How Inequality in Education in Ireland is Produced, Reproduced, Justified, and Resisted at the Intersection of Disability and Social Class

Rosario Ryan, BA

February 2019

Education Doctorate

Maynooth University
Faculty of Social Sciences

Head of Department: Professor Sharon Todd
Supervisors: Dr. Delma Byrne and
Dr. Bernie Grummell

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Chapter 3: Intersectionality as a Theoretical Framework to Understand Inequality in Education...................... 90

Chapter 5:
DARE 2010 -
Analysis of Applications and Eligibility 178

Chapter 6:
DARE 2010 -
Analysis of Retention/ Non-Progression
DARE Eligible Students in Higher Education.......... 233

Chapter 7: Student Stories: Experiences of Disability and Social Class in Education in Ireland 262

Acknowledgements

I want to thank the Irish Universities Association, the DARE and HEAR Strategic Development Group, the Central Applications Office, and Joachim Barnett from the University of Limerick, who provided the DARE and HEAR data and facilitated and supported this study. I would also like to thank each of the 11 Higher Education Institutions participating in the DARE scheme who provided data on the retention of DARE eligible students in their institutions to facilitate the analysis of retention/non-progression.

I would like to especially thank each of the ten generous participants who participated in this study. Thank you for your time, your insights and your honesty. Your courage, resilience and determination inspired this study.

I am very grateful to have had two wonderful supervisors in Dr Delma Byrne and Dr Bernie Grummell who have been both guides, friends, and inspirations throughout this study. Your insights, patience and support contributed enormously to the quality of this work.

Thanks to the staff of Maynooth University who provided support and advice. A special thanks to the wider team within the Maynooth University Access Office whose unwavering support and belief keep me going. I also want to particularly thank Simon for all your support and encouragement. You are of course a hero.

I could not have completed this study without Gary who sacrificed a great deal to allow me to follow my dream. Thank you for all the time, support, and belief. I also want to thank Daniel, Adam, and Grace who provided endless support and encouragement. This would have been impossible without you all.

A final thanks to my Mother who always believed that education would open doors of opportunity to everyone regardless of class or background. You inspired a commitment to equality and social justice that inspires me still. A final word for Madeleine. I wish you were still here to read this.

Abbreviations

AIT:	Athlone Institute of Technology
ADHD:	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AHEAD:	Association for Higher Education Access and Disability
BERA:	British Educational Research Association
CAO:	Central Applications Office
CDT:	Critical Disability Theory
CIT:	Cork Institute of Technology
CSO:	Central Statistics Office
CSP:	Coordinated Support Plan
CRPD:	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DARE:	Disability Access Route to Education
DCD:	Developmental Coordination Disorder
DCU:	Dublin City University
DEIS:	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES:	Department of Education and Science/ Skills
DIT:	Dublin Institute of Technology
EPSEN:	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act
EU:	European Union
EHEA:	European Higher Education Area
FSD:	Fund for Students with Disabilities
GUI:	Growing Up in Ireland
HE:	Higher Education
HEA:	Higher Education Authority
HEAR:	Higher Education Access Route
HEI:	Higher Education Institution
HSE:	Health Service Executive
IEP:	Individual Education Plan/ Individualised Education Program
IoT:	Institute of Technology
IS:	Intersectionality
ITB:	Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
LD:	Learning Disabled

MDI:	Mater Dei Institute of Education
MU:	Maynooth University
NAO:	National Access Office
NAO:	National Audit Office in the UK
NCI:	National College of Ireland
NCSE:	National Council for Special Education
NDA:	National Disability Authority
NP:	Non Progressed
NUIG:	National University of Ireland Galway
NUIM:	National University of Ireland Maynooth (now Maynooth University)
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLC:	Post Leaving Certificate
RANLHE	Access and Retention: Experiences of Non-traditional Learners in HE
SA:	Small Area
SAF:	Student Assistance Fund
SDG	Strategic Development Group
SEG:	Socio-Economic Group
SEN:	Special Educational Needs
SENO:	Special Education Needs Organiser
SERC:	Special Education Review Committee
SIMD:	Scottish Index Multiple Deprivation
SpLD:	Specific Learning Difficulty
SNA:	Special Needs Assistant
SUSI:	Student Universal Support Ireland
SWD:	Students with Disabilities
TCD:	Trinity College Dublin
UCC:	University College Cork
UCD:	University College Dublin
UK:	United Kingdom
UL:	University of Limerick
UN:	United Nations
US:	United States
WHO:	World Health Organisation

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

This is a study about how disability and social class intersect in the lives of young adults in higher education in Ireland to reveal complex inequality, oppression, privilege and power. The overall aim of this study is to identify how disability and social class are constructed and enacted in education in Ireland, how they intersect to maintain, reproduce, and sustain inequality and privilege, and how they are shaped through individual agency.

I locate this study within a social constructivist and an advocacy/participatory paradigm and the theoretical framework of intersectionality. This is a mixed methods study and uses quantitative data from the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) and the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR), national access initiatives, and interviews with ten student participants, to analyse how disability and social class, as social identities, intersect to influence progression, retention, and the experience of higher education.

The findings from this research enhances our knowledge of complex educational inequality, identifying how working-class students with disabilities are currently falling through the cracks of national and institutional policy and practice. The voices of the participants are central and offer a very different way of thinking about disability, about widening participation policy and practice, and about access to education in Ireland. Students identified multiple embedded barriers, inferior positioning, unequal resources, hardship and sacrifice, and the negative impact on their student identities. They also describe extraordinary resilience and activism supported by parents, individual teachers, and more inclusive schools.

The study identifies how current understandings of disability and social class have created a powerful regime that is reproducing inequality in education and relegating all students with disabilities, particularly working-class students, to positions of inequality and inferiority. The study illustrates that what it means to have a disability depends on each individual's simultaneous location in the social hierarchies of disability and social class.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview

This research explores how disability and social class intersect in the lives of young adults in higher education (HE) in Ireland to reveal complex inequality, oppression, privilege and power. The research analyses quantitative data from national access initiatives and qualitative data from interviews with ten student participants to explore how disability and social class, as social identities, intersect to influence progression, retention and the student experience in higher education in Ireland. The research aims to contribute to a better understanding of how disability and social class are constructed and enacted in higher education in Ireland, how they intersect to maintain, reproduce and sustain inequality and privilege, and how they are shaped through individual agency.

This chapter begins by providing an overview of the education system in Ireland and the current tensions and imperatives that are driving national strategic objectives and policy in HE. The chapter then outlines the strategic importance of widening access to HE, in both a European and Irish national policy context, and the drivers of these strategic priorities. Next, the context for the research is identified in relation to the widening of access to HE, the development of supplementary pathways into HE, and the increases in the numbers of students with disabilities (SWD[1]) and students identified as disadvantaged in HE. The rationale for the research is articulated as the need to identify whether there has been a real broadening of access to HE for students with disabilities by exploring the

---

[1] The National Disability Authority is an independent statutory body in Ireland that provides information and advice to the Government on policy and practice relevant to the lives of persons with disabilities. The Authority advise that when writing or speaking about people with disabilities it is important to put the person first and that using the term people with disabilities or disabled people is appropriate. I have opted to use the term students with disabilities and abbreviate this to SWD in the study.

intersection of disability and social class to identify complex inequality in education. I then briefly describe my personal and professional role and background acknowledging how my own biography has shaped my interest in and approach to the study. Next, the research questions are clearly articulated and identified as central guiding principles for the study. I then outline the importance of reflexivity and the social justice perspective that guided the inquiry. Finally, I provide an overview of the layout of the full study chapter by chapter.

1.2 Education System in Ireland - National Policy Context

The structure of the education system in Ireland provides the backdrop and context for the study. This section provides an outline of both the primary and post-primary education sectors and the Higher Education (HE) sector in Ireland.

1.2.1 Primary and Post-Primary Education

There are over 3,000 primary schools and over 700 post-primary schools in Ireland (Keane 2013). These schools are overseen by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) who have overall responsibility for education and training in the Republic of Ireland. The education system is Ireland is stratified by social class and the type of post-primary school attended has been identified as having a strong impact on the long-term educational trajectory of second level students (McCoy and Byrne 2011). Progression to HE is also impacted by the type of school attended with entry varying strongly by social class (Byrne 2009, Lynch and O'Riordan 1998, McCoy et al. 2009).

One of the largest national initiatives developed to address educational inequality is the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) School Support Programme, a national initiative of the DES, introduced in 2005, aimed at lessening educational disadvantage and bringing about social inclusion in primary and second level education. Schools selected for inclusion in the programme have a range of additional targeted supports including a reduced pupil teacher ratio and enhanced capitation and other personal and academic supports. DEIS schools attract a very diverse student body with a higher proportion of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students with disabilities and Irish Travellers, than non-DEIS schools (Smyth and McCoy 2009). There are persistent differences in academic achievement and outcomes between students attending DEIS and non-DEIS schools (McCoy et al. 2012, Banks and McCoy 2011, Smyth and McCoy 2009). The numbers of students progressing from DEIS schools to HE in Ireland has been estimated by the HEA to be 12 per cent of the total number of new entrants to HE, a rate that has improved only marginally since the commencement of the current national access plan (HEA 2018c, 19).

There is a strong fee-paying post-primary school sector in some parts of Ireland which has established a reputation for maximising academic achievement and the opportunities for students attending such schools to access HE. College progression rates from schools in the fee-paying sector have been at a peak for a number of years with about half of the fee-paying private secondary schools showing 100 per cent of pupils progressing to HE and *"the remainder, overwhelmingly, as close as makes no difference"* (Irish Independent 2018). Students in fee-paying schools enjoy advantages such as a lower pupil-teacher ratio and better facilities and "out-of-school private capital investment" which give them a competitive edge when it comes to achieving the high points required for college courses (Lynch and Baker 2005, Lynch cited in Irish Times 2018).

In Ireland, students with a disability/special educational need (SEN) in primary and post-primary education have a range of educational options. These range from full time enrolment in mainstream schools, to full time enrolment in special schools attended by students with SEN only, special classes attached to mainstream schools where students with SEN spend most or all of the school day or withdrawal from mainstream classes for support (NCSE 2013). It has been estimated that 25 per cent of nine year olds in Ireland had a SEN of some kind (Banks and McCoy 2011). There are over 57,000 students with special educational needs in mainstream school in Ireland receiving support (NCSE 2017, 4). Ireland also has 119 special schools attended by students with SEN only (NCSE 2013, 120) and there are over 7,000 students enrolled in these schools (NCSE 2017, 19). There has been significant investment in special education in Ireland over the last decade driven by the increasing proportion of children who are qualifying for support, the increasing number of pupils presenting with an autism diagnosis and increases in special classes established (Campbell et al. 2017).

In relation to participation in education, people with disabilities in Ireland have more negative educational outcomes (Watson and Nolan 2011, Watson et al. 2015). Students with disabilities face considerable barriers within the education system including low educational expectations by parents and teachers, variable support, delays in assessment processes, stigma and bullying (Cosgrove et al. 2014, Banks et al. 2015, McCoy and Banks 2012). Barriers to participating fully in HE have also been identified and include the necessity to have assessments to access support, a lack of transition planning, and variable supports (McGuckin et al. 2013). Participation by SWD in HE has increased over the last decade and six per cent of new entrants to HE currently indicate that they have a disability (HEA 2015).

1.2.2 Higher Education

The Central Applications Office (CAO) was established in 1976 and manages a national application system for all undergraduate programmes to the Irish HE sector that is made up of seven universities and 14 Institutes of Technology (IoT's) (Keane 2013). Entry to HE in Ireland is very competitive, particularly for high demand professional programmes in the university sector, where entry is dependent on the number of points achieved in the Leaving Certificate examination[2]. Students who apply to HE in Ireland have the grades that they achieved in their best six subjects in the Leaving Certificate converted by the CAO to a number of 'points', to a maximum of 625 points and the points total achieved by each student is then considered against each individual's college course choices (Keane 2013, 11). Points for some courses and colleges can be high and very competitive with access to some prestigious courses requiring maximum possible points. The Leaving Certificate in Ireland is considered to be a '*high stakes*' examination and a '*gateway*' to HE (Looney 2006, 349).

One of the most striking features of the Irish HE system has been the continued massification of the sector where the number of students entering HE in Ireland has expanded from a base of 15,000 in 1980 to over 44,000 new entrants in 2017/18 (HEA 2018b, 1). There are currently over 230,000 full time, part-time and remote students enrolled in HEA funded higher education institutions (HEI's) in Ireland (HEA 2018b, 1). The participation rate for 18-20 year olds nationally has grown from 20 per cent in 1980 to the current level of 58 per cent (HEA 2018b). In Ireland, 41 per cent of people now have a higher education qualification, and this is even higher among younger adults with

---

[2] There are two cycles in Irish post-primary education, the junior cycle and the senior cycle that culminates in the Leaving Certificate examination, which is a key determinant of HE participation

over half of 25-34 year olds having completed higher education (OECD Education at a Glance 2015, reported in HEA Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018a).

The drivers supporting the expansion of the HE sector in Ireland included the abolition of tuition fees in 1996 for full time undergraduates, a growing national population, improved retention rates in second level schools, higher aspirations among the general population, as well the perception that HE should be more socially inclusive (Fleming et al. 2017). This progression from an elite to a massified system of HE is a key national policy strategy with the objective of broader access to HE linked to national and global economic competitiveness (by providing skilled graduates to meet the needs of an emerging economy) and with the social justice agenda (by providing equitable access to HE) (HEA 2008). The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2007) identified that the continued expansion of HE is critical to Ireland's economic competitiveness setting a target that 72 per cent of the relevant age cohort will be participating in HE in Ireland by 2020. This national participation rate target of 72 per cent was also identified as key in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, which provides a roadmap for the reform of higher education (DES 2011). Broadening access to HE is positioned in policy and practice as a key driver of the continued expansion of HE in an Irish context.

The implementation of this national strategy has led to a new relationship between HEI's and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) through the development of the Higher Education System Performance Framework. The first Framework covered the period 2014-2016 and a new System Performance Framework was published in January 2018 to cover the period 2018-2020 (HEA 2018a). These frameworks require all HEI's to set targets across a range of strategic objectives, including to recruit *"…a student body that* *reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population"*, to meet national policy objectives (Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018-2020, 1). These objectives are articulated as compacts, or agreements, with the HEA, and institutional performance and outcomes are published and linked to institutional funding including financial penalties and incentives. Within this policy framework, HEI's must commit to specific quantitative targets and measurement of outcomes is central to institutional performance measurement and funding.

Hence, we have to view the continued stratification of education on social class and disability in this context of the policy targets and measures set within the national performance framework for HE as well as the socio-economic context of the increased massification of HE. It is also framed by the wider European context of broadening access to HE as evident in the policies introduced to support greater diversity of the student body in HE which are reviewed in the next section.

1.3 Widening Access to Higher Education in Europe and Ireland

In Europe, the modernisation agenda and the EU 2020 strategy both focus on increasing participation in HE, with a goal not just to increase overall numbers but also to ensure that participation in HE is diverse and representative, specifically addressing barriers related to socio-economic background and other factors (Eurydice 2014, 15). The Bologna Process has led to the establishment of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which includes 48 countries including Ireland. The Bologna Process prioritises the social dimension of higher education committed to the goal '*that the student body should reflect the diversity of the population and that the background of students should not have an impact on their participation in and attainment of higher education*'

(European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015, 145). To progress this goal, countries in the EHEA agreed '*to adopt national measures for widening overall access to quality higher education*' and to '*work to raise completion rates and ensure timely progression in higher education*'[3]. Almost all HE systems in Europe reflect the objective of widening participation in HE in national policy (European Commission/ EACEA/ Eurydice 2015, 115).

In Ireland, broadening access to HE has become a key national policy priority in recent decades (HEA 2015, 14). The Higher Education Authority (HEA), who has a statutory responsibility, at central government level, for the effective governance and regulation of higher education institutions and the higher education system, has a specific legislative obligation to promote equality and access to HE by people under-represented in the student body by *"promoting the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education"* (Higher Education Authority Act 1971, Section 3). All HEI's in Ireland have Access/Disability Officers who coordinate transition and post-entry supports for students under-represented in HE and link the HE sector with schools, families and communities who historically have not been in a position to access higher education. Two national supplementary entry routes have been developed to provide broader access to HE for students with disabilities (Disability Access Route to Education - DARE) and for students that are socio-economically disadvantaged (Higher Education Access Route - HEAR) who do not meet the required Leaving Certificate points required for their courses. The schemes are limited to school leavers under the age of 23 as of 1st January of the year of entry to HE and those who have completed their Leaving Certificate examination (Byrne et al. 2013, 28). The HEAR scheme was introduced in 2000 and relaunched as a national

---

[3] Bucharest Communiqué, p. 1

scheme in 2009 along with the DARE scheme. The HEAR route was also extended from being offered to only DEIS schools and HEI linked schools in 2008 to include all second level schools in the Republic of Ireland in 2009 (Byrne et al. 2013, 28). Students who are eligible for the schemes compete for entry into HEI's participating in the scheme on *reduced* Leaving Certificate points thereby providing access to colleges or courses that might otherwise have been out of reach. Students eligible for the schemes are also offered a range of financial, academic, and personal supports. Both schemes are based on the premise that school leavers experience barriers (related to disadvantage or disability) that have a negative impact on their second level education and thus their chances of progression to HE. These schemes combined accounted for more than one in every ten CAO acceptances in HE in Ireland in 2015 and 2016 (Nic Fhlannchadha 2017).

To ensure a national approach to widening participation, a National Access Office was established in Ireland in 2003 to coordinate national widening participation strategy, and has produced three national plans to widen access to HE covering the periods 2005-2007 (HEA 2004), 2008-2013 (HEA 2008) and 2015-2019 (HEA 2015). The most recent national plan seeks to ensure that the student body in HE reflects the diversity of Ireland's population and sets out quantitative targets to increase HE participation by socio-economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, mature students and Travellers, as well as setting new targets for further education award holders, part-time/flexible learners and lone parents (HEA 2015).

Although there has been considerable investment in widening participation in HE and some narrowing of inequality, access to HE in Ireland remains highly stratified as *"access to higher education is not distributed equitably across different groups in the Irish population"* (HEA 2015, 14). There is almost full participation in HE by new entrants from more advantaged professional socio-economic groups (SEG's), in comparison to other groups, particularly the semi-skilled and unskilled manual group (the working classes), who have much lower participation rates (HEA 2015, 14). Inequity in participation in HE in Ireland is not just confined to particular socio-economic groups as it is also linked to where people live. In more affluent areas of Dublin for example, over 99 per cent of 18-20 year olds are progressing to HE in comparison to a participation rate of just 15 per cent in more socially deprived areas of the city (HEA 2015, 14).

Successive national access plans have aimed to broaden access to HE primarily by setting quantitative targets to increase participation in HE by specific groups that continue to be under-represented. The target set in the current national access plan is to increase the participation of those from the Non-Manual and Semi/Unskilled manual groups (working classes) from 23 per cent to 32 per cent for the Non-Manual socio-economic group and from 26 per cent to 40 per cent for the Semi/Unskilled cohort, over the lifetime of the plan (HEA 2018c, 43). In relation to participation by people with disabilities, the plan proposes to increase the numbers of students with disabilities, as a percentage of all new entrants to higher education, from 6 per cent to 12 per cent (HEA 2018c, 43).

