieve success?
4. Are you planning to go to university?
5. Which field of study and at which university?

Appendix 9: Interview Questions for Parents in English

1. What is your view about education?
2. What do you think about the education system in the UK?
3. Tell me about your child's education
4. What was your role in your child's education?
5. What was it like when your child was doing GCSE?
6. How is your child at home? Does he/she do schoolwork?
7. Can you tell me about the GCSE attainment of your child?
8. How did you feel about your child's educational attainment?
9. Have you expected your child's attainment? How?
10. What do you think were the main influences of your child's educational attainment?
11. What do you hope your child says about his/her experience in school?
12. Were there fears or concerns you had about your child during high school? What are they?
13. What do you hope your child's future aspirations will be?
14. Do you think your child is different from others? How?
15. Why do you think some students achieve well at school and others not?
16. Do you have other children who finished high school?
17. Was their educational experience different? How?

Appendix 10: Sample Ethnographic Field Note



DATE / / OM OT OW OT OF OS OS NOTES

23/07/2017 10:00 am

The family live in a large modern built Social housing building located at the heart of Cardiff town. The building is situated in a very convenient location and close to all local amenities. The building is quite clean and well maintained. It requires a security key to get access to the building.

The family live in a three bedroom apartment which is well looked after. Tahir's mother and his older sister were present when I visited.

DATE / / OM OT OW OT OF OS OS NOTES

The mother was very interested to know my experiences of living in Somalia. I took the chance and explained/narrated my experiences. Doing so helped me establish rapport with the mother and her daughter.

There was a reading space at a corner of the living room, with a reading table and chairs. There was a book shelf that held a collection of books. There was also a computer and internet connection.

This family consisted of 5 (Parents + 3 Children). Quite small compared with average Somali family which is often large.

Appendix 11: Code Book

FRAMEWORK	CODE	DESCRIPTION
Educational experience	Fitting in/not fitting in, school mobility, educational achievement	Feeling comfortable and secure at school, any challenges at school, how many times a student changed school, student achievement compared with the national average.
Aspirational and resistant capital	High hopes, hard work, persistence	Doing school homework, preparation for tests and exams, motivation to succeed in education, decisions to pursue further education, career goals, future aspirations and high hopes.
Family capital	Family knowledge, motivation, pride	Parental education and occupation, parental perception on education, any support from parent/s, older siblings and extended family support and motivation, parental aspirations and expectations for their children.
Social and navigational capital	Family, peer network, private tutors, teachers	Accessing community networks and resources, parental efforts to support children's education at an early stage, making use of private tutors to raise achievement levels, advice from teachers, peer networks and their positive/negative influence on achievement.
Linguistic capital	Bilingual, oral histories	Student abilities to speak more than one language, parents narrating stories about their education in Somalia and past experience.