There is, within these quantitative targets, a focus on parental occupation as the indicator of social class/socio-economic group. In relation to disability, there is also an assumption of homogeneity where the focus is to *"ensure that all students with disabilities can access and participate in higher education on an equal basis"* (HEA 2015, 36). There is within this broad aim an additional focus, not on student characteristics, but on specific disability categories, with a specific emphasis on supporting students with physical/mobility and sensory disabilities into HE. The national access plans do not consider intersectionality of disadvantage and the quantitative targets are unconnected, so that for example there is a target for mature students (as a cohort) and students with disabilities (as a cohort) but no target for mature students with a disability. There is a national target for students with a disability but no target for working-class students with a disability. There is within these quantitative targets an assumption that a single characteristic, disability, social class, age etc., defines the individuals within that cohort. There is also an assumption of homogeneity, of identical experiences, barriers, and outcomes.

In summary, access to HE is a priority in both a European and Irish national policy context. In Ireland, HE has a legislative obligation to widen access to HE and the sector has introduced a broad infrastructure and supplementary entry routes to broaden access to HE. National policy is articulated as national access plans overseen by the National Access Office, the HEA, and in recent times, the DES. The focus of the national plans is on broadening access to HE through set targets, primarily at the point of entry, rather than any processes of marginalisation or inequality that lie outside of the HE sector.

This brief review of the national policy context is explored in greater detail in chapter 2 and sets the scene in this chapter to consider the rationale and the benefits of this research study outlined in the following section.

1.4 Where is the Gap? The Rationale for the Research

It is undeniable that Ireland has made progress over the last two decades in supporting greater equality across the education system. There has been a raft of equality legislation introduced in Ireland including the Education Act (1998), Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004) and the Disability Act (2005), that broadened and strengthened rights and entitlements in education and society. There has been considerable investment in the development of national policy and infrastructure to support students with SEN/disability and students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, albeit largely separately, in the primary, post-primary and HE sectors, to support greater equality in education.

These policies and investment have led to some considerable changes across the system. Overall rates of literacy and numeracy, school retention, and progression to further and higher education, have improved for pupils in DEIS schools (DEIS Plan 2017, DES). There have been large increases in the numbers of students with a disability progressing to HE in Ireland (AHEAD 2018). The total number of students receiving support from the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) in HE has increased dramatically with over 10,000 students with disabilities receiving support from this fund across the sector in 2015/16 (HEA 2017). Access to HE by students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, when measured by SEG, has also improved over the last two decades (HEA 2015, 14). The DARE and HEAR schemes, established as supplementary pathways into HE, have a high visibility across the education system and the number of students eligible for both schemes has increased significantly over the last number of years (Nic Fhlannchadha 2017).

I conducted this study during a period when increases in the numbers of SWD in HE are presented as major policy and sectoral successes creating a largely unchallenged discourse that access to HE has been broadened in Ireland for students with disabilities (HEA 2018a, System Performance Framework; HEA 2018c, Progress Review of National Access Plan). Although broadening access to HE has been a dominant feature of HE policy in Ireland over the last two decades, success however is largely measured by reference to numerical targets with less interrogation of who the target groups are, of possible pockets of disadvantage or sub-groups within categories, or of possible intersections of disadvantage. There is also a lack of sustained critical interrogation of how we understand disability, disadvantage, or social class, of how students experience these, and the implications for policy and practice in education. In Ireland, the primary understanding of SEN/disability within the Irish education system continues to be *"at the medical model end of a medical-social model"* where disability is still seen to be an individual deficit located within the child (Rix et al. 2013, 189), while disadvantage has been understood in terms of quantitative measures of indicators of socio-economic background (Bernard 2006).

Interrogating whether there has been a real broadening of access to HE for SWD and students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds is a key driver for this study. Widening participation policy and practice in Ireland, including the development of DARE and HEAR, is largely based on 'single identity markers', treating SWD and students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds as homogenous, separate and unconnected. The increases in the numbers of students with disabilities progressing to HE is assumed to benefit all students because there is an implicit assumption that all students with disabilities are the same, experience the same barriers, the same impact, come from the same backgrounds and achieve the same academic outcomes. Students eligible for HEAR and DARE are also seen as a homogenous group and so they are understood to be all disadvantaged and all equally disadvantaged.

There is increasing evidence in Ireland that disability and social class are not separate, and are not just connected, but are interconnected, and indeed that educational disadvantage, poverty and disability *"…bear a reciprocal relationship"* (Watson and Nolan 2011, xii). Children with SEN for example are more likely to cluster in disadvantaged schools, are more likely to live in one-parent families, and are more likely to live in families dependent on social welfare (Cosgrove et al. 2014). Children with each type of disability attending DEIS schools at second level are more likely to perform at a lower level than their counterparts in non-DEIS schools (Banks et al. 2016, 51). This is also evident in other jurisdictions, where children in more deprived areas tend to be diagnosed with more stigmatised disabilities (Riddell 2009). Resources allocated to children with SEN also vary by social class and tend to be disproportionately availed of by families with more social and economic capital (Riddell et al. 2010 in Scotland, Rose et al. 2015 and McGuckin et al. 2013 in Ireland).

Access to the DARE and HEAR schemes are particularly relevant to this study as they should in theory provide greater access to all students within these target groups to HE. Questions of bias in the DARE scheme however have been raised as there are a disproportionate number of applicants to the DARE scheme from fee-paying schools and more affluent areas (Byrne et al. 2013). In theory, as the HEAR scheme uses economic, social and cultural indicators and a broader *"additive/intersectional definition of socio-economic disadvantage"*, the HEAR scheme should support the most marginalised and disadvantaged to access HE (Byrne et al. 2013, 14). A key indicator of this approach should be the number of applicants eligible for both schemes. Applicants eligible for both the DARE and HEAR schemes account, however, for a minute proportion of eligible DARE and HEAR applications, just 0.3 per cent and 0.4 per cent of total new entrants to HE in 2015 and 2016 respectively (Nic Fhlannchadha 2017). This data suggests that there may be a deeper bias in both schemes and that students experiencing complex intersectional disadvantage at the interstices of disability and poverty may not be benefitting from current policies or from these supplementary pathways to broaden access to HE.

This study thus seeks to look beyond the macro increases in the numbers of SWD in HE, the increases in DARE and HEAR eligible applicants, and the infrastructures developed to support widening participation in HE, to analyse how the *intersection* of disability and social class affects students in the context of progression to HE, retention within HE, and the student experience of HE. Using intersectionality as a theoretical framework, this study seeks to explore both disability and social class as identities from an intersectional perspective, challenging binary conceptions of identity, questioning essentialism and homogeneity, to identify inequity in education. This study examines whether students positioned at the intersection of disability and social class are multiply marginalised, and are as a result falling through the cracks of existing policy.

This study seeks to challenge the assumption that disability is the most significant category (as is suggested in policy and practice) of disadvantage (HEA 2004, HEA 2008, HEA 2015, HEA 2018c) arguing that it is how disability intersects with other social locations (social class) that shape experiences. The research also aims to contribute to a greater understanding of how disability and social class are constructed, intersect, and resisted, in the lives of the most marginalised and the most privileged, in education, and explicitly seeks to influence national policy and practice.

1.5 What are the Research Questions?

The research can be broken down into three specific research questions focused on exploring the intersection of disability and social class in HE in Ireland. My desire to look past single categories of analysis (disability and social class) and consider the complex inequity revealed at the intersections of these social identities shaped how I formed these three research questions:

1. Based on data from young people with disabilities who applied to the DARE and HEAR schemes, how does the intersection of disability and social class impact on the pattern of applications and eligibility for these schemes?
2. Based on data from the DARE and HEAR schemes, and data from the 11 HEI's participating in the DARE scheme, how does the intersection of disability and social class impact on the retention/non-progression of DARE eligible students within HE?
3. Based on interviews with students with disabilities in HE from a variety of social backgrounds, how does the intersection of disability and social class impact on the student experience in education and in HE?

In addressing these questions in detail, I want to examine whether SWD are, as the DARE scheme suggests, a broadly homogenous and equally disadvantaged group, or whether all students have varying and heterogeneous characteristics and outcomes, revealing some students who are multiply and uniquely disadvantaged and marginalised. The questions seek to identify whether there has been a real broadening of access to HE for all students with disabilities or whether national policy and practice, educational structures and institutions, are creating and perpetuating inequality.

A key aspect of this study is to identify how students, from different social backgrounds, experience and live disability in the education system. These questions support a broader consideration of the processes of domination and subordination, and of individual resistance and agency that shape outcomes for all students with disabilities in education.

The questions seek to illuminate the processes of power that create unequal conditions, to challenge the 'universal voice' (Crenshaw 1989, 154) that seeks to speak for all students with disabilities, and to consider the implications for policy and practice in relation to disability, social class and widening access to HE in Ireland.

1.6 What is the Contribution to Knowledge?

This research seeks to make a substantial contribution to scholarship through the unique intersectionality informed approach by addressing current gaps in knowledge to inform national and institutional policy and practice. Quantitative and qualitative studies to date have not explored these intersections in this way and this unique approach offers a substantial contribution to knowledge in this domain.

In Ireland, we know very little about how disability affects the retention of students in HE, and the small body of research available reports on students with disabilities as a homogenous group, eliding within group differences. This study seeks to address this gap in knowledge, nationally and internationally, not just about the retention of SWD in HE, but crucially about how disability and social class intersect to impact retention/non-progression in HE. This study seeks to address a specific gap in knowledge and quantitative and qualitative studies to date have not explored these intersections in this way.

In Ireland, research on the educational experience of SWD has primarily been on the impact of specific disabilities rather than the differing characteristics of SWD failing to identify *"…whether these had additional effects on participation, transition or progression of people with disabilities"* (Duggan and Byrne 2013, 108). This study seeks to analyse the experiences of SWD, across the whole education system, to explore how students, particularly working-class students, experience disability in education. This is a unique approach and offers a significant contribution to knowledge and understanding in this domain.

In this study, I examine disability in a new way using an intersectional approach to reveal the multiple impact of inequalities previously hidden, addressing a national gap in knowledge by providing an alternative analytical lens to reveal the way that social identities, social structures, and social institutions, work together to create, sustain, justify, and reproduce inequality in education.

1.7 Who is the Researcher?

In relation to the research study, my own position and relationship to this topic is key to my interest in this issue. My personal and professional biography have shaped my own perspectives on education.

I was born in a rural area of County Carlow and was the third youngest of thirteen children. Neither of my parents attended HE and both made financial and personal sacrifices to give their children a good education that was understood to be critical to creating life opportunities. Many of my older sisters and brothers went on to access third level qualifications by studying at night. The first child in the family to go on to full time third level education was the 10th in the family, who went to UCD, and went on to become a secondary school teacher. I was the 11th in the family, and I went to UCD too, not because it was the right college or course, but because my sibling had gone there before me. My memories of UCD are of a vast alien institution, where individuals seemed unimportant, where student drop out was expected and not entirely undesirable, and where students from working-class backgrounds were in the minority. I struggled in HE, not academically, but socially, where my own background never seemed to fit with this resolutely middle-class environment.

I just about survived financially, living on the state student maintenance grant, and engaging in part-time work to pay for the costs of HE. I graduated with a Bachelor of

Arts degree in 1986 and went to work for Dublin County Council in a variety of administrative positions. During the 1990's, there was a focus on broadening access to education and all HEI's were employing Access Officers to coordinate activities in that area. I was interested in broadening access to HE, applied for, and took up the post of Access Officer in the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) in 2000. During my time as Access Officer, I was working with a variety of student groups, particularly mature students and students from disadvantaged schools and communities. Students with disabilities were just emerging as a target group and I was challenged by my own lack of knowledge about how to support the variety and complexity of disabilities in an educational environment. During my time in ITB, disability and indeed lower socio-economic status, were largely understood to be individual deficits (that could be accommodated by individual accommodations) rather than an institutional weakness (that could be addressed by structural reform and an inclusive approach to teaching and learning acknowledging that diversity is the norm and not the exception).

In 2005, I moved to Maynooth University and took up the post of Disability Officer where I was given free rein to develop academic supports for the small numbers of SWD studying in Maynooth University at that time. I approached the role with the objective of providing proactive, innovative, inclusive supports for SWD. During my time in that role, the numbers of students supported by the Disability Office increased from fewer than 100 students to over 800 students who had access to a range of innovative and inclusive supports.

In 2012, I became the Director of Access in Maynooth University and became responsible for developing the overall strategic direction of the University in relation to widening participation for groups currently under-represented in education. My experience in the past had been of developing widening participation strategies focussed primarily on developing outreach initiatives and post-entry supports, with these activities largely based in the Access Office. In my new role, I had the opportunity to support the university to mainstream the delivery of equity of access to support better outcomes for all students, moving widening participation out of more traditional locations into university structures and embedding 'whole-of-HEI' approaches to institutional access strategies. During my time in this role, a number of supports initially developed for widening participation target groups have been mainstreamed e.g. the Mathematics Support Centre, Student Plus and the Student Budgeting Advisory Service, in order to improve the student experience and learning outcomes for all students. Pioneering specialised supports (e.g. Student Central) have been developed for the smaller percentage of students whose more complex needs cannot always be met through mainstream provision. Furthermore, initiatives which provide a more cohesive and inclusive approach to supporting students, e.g. the unique Maynooth Access Programme Academic Advisors model and the Launchpad Orientation Programme, have been successful in meeting student needs in a more efficient and comprehensive way.

Increasingly, Maynooth University has recognised widening participation, diversity and inclusion issues as central to university strategy and pivotal to achieving the progress made over the course of the current strategic plan. Maynooth University is committed in the new Strategic Plan to '*become a model university for equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism*' *(*Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018-2022, 44*).* This is the first time that widening participation has been identified as a specific strategic priority for the University and reflects our ambition and commitment in this area and our desire to become a model institution for diversity and inclusion.

As part of my work as Disability Officer and later as Director of Access, I was actively involved in the development of the DARE scheme. My own experience of working for almost 20 years in the area of socio-economic disadvantage and disability threw up interesting questions for me. These questions were troubling because they suggested that the policies and ideologies that underpin the DARE and HEAR schemes, policies and ideologies that are relatively unchallenged, might be flawed. The HEAR scheme uses a combination of cultural and economic indicators which means that students who have met three indicators may be eligible for the scheme while other eligible students may have met all six indicators. For admission purposes, these students are treated the same suggesting that all eligible students are equally disadvantaged. The DARE scheme foregrounds disability as central to disadvantage and does not consider any cultural or economic indicators as part of the assessment process. The DARE and HEAR schemes were historically built on different and separate foundations and the only acknowledgement of possible intersectionality of disadvantage is the prioritisation given to applicants eligible for both HEAR and DARE in the context of admission to HE.

My own professional experience suggested that students eligible for DARE and/ or HEAR were resolutely individual with tangible differences in social background/disability and experiences that meant that some students experienced greater barriers than others. In my experience, identities, disability, class, gender and ethnicity for example, were experienced simultaneously in the lives of students. Different aspects of their identities were foregrounded at different times in their lives in different contexts. Lower socio-economic status emerged strongly in the lives of many students as an issue lived with, through and alongside disability.

These experiences suggested to me that disability and social class might be experienced simultaneously, but very differently in different contexts, and at different times, and that how those identities intersected might reveal unique and compelling disadvantage that is not considered in national policy/practice. I was concerned that the assumption in the DARE and HEAR schemes that disability and social class are experienced and lived separately might elide the complex interconnected nature of both identities and obscure those students most vulnerable and marginalised at these intersections.

My own experience also suggested that students never identified themselves as '*disabled*' or '*socio-economically disadvantaged*'. I was troubled by how we, as professionals, impose an 'identity' upon students that we often knew to be vulnerable. These schemes are both based on hierarchical categorisations and require students to accept the identity (poor or disabled) assigned to them, reifying difference, validating the status quo, and creating 'sticky labels' that are largely permanent (Rix et al. 2013, 191). I questioned whether in trying to do the 'right thing', that there was a real possibility that the schemes, and indeed how HE understands disability, were consolidating the marginalisation of individuals foregrounding one aspect of their lives as their singular identity.

Finally, I was also concerned that the very existence of compensatory schemes like DARE and HEAR could be seen as a willingness to accept, or even endorse, an unequal and deeply stratified education system (Lynch 1999). These schemes do not challenge the systemic societal inequality that generates educational disadvantage and largely ignore the fact that the cycle of educational disadvantage commences at birth and that the roots of inequality can be found in *"…the social and economic disadvantage of communities and families (e.g., poverty and the factors related to it, such as unemployment, parental education, and occupational attainment"* (Kellaghan et al. 1995, 2). The DARE and HEAR schemes clearly wish to deliver a broader and more equitable access to HE although there has been less research into whether the schemes support the privileged few, possibly the most advantaged of the disadvantaged, to access a HE sector that remains fundamentally inequitable. I was concerned about how current systems and practices might be deflecting attention from wider systemic social inequalities and reproducing educational inequality.

This study seeks to consider each of these issues and to identify who benefits from the DARE and HEAR schemes, and who does not, and to identify whether the schemes are broadening access to HE or perpetuating social inequalities for those most marginalised at the intersection of disability and social class.

1.8 Reflexivity - Professional and Personal Conflict

Hunting (2014) highlighted the importance of reflexivity at every stage of the research process as being aware of how the researcher’s own preconceptions, values, social position and interests shape research processes and knowledge production. As this is an intersectionality informed study, reflexivity challenged me to consider my own assumptions about social identities, an issue that emerged repeatedly for me over the course of the research process. I was keenly aware that a non-reflexive focus on disability and/or social class risked overlooking the processes of power that shape experiences of ableism and classism that are so central to this study.

As a researcher, I was aware of the potential conflict between my professional role as Disability Officer and my personal commitment to social justice and the complexity of educational disadvantage. My role as Disability Officer/Director of Access in the university is to formulate internal policy and strategies to broaden access to HE and to contribute to the development of national policy. My intersectionality informed reflexive approach pushed me to challenge dominant assumptions of disability and social class as deficits located within individuals, led me to question my own assumptions and beliefs, and challenged me to interrogate my own professional role. I locate the study within the tradition of biographical research acknowledging that to write the stories of others requires reflection on "*our own histories, social and cultural locations as well as subjectivities and values*" (Merrill and West 2009, 8). Although dominant assumptions of disability and social class suggest that these are deficits located within individuals, my own personal and professional experiences suggested that disability and social class are social constructions, built on hierarchies of superiority and inferiority, rooted in complex relations of power, and that these identities, far from being separate, were complex, intersectional, and inextricably intertwined. In line with a biographical research approach, I recognise that I am, as a researcher, always present in the study. I acknowledge that my own personal and professional experiences shaped every aspect of the study from the initial research topic to the study recommendations. In the study, I use my own experiences as a working-class student, and as a professional, to understand the lives of others but I sought to be always reflexive, to recognise that while my own experiences were a source of understanding, that they were also a source of bias. As a researcher, therefore, while I was immersed in the experiences of the study participants, I drew reflexively from the parallels in my own life and experiences cultivating both understanding and detachment (Merrill and West 2009). Although the study concerns the experiences of ten participants, I was thus able to use the richness of their stories, and my own closeness to their experiences, to discuss wide-ranging policy and practice issues for all people with disabilities at the intersection of disability and social class.

Biographical research approaches can bring '*profound shifts of identity*' (Merrill and West 2009, 2), and throughout the study I increasingly began to consider how disability and social class, as social identities, originate in the social, political and historical discourses within which the dominant, and overwhelmingly negative, understandings of these identities originated and are sustained. I began to question how these discourses influence policy and practice in higher education and to ask who might benefit most from these understandings. I also began to question my own role in the university which essentially seemed to be more one of gatekeeper and boundary maker, protecting the institution, guarding the borders between students who were disabled (and needed individual accommodations) and those who were not disabled (and could access the mainstream institution).

As this is an intersectionality informed study, reflexivity made me consider my own markers of identity (gender, race, ethnicity, social class, disability, age, religion etc.), and how these markers of identity intersect in my own life not just to disadvantage, but also to privilege. As a researcher, I had to acknowledge that my own background (as a working-class student) and professional experience (as an internal policy maker and practitioner) drew me to this area of research. I also freely acknowledge that my assumptions about disability and social class as outlined above, my awareness of what is typical/normal, how I see the world and the knowledge that I believe to be true, influenced and shaped the study.

In all aspects of the research, I have sought to be truthful and honest in both my awareness of how I am present in the study, how my values and experiences have shaped interpretations of data and my relationships with student participants. In truth, my greatest commitment has been to honour the courage of the student participants, and to base their testimonies and the truth of their reality in the study with a strong social justice objective. Identifying the centrality of power and the structural conditions that produce or reinforce inequity is critical in this study to ensure that these identities are no longer solely viewed in terms of the individual.

In this study my approach has been, despite my professional role, to challenge the medical model of disability and the narrow definitions of social class, to reveal the dynamics of oppression for highly stigmatised groups, and to identify the factors that shape experiences, sustain stigma and create barriers. In doing so, I wish to change the structural conditions and the assumptions that have contributed to inequity and to the reproduction of inequality in education and to create equal opportunities for all people to access and succeed in HE.

1.9 Layout of the Research

This chapter provided the reader with an initial overview of the education system in Ireland and the current tensions and imperatives that are driving national strategic objectives and policy. The context for the research was identified in relation to the widening of access to HE, the development of supplementary pathways into HE, and the increases in the numbers of students with disabilities and students identified as disadvantaged in HE. The rationale for the research was identified as the need to challenge the assumed homogeneity of all students with disabilities, by exploring the intersection of disability and social class, in relation to progression to HE, retention in HE, and the student experience, to reveal complex inequality in education. I outlined my personal and professional role and background and considered the influence of my personal and professional biography on my position and approach to this research. I identified three research questions that are central guiding principles for the study. I also outlined the importance of reflexivity and the social justice perspective that guides the inquiry.

Chapter 2 builds on some of the policy issues introduced in this chapter and introduces disability and social class as social identities to explore how these identities have been constructed in education in Ireland as singular, unidimensional and separate hierarchies. I explore theories of disability and social class and the tensions between these theories and new approaches that are developing momentum. I contextualise these theories to legislation and policy developed in Ireland, and internationally, to address inequality in access to education for people with disabilities and people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. I analyse the development of national policy to address inequality in HE in Ireland and the introduction of pathways to broaden access to HE. I also analyse the literature on student retention in HE and the experiences of students with disabilities and working-class students in education in Ireland

Chapter 3 begins with a rationale for choosing intersectionality (IS) as a theoretical framework and describes how it offers a new approach to analysing the intersection and interconnectedness of multiple and complex identities to reveal inequality in education. A brief history of the origins and development of IS is provided and the key concepts underpinning the framework are explained. The suitability of IS for research in a range of areas is explored, including disability as a category, and education and higher education as a context. In the final section, an overview of how IS will be applied in this research is outlined.

Chapter 4 explains the methodology used in this research, the approach taken and the methods used in order to explore the research question. Questions of ethics, reliability, validity and the limitations of this study are also examined in this chapter. The use of a social constructivist and advocacy/participatory paradigm and the theoretical framework of IS provide the rationale for the methodology, methods, and approaches chosen, and justify the use of the combination of quantitative and qualitative data used in this research.

Chapter 5 analyses quantitative data from students who applied to the DARE scheme in 2010, the most recently available data at the outset of the study, to explore patterns of application and eligibility for the scheme, at the intersection of disability and social class, to identify complex inequality in education in Ireland. The quantitative data provides a macro picture of national patterns of application and eligibility to the DARE scheme by students from different social backgrounds.

Chapter 6 analyses the intersection of disability and social class reporting on the retention/non-progression of students with disabilities eligible for the DARE scheme who progressed as first time entrants to undergraduate programmes of study in one of 11 higher education institutions participating in the DARE scheme in Ireland in September 2010. The quantitative data provides a macro picture of national patterns of non-progression in HE in Ireland by SWD from different social backgrounds.

Chapter 7 provides a deeper insight into individual student experiences reporting on the experiences of ten individual students in one HEI in Ireland. The chapter analyses the qualitative interviews that asked participants about their educational journey before, and after, progressing to HE, their experiences of life as a student with a disability, their educational experiences and outcomes. A key aspect of these analyses is to explain how broad macro-level social and societal structures are connected to the micro level of individual experience and how students in different social situations live their lives. The chapter uses the four domains from Collins' matrix of domination (1990) framework to explore the central themes that emerged from the student life stories revealing the intersection of disability and social class, to better understand the student experience at these intersections.

Chapter 8 applies the study findings to the theoretical framework of IS. I firstly summarise the main findings for the reader and then explore these findings with reference to previous empirical research and theory/scholarship clarifying the study contribution to current knowledge. I consider these findings using IS as a framework, but also guided by my own thoughts, reflections, and professional experience in HE. The limitations of the research and methodologies employed are identified. Finally, the recommendations from the study are outlined and concluding comments are provided.

Chapter 2: Challenging the '*Universal Voice'* - The Intersection of Disability and Social Class in Education

2.1 Introduction

This study seeks to explore how disability and social class intersect in the lives of young adults in higher education (HE) in Ireland to identify complex inequality, oppression, privilege and power. A key focus of the study is to map how oppression operates at both the macro (national policy) and micro (individual experience) levels to reveal complex intersectional disadvantage and privilege. This chapter locates this analysis of the intersection of disability and social class within the broader social and educational context in which it occurs.

Disability and social class have been constructed as social identities in Irish education as singular, unidimensional, and separate hierarchies. This chapter challenges this singular construction of a universal voice for these students' diverse experiences in HE. I also explore the consequences of this singular placement for how disability and social class are positioned in education policy and enacted through policy initiatives such as the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) and the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) schemes in Ireland.

There are two sections in this chapter. Section 1 examines the construction of disability as a negative social identity and the implications of a singular, unidimensional, deficit-based approach to disability as reflected in policy and practice in education in Ireland. Section 2 explores the implications of the construction of lower socio-economic status as a negative social identity, before drawing insights from both sections together in a conclusion which makes the case for the necessity of an intersectional approach analysing the interconnectedness of disability and social class as complex identities that reveal inequality in education in Ireland.

2.2 Development of Disability/Special Education Needs Policy in Ireland

In this section, I trace the development of discourses which located understandings of disability in terms of deficit and difference, and its basis in the medicalised and individualised approaches to addressing the needs of students with disabilities (SWD) in education. I examine disability as a socially constructed identity and the development of deficit-based, medicalised, and individualised understandings of disability that have informed how the needs of SWD are addressed in education. I trace how these limited understandings of disability influenced the development of legislation, policy, and practice, and how they continue to be impactful in the lives of students with disabilities across all sectors of education in Ireland today.

2.2.1 Disability - A Singular Construction of Deficits and Difference

There are a number of comprehensive histories tracing the emergence of disability as a social identity in both a European (Barnes and Mercer 2010, Braddock and Parish 2001; Finkelstein 1980; Oliver 1990) and an Irish context (Griffin and Shevlin 2011, McDonnell 2007). These histories identify that people with disabilities have shared a long experience of marginalisation that *"…that has often been oppressive and included abuse, neglect, sterilisation, stigma, euthanasia, segregation, and institutionalisation"* (Braddock and Parish 2001, 52). Historically, disability has been long been equated with '*deficits, abnormalities and functional limitations*' (Barnes and Mercer 2010, 1).

Stigma has been a feature of disability through the ages both positioning disability as shameful and undesirable and justifying the inferiority of that positioning. In the Birth of the Clinic (1973) Foucault identified that the disabled identity is a social construction where those who exercise power justify difference, creating and constructing social identities as ‘able-bodied’ or ‘normal’, and ‘disabled’ and ‘abnormal’, to justify exclusionary practices. These people are then ostracised, devalued, or ignored, a process that inherently validates and justifies their exclusion and marginalisation. The construction of people with disabilities as abnormal, not able to do the normal things that people take for granted like participate in education, work, marriage, or independent living, has contributed to the dominant view that such people are *“unfortunate, useless, different, oppressed and sick”* (Hunt 1966, 146) relegating people with disabilities to the status of *“… a despised and disadvantaged sub-group”* (Abberley 1987, 17).

This conceptualisation of disability as an inherently negative pathologised individual and undesirable state of difference and deficit, assuming dependency and necessitating charity, has become the dominant understanding of disability played out in multiple contexts throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Modern industrialisation and the reification of science with the resulting medicalisation of society have been the primary factors driving and maintaining this construction of disability (Abberley 1987, Braddock and Parish 2001, Barnes 1991, Finkelstein 1980, Oliver 1990). These conceptualisations and historical context continue to influence the lives of people with disabilities today.

The first two decades of the 21st century have been notable for the development of challenges to this medicalised, and deficit-based construction of disability, a debate framed broadly as the medical versus the social model of disability, as explored in the following section.

2.2.2 Medical and Social Models of Disability - Tensions in Policy and Practice

The medical model of disability has been enormously influential in the development of policy and practice and has been the dominant paradigm for understanding disability throughout most of the twentieth century (Hosking 2008). The medical model is rooted in the understanding and assumption that the disadvantage experienced by people with disabilities is their medical condition and that this is an individual, undesirable, and negative state of being. In this model disability can, and indeed must, therefore be identified, diagnosed, treated and cured if possible, and medical professionals are the only arbiters of this process. This model is underpinned by deficit negative assumptions *"…in health terms, that disability is a pathology and, in welfare terms, that disability is a social problem. To have a disability is to have* '*something wrong with you*'*"* (Oliver 1996, 30).

In the medical model, the environment plays little or no role in the exclusion of people with disabilities as the root of the difficulty is perceived as located in their own individual pathologised medical deficit and there is little or no consideration of disabling structures in society. The medical model has particular relevance for this study, as it has been the dominant perspective in education, suggesting that the deficit lies within the child rather than in the education system. This perspective has driven the development of policies to 'fix' the child rather than address a system that has marginalised so many. This medical perspective is manifested in education as '*an army of special professionals*' regulating a '*SEN industry*' driven by the expansion of professional vested interests (Tomlinson 2012, 268-269).

In the 1960's and early 1970's, disabled activists challenged the medical model in a very radical way with the increasing politicisation of disability. The social model of disability, a term coined by Mike Oliver, a sociologist, suggested that disability should be reconceptualised not as a medicalised model with a focus on dependency and tragedy, but as a theory to understand disability. In this social model, there is a distinction between impairment and disability where disability is created by the structural inequalities that exist, economic, physical, environmental and cultural, that prevent people with disabilities from accessing the benefits of society (Oliver 2004).

Internationally, the social model of disability is increasingly dominant in policy development where disability as a human rights issue has emerged strongly in recent decades. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (UN General Assembly 2006) was finalised in May 2008 *"to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities"* (CRPD, Article 1). The definition of people with disabilities is very much in line with the social model of disability and includes *"…impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others"* (CRPD, Article 1). The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank published the first 'World Report on Disability' in 2011, a report that positions disability as socially constructed emerging from the complex negative aspects of a health condition *interacting* with personal and environmental factors. It highlighted how disability and poverty are interconnected and that people with disabilities experience greater disadvantage (WHO 2011). These international reports, through the UN and the WHO, position disability as a complex global human rights issue impacted by many factors (other than disability) including poverty, culture and environment.

These debates about the social and medical models of disability and the contradictions in how disability is conceptualised and understood both historically and currently are relevant to this study. The social model has stimulated and informed a raft of legislative changes in the US, United Kingdom, Ireland, and elsewhere. The human rights approach to understanding disability illustrates that how we understand disability is changing and evolving, moving away from a medical model approach, and beginning to consider how disability *and* poverty intersect to marginalise the poorest in society who are particularly vulnerable across the world (WHO 2011, Banks et al. 2018, Shevlin 2019). The uncertainties about what disability is and how it should be addressed in policy underpinned by themes of shame, difference, and inferiority, still play out in legislation, policy discourses, and ultimately in practices, across all sectors of education and life experiences in Ireland. This context is relevant in education, and as I will explore later, the historical origins of disability continue to be influential, and even dominant, and the medical and social models are constantly struggling for supremacy in education in policy and practice.

This is evident in the development of policy, legislation, and definitions of disability, that underpin policy and practice in the primary, post-primary, and HE sectors in Ireland, as the following section explores.

2.2.3 Disability/ Special Education Needs Policy in Education

In Ireland, historically, the philosophical and policy perspective was that the needs of children with disabilities could only be met through segregated educational provision (Kitchin and Mulcahy 1999). Substantial expansion in schooling for children with disabilities only began in Ireland in the 1950's when voluntary groups, charities, and religious orders (not the state), began to set up special schools (for children with disabilities only) in different parts of the country and these schools continued to grow until the 1960's (McGee 1990). Until the 1980's, disability policy in Ireland was seen as the responsibility of the health sector, thereby reinforcing the medical approach to disability (Doyle 2003).

By 1993, there were sixty four special schools in Ireland (DES 1993), with educational provision for children with disabilities continuing to be largely provided by voluntary/religious bodies, primarily related to provision in primary schools only, and was predominantly provided in an ad hoc manner in secondary schools, driven largely by parental demand rather than state policy (NCSE 2013). The education sectors for children with, and without disabilities, were firmly segregated with mainstream and special education operating in Ireland in virtual mutual isolation (Shevlin, Kenny and Loxley 2008). Special schools were eventually formally recognised by the state although this recognition, rather than the signalling the emergence of an inclusive education system, effectively legitimated the existing segregated models of educational provision for children with SEN in Ireland (McDonnell 2003).

In Ireland in the 1990's, there were significant changes in policy in education, driven largely by parents, who took to the courts to demand the human right of equal access to education for their children forcing the state to accept the legal obligation to provide an *"…appropriate education for all children"* (Meegan and MacPhail 2006, 58). The report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) published in 1993 described a range of weaknesses in educational provision for children with special needs in Ireland including a lack of integration at primary level, dropout at post-primary level, insufficient specialist training for teachers, and segregated ordinary and special education systems (Meegan and MacPhail 2006, 59). The SERC report (DES 1993) contained a definition of pupils with ‘*special educational needs*’ (SEN) suggesting that ‘*circumstances*’ be considered for children with SEN and broadened the definition to include the *“physical, social, emotional and material circumstances of the pupil”* (MacGiolla Phádraig 2007, 290). This definition is located more clearly in the social model of disability suggesting that the barriers faced by children might have a number of origins. Significantly, the definition suggested that SEN was not about academic deficits but encompassed children who needed a more challenging curriculum.

While the broadness of the inclusion approach was to be welcomed, the SERC report also suggested that the Committee favoured *“as much integration as is appropriate and feasible with as little segregation as necessary”* (DES 1993, 22). This guarded and qualified approach to inclusion is key because inclusion, although identified as desirable, was not embedded in policy as a central principle. Rather inclusion was to be one part of a continuum of provision for children with SEN with segregated education still considered as a suitable alternative (McDonnell 2003). Children with SEN for the first time had an automatic entitlement to resources, which included access to resource teaching and support, and this led to a dramatic increase in the numbers of resource teachers and special needs assistants in mainstream schools (Meegan and MacPhail 2006, MacGiolla Phádraig 2007, Shevlin et al. 2008). As with the previous uncertainty about what inclusion actually means, this change in government policy provided more resources to schools, but there was no real fundamental change in ethos or policy and additional resources did not guarantee an inclusive educational environment for all children (MacGiolla Phádraig 2007, 293). These ad hoc approaches and philosophical uncertainty about how desirable or mandatory inclusion is, what inclusion means, and the practical implementation of inclusive approaches to education, are important because they continue to be impactful in all sectors of education today.

Legislation in Ireland followed the SERC report with the two most relevant acts being the Education Act (1998) and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004). This legislation revealed an emerging narrowing conceptualisation of disability that repeatedly enforced an increasingly medicalised model of disability in education. The Education Act (1998) provides the first legal definition of 'disability', defining it as essentially a medical condition, reflecting the dominance of the medicalised pathologised approach to disability as well as uncertainty. The language is medicalised in this Act with reference in this definition to 'organisms', 'chronic disease', 'illness', 'malfunction', 'malformation', 'disease' and 'conditions'. The Act did however define SEN as '*the educational needs of students who have a disability and the educational needs of exceptionally able students'* (Education Act 1998, 8), a broad and inclusive definition to include children with academic difficulties and children who were gifted and might require a more challenging academic environment. There was no reference in the definition to the impact of circumstances that had been suggested by the SERC (DES 1993) report excluding children with adverse *"social, emotional or material circumstances"* from this legislative protection (MacGiolla Phádraig 2007, 293). The Education Act (1998) is significant in policy because it provided a legal medicalised deficit-based definition of disability and created a restrictive and individualised understanding of SEN that is relevant to both current policy and practice.

The EPSEN Act (2004) is important in the evolution of policy because there is a statutory guarantee of education services for people with special education needs to include assessments, individual education plans (IEP's) and a central role for parents in the education of their children. The Act also made provision for the establishment of the National Council for Special Educational Needs (NCSE) and for the appointment of locally based special needs organisers. However, it is also clear that the definition of SEN becomes more focussed on disability and effectively moved Ireland from a broad understanding of special education needs to a focus on disability only (MacGiolla Phádraig 2007, 298). The EPSEN Act (2004) states that a child shall be educated in an inclusive environment *"where possible"* unless to do so would not be consistent with the best interests of the child or other children (EPSEN Act 2004, 5). With this legislation, SEN is now exclusively focussed on disability that has been separated clinically from ability and from social, cultural, and economic circumstances. The increasingly medicalised approach to disability enshrined in legislation suggests that there is lukewarm support for inclusion that can be facilitated, rather than guaranteed, with options to opt out of an inclusive approach if it is not in the interests of the child or other children, or the school; ambiguities that are still impactful today.

In Ireland, the impact of legislation and policies that medicalised disability have resulted in a stratified education sector where students with SEN in primary and post-primary education have a number of educational options (in theory) ranging from full time enrolment in mainstream schools, to full time enrolment in special schools (schools that are segregated and are for children with SEN only), and a variety of options in between (NCSE 2013). These in between options include special classes in mainstream schools although it has been argued that these are a different form of segregated schooling (McDonnell 2003).

There are 119 special schools in Ireland and in the 2016/17 school year, there were 7,700 students enrolled in these schools supported by 1,197 teachers and 2,405 SNAs (NCSE 2017). The prevalence of children with SEN in mainstream schools is difficult to state with certainty due to various definitions of SEN and disability and data collected from different sources using different methodologies (McCoy et al. 2014a, 125). Banks and

McCoy (2011) in an ESRI study using data from a longitudinal study ‘Growing Up in Ireland’ (Williams et al. 2009) suggested that 25 per cent of nine year olds in Ireland had a SEN of some kind, suggesting that SEN is common in all schools. These prevalence rates are not, however, evenly distributed across the population and there is a strong association between SEN prevalence rates and disadvantage/social class (McCoy et al. 2014a). This is relevant because it suggests an association between disability and social class that I explore in detail later in this chapter.

There has been a significant state investment in special education in Ireland and the state’s annual expenditure on special education in the primary and post-primary sectors increased by 38 per cent between 2011 and 2017 to €1,683 million euros, 18.9 per cent of the Department of Education and Skill’s gross current allocation (Department of Public Enterprise and Reform Disability and Special Education Related Expenditure 2017). The supports provided for children with SEN include a large number of additional people resources including over 7,000 resource teachers and over 13,000 Special Needs Assistants (SNA’s) to support over 57,000 students with special educational needs (NCSE 2017, 4). The Resource and Learning Support teachers provide supplementary learning support and resource teaching, and supports also include assistive technology, transport, home tuition, an extended school year scheme, and a visiting teacher service for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Blind/Visually Impaired (NCSE 2013). SNA’s (usually allocated to individual students) are also provided to support the care needs of students.

In summary, the overall intent of Irish legislation and policy is clearly to broaden access to education although policy to support SEN in schools has been driven more by litigation and parental demand than by a commitment to inclusive education and policy and is underpinned by various competing and contradictory definitions of disability. Numerous definitions of disability in Ireland are often in conflict with each other. The Education Act (1998) defines disability as an individual medicalised deficit and this interpretation is dominant in education. Each legislative step has seen the medicalised individual deficit-based approach to SEN consolidated and the social model understanding of SEN disappearing. SEN is now about individual deficit and again the approach is about qualified support for inclusion rather than a human rights based approach. An aspiration to inclusive education is constantly qualified in legislation, language, and practice, by the *but* mentality. Education should be inclusive *but* only 'appropriate' education (Education Act 1998, Section 7 (1)). Education should be inclusive *but* key provisions in the EPSEN Act that would ensure inclusion have not been implemented. Education must be inclusive *but* only if consistent with the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated suggesting a lukewarm support for inclusion and that the needs of all children cannot be met in an inclusive setting (EPSEN Act 2004*).*

The legislative fuzziness and lack of clarity reflect the uncertainty about the vision of an inclusive approach versus an education system with a legal requirement to provide resources and supports in a medicalised and pathologised understanding of disability but with no human rights based policy that would guarantee inclusive provision. These issues are directly relevant to the experiences of students with disabilities in all education sectors, and to their opportunities to progress and to be retained in HE. These competing ideologies play out in the lives of children with disabilities across the education system.

The next section considers the development of legislation, policy, and practice, for SWD in Higher Education.

2.2.4 Students with Disabilities - Policy, Participation, and Pathways to Higher Education

The motivation to broaden access to HE has been dominant in HE policy over the last two decades and is linked to a number of discourses including that broadening access to HE is linked to economic competitiveness and that creating social mobility can address longstanding social inequalities (Irish Government 1965, Skilbeck and Connell 2000, DES 1995, DES 2001, DES 2011, HEA 2004, HEA 2008, HEA 2015, Fleming et al. 2017, 108). In 1971, this commitment to equality was tentatively enshrined in the Higher Education Authority Act (1971), Section 3 of which sets out that the higher education sector has a responsibility for *"promoting the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education"*. A similar rather tentative approach to equality can be seen in the Universities Act (1997) that introduced more specific obligations to *"promote gender balance and equality of opportunity among students and employees of the university"* (Universities Act 1997, Section 12 (k)). Under Section 36 of the Act, Universities are required to develop policies in respect of access to the university and to university education by economically or socially disadvantaged people, by people who have a disability and by people from sections of society significantly under-represented in the student body. The language used in this legislation is aspirational in nature suggesting that promoting and having '*regard*' to access and equality is sufficient. This compares to a human rights approach that would oblige or compel institutions to meet specific measurable outcomes and to radically change the structure of a system that again seems geared to address the needs of the most privileged. In this vague and halfhearted commitment to inclusion, similar to policy in other sectors of education, equality of access to HE for SWD seems to have its origins in an optional goodwill approach rather than a core part of the role of HE in Ireland.

The medicalised individualised conceptualisation of SEN/disability enshrined in legislation and applied in practice in the primary and post-primary education sectors is also enforced in HE in Ireland. Students in HE must '*register*' with disability services in the HEI to access support requiring that students self-identify as a student with a disability. In order to register with the disability services, students must provide the required medical documentation (from the appropriate professional) that confirms that the student has been diagnosed with one of the identified categories of disability[4]. Students must be registered with disability support services to access any additional support related to disability that is not available to all students in the mainstream services. The Irish Government and the EU established the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) in 1994. The FSD is managed by the HEA and covers the cost of academic supports for SWD. Students who register with disability services can access transition/orientation supports, individual needs assessments, assistive technology, learning support, dedicated specialised supports, and examination accommodations.

All HEI's have either Access and/or Disability Officers who coordinate the provision of academic supports for SWD. These structures are often separate and divided into Access Officers (coordinate support for working-class students) and Disability Officers (coordinate supports for SWD). These support services are widespread across higher and further education although there is variability in supports and student satisfaction (Duggan and Byrne 2013, McGuckin et al. 2013).

---

[4] There were 11 possible disability categories at the time of the study: Asperger's Syndrome/Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Blind/Vision Impaired, Deaf/Hearing Impaired, Dyspraxia (also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder or DCD), Mental Health Condition, Neurological Conditions Including Brain Injury and Speech and Language Disabilities), Physical Disability, Significant Ongoing Illness (including Epilepsy, Diabetes, Cystic Fibrosis, and Gastroenterology Conditions), Specific Learning Difficulty (includes Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, and Dyscalculia) and Other (none of the above.

2.2.4.1 Participation Rates and Targets for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

With regard to the prevalence of SWD in HE, across OECD countries, there has been an increase of over 20 per cent on average between 1995 and 2011 in the proportion of SWD attending tertiary education (OECD 2013). In Ireland, the increase in the numbers of SWD in HE has been tracked over the last 20 years by the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) in Ireland who complete an annual survey on the participation by SWD in Ireland. The most recent survey confirms that, as a percentage, the numbers of SWD in HE has continued to increase over the last 20 years, even as the HE sector has expanded, and that between 1998/99 and 2016/17, the total numbers of SWD in HE in Ireland increased from 1.1 per cent (1,410 students) to 5.7 per cent (12,630 students) (AHEAD 2018). The HEA also report that participation by SWD in HE across the sector continues to increase with six per cent of new entrants to HE currently indicating that they have a disability (HEA 2015). The target is to increase participation by SWD to 12 per cent of new entrants to HE over the lifetime of the current national access plan with a particular focus on students with sensory and physical disabilities (HEA 2018c).

In Ireland, the increase in the numbers of SWD accessing HE has been identified as a major policy success (HEA 2018a). These data should however be considered carefully at a number of levels. Firstly, the AHEAD survey is voluntary and it is not clear if it captures all SWD who are in HE. An issue that is very relevant to this study is that national data and targets for broadening access to HE by SWD are not disaggregated by social class, SWD are treated as a homogenous group, and thus increases in participation rates are assumed to benefit all SWD equally. There is no consideration in the data of the intersection of disability and social class or the varying characteristics of students. I do not deny that there have been increases in the overall participation rates in HE by SWD but I argue that these data provide an incomplete and inadequate picture of the participation of SWD in HE in Ireland. I will explore this issue further in chapter 3 where I propose that IS offers a more compete framework for analysing the participation of SWD in HE in Ireland.

The DARE scheme was introduced as an initiative to broaden access to HE for SWD and to contribute to the national targets outlined above and has, at a macro level, contributed to the increases in the number of SWD accessing HE in Ireland. The DARE scheme is important in this study because it provides a full national picture of the application of school leavers with disabilities to HE in Ireland and these data are used in the study to map the impact of the intersection of disability and social class on the progression, retention, and experience of SWD in higher education in Ireland. I outline the implications of the development of this pathway to HE for students in more detail below.

2.2.4.2 Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)

The DARE scheme is relevant to this study as it was developed as a national scheme to support greater access by SWD to HE in Ireland based on the premise that school leavers experience (the same) barriers related to disability that have a negative impact on their second level education and thus their chances of progression to HE. In 2017/18, DARE was available in 20 institutions (all seven universities, six Institutes of Technology (IoT's) and seven colleges. Students who are eligible for DARE can access a place in HE without reaching the points that are required by other students. Some HEI's operate a percentage points reduction (TCD for example offers a reduction of up to 10-15 per cent of the points required for each course to DARE eligible students) while others offer a maximum points reduction (DCU for example offers a maximum points reduction of up to seventy five points). Students eligible for DARE are also offered a variety of transition and post-entry supports.

The DARE scheme has had a significant impact on broadening access to HE measured by the volume of applications and the numbers of students eligible for DARE who progress to HE in Ireland. Table 2.1 identifies applicants eligible for DARE in 2015 and 2016, and merges that data with CAO acceptances to HE, to provide a national picture of the impact of the DARE scheme in the context of new entrants to HE in Ireland.

TABLE 2.1: DARE APPLICATIONS AND PLACES ACCEPTED IN HE IRELAND 2015 AND 2016

Year	CAO Applications	CAO Acceptances*	DARE Applications	DARE Acceptances	Total HEAR and DARE Acceptances
2015	61,575	43,460	4,498	1,891 (4.4%) **	4,996 (11.5%) **
2016	63,747	43,569	5,402	2,188 (5.0%) **	5,194 (11.9%) **

- *All data from Nic Fhlannchadha (2017) - DARE HEAR Facts and Figures 2017 (2016/17) except CAO Acceptances which is from HEA (2018b) Key Facts and Figures*
- ** Students who have accepted a place in HE via the CAO*
- *** As a percentage of CAO Acceptances*

The data confirm the continuing increase in the number of DARE applications with an increase between 2015 and 2016 of 904 (20.1 per cent) and an increase of 297 (15.7 per cent) in applicants eligible for DARE who accepted a place in HE in Ireland. DARE entrants to HE have increased over the last number of years and accounted in 2016 for 5.0 per cent of all acceptances in HE. These data suggest, at a macro level, that there is a broadening of access to HE in Ireland by SWD.

Again, these data need to be considered carefully. The DARE scheme considers all SWD as a homogenous group. Unlike the HEAR scheme (introduced later in this chapter), there are no social or cultural or economic indicators used as part of the DARE scheme to determine eligibility even though the DARE scheme attracts a disproportionate number of applicants from fee-paying schools and more affluent areas suggesting that there may be a bias in the scheme (Byrne et al. 2013). The locus of disadvantage in the DARE scheme is disability (medicalised approach) only. Again, increases in the numbers of DARE applications and the numbers of DARE eligible students progressing to HE is presented as benefiting all SWD equally. I explore this issue later in the chapter where I argue that this assumption hides how the DARE scheme marginalises working-class SWD.

A more fundamental challenge to the DARE and HEAR schemes is the argument that although the schemes offer an alternative pathway into HE they fail to challenge, and in fact can be seen to validate, the structural inequality that is embedded throughout a stratified education system. The result is that such schemes consolidate rather than address current inequities, as it is those that are the most advantaged who will be best positioned to take advantage of improved opportunities (Lynch 1999, 293). This study examines whether SWD with greater economic, social and cultural capital, are using the DARE scheme to improve their positioning and create opportunities in education while working-class SWD, with fewer resources, are marginalised in a scheme that was ostensibly established to support their empowerment.

Finally, both schemes are based on categorisations and applicants are required to possess certain characteristics in order to apply and a certain amount of cultural capital to make a successful application. Students are defined by these characteristics, whether disability, or poverty. In such a space, applicants must take on this social identity to access the pathway, labels that can reinforce a particular identity, whether wanted or not. DARE students and access students are created and the '*sticky label*' which consciously or unconsciously was attached in early life is firmly reattached and maintained by these schemes (Fleming et al. 2017, 104).

Although the participation rates of SWD in HE provides some indication of the broadening of access to HE, a key issue explored in this study is how the social construction of disability (as a medicalised individualised deficit) has impacted the experiences of SWD in education and this is explored in detail later in the study through the participants' accounts of their experiences across the education sectors. As this is such a central part of the study, I outline in the next section the themes in the literature related to the experiences of SWD in education that emerge repeatedly as key.

2.3 Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Education

There are a number of important themes that resonate in the literature on the experiences of SWD in schools in Ireland that are relevant to this study and that emerge as key. These can be summarised as the tensions in the education system between the medical and social models of disability; the ad hoc, individualised, and goodwill-based nature of student supports; the marginalisation of students and their parents; the role of teachers/school climate; low expectations, and the labelling/stigma of disability. A review of the literature in relation to the experiences of SWD in HE suggest that little changes for students as they progress from earlier school education to HE as the same themes emerge repeatedly as the medical model of disability largely reigns supreme across the education system. These themes are analysed in more detail below.

2.3.1 Medicalised Individualised Understanding of Disability

Echoing what was described earlier at societal level, the primary understanding of SEN/disability within the Irish education system is located in the medical model of provision, with a focus on individual deficits, suggesting that while national and school policies promote inclusion, the reality is often one of exclusion where many barriers remain (Shevlin et al. 2008). McCoy and Banks (2012) in *"Simply Academic? Why children with special educational needs don't like school"* used data from a large-scale longitudinal study of 8578 9-year-olds and suggested that while the primary school curriculum, for example, has, in theory, incorporated an inclusive education strategy, there is little evidence of an inclusive education system (McCoy and Banks 2012, 94). In Ireland there has been little pressure for the school system to change while individual students are expected to assimilate, to integrate, and to adapt to mainstream norms (Kenny et al. 2000, O'Donnell 2003, O'Keefe 2004, Rose and Shevlin 2004, Shevlin et al. 2004b).

This medical model means that the support needs of students are positioned as deficit-based and individualised, dependent on the goodwill of sympathetic individuals, rather than system or legislative guarantees (Meegan and MacPhail (2006). The inadequacy and variability of school support, between sectors, or between and even within schools, is a constant theme in the literature (Kitchin and Mulcahy 1999, Prunty et al. 2012, Squires et al. 2016, Barnes-Holmes et al. 2013). In Ireland, the result is variable and uncertain policy to provide for pupils with SEN/disabilities in primary and post-primary schools (Rose et al. 2015). This is a familiar international policy context with similar conclusions also reached by Healey et al. (2006) in the UK and by Riddell et al. (2005) in Scotland.

In Ireland, there have been a small number of studies examining the experiences of SWD in HE. Phillips and Clarke completed a study in 2010 titled *"Pathways for disabled students to tertiary education and employment"* as part of an OECD research project. The study, across three higher education institutions, reported that while support was generally better in HE (in comparison to the patchy support in schools) that it was not always consistent (Phillips and Clarke 2010). More recent studies in Ireland concur identifying that while disability supports services are now widespread across HE, that there continues to be variability where supports are largely individualised and the structural barriers for SWD in HE have not been fully addressed (Duggan and Byrne 2013, McGuckin et al. 2013).

Similar conclusions have also been reached in Scotland and England, identifying that many of the barriers experienced by students in HE were structural in nature where the medical model of disability is dominant, disability was perceived to be the real problem, resulting in inadequate individualised solutions (Riddell 1998, Holloway 2001, Borland and James 1999). A study in one of the 'top ten' English universities considered an example of good practice for its wide range of disability supports, identified barriers in staff attitudes, students forced to disclose a disability to access services, and an environment where SWD constantly battled for support (Goode 2007). Vickerman and Blundell (2010) identified that good experiences for SWD in HE largely depended on individual staff members, and that there were gaps in policy and practice where most students struggle to receive ad hoc individualised support (Vickerman and Blundell 2010).

2.3.2 Experience of Parents of Students with Disabilities

The marginalisation of parents is an important theme in the literature in the primary and post-primary sectors and parents report a challenging environment when interacting with schools and education providers negotiating and battling to secure supports for their children. Parents reported that schools operate under the 'charity' rather than a 'rights' model, with parents feeling that they are continually asking for services rather than being entitled to them, relying on the support of individual staff/school principals to secure effective access (Kenny et al. 2005, Shevlin et al. 2008). Many parents felt themselves '*embroiled in a struggle*' underpinned by a lack of confidence on the part of principals and teachers (Rose et al. 2010, 368).

A national study of parental perspectives and experiences of SEN provision in Ireland reported that 10 to 20 per cent of parents experienced serious difficulties due to dissatisfaction with how their child was taught and the lack of opportunities for parental involvement in their child's education (Armstrong et al. 2010). In this system, much of the responsibility for negotiating access and support rests with individual parents who report difficulties for parents in accessing timely diagnoses, and that appropriate support was hindered by a lack of encouragement by schools of parental involvement (Rose et al. 2015). Students with SEN/disabilities report however that their parents and families were very involved in supporting their decisions regarding post-school options though there was limited evidence of formal engagement by parents with school professionals in this process (Smyth et al. 2011, 102-103).

This suggests that parents with greater advocacy skills may be better positioned to challenge their marginalisation and to support better outcomes for their children, an issue that emerges as key in participant accounts in this study. It also suggests that individual students who do not have parental support or advocacy capacity might be particularly vulnerable in a system that is negotiated by individuals rather than supported by systemic provision an issue that is also very relevant for this study. This issue is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter in relation to the intersection of disability and social class.

2.3.3 Low Expectations - Teachers, Parents, Students

The conceptualisation of SEN/disability as inherently negative is a dominant ideology in schools and society and low academic expectations of children with SEN by parents and teachers is the norm. Internationally parents have only low or moderate expectations of the educational outcomes their child will achieve (Armstrong et al. 2010). A study to explore the outcomes of children with special educational needs using data collected from nine year old children and their parents, teachers and school principals as part of Wave I of the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study identified that all SEN groups (except children with physical or sensory disabilities) were significantly less likely to have parents expecting them to obtain a third level degree and that the issue of low parental expectations was so significant that a global policy intervention was required (Cosgrove et al. 2014). Negative assumptions about SEN/disability are endemic and parents had lower academic expectations even compared to the actual academic achievement of their child (Banks et al. 2016). The importance of parental expectations is particularly key to positive student outcomes with suggestions that strong parental support seems to have the capacity to counter even the most negative school experiences (Phillips and Clarke 2010).

Low teacher expectations also have a significantly negative impact on the academic engagement and outcomes for children and young people with SEN/disabilities. There is evidence that teachers had lower academic expectations even when this was not consistent with ability (Shevlin et al. 2002, O’Donnell 2003, Rose and Shevlin 2004, Rose et al. 2010). The impact of low expectations is not confined to the early cycles of education. A study in Ireland that looked at admission routes to higher education for

SWD and interviewed 16 third level students also identified low expectations by staff in HE (Shevlin et al. 2004a).

SWD also seem to have lower expectations of themselves where the majority of post-primary students in Ireland without SEN wanted to go on to further education while students with SEN were more likely to seek employment or work-based education (Squires et al. 2016). This suggests that the dominant ideology is that SEN/disability is inherently negative and is conflated with low academic ability, that this ideology is endemic and is the dominant experience for children with SEN, their parents and teachers. This theme emerges strongly in participant accounts in this study.

2.3.4 Importance of Educators - Capacity, Expertise, Role Models

The importance of teachers/lecturers in supporting children with SEN in terms of attitudes, values and attributes is highlighted in the literature. The negative impact of teachers who exclude, accept lower standards and give poor feedback has been highlighted (Kenny et al. 2003). This has been contrasted to the empowering nature of supportive inclusive teachers who often however acted in the informal domain (Shevlin et al. 2002). Many studies have found that the relationship between students and teachers is crucial, that SWD wanted to be treated like their peers, to be ‘understood’, to be respected and to be seen as a ‘whole’ person (McCoy and Banks 2012, Squires et al. 2016).

A specific issue arises in relation to the professional capacity of many teachers to effectively support children and young people with SEN/disabilities as some classroom teachers in Ireland lack even basic knowledge of the educational implications of particular SEN/disabilities (Shevlin, Kenny and Loxley 2008). This perception of teachers not having the knowledge and skills to support children and young people with SEN is a frequent theme and teachers in special settings were perceived to be more supportive and to have more knowledge and experience than teachers in mainstream settings (Squires et al. 2016). Many class teachers themselves acknowledged that they were uncertain of how to provide effective curricular access for pupils with SEN in their classes (Rose et al. 2016: 166). The Special Needs Assistant (SNA) role has become the dominant model of support in the classroom in Ireland in recent years even though it has been identified that this support reflects a medical model which locates the ‘problem’ within the individual child or young person where the SNA becomes the solution for the individual child to ‘fix’ the problem. This kind of focussed support on individuals has been identified as being to the detriment of more inclusive teaching or curriculum interventions or system change (Carrig 2004, Logan 2006, Travers 2006, Drudy and Kinsella 2009, Rose and O’Neill 2009, Rose et al. 2010).

The literature suggests that the medical model is dominant in the education system in Ireland leading to the assumption that specialist knowledge is required to teach SWD rather than the expectation that teachers can teach all students (Rose et al. 2016, 166). The prevailing ideology suggests that SEN/disability is not ‘normal’ and that ‘normal’ teachers cannot teach children or students with SEN/disabilities as this requires something ‘extra’, more ‘specialised’ or ‘expert’ than is needed for the ‘normal’ students.

2.3.5 Labelling and Stigma

The labelling of children with disabilities and the impact of this process on their identities is relatively underexplored in the literature. Although it is mentioned as negative, this is often in passing rather than examining how children experience the label, the impact on their identity, relationships, confidence, and how it affects their education.

For many children and young people the words ‘SEN’ and ‘disability’ have a negative connotation and the dangers of labelling children and young people with SEN/disabilities has been highlighted because of the evidence of lowered expectations and stigmatisation (Banks et al. 2015, McCoy et al. 2016). Students with and without SEN, suggest that inclusive teachers who provided support in an inclusive way were important and that it was key not to be different, not to be singled out, or identified/labelled as a SWD, which was seen to be implicitly negative (Squires et al. 2016, Barnes-Holmes et al. 2013). Labelling was identified as key to how students internalised the negative and deficit-based assumptions about disability that are endemic in the education system.

In summary, there are tensions in the education system between the medical and social models of disability that mean that the experiences of many SWD are characterised by individualisation, medicalisation, marginalisation, isolation, and inferiority across all education sectors where the medical model of disability largely reigns supreme. These studies, while valuable and key to the participant experiences explored later in the study, continue to suggest that the experiences of all SWD are the same, a universalising approach that elides within group differences. Indeed, the largest and most recent study in Ireland to examine the experiences of post-primary students to understand their experiences of SEN did not consider or report at all on the potential for differentiated school experiences for children from differing socio-economic backgrounds (Squires et al. 2016). This study argues for a closer and more nuanced examination of the experiences of SWD at the intersection of disability and social class.

This study also considers the retention in HE of SWD as important and the next section outlines how little we know about the retention of SWD generally in HE and the significant gap in knowledge about the retention of students in HE at the intersection of disability and social class, an issue that this study proposes to address.

2.4 Retention of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

Internationally there is a lack of data in relation to the retention of students with disabilities in HE (Quinn 2013, 63). Even where there is some data, the evidence is not conclusive. In a UK study on the retention of 462 students based in a cross-section of HEIs in the UK, who did not enter their second year, just 31 students declared a disability (Yorke and Longden 2008). Of those, personal health was most frequently identified as an influence on their non-continuation although SWD had a higher rate of citing a lack of support from both staff and students and a greater tendency to cite large class size as an influence (Yorke and Longden 2008). The National Audit Office in the UK commissioned an international comparative analysis of student retention in HE and identified that some countries in the study (US) could provide no information on the retention of SWD while others (Australia) collected and reported on this group (Van Stolk et al. 2007). The same study confirmed that there was no issue with the retention of SWD in Australia or in the Netherlands (NAO 2007, 42) and that in England SWD actually fare marginally better than the standard student body (NAO 2007, 20).

In Ireland, a national commitment to better data on retention is substantially weakened by a failure to collect data on the retention in HE of SWD. A series of national studies on retention (Mooney et al. 2010, Liston et al. 2016, Frawley et al. 2017) did not collect or report on the retention of SWD although the studies did report on other student characteristics including gender, ethnicity, and social class. A study on the retention of non-traditional students in Irish higher education identified a small number of SWD in the sample although issues specific to this group were not developed (Fleming and Finnegan 2011). A national study for the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (2015) on retention did not address the issue of the retention of SWD specifically. The study did report, almost in passing, that a significant reason for non-completion related to health and medical issues, predominantly emotional and mental health issues.

One of the few Irish studies to look at retention by SWD in higher education was published in 2006. Byrne in '*Improving the Retention of Students with Disabilities in Third Level: Final Summary Report to the National Access Office*' (Byrne 2006) identified significant issues at second level in relation to the provision of relevant information to SWD, the need for greater collaboration and sharing of information and the need for more inclusive school policies. Again, the study treated SWD as a homogenous group experiencing the same barriers and outcomes and did not consider social class. A more detailed report on the retention of SWD in Ireland was published in 2010 and stemmed from *"a dearth of information available on the access, retention and success of students with disabilities in higher education in Ireland"* (UCC/CIT 2010, 4). Overall, the report was positive in relation to the retention of SWD suggesting that these students, once appropriately supported, are successful in HE (UCC/CIT 2010, 7). The study also did not consider the intersection of disability and social class. A national study of the HEAR and DARE schemes identified that, after controlling for a range of characteristics, that DARE entrants had the same probability of progressing to 2nd Year as all other students (Byrne et al. 2013).

In summary, the literature on student retention in HE related to the relationship between disability and retention reveals that there is a lack of data internationally and nationally and conflicting evidence with no conclusive picture about how SWD fare in HE. There is little attention paid in the literature to how disability might intersect with other identities to impact retention in HE. This lack of attention nationally to the retention of SWD in any way is puzzling although it may reflect the belief that retention in HE by SWD is an individual matter related to disability (a medicalised individualised approach) only rather than a system issue or the inflexibility of structures in HE. It may also reflect how SWD are marginalised even in national policy where increased participation by SWD in HE is the objective rather than the retention of these students in HE. I argue that these studies provide an incomplete national picture of the retention of SWD in HE, a significant gap in knowledge that is addressed by this study.

2.5 Summary - Disability/ Special Education Needs Policy in Ireland

This first section outlined the development of disability as a social construct underpinned by widely held assumptions that disability is an inherently negative individual deficit that could, and indeed should, be controlled through medicalisation and segregated provision. The perception of disability as a thing of shame, stigmatised, a negative difference, to be feared, as well as contained and separated from 'normal' society, has been enduring and this paradigm is still dominant. The language used to portray disability and the images used to represent disability currently continue to label and to portray people with disabilities as *"…deficient, pitiable, wicked or malign, dangerous or valueless"* (Hosking 2008, 14). The social model, reified in policy, is in tension with a medical model that is dominant in practice, despite the human rights discourse that is gaining momentum internationally driven by the demand for inclusion versus integration and for equality rather than charity.

These developments are relevant to this study suggesting that special education (for children with disabilities only) and mainstream education (for able children) developed as two entirely separate forms of educational provision in Ireland underpinned by a discourse of deficits, difference, and inferiority, that continue to be impactful in education today. The desire for a social model approach to disability is tempered by the dominant medicalised definitions that emerged in the Education Act (1998) and that have been implemented in practice across all education sectors. National policy was driven by the pressure and success of litigation and parental demand, conceding to some demands, rather than a new policy framework underpinned by a belief in the ethos and value for all children of inclusive education. The medical and deficit-based approach to disability continues to be dominant, creating and enforcing hierarchies in education between the ‘able’ and the ‘disabled’, between ‘mainstream’ and ‘special education’, and the uncertainty about what constitutes an appropriate education for people with disabilities is in evidence across all education sectors.

In Ireland, the increase in the numbers of SWD accessing HE has been identified as a major policy success although SWD are considered to be a homogenous group and these increases in participation rates are assumed to benefit all SWD equally, an approach challenged by this study. Analysing the retention of SWD in HE is not a policy or research priority and again reports on students as if they are a homogenous group experiencing the same barriers and outcomes within HE. In the education system, the experiences of SWD are characterised by the ad hoc, individualised, variable, and goodwill based nature of student supports, the marginalisation of students and their parents, low expectations, and the labelling/stigma of disability. These themes are all again largely underpinned by assumptions about the homogeneity of the experiences in education of all SWD and a lack of attention paid to the intersection of disability and social class in people's experiences and indeed other identities including age, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity.

In my own practice within HE these debates are relevant because students live and experience life at the intersection of these contradictions, living with a policy context that is in theory based on the aspirations of the social model, while in practice, the medical paradigm is dominant. The influence of the medical model in all education sectors is pervasive and damaging to SWD. In my own professional work however, the social model of disability is not a compelling theory of disability either. I feel, as Shakespeare and Watson (2002) argue, that most students do not see themselves as disabled under either the medical or the social model. The social model perspective is also not effective in explaining how disability intersects with other identity dimensions and constantly argues that disability is the primary, if not the only, marker of disadvantage. In fact assuming that disability, while important, is the key to each person's identity *"is to recapitulate the errors made from those from the medical model perspective who define people by the impairment"* (Shakespeare and Watson 2002, 22). In my own experience in HE, SWD do not experience disability as a singular experience. Rather, they experience disability *and* social class (and other aspects of their identity) simultaneously, with different aspects foregrounded at different times and in different contexts, intersecting to influence every element of their everyday interactions and experiences. I explore this issue further later in the next chapter when I argue that intersectionality offers a more complete way of analysing these intersections.

In the previous sections I outlined how disability, as a negative and highly stigmatised social identity, has been constructed in policy and practice in Ireland as a singular identity, treating students with disabilities as essentially homogenous, eliding within group differences and positioning disability as the defining aspect of each person's identity. In the next section, I examine the emergence of social class as a concept, and the development of similar deficit-based understandings and individualised approaches to addressing the needs of working-class students in education. I argue that a similar parallel unidimensional approach to social class has driven the development of policy and practice in education in Ireland, marginalising those that are different in other aspects of their identities.

2.6 Development of Social Class Policy in Education in Ireland

In this section, I trace the parallel development of deficit understandings in the area of social class and the impact of the development of categorical quantitative approaches to social class that are reified as the primary, and often the only, approach to understanding, identifying, and analysing, educational inequality in Ireland. I trace how these limited singular understandings of social class influenced the development of legislation, policy, and practice, in education in Ireland and how they continue to be impactful in the lives of working-class students in particular in the education system today.

2.6.1 Social Class - A Singular Construction of Deficits and Difference

Unlike disability which has been presented through the ages as a clear and undisputed deviance, there has been considerable conjecture as to whether social class actually exists (Bourdieu 1987) or whether there has been '*…a withering away of class*' which no longer has any relevance in a modern capitalist society (Goldthorpe 1996, 483). In Britain, since the 1990's sociologists have explored the fact that while social inequalities have widened in society there seems to be less awareness of class (Savage et al. 2010, Skeggs 1997, Savage 2000, Reay 2005). Skeggs (1997), completing a longitudinal ethnography of young working-class women set in North Western England in the late 1980's and early 1990's, argues that class in the lives of these young women was central and that while class as a concept has almost disappeared, class, and class classifications, impacted on their lives on a daily basis (Skeggs 1997, 2). In this study, women were always conscious of the inferiority of their working-class position, characterised by an inability to get it right, to be without shame, humiliated and judged, and so they actively sought out middle-class respectability as a way of being valued (Skeggs 1997, 95). Reay (2005) similarly argues that far from being irrelevant in contemporary society in the UK, social class operates just as powerfully on an individual and on a collective level as "*…class is deeply embedded in everyday interventions, in institutional processes, in struggles over identity, validity, self-worth and integrity…*" (Reay, 2005, 924). Savage et al. (2015) argue that class in British society is as salient as ever but that there is a need for a new concept of social class suggesting that the most important divisions are no longer between the traditional 'middle' and 'working' classes but between a small and incredibly powerful corporate elite and everybody else (Savage et al. 2015, 1022). In Britain, the negativity related to being 'working class' is unchanged with the development of terms like the 'underclass' used deliberately to stigmatise the poor (Savage et al. 2015, 1022). More recently, in popular culture, derogatory terms such as 'chavs' have become synonymous with the negative stereotypes of the working class as welfare mothers and petty criminals represented in the media (Tyler 2008).

In Ireland, Finnegan (2012) in an examination of social class in HE, also argues that social hierarchies and divisions (the basis of social class) continue to be relevant, impactful, and indeed are one of the dominant ways of describing the social divisions in society represented as the working classes, the growing middle classes, and the established elites (Finnegan 2012). Historically, the institutional structures of reformatories and industrial schools in Ireland developed to manage and control the 'problem' of the poor, echo the policies of negative difference, segregation, and institutionalisation, experienced by people with disabilities. The poorest in society were disproportionately channelled into these institutions, positioned in policy and practice as stigmatised and inferior (Finnegan 2012). Although, socially and economically there have been major changes in Irish society in more recent times as Ireland has transitioned from a mainly rural and agricultural economy to become more industrialised and urbanised, society has remained highly stratified (Breen et al. 1990). In Ireland, the last 20 years have been characterised by the boom of the 'Celtic Tiger', a period when social inequality was of marginal interest, followed by a deep recession that began with the banking crisis in 2008. The next ten years saw a decade of forced emigration, increased homelessness, stark polarisations in income inequality, significant increases in unemployment, and deep cuts in public expenditure, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable in Irish society in terms of access to education and welfare. This was also the period when the working class began to be more widely represented and stereotyped in Ireland as 'an underclass', associated with drugs, criminal gangs, crime, and welfare dependency (Finnegan 2012). These conceptualisations of social class underpinned by assumptions of deficit, difference, and inferiority, continue to influence the lives of working-class students in education today.

The impact of these differentials can be explored through theories of social class which remain a contested topic explained by various perspectives. I outline various theories of social class, in brief below, before exploring their relevance for this research.

2.6.2 Theories of Social Class - Tensions in Policy and Practice

Karl Marx's theory of class exploitation and emancipation has been very influential in sociology analysing the hidden mechanisms of class reproduction in society, and arguing that these conflicts can be resolved by advancing an emancipatory agenda. Marxist class theory is primarily concerned with class formation, with collective class action, and with the history of class struggle. Marxism has been very influential although Max Weber (1978), a sociologist, has also had a significant influence in shaping the sociology of class. Weber also argued that class is central to society, but suggested that class is also inherently connected to status and power. His theory has been very influential, analysing how the opportunities available to a member of a given class in the market are determined by a complex interplay of cultural, social and economic power.

Pierre Bourdieu (1984; 1985; 1989) argues that social class is more of a '*social space*' experienced as various forms of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) that are like *"aces in a game of cards"* in the struggle for scarce resources (Bourdieu 1987, 3). In this theory, agents are distributed in the overall social space according to the volume of capital they possess, the composition of that capital, and their trajectory in social space being assigned a position, or a '*precise class of neighbouring positions*' (Bourdieu 1987, 4). People in this shared space adjust to their position, to their sense of place, as defined intrinsically (by the material conditions of existence) and relationally (by how they are positioned in relation to other positions above or below them). Class struggles represent the demarcation or definition of boundaries between the groups that are not fixed, as there are no more clear-cut boundaries in the reality of the social world than there are in the physical world (Bourdieu 1987, 13). These class struggles are fundamentally about power, who has access to various forms of capital, power, and scarce resources.

This theory argues that society is structurally configured to facilitate access for the most privileged at the expense of the most vulnerable and marginalised and that class is most importantly about social and cultural power. Bourdieu drew attention to the importance of culture in society and the importance of non-economic capitals providing a compelling analysis of class reproduction. This is significant for this study as Bourdieu provides a way of exploring social class that is not based on static socio-economic categories or economic determinism or occupational hierarchies. Class in this theory is most importantly about dynamic social and cultural power constellations.

While debates over the relevance of class in contemporary society has prompted a discourse that there has been 'a withering away of class' and that class has become largely irrelevant in a modern capitalist society (Goldthorpe 1996, 483), large-scale international studies however highlight the persistence of class inequality in education internationally (Breen 2004, Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992, Shavit and Blossfeld 1993) and in Ireland (Clancy 1982, 1988, 1995, 2001, Clancy and Wall 2000, O'Connell et al. 2006). I contend that the relationship between social class inequality and education is most convincingly explained through various models of 'social reproduction' theory and I situate this study in this perspective (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, Bowles and Gintis 1976, Young 1971). These theorists suggest that inequality is a key function of the education system itself, rather than an unfortunate by product. In this theory, schools are institutions which are structured and organised to subordinate and manage human labour (Bowles and Gintis 1976). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue that formal education systems reflect the cultural norms and practices of the dominant classes, the elite, and that ease of movement through the education system depends on each individual's habitus and the composition and volume of capital at their disposal. The term 'habitus' refers to the dominant norms and practices of particular social classes or groups (Bourdieu and

Passeron 1977). Central to Bourdieu's notion of habitus is that in society certain classes use their social cultural and economic capital to reproduce themselves and secure their dominance in society (Thomas 2002, 430). Thomas (2002) argues that habitus refers to more than norms or values because it is so embedded often subconsciously in everyday life and interactions (Thomas 2002, 430). The habitus of the elite are well suited to thrive in formal educational environments that are (deliberately) structured to meet their needs while the needs of the working classes are far more likely to be divorced from the habitus of formal educational institutions. The dominant classes therefore fit easily into, and will succeed, in environments that have been systemically structured to support their success.

A number of other theorists have also supported dynamic approaches with Archer et al. (2003) arguing for a '*class as process*' approach suggesting that class is not fixed, or static, or indeed easily categorised. Rather, class is produced through interactions between individuals, institutions and policies (Archer et al. 2003, 12). Ball (2003) identifies that the focus of class inequality should actually be on the structural reproduction of class advantage and disadvantage and the different ways that power is mobilised by the elite to access scarce resources and to maximise opportunities (Ball 2003). Education, with scarce resources, and the potential to maximise opportunities and advancement, is a key battlefield in these class debates. In this space, the middle classes use class strategies as a way of seeking advantage, social advancement, and mobility (Ball 1993, 17).

Critical feminist scholarship has also contributed to understandings of social class in education. Reay (1998a, 1998b) continues Bourdieu's theory of habitus arguing that class is gendered and racialised and that this contributes to the reproduction of social inequality. Reay (1998b) argues, in an exploration of working-class mothers' involvement in their children's education, that class is an important part of social identity that permeates daily interactions despite its marginalisation in contemporary discourses (Reay 1998b, 259). The advent of 'classlessness' can be viewed not as the elimination or irrelevance of class, but as the product of a dominant and successful middle-class strategy. This strategy is supported by a media controlled by middle-class interests, and the prevalence of individualistic discourses labelling some of the working classes, particularly lone mothers and their children, as an 'underclass' (Reay 1998b, 267). These theories are echoed by Lynch (1999) who in an examination of inequality in education in Ireland suggested that society holds those excluded from education as personally accountable for their exclusion, a focus on the individual rather than systemic failure, reifying individual attributes as the locus of the disadvantage.

Both Reay et al. (2009) and Skeggs (1997, 2004) are concerned with how people negotiate class within formal education institutions and have made important contributions to an understanding of how social class and gender, and other identities, intersect. The emergence of other aspects of inequality (gender, race, disability, sexuality, age), have been driven by social movements demanding rights for women and people with disabilities among others. The increasing attention to other markers of oppression, (gender, disability, age, sexuality, ethnicity), and the intersecting nature of those identities, suggests that despite the continuing nature of socio-economic inequality and the continuing importance of class, that while it is important, it is not the only category of relevance in an examination of inequality in society (Finnegan 2012, Reay 1998b). This entails grasping how these axes of social divisions intersect with, reinforce, and modify class power lines; issues that are central to this study (Anthias 2005, Skeggs 1997).

In the next section, I focus on the context in Ireland and I map the development of policy, legislation, and definitions of social class, that underpin policy and practice in the primary, post-primary, and HE sectors in Ireland. These theories of social class and the assumption that social class is the singular locus of disadvantage, have had a major impact on these developments.

2.6.3 Social Class Policy in Education in Ireland

While there are myriad definitions of disability in an Irish context, there is no legal definition of social class and just one legal definition of educational disadvantage in Ireland. Section 32 of the Education Act (1998) defines educational disadvantage as *"…the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevents students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools".* Within this definition, unlike disability related legislation, there is no clarification of what social or economic disadvantage means or what an appropriate education might be. This definition of educational disadvantage is so broad that it provides little guidance on educational interventions and fails to recognise the importance of cultural factors that are key to understanding how educational disadvantage operates in all its complexity (Kellaghan 2001, 3).

This definition of 'educational disadvantage' in the Education Act has led to a national policy response focused on interventions to support schools identified as disadvantaged under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) scheme in deprived social areas (Smyth et al. 2015). The DEIS scheme was launched in 2005 and is the national action plan for educational inclusion to address the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities from preschool through second level education. The rationale for DEIS is that disadvantage associated with poverty is exacerbated when large proportions of pupils in a school are from deprived backgrounds known as the ‘social context effect’ (Sofroniou et al. 2004). Schools were/are selected for participation in the scheme based on family and pupil characteristics including levels of unemployment, local authority housing, lone parents, Travellers, Junior and Leaving Certificate retention rates and examination results (Smyth et al. 2015). DEIS schools have a higher proportion of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students with disabilities, and Irish Travellers, have a higher incidence of literacy and numeracy issues, behavioural issues, absenteeism, lower student motivation and less parental involvement than non-DEIS schools (Smyth and McCoy 2009). DEIS schools have an overrepresentation of students with lower income levels, maternal education and few educational resources in the home (McCoy et al. 2014b). The differences between achievement and outcomes in DEIS and non-DEIS schools can be wide and suggest an increasing ghettoisation of schools identified as disadvantaged (McCoy et al. 2012, Smyth and McCoy 2009).

The schools in the DEIS scheme at the time of this study included 197 primary schools (Urban Primary Band 1), 144 (Urban Primary Band 2), 324 rural primary schools and 195 post-primary schools. These schools have a range of additional targeted supports including a reduced pupil teacher ratio and enhanced capitation and other personal and academic supports. Although the funding for the DEIS programme was largely ring-fenced during the cuts in public expenditure in recent years, other cuts impacted often disproportionately on disadvantaged schools including reductions in guidance provision, language support and withdrawal of the Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers (Smyth et al. 2015).

This policy approach to addressing issues of social class is important in the development of Irish policy because the focus has been on targeting schools identified as disadvantaged and providing *some* schools with additional resources to support improved academic participation and outcomes rather than addressing systemic structural inequality. The merits of this approach to disadvantage are uncertain as students attending these schools have poorer academic choices and materially different academic outcomes, particularly in the context of progression to HE, issues that are directly relevant to this study. I argue that the development of DEIS schools has resulted in a policy of segregation and stigma and the containment of working-class students (similar to 'special schools' for students with disabilities) that is enormously impactful in the lives of children in disadvantaged communities. Many students who are disadvantaged do not attend their local DEIS schools by choice. As with policy for students with disabilities, the focus has been on the provision of additional resources rather than a fundamental reconfiguration of the school system to become more inclusive and equitable. In this environment, students must navigate a stratified education system with materially different educational opportunities and outcomes.

The next section considers the development of legislation, policy, and practice, for working-class students in Higher Education.

2.6.4 Working-Class Students - Policy, Participation, and Pathways to Higher Education

The individualised approach to social class disadvantage enshrined in legislation and applied in practice in the primary and post-primary education sectors is also enforced in HE in Ireland. All HEI's have Access Offices who provide a link between the HE sector and DEIS schools/ disadvantaged communities to remove barriers to progression to higher education and create realistic expectations for educational progression among schools, families, and communities who historically do not access higher education. Most of these offices were established in the 1990’s and they were often established before, and remain largely separate, from offices established in HE to support SWD. In Maynooth University, for example an Access Officer was appointed in 1998 although a Disability Officer was not appointed on a full time permanent basis until 2004.

From the mid 1990’s, many Access Offices were responsible for developing pre-entry access/foundation courses as part of a wider objective of broadening access to HE with 37 such courses developed by five of the seven universities, ten IoTs and two Colleges of Education (Murphy 2009). An evaluation of these courses identified that they were developed either by individual HEI’s or in partnership with other HEI’s and/or the Further Education sector with most of the courses targeting opportunities to access HE for a range of socio-economically disadvantaged students including school leavers, mature students, ethnic minorities or people with disability (Murphy 2009, 32). Alternative entry routes were also developed by Access Offices specifically targeting pathways for mature students as well as for school leavers through the DARE and HEAR schemes.

Access Offices typically support students who are eligible for the HEAR scheme (an individualised approach) and have developed and deliver a wide range of transition, social, and academic supports, for individual students under-represented in HE. All students eligible for HEAR receive some sort of additional financial support as financial barriers have been consistently identified as having a massive impact on students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (Lynch and O’Riordan 1998, McCoy et al. 2009, McCoy and Byrne 2011, McCoy et al. 2010).

Nationally, there are a number of other individualised financial supports available to students in HE with the most important being the state grant, Student Universal Student Support Ireland (SUSI), and the Student Assistance Fund (SAF). SUSI is administered nationally (externally to the HE sector) and the SAF is administered by each individual HEI (funds are provided by the HEA). The inadequacy of these financial supports are central to the experiences of participants in this study. SUSI is increasingly acknowledged to be inadequate to cover the costs of HE (Report of the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education 2016). The Student Assistance Fund (SAF) was established in 1994 and provides targeted funding to individual students experiencing financial hardship. The SAF, rather than being a marginal financial support for some students, has assumed increasing importance in the HE system where the SUSI grant is acknowledged as inadequate. In 2014/15 alone, the SAF allocated over six million euros to almost 15,000 students (HEA 2016, 14) suggesting that student financial hardship is endemic across the higher education sector.

2.6.4.1 Participation Rates and Targets for Working-Class Students in Higher Education

The influence of the theories of social class outlined earlier in the chapter are evident in the Irish education context where quantitative approaches have dominated the way that we understand social class in education (Bernard 2006). Social class in Ireland in HE has historically been measured based on a hierarchy of parental occupations where people are classified into social economic groups (SEGs) and classes (Employers and Managers, Higher professionals, Lower professionals, Non-Manual workers, Skilled Manual workers, Semi-skilled manual workers, Unskilled manual workers, and Farmers and Own account workers).

The working class is typically understood to be the four lowest socio-economic groups, manual workers and routine non-manual workers who also have the lowest rates of participation in HE (Fleming et al. 2017, 145). Patrick Clancy's seminal quantitative studies, using these categorisations, has documented the varying participation rates of differing socio-economic groups in HE in Ireland over several decades confirming that access to HE is stratified by social class and is dominated by people from higher professional, managerial, and farming family backgrounds. (Clancy 1982, 1988, 1995, 2001, Clancy and Wall 2000, O'Connell et al. 2006). There have been three national access plans to broaden access to HE in Ireland and all three set targets for HE participation based on these SEG classifications (HEA 2004, HEA 2008, HEA 2015). The current national access plan identifies that access to HE remains inequitably distributed across the Irish population where the participation of those from the higher professional groups in HE has now reached almost full participation while those from semi-skilled and unskilled socio-economic groups remains low at just 26 per cent (HEA 2015). In Dublin, stark inequalities are also visible in participation between postal districts suggesting an association between participation in HE and where you live (HEA 2015). The target set in the current national access plan is to increase the participation of those from the Non-Manual and Semi/Unskilled manual groups (working classes) to 32 per cent and 40 per cent respectively by 2021 (HEA 2018c, 43).

Again, I argue that this analysis of inequitable participation in HE by social class is incomplete. There is a reliance on quantitative SEG categorisations that it is suggested provides a complete picture of access to HE and that is used to inform national policy. This categorical approach to social class in national policy, and an implicit acceptance that this approach can measure and explain social class, is important to this study. There is in these quantitative approaches an assumption of certainty and of homogeneity. In this study, I use quantitative data, and measures, to *suggest* social class, and to map patterns of access to, and retention in, HE by social class. I argue that the nationally quantitative approaches, while useful, use a minimal definition of social class, based on occupations, reifying quantitative data, and are not adequate to explain what social class is, how it is experienced, how it intersects with other identities, and how people feel it in their lives. The complexity of these issues are analysed and explored with student participants in the study as quantitative data alone is inadequate to explain how disability and social class are experienced in the lives of individual students in HE.

In a previous section, I outlined the inequitable academic outcomes for children attending DEIS schools and yet there is no consideration in these data, or in national targets, of entry to HE from students who attended DEIS schools. There is also no data/targets on students in HE in receipt of the special rate of grant whose backgrounds might suggest long-term social welfare dependency. There is no data/targets in HE based on where students are living even though national data suggests an association between home address and deprivation and progression to HE. There is also critically no consideration of the intersection of social class with other social identities, including disability. I argue that this picture of social class in HE in Ireland is therefore incomplete and that these singular unidimensional quantitative approaches to social class hide within group differences, issues that are explored further in this study.

The HEAR scheme was introduced as an initiative to broaden access to HE for school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (working-class) and to contribute to the national targets outlined above, and has, at a macro level, contributed to the increases in the number of working-class students accessing HE in Ireland. The HEAR scheme is important in this study because it provides a full national picture of the application by school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to HE in Ireland and these data are used in the study to map the impact of the intersection of disability and social class on the progression, retention, and experience of SWD in higher education in Ireland. I outline the implications of the development of this pathway to HE for working-class students in more detail below.

2.6.4.2 Higher Education Access Route to Education (HEAR)

The HEAR scheme is relevant to this study as it was developed to support greater access to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to HE in Ireland based on the premise that school leavers experience barriers related to social class that have a negative impact on their second level education and thus their chances of progression to HE. The HEAR scheme uses an intersectional multi-indicator approach to identify socio-economic disadvantage using a range of financial, social and cultural indicators or criteria[5]. In 2017/18, HEAR was available in 16 institutions (all seven universities, two IoT's and seven colleges). Students who are eligible for HEAR can access a place in HE without reaching the points that are required by other students. They are also offered a variety of transition and post-entry supports.

The HEAR scheme has had a significant impact on broadening access to HE measured by the volume of applications and the numbers of students eligible for HEAR who progress to HE in Ireland. Table 2.2 below identifies applicants eligible for HEAR in 2015 and 2016, and merges that data with CAO acceptances to HE, to provide a picture of the impact of the DARE and HEAR schemes in the context of entrants to HE in Ireland.

---

[5] http://accesscollege.ie/hear/making-an-application/eligibility-indicators

TABLE 2.2: HEAR APPLICATIONS AND PLACES ACCEPTED IN HE 2015 AND 2016					
Year	**CAO Applications**	**CAO Acceptances ***	**HEAR Applications**	**HEAR Acceptances**	**Total HEAR and DARE Acceptances**
2015	61,575	43,460	9,158	3,105 (7.1%) **	4,996 (11.5%) **
2016	63,747	43,569	9,532	3,006 (6.9%) **	5,194 (11.9%) **

- *All data from Nic Fhlannchadha (2017) - DARE HEAR Facts and Figures 2017 (2016/17) except CAO Acceptances which is from HEA (2018b) Key Facts and Figures*
- ** Students who have accepted a place in HE via the CAO*
- *** As a percentage of CAO Acceptances*

The data confirm the continuing increase in the number of HEAR applications with an increase between 2015 and 2016 of 374 (4.1 per cent). There is a small decrease in applicants eligible for HEAR although these figures have been stable over the last number of years in comparison to the continuing increases in applications to DARE. HEAR entrants accounted in 2016 for 6.9 per cent of all acceptances in HE. Overall, DARE and HEAR combined account for more than one in ten of all CAO acceptances in 2015 and 2016.

These data suggest, at a macro level, that there is a broadening of access to HE in Ireland by students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and some narrowing of inequality. Again, these data need to be considered carefully. There is an assumption of homogeneity even within the HEAR scheme. All HEAR eligible students are suggested to be equally disadvantaged even though students might in theory be eligible not having attended a DEIS school or not living in an area categorised as disadvantaged. In addition, the HEAR scheme does not consider disability as an indicator of disadvantage even though there is a strong association between poverty and disability (Watson and Nolan 2011, Watson et al. 2013). The invisibility of any consideration of the intersection of social class with other indicators of disadvantage, including disability, in a scheme established ostensibly to empower working-class students, positions disability again as of marginal interest and is an issue that is directly relevant to this study.

A key issue explored in this study is how the social construction of disability (as a medicalised individualised deficit) has directed the experiences of SWD in education and how these experiences are impacted by the intersection of disability and social class, explored in detail later in the study through the participants' accounts of their experiences across the education sectors. I outline below the themes in the literature related to the experiences of working-class students in HE that are relevant to this study. The literature suggests that the same themes of stigma, inferiority, and difference, identified earlier, also characterise the experiences of working-class students in education.

2.7 Experiences of Working-Class Students in Education

There are a number of important themes that resonate in the literature on the experiences of working-class students in education that are relevant to this study and that emerge as key. These can be summarised as structural barriers in HE particularly financial barriers, a disconnection between the students' working-class habitus (values, norms, and culture) and the 'middle-class' habitus of universities and elite institutions, and experiences of education as a 'struggle' with a strong sense of 'not fitting in' or 'not being good enough' to be in HE.

In the US, quantitative and qualitative studies have identified that social class influences academic and social integration in HE and that the experiences of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in HE differed in significant ways from their middle-class peers (Walpole 2003, Aries and Seider 2005). A longitudinal quantitative study identified that students from low socio-economic backgrounds in the US engage in more part-time work, study less, are less involved in social activities, less connected to HE, and report lower academic grades that their high socio-economic peers (Walpole 2003, 63). Similar themes were identified in Canada where Lehmann (2009) analysed the experiences of first generation working-class university students as part of a three year longitudinal study at a large university in Ontario. In the study, working-class students experienced university in "*different and uniquely working-class ways*" (Lehmann 2009, 634) where they encountered structural disadvantages, particularly financial pressures, that influenced their ability to focus on their studies, to connect socially, and to access career networks (Lehmann 2009, 637). Working-class students also lacked confidence in their academic ability and were unsure of their 'right' to be in HE suggesting a "*kind of habitus dislocation*" (Lehmann 2009, 638).

Research in the UK also highlights that working-class students in HE have "*very different and inequitable experiences in university*" (Reay et al. 2010, 120). Christie et al. (2005) explored the experiences of access students at two prestigious universities in Scotland and reported how these students constructed themselves as 'day students' as they had limited capacity to engage in the full college experience constrained by travel arrangements, family responsibilities, financial pressures and part-time work (Christie et al. 2005, 14). Students needed to maintain a delicate balancing act to stay in HE where they felt that their needs were largely invisible to the institutions and where their success was perceived to be *despite* the institution rather than the result of proactive support (Christie et al. 2005, 25). Reay (2012) also identified that working-class students in HE in the UK are more likely to work long hours in part-time work, to have insufficient time for their studies and had more limited opportunities to progress their studies/career in the form of access to relevant internships, networking and volunteering opportunities (Reay 2012). The financial barriers for working-class students emerge as a theme repeatedly in the literature both acting as a disincentive to progression to HE (Archer in Archer et al.

2003, 136) and materially affecting the student experience in HE (Hutchings in Archer et al. 2003, 164, Keane 2011a, Keane 2015)

Bathmaker et al. (2013) used data from a 3 year longitudinal study of working-class and middle-class undergraduates at Bristol's two universities (the Paired Peer project) in England identifying how middle-class students who 'know the game' have their social advantages maintained in HE (Bathmaker et al. 2013, 724). Middle-class students were better able to mobilise cultural and social capital using both 'what they know' and 'who they know' to good effect to access the best (paid and unpaid) internships and experiences while working-class students were more likely to focus on 'hard' academic credentials partly due to financial constraints and family responsibilities (Bathmaker et al. 2013, 739). Crozier et al. (2008) focused on the experiences in HE of middle-class and working-class students in four different types of HEI in three geographical areas in England identifying how middle-class students demonstrated greater confidence, self-worth and educational entitlement in comparison to working-class students (Crozier et al. 2008, 170-171). Middle-class students' cultural capital ensured that they were well connected to the university and supports compared to working-class students who were more likely to feel disconnected, to be living at home, working part time, unaware of or unconnected to the institution or supports (Crozier et al. 2008, 173). Middle-class students in HE, due in part to their critical mass in HE, feel like "*fish in water*" (Bourdieu 1990), enjoying the university experience and extracting greater value from it (Crozier et al. 2008, 175).

Thomas (2002), in a case study of a modern university in England with a strong record of widening participation, identified how institutional habitus can contribute to the alienation of working-class students who feel a disconnect between their own background and culture and the middle-class habitus of universities (Thomas 2002, 436). Working-class students are constrained materially through the need to live at home and financial barriers but they are also constrained by a sense of place and belonging and with the desire to 'fit in' and belong (Reay et al. 2001, 867). Reay at al. (2010) drew on case studies of 27 working-class students across four HEI's in the UK to consider how social class is modified, reinforced, or transformed through the experience of going to university. The study identified how working-class students struggled to reconcile their working-class background with university life and many experienced the feeling that they did not belong or deserve to be in HE (Reay et al. 2010, 118). A comparative study of the experiences of working-class students' university experiences in England and Ireland identified the same issues, with many working-class students experiencing a feeling of 'dislocation' from the dominant culture in universities and this was particularly pronounced in elite universities where feelings of 'not belonging' or of 'othering' were strong (Finnegan and Merrill 2017, 318).

Students in a longitudinal study (Christie et al. 2008) using data drawn from interviews on the teaching and learning experiences of non-traditional students in an elite university in the UK reported that same sense of 'not belonging', of the tension between their home lives and their academic lives in university leading to them adopting a 'partial' membership of the university community (Christie et al. 2008). Underlying these experiences students reported feelings of 'shame' at not being the 'right' person for an elite university (Christie et al. 2008) whereas children of middle-class families benefit from the "*less visible benefits of affluence – confidence, entitlement, a sense of belonging within education*" that comes from a family history of privilege (Reay 2013, 34). Working-class students in HE experience common feelings of guilt and fear where they are academically and socially '*plagued with anxieties'* (Reay 2005, 922). Fear and anxiety were compounded by the shame of potentially over reaching and failing as well as by the shame of, even if successful, of never really feeling good enough (Reay 2005, 923).

Surviving HE as a working-class student, a theme relevant to this study, is also a feature of the literature. Reay et al. (2009) used Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field to explore the experiences of working-class students at an elite university in England arguing that these students have to continuously challenge the inherent inferiority of their positioning and must develop '*almost superhuman levels of motivation, resilience and determination*…' to resist their assigned inferior positioning and succeed in HE (Reay et al. 2009, 1115). Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) conducted a large study in a post 1992 university in England where student experiences in HE were characterised by the same constant struggle, financial hardship, a lack of confidence and academic ability and institutional barriers, with the perception that attending university was a privilege rather than a right (Leathwood and O'Connell 2003, 610). Working-class students who graduated felt pride at their achievement but the dominant theme was "*that of survival*", of insecurity, of struggle compared to middle-class students who could afford to take more risks (Leathwood and O'Connell 2003, 610). This sense of struggle resonates with Reay's (2003) study of 12 working-class women attending an access course where survival and struggle was seen as the dominant experience of education and where failure was seen as individual rather than related to class experience or a culture of poverty (Reay 2003).

These same themes have also been identified in an Irish context. Keane (2011b) drew on a three-year study exploring the post-entry academic and sociocultural experiences of 45 school leaver aged access (lower socio-economic groups having entered HE following completion of one year access course) and traditional entry students (higher social economic groups having entered HE through traditional route) at one Irish university (Keane 2011b). The school leaver access cohort were constrained by a lack of academic confidence, worried that they were not academically ‘able’ and were not ‘good enough’ for HE and needed repeated evidence and reassurance in comparison to middle-class students who had no concerns about ability and felt confident to be in HE (Keane 2011b, 713). Working-class students identified issues with making ‘real’ friends in HE and the challenges of becoming more distant from former friends where their ‘habitus’ can be in opposition to the middle-class habitus of the university (Keane 2009, 92 & 94). Lynch and O’Riordan (1998) in an examination of the ‘black box’ of education focussed on the transition from second to third level education in Ireland suggested that the experience of working-class students in education in Ireland is one where working-class culture and background is positioned as inherently inferior in schools and in HE. The authors suggested that low expectations, a lack of information, and the perception of being an ‘outsider’ in a dominant middle-class culture had a pervasive impact on individuals, themes that I outlined previously in relation to the experiences of SWD. Participants were aware of their own relatively inferior position although only a few suggested that a response might be a radical restructuring of society demonstrating the extent to which people accept and internalise dominant meritocratic ideologies (Lynch and O’Riordan 1998, 474). The primary barriers to working-class participation were identified primarily as financial, as well as cultural and educational, although these barriers were seen as mutually constitutive and highly interactive (Lynch and O’Riordan 1998, 445). A more recent study suggested that these same barriers continue to be impactful in the lives of working-class students in HE in Ireland (Finnegan 2012).

Finnegan’s study of 51 students in three HE institutions in Ireland is also relevant to this study as it focussed on social class in HE and identified that class matters for students although it is very individual with some, but not all, defining and labelling themselves as 'working-class', 'disadvantaged' or 'access' students (Finnegan 2012). Class emerged, as Bourdieu (1986) had suggested, more as shared experiences of inequalities in power, powerlessness, and differential access to cultural and economic capital. Similar to the stigma associated with disability, there was and continues to be a strong belief that to be 'working-class' is negative, that to be working-class is an individual deficit and that it *"is to get things wrong, to fail, to be lesser"* (Fleming et al. 2017, 155). The sense of social class for students was pervasive and impactful and had a bearing on each individual's sense of self as well as on student experiences, trajectories and outcomes across the education system (Fleming et al. 2017). These themes resonate with previous research in England where women who could be defined as working class refused to do so and instead they "*misidentified and dissimulated*", concerned to have more legitimate or socially acceptable identities (Skeggs 1997, 74). In their lives, the label working class signified "*all that is dirty, dangerous and without value*" (Skeggs 1997, 74) in a society where the '*negativity associated with the working class is ubiquitous*' (Skeggs 1997, 75).

This study also considers the retention in HE at the intersection of disability and social class to be important and the next section looks at the literature on student retention in HE related to the relationship between retention and social class where research gives insight into the complex landscape of inequalities that often underlie retention patterns.

2.8 Retention of Working-Class Students in Higher Education

A series of quantitative reports have been published by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) presenting national studies of retention in Irish higher education institutions which confirm the strong relationship between social class and retention in HE in Ireland (Mooney et al. 2010, Liston et al. 2016, Frawley et al. 2017). The studies confirm that students from more advantaged social backgrounds (who are most likely to access HE) are also most likely to complete their programmes of study while students from the traditional working classes (the least likely to access HE) are less likely to be retained in HE (Mooney et al. 2010, 38). Similar trends have been identified internationally (NAO 2007 (UK), Quinn 2013 (Europe).

Quinn et al. (2005) in a study entitled *"From life crisis to lifelong learning: Rethinking working-class* '*drop out*' *from higher education"* examined four post-1992 universities from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland using a range of qualitative methods to explore the experience of dropping out of HE by students from non-traditional backgrounds, particularly lower socio-economic groups and first generation entrants. The research found there were many reasons for withdrawal including being on the wrong course, academic challenges, and a lack of institutional belonging. Many students from working-class backgrounds who left higher education early experienced '*academic culture shock*' (Quinn et al. 2005, 21). This report suggested that student failure was not the issue and that systemic issues were the real barrier identifying that if HE was to really offer a ladder out of poverty that responsive flexible systems should be developed to accommodate working-class students (Quinn et al. 2005).

Fleming and Finnegan (2011) completed a study on access and retention completing interviews with 125 non-traditional students in three HEI's in Ireland (Trinity College Dublin, Maynooth University and the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, Dublin) and drew similar conclusions. They identified that students from disadvantaged backgrounds rely on a fragile support system impacted by financial pressures, caring duties, significant life events, mental health issues, and academic and workload difficulties (Fleming and Finnegan 2011). The study also stressed the importance of student resilience in the face of endemic barriers supporting the retention of 'non-traditional' students in HE (Fleming and Finnegan 2011).

A study on the progression of students who entered five Irish Universities through the HEAR route found that HEAR/Access students have lower rates of progression from year 1 to year 2 of their studies (ESAI Conference 2013). Byrne et al. (2013) in their national evaluation of the HEAR and DARE schemes however found that having controlled for a range of characteristics that there was no significant difference in progression to 2nd year for HEAR entrants.

The literature on student retention confirms the link between retention and social class although I would raise some issues with the data. The literature generally suggests that wrong course choice is the primary factor influencing retention in HE although the evidence on why students leave is poor and many students are given few options to indicate why they leave. Many may cite course choice although it is far more likely that it is a complex intertwining of factors rather than one easily identifiable reason. Whatever the reasons for leaving HE, much of the terminology suggests that the issue is located within the student, e.g. '*failure*', '*persistence*', '*withdrawal*' '*dropout*' and '*student success*' with less focus on the place of study (e.g. *retained* within an institution) or the system (e.g. *graduation rates*) where the responsibility shifts to either the institution or government (Jones 2008). These theories relate more to the tendency to see students who leave HE as representative of individual failure rather than connecting this to systemic embedded barriers or the broader socio-cultural and economic landscape that supports students from certain backgrounds to enter and progress through HE while discouraging others.

From a social class perspective, many students may make the wrong course choice because they do not have the social connections to have ‘insider knowledge’ of courses or institutions, may not have siblings who attended HE previously or may not have had access to the course guidance that is available to those with more financial resources (Thomas and Quinn 2006, Thomas 2002, Thomas, 2011). The adequacy of pre-entry information, advice and guidance, particularly for students who do not have the cultural or economic capital to access these individually, and access to appropriate guidance is an issue that particularly affects equity groups (Bowes et al. 2013, Liston et al. 2016, National Forum 2015). Internationally and in Ireland, the literature suggests that students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds/working classes experience complex intersectional difficulties impacted by socio-cultural, structural, policy, institutional, personal, and learning factors (Quinn 2013, Quinn et al. 2005, Thomas 2002, Fleming and Finnegan 2011). These students often have a fragile web of supports and can be impacted significantly by external factors most importantly financial pressures but also by caring responsibilities, significant life events, mental health issues, and academic and workload difficulties. These issues are all relevant to this study and are reflected in the participants’ accounts of their lives as SWD in education.

Most importantly, while the literature largely does not address the intersection of disability and social class in relation to retention, these issues are interconnected in participants’ lives in this study suggesting that it is also how disability intersects with social class that impacts on every aspect of their lives, including retention in HE.

2.9 Summary Social Class Policy in Education in Ireland

This section maps key themes in relation to social class including deficit-based understandings of social class underpinned by widely held assumptions that to be working-class is an inherently negative individual deficit, characterised by stigma, segregation, marginalisation, limited access to resources and opportunities, differential educational outcomes and assumptions of homogeneity. Many of these themes, difference, deficit, segregation, individual failure, embedded structural inequalities, are common to the experiences of many marginalised groups including SWD.

Educational disadvantage is broadly defined in legislation and the primary response to educational disadvantage/social class inequality for the school going population has been targeting resources at specific schools where there are concentrations of poverty/working-class students. These additional resources have had some impact although there are poorer academic outcomes for children attending these schools and an increasing ghettoisation of schools identified as disadvantaged. In Ireland, access to HE remains inequitably distributed across the Irish population where the participation of those from the higher professional groups in HE has now reached saturation while participation by working-class students remains low and there are stark inequalities in participation based on parental occupation and address (HEA 2015).

While there are uncertainties in Ireland about what social class is, how we understand social class, and what we should do about it, its impact in education is undeniable. In Ireland, an understanding of social class in education is underpinned by the certainty of quantitative categorical approaches, a limited understanding of social class and how it impacts the lives of people in education. These uncertainties have had a defining impact on national policy in this area across all education sectors despite the persistent inequalities documented by researchers in this area over the decades.

These developments are relevant to this study suggesting that a stratified and segregated education sector for working-class students has developed as part of national policy underpinned by a discourse of deficits, difference, and inferiority that continue to be impactful in education today.

2.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I introduced disability and social class as social identities identifying how they share common histories linked by assumptions of individual failure, difference, deficit, inferiority, dependency, charity and stigma. I explored how the construction of these social identities have created common hierarchies of inferiority, and privilege, and positioned individuals within these hierarchies as polar opposites, the ‘ideal’ and ‘normal’ versus the ‘undesirable’ and ‘abnormal’, the ‘able’ versus the ‘disabled’, the ‘working class’ versus the ‘middle class’. I explored how these identities have been created as different, positioned as inferior, and placed in a hierarchy of privilege and oppression with a clear distinction between those that are valued and those that are not.

These conceptualisations are underpinned by a lukewarm support for inclusion and equity across the education system, a focus on ‘fixing’ the individual rather than the system. This is an approach that segregates, separates, and contains those that are ‘different’, an approach that is mandated by legislation, implemented in policy and practice in multiple domains, characterised by unequal resources and marginalisation, and that has resulted in a deeply stratified and inequitable education system. The focus on individual supports for working-class students in HE mimics the individualised supports provided for SWD, deflecting attention away from the structural inequalities that are the root of inequitable access to education in Ireland.

The singular unidimensional approaches, outlined in this chapter, that have driven national policy and practice in education in Ireland fail to consider or acknowledge intersectionality, how disability and social class are mutually constitutive, how they intertwine and are interconnected. Such an approach positions these students as essentially homogenous, silencing and pushing those who are different in other aspects of their identity, to the margins. In my own experience in HE, these approaches are not adequate to understand or explain the experiences of students in education in Ireland. Students do not experience disability or social class (or other identities) as a singular, separate, contained experience. Rather, they experience disability (and other aspects of their identity including social class) simultaneously, with different aspects foregrounded at different times and in different contexts, intersecting to influence every element of their everyday interactions and experiences. This study suggests that while individually disability and social class both have an impact in the lives of students, when they intersect, they combine to create unique and compelling disadvantage.

In the next chapter, I introduce intersectionality (IS) as a theoretical framework and I argue that IS provides a way to analyse how disability is intertwined with other sources of disadvantage. I argue that this framework offers a challenge to the limited unidimensional approaches outlined in this chapter that have driven national policy and practice in education to identify the complex inequality that exists at the intersection of disability and social class.

Chapter 3: Intersectionality as a Theoretical Framework to Understand Inequality in Education

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored how in the current policy framework, the participation, retention, and experiences of students with disabilities in education are largely understood and analysed singularly, or when considered with social class, presented as if they are operating on parallel, rather than intersecting, tracks. This chapter introduces intersectionality (IS) as the theoretical framework chosen for this study. This chapter begins with a rationale for choosing IS and describes how it offers a new approach to analysing the intersection and interconnectedness of multiple and complex identities to reveal inequality in education. A brief history of the origins and development of IS is provided and the key concepts underpinning the framework are explained. The suitability of IS for research in a range of areas is explored, including disability as a category, and education and higher education as a context. In the final section, an overview of how IS will be applied in this research is outlined.

3.2 Choosing a Theoretical Framework

The literature outlined above explored the contested concepts of disability/special educational needs (SEN) and social class. This research analyses the progression to, retention in, and the experience of students with disabilities (SWD) in higher education in Ireland at the intersection of disability and social class. One of the challenges in choosing an appropriate theoretical framework lay in the necessity to have a framework that could examine each of these areas using intersecting variables.

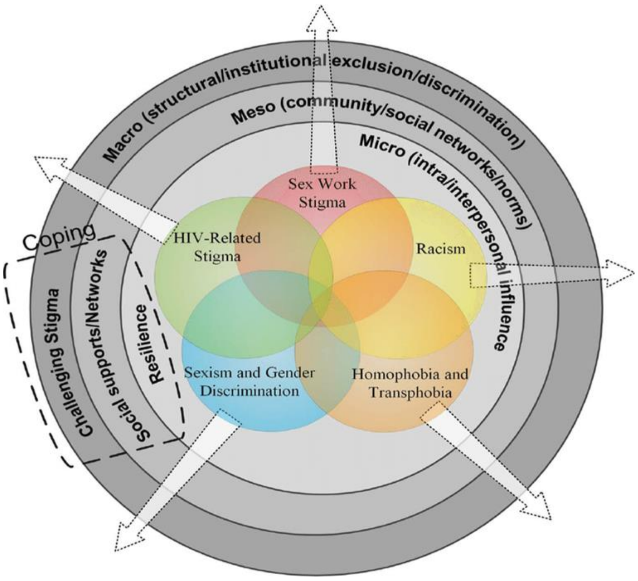
This study needed a framework that would centre disability and social class and yet not reify one category over another. It needed to be flexible and yet rigorous enough to capture the nuanced intersection of these identities, not as additive, but as interconnected, mutually constitutive and simultaneous. The framework needed to illuminate the complexity of multiple identities, providing a structure to map how they are created, justified, sustained, and reproduced, by power systems that operate at a macro and micro level. The framework also needed to be broad enough to identify both oppression and privilege as well as the experiences of those in the centre. Finally, the study needed to have a framework that would centre the voices of individuals located at various intersections, particularly the voices of the most marginalised, to illuminate their lived experience from the point of view of informing transformative action. I have chosen IS as it meets this unique and complex set of criteria.

3.3 What is Intersectionality?

‘*When they enter, we all enter*’ *(Crenshaw 1989, 167)*

Intersectionality (IS) has been identified as the most useful multidisciplinary approach for analysing experiences of identity and oppression (Nash 2008, 2), the most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies has made so far (McCall 2005, 1771), and the world’s leading conceptual and analytical framework for analysing the nature, processes, and structures that create and sustain social inequality (Hancock 2007). There are numerous definitions of intersectionality although Kathy Davis (2008), a feminist scholar and sociologist, defines intersectionality succinctly as ‘*the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power*’ (Davis 2008, 68). In Figure 3.1, I have reproduced a model from a Canadian study (2011) which examined the intersection of gender, race and sexuality, to illustrate the complexity of an IS approach.

Figure 3.1: Conceptual model of intersectional stigma (Logie et al. 2011)



In contrast to concentric approaches like Bronfenbrenner's 'person-process-context' model, different factors in an IS approach intersect and overlap at the centre and then splash outwards across the different levels, micro, meso and macro.

IS is best described as a theoretical framework and a normative paradigm (Hancock 2007) illuminating how multiple social identities (e.g. race, class, gender, ability, sexuality etc.) are created, justified, and sustained. IS examines how these socially constructed identities intersect with macro social structural systems (racism, classism, sexism, ableism etc.) at the micro level of the individual lived experience to reveal hierarchies and interlocking systems of power, privilege, and oppression. IS suggests that these socially constructed hierarchies are systematic and embedded in all of our major institutions making these critical systems to understand (Weber 1998). How individuals experience inequality in their daily lives is directly connected to how power and inequality are configured within social structures, including institutions, laws, and government policies (Scott and Siltanen 2012, 6). An intersectional approach to inequality sees different expressions of inequality, the micro individual experiences and the macro structural experiences as intertwined, interconnected and mutually sustaining.

3.4 History of Intersectionality

Intersectionality, as a theoretical framework, emerged in the 1980's, initially in the United States (US), from the experiences of Black women who suggested that their experiences could not be properly understood using one single aspect of their identities, either race or gender (Hesse-Biber 2012). One of the earliest articulations of an intersectional approach, although it was not named as such, was by the freed slave Sojourner Truth who delivered a speech entitled *"Ain't I a Woman"* in 1851 at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio. Truth challenged the single axis perspective asserting that her experience was one of the interplay of her experiences as Black and as a woman and that neither aspect of that identity could be separated from the other. In the late 1980's, IS as a theory began to emerge more forcefully when a number of African American women scholars in the US called for a new approach to analysing the lives and lived experiences of Black women (Davis 1981, Combahee River Collective 1982, Crenshaw 1989, Collins 1990). These scholars theorised that singular, unidimensional approaches were inadequate to explain the lived experiences of Black women because aspects of their identities, be that race, gender, sexuality or class, were relationally connected and operated simultaneously. This emerging scholarship includes a collection of Black feminist scholarship theorising on the exclusionary nature of gender in women's studies *"All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies"* (Hull et al. 1982) and *"A Black Feminist Statement"* published by the Combahee River Collective (1995), a community group of African American women in Boston.

Patricia Hill Collins' work on gender, race and class became central to feminist theory before the term intersectionality came into common usage (Anthias 2013). Collins (1990) in her influential book '*Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*' describes race, class and gender as "*interlocking systems of oppression*" (Collins 1990, 222) and differentiated between this approach and binary or unidimensional analyses which had characterised previous feminist theory. Collins developed a conceptual framework for understanding these *"interlocking"* or *"intersecting"* oppressions as a *"matrix of domination"* (Collins 1990, 225). This matrix includes the macro (group level) and the micro (individual level) approaches to understanding power that is exercised at the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal levels of analysis. Each of these levels represents a domain of power and each level serves a very particular purpose to organise, maintain or justify oppression. The structural domain organises oppression through large social institutions like the legal system, education, housing, banking and the media. The disciplinary domain manages that oppression using bureaucratic institutions and practices that maintain and reproduce oppression. The hegemonic domain legitimises and justifies the first two levels through ideologies represented through the media, or in school curricula, through community and family cultures. Finally, the interpersonal level influences individuals' everyday lived experiences (Collins 1990).

Feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, a socio-legal theorist based in the United States, has been credited with introducing the term *"intersectionality"*. Crenshaw used intersectionality theory to map the intersection of race and gender from a legal perspective in the contexts of employment and domestic violence (Crenshaw 1989). Crenshaw's conception of intersectionality particularly argued that a '*...focus on the most privileged group members marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened*' (Crenshaw

1989, 140), forcing the most marginalised groups to jockey for position, as the most privileged within the group identify their own dominant concerns. Crenshaw (1989) used two metaphors to explain IS. The most widely recognised is where intersectionality is described as multiple identities colliding or crashing at traffic intersections where some people, particularly the most marginalised, are caught at the points of intersection. Crenshaw (1989, 151) also describes how single axis approaches serve to advantage and support the most advantaged by creating an image of all the people who are disadvantaged either by race, sex, colour, class, sexual preferences, ability or age standing in basement. They are layered, standing feet on shoulders reaching towards the hatch of a glass ceiling. Race, gender, and class and other factors multiply burden those on the bottom. Only a single factor burdens those on the top and escaping through that hatch is only genuinely available to them due to the *"singularity of the burden and their otherwise privileged position in relation to those below"* (Crenshaw 1989, 152). Those who are multiply burdened are generally left below. It has been difficult to find a metaphor that best describes IS. It is now widely recognised that intersectionality is more than a car crash at the centre of a set of separate roads. Instead, it is well understood that these systems of power are mutually simultaneously constituted (Weber 2009) such that there is no point at which race is not both classed and gendered or gender is not both raced and classed (Hesse-Biber 2012).

IS has travelled widely to critical legal, disability and race studies as well as to other disciplines including the humanities, social and natural sciences, to history, sociology, philosophy, feminist studies, ethnic studies, queer studies, and legal studies as well as travelling geographically across countries and continents (Cho et al. 2013). Intersectional studies have illuminated many disciplines including political science (Hancock 2007), sociology (Choo and Ferree 2010) and philosophy (Walby 2007) and has developed connections with multiple disciplines (Carbado 2013). IS, while strongly located in its US roots, has also developed in the UK with the work of Brah, Anthias and Yuval-Davis who were central to the introduction of intersectionality approaches within the European context (Brah 1996, Anthias 2013, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983). Scholars within traditional social science disciplines, as well as those working within public policy, criminology, and education, have found intersectionality useful. Sociology has been at the forefront of these developments, investigating intersectionality's possibilities to better understand social inequalities (Collins 2015). In fact, while Crenshaw (1991) is credited with coining the term 'intersectionality', it was Collins (1990) with her publication '*Black Feminist Thought*' who has been credited with bringing intersectionality as a theory from the fringes of sociological thought to its centre (Gopaldas and DeRoy 2015).

3.5 Key features of an Intersectional Framework

Intersectionality has been called *"a heuristic device for understanding boundaries and hierarchies of social life"* (Anthias 2013, 4), a theoretical and empirical paradigm (Hancock 2007), or a '*buzzword*' (Davis 2008, 67). Regardless of how intersectionality is framed, there are features that are common and underpin an intersectional framework regardless of the methodology used or the subjects under examination.

Intersectionality rejects the "single-axis framework" articulated by many feminist and race scholars because they focus on one, or what is presented as the most important category or identity only, treating these categories as essentially homogenous (Yuval-Davis 2006) and pushing the most vulnerable groups to the margins (Crenshaw 1989). All experiences are explained therefore by race or gender singularly or when considered together as if they were operating on parallel tracks. This single category approach is a universalising one as it seeks to explain the inequality and provide an explanation. The remedy, once identified, applies equally to all members of that group (Hancock 2007). The dominant groups identify the problem and the solution, dictating policy, often leaving the overall systems of domination, oppression or stratification unchanged as only the most privileged of that group benefit.

IS challenges the concept of the '*universal voice*' (Crenshaw 1989, 154), or '*in-group essentialism*' (Hancock 2007), where a voice appears to speak for everyone in the group. In reality, that voice often speaks just for a subset of that group, often the elite or most advantaged subset within the group, conflating or hiding intragroup difference (Crenshaw 1991). In setting some characteristics of a particular group as fixed and certain, the members of that group who are different in other aspects of their identity (e.g. class, ability, gender, sexual orientation etc.) are often marginalised, made invisible, and silenced (Hancock 2007, 65). Even where differences are acknowledged, the implications of this are often lost, referenced in passing rather than identifying how such an approach obscures or makes real difference invisible (Symington 2004). This aspect of IS is important for this research in that the study seeks to examine disability in a new way, revealing inequities and within group difference previously hidden. IS thus provides an alternative analytical lens to reveal the ways in which social identities and wider social structures and institutions work together to create, justify, and reproduce inequality for SWD in education.

IS is concerned with identity categories because social categories have real meaning and have social and material consequences (Artiles 2013, Crenshaw 1991). These categories include, but are not limited to, race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, nation, ethnicity and similar categories of analysis (Collins 2015). Power, which is central to IS, has '*…clustered around certain categories and is exercised against others*' (Crenshaw 1991, 1297). IS recognises that different social identities all have different histories and ontological bases. This is important in this research because disability has its own history and context. However, IS believes that they all involve creating boundaries, that they homogenise and construct collective attributes to specific social identities creating binary versions of difference, thus creating and sustaining hierarchies (Anthias 2013, 8).

3.5.1 Intersectionality and Power

IS contends that identities are socially constructed and are underpinned by a discourse of normality, naturalisation, and homogeneity, an issue that is central to this research. Social identities are justified by a biological rationale, linked to personal and individual characteristics, rather than wider social structures and are presented as natural, fixed, immutable and justified. IS maintains that these categories are socially constructed and often used to create boundaries about who to include or exclude, to determine who is normal or not, what or who is valued or not, who is entitled to resources and who are not (Yuval-Davis 2006, 199). The hierarchies created by these categories exist as outcomes of the operation of power. These social categories naturalise, collectivise and essentialise social relations (Anthias 2013). The processes that sustain these categories are inferiorisation; particularly stigma and disgust, exploitation, where one group derives benefit from the exercise of power, and unequal resource allocation that results in inequality (Anthias 2013, 10). Social categorisation has a profound effect on individuals; how they see themselves, how others see them, how they are treated, as well as affecting life chances (Anthias 2013).

IS does not, however, argue for the abolition of categories themselves but rather the values that are attached to them and the way that these values '*foster and create social hierarchies*' (Crenshaw 1991, 1297). IS does argue for a new conceptualisation of what categories actually are, how they are formed, their role in politics and the consequences, particularly for people on the margins (Hancock 2007). This is a central theme of this study as disability/SEN and social class, in an Irish education context, are underpinned by particular conceptualisations that are often unchallenged. IS, in the context of this study, seeks to examine from a social justice perspective, the implications of these understandings of disability and social class in the context of structures in education and the processes of shame and stigma that underpin these conceptualisations. IS seeks to reveal the implications of this approach for the most privileged, and the most marginalised, and the processes of individual resistance that have the potential to inform policy and transform hierarchies.

The consideration of identities and categories is important in IS, but the focus of IS primarily is not on categories per se, but on the systems of power that produce, justify and sustain them (Brah and Phoenix 2004, Cho et al. 2013). IS is concerned with power, how it is produced, what processes are involved and what hierarchies are created (Knudsen 2006). Identities do matter, categories of difference do matter, but in an IS framework these are ideally examined by '*contextualizing the process and systems that constitute, govern, and constitute difference*' (Dhamoon 2011, 234). The focus of analysis is not therefore strictly on an individual or category, group or institution but '*on the techniques of power*' and it is this attention to power that gives intersectional research its '*critical edge*' (Dhamoon 2011, 234).

IS is applicable to both the structural level of analysis and the individual level via the domains of power thesis (Collins 2000) recognising that politics plays out at both a structural and individual level (Hancock 2007). In examining the macro structures IS strives to identify patterns of discrimination and to distinguish these from individual characteristics about the subject or the community (Symington 2004, 3). IS works to connect the construction of social identities to the social, cultural, ideological, economic, political and legal environment that creates inequality and the structures that facilitate oppression and privilege (Symington 2004, 5). One of the great strengths of IS is that it is not just focussed on the individual level nor is it just concerned with ‘difference’. This study seeks a macro view of the dominant conceptualisations of disability and SEN. The way that disability is lived in, through and alongside social class (and other identities) is also critical. IS offers a lens to examine these connections.

3.5.2 Intersectionality and Social Justice

A key element of IS that is directly relevant to this research is how IS is concerned with revealing both oppression and privilege (Dhamoon 2011). Collins (1990) identified that in an IS analyses that there are few pure victims or pure oppressors because intersecting systems produce varying acts of penalty and privilege *“from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone’s lives”* (Collins 1990, 229). IS has always however been particularly concerned with revealing the experiences of people who have been historically oppressed or marginalised (Crenshaw 1989, Symington 2004, Hancock 2007, Dhamoon 2011, Bowleg 2012, Hesse-Biber 2012), examining and making bare the interlocking social identities which create inequality. Indeed, ‘*giving voice to the oppressed*’ has been one of the defining features of an IS approach (Choo and Ferree 2010, 131). Dominant views of discrimination, created by one perspective, shape and influence systems and processes, creating for the most marginalised, ‘*an interlocking prison from which there is little escape*’ (Hancock 2007, 65). IS can reveal the interlocking prison that some students experience in accessing education revealing how different social, cultural and economic resources influence progression, retention and the student experience.

IS also has a social justice impetus which is central to my objectives. While the focus of IS is to better understand the nature of social inequality and the processes that create and sustain them, IS has a strong activist component aiming to resist and challenge the status quo. The production of knowledge through IS frameworks to address social problems and using that knowledge to solve problems of inequality have been fundamental to the IS commitment to active social justice (Collins 1998, Hesse-Biber 2012, Carbado et al. 2013, Collins 2015). This issue is central to the research that aims to better understand how disability and social class function in education and the implications for policy and practice.

IS is thus best characterised as a specific way of thinking about sameness, about difference, and about how they relate to power and dominant ways of thinking about discrimination (Crenshaw 1989). IS asks the researcher to think differently about social identities, categories, inequality, and power (Symington 2004). IS is committed to the principle that social identities are relational, always permeated by other categories, are always fluid, permeable and in flux, always in the process of creating and being created by dynamics of power (Cho et al. 2013, 795). IS is not an additive process but rather a transformative interactive of effects (Choo and Ferree 2010) which finds something unique being produced at the intersection of different systems of discrimination that can draw attention to those, often multiply marginalised, who fall through the cracks (Symington 2004, 3). This is important for this study where I work within HE dominated by a medical model understanding of disability and a categorical quantitative understanding of social class. Identifying students who are poorly served by current policy, or whose complex individual experiences and outcomes are not understood, is one of the central aims of this research. This approach also matches my own advocacy/participatory methodological approach.

3.6 Criticism of an Intersectional Framework

IS, for a whole variety of reasons, has faced strong criticism. The approach itself, which suggests division rather than unity, was initially considered to be '*dangerously divisive*' (Crenshaw 1989, 148). IS has been criticised as being too vague or imprecise (Davis 2008, Verloo 2006). It has been suggested that more stringent methodological guidelines would improve IS (Brah and Phoenix 2004, McCall 2005, Yuval-Davis 2006, Hancock 2007, Davis 2008, Dhamoon 2011). IS has been criticised for its apparently limited capacity to do anything other than draw attention to the particularities of Black women (Cho et al. 2013) or its limited potential as an analytical framework to move beyond the 'big three' of gender, race and class and reflect the needs of all marginalised communities. The '*unruliness*' of IS (Cho et al. 2013, 793) has been criticised as well as its emphasis on identities versus structures of inequality (Cho et al. 2013, 797). Opinions on the usefulness of IS have varied from the perspective that IS is the best theory to explore the complexity of social division (Brah and Phoenix 2004) to a suggestion that IS is not even a theory, rather just a buzzword (Davis 2008). Barbara Tomlinson, a feminist theorist, however, suggests that while critics assume that their task is to critique intersectionality as an approach, their focus should be '*to foster intersectionality's ability to critique subordination*' (Tomlinson 2013, 996).

One of the major criticisms of IS is that it has been too focussed on race and gender and is/has been primarily of interest to feminist scholars only (Choo and Ferree 2010). The question of whether IS has any universal applicability for other marginalised groups, including disability, has been raised (Anthias 2013). Collins (1990), although primarily focussed on the intersection of race, class and gender, stated that IS could be applied to other categories of oppression as regardless of the particular intersections involved, domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression (Collins 1990). Hancock (2007) agreed that IS, as a research paradigm, can be widely applied to the study of other social groups and that IS does not inherently privilege any social category (Carbado 2013). Bowleg suggested that IS can include any people whose micro and macro-level experiences intersect at the point or intersection of social inequalities (Bowleg 2012). The historic focus on race, class, and gender has more reflected the choices that researchers have made as individuals rather than that the framework is limited to those social categories only (Dhamoon 2011). IS has expanded and there is now a large body of research using IS addressing other social categories, including sexuality and disability (Carbado et al. 2013).

IS has been criticised as being too focussed on identities, too focussed on some identities, and focussed on identities to the detriment of social structures and power (Davis 2008). Carbado (2013) agrees that IS is an 'identitarian framework' but notes that it is key to understand that IS does not have a commitment to subjects or identities per se but rather to '*marking and mapping the production and contingency of both*' (Carbado 2013, 815). Criticism of IS often asserts that IS is either insufficiently or overly attentive to particular subjects, a belief premised on an incorrect assumption that identity is the focus of IS or that revealing difference is the aim (Cho et al. 2013). In fact IS is an engagement with power, rather than identity, and the strength of IS lies in the '*analyses of power that reveal which differences carry significance*' (Tomlinson 2013, 1012). Identities in an IS approach are important but are used as a proxy '*to examine and counter structural injustice and subordination*' (Tomlinson 2013, 1000). IS is thus more concerned from an analytical point of view with the ways things work, than who people are (Cho et al. 2013, 797).

IS has been particularly criticised for its focus on the most marginalised thereby reflecting oppression and not privilege, neglecting to describe the ways in which privilege and oppression intersect and inform each other (Nash 2008, 10). Carbado et al. (2013) dispute this analysis noting that IS is not a race to the bottom, although it does seek to attend to the vulnerability of the most marginalised communities and people. One of the great strengths of IS for this study is that it also seeks to map the top of hierarchies. I understand IS in this way and thus am able to critically reflect to ensure that I do not '*conflate IS with double jeopardy, to apply the theory only to race or gender or to reify Black women as the essential subjects of IS*' (Carbado 2013, 814). In this study, all SWD are disadvantaged, but a focus on the needs of the most privileged SWD suggests that their experiences are representative of the experiences of all SWD. In fact, those that are multiply burdened are pushed to the margins, made invisible, and silenced.

The endless listing of differences and the potential for ever more categories of examination, sets and subsets, the '*et cetera*' problem (Cho et al. 2013), has led to the rejection of IS by some researchers who anticipate a '*paralysis*' from the inclusion of ever more variables (Hancock 2007, Anthias 2013). This endless proliferation of difference runs the risk of leaving the most important differences under theorised (Knapp 1999, Skeggs 1997) obscuring issues like class (Anthias 2013). A related argument is that social identities or categories are implicitly different, social class for example has different organising logics (Skeggs 2006 in Phoenix 2006). Race, in this argument, cannot be treated the same as class or disability. I see the openness and ambiguous nature of IS, its '*murkiness*' (Nash 2008, 1), however, as both a challenge and a strength allowing '*endless constellations of intersecting lines of difference to be explored*' supporting IS to become successful (Davis 2008, 77).

3.7 Intersectionality and Disability

From its inception, IS has been focussed primarily on the intersection of race/ethnicity, class and gender (Nash 2008, Anthias 2013). IS has sometimes considered age and sexuality but disability as a social category has been seldom included (Söder 2009) although these categories have been explored more in recent years (Hesse-Biber 2012). It is true that Collins (1990) and Crenshaw (1989; 1991), did not include disability in their categories of examination, although both had theorised that intersectionality as a framework could be expanded to include other sites of oppression. Erevelles and Minear (2010) in *Unspeakable Offences: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality* argue that the omission of disability as a critical category in discussions of intersectionality has had '*disastrous and sometimes deadly consequences*' (Erevelles and Minear 2010, 128) for disabled people of colour at the intersections of multiple differences. Perhaps disability has been less used in an IS framework because disability has been seen as different to other categories like race, class, or gender. Disability has historically been analysed as a medical issue from an '*individual pathology perspective*' (Liasidou 2014, 121), a problem of and rooted in the individual, rather than a socially constructed identity that reflects the operation of power (Oliver 1996).

The exclusion of disability from IS approaches is often without any real critical rationale although Söder (2009) identified research from de los Reyes and Mulinari (2005) as the exception. De los Reyes and Mulinari (2005) identified that for a category to be included in an IS analysis requires that the characteristics be stable over time, inescapable (in that you should not easily be able to change your position), antagonistic (in that what is good for the oppressor is not good for the oppressed), and that the relationship is exploitative. In this respect, the authors distinguished between exploitation and stigmatisation.

According to de los Reyes and Mulinari people with disabilities are stigmatised, but they are not exploited and as such they should not be included in an IS perspective. Söder (2009) wryly observes that most disability scholars would disagree with such an analysis. I certainly disagree with this perspective. A central premise of this study is how disability should always be analysed from an IS perspective, as this approach can reveal both stigma and exploitation. IS will examine in this study how the power that accrues from occupying a position of dominance in the disability and class hierarchies, enables large numbers of people with disabilities in similar locations to have privileges or advantages over others more marginalised in the context of access to education.

David Hosking (2008) in exploring Critical Disability Theory (CDT) and legal studies in the UK suggests that IS, which he refers to as '*multidimensionality*', is one of the seven central elements of CDT, the others being the social model of disability, valuing diversity, rights, voices of disability, language, and transformative politics. Hosking argues that recognising that everyone is multidimensional allows for a structural analysis of society, acknowledging rather than denying within group diversity. Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) in an Australian context also consider that the introduction of IS in the context of critical disability studies has been important in challenging singular conceptions of identity (Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009, 60), which could contribute to overcoming the marginalisation of disabled people. The authors do question whether intersectionality scholars will however '*remain attached to the conventional mantra of race, gender, sexuality and class and continue to exclude other groups, such as disability and age*' (Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009, 62). There have been calls for more intersectional approaches in disability research. Thomas (1999) for example argued for a greater awareness of the ways disabled women experience multiple intersecting oppressions.

Söder (2009) argues that the historical focus of disability research on the individual rather than structures, power and resources could be addressed by IS (Söder 2009, 76).

Social class has always played an important role in the social construction of disability, with disability, social class and race entangled in an '*ongoing, complicated and vexed relationship*' (Ferri and Connor 2014, 472). It has been suggested that the focus of IS on gender and race in particular has meant that analyses of other categories like disability and class has been under-explored within intersectionality frameworks (Anthias 2013) with little research exploring the links between disability and social class (Fordyce et al. 2015, 286). Artiles (2013) argues that the medical model fragments the individual, focussing either on race or on disability, rarely examining the interplay of both with other dimensions like social class and gender (Artiles 2013, 331) but that an IS framework can challenge this approach.

I argue that IS can challenge the notion of a homogenous population of students with a disability, all equally disadvantaged. IS can examine how disability and social class intersect, intertwine, and shape distinctly different experiences and outcomes for some students, often the most vulnerable in our society. By applying IS to the available data in this research, the intention is to contribute to the scant literature on the intersection of disability and social class in relation to educational inequality.

3.7.1 Intersectionality, Disability and Education

There is compelling evidence that people with disabilities are a heterogonous group and that disability and social class/poverty are interconnected in education in Ireland (Watson et al. 2013, Watson et al. 2016). Watson and Nolan (2011) in a 'A Social Portrait of People with Disabilities in Ireland' looked at the social conditions of people with disabilities in Ireland and specifically focused on the links between disability, poverty and social exclusion, identifying that educational disadvantage, poverty, and disability are interconnected and mutually constitutive (Watson and Nolan 2011, xii). Banks et al. (2015) identified considerable heterogeneity among children with disabilities in terms of their characteristics and experiences, highlighting that there are wide differences in the prevalence of disabilities across social groups, and that placement in special education settings varies systematically by individual child characteristics including social background suggesting an inherent bias in the system (Banks et al. 2015). The experiences of children with disabilities in the education system also vary by social class where children from semi- and unskilled social class backgrounds (working-class) are more likely to report never liking school compared to pupils with SEN from professional backgrounds (McCoy and Banks 2012).

Social class also impacts the type of disability children are diagnosed with as children attending highly disadvantaged school contexts in Ireland are far more likely to be identified with behavioural problems (highly stigmatised) and less likely to be identified with learning disabilities than children with similar characteristics attending other schools (McCoy et al. 2012). Disproportionality, defined as the '*structured probability with which minority youth are more likely to be* '*documented*' *as disabled*' (O'Connor and de Luca 2006, 9-10), also shines some light on the connections between disability and poverty in education, although it does not particularly affect normative categories of disability, (including for example hearing and visual impairments), which tend to be identified and measured against agreed norms. The link with social deprivation is particularly strong however for non-normative categories, usually more subtle disabilities where identification is determined by professionals (Riddell et al. 2010). These non-normative categories are more stigmatised (O'Connor and de Luca 2006) and are disproportionally assigned to students living in the most disadvantaged communities (Riddell 2009).

The intersection of disability and social class in education can also be seen where children with SEN are more likely to cluster in disadvantaged schools, live in one-parent families (many of these comparatively socio-economically disadvantaged) than children without special educational needs, and are more likely to be in families dependent on social welfare (Cosgrove et al. 2014). The same intersection of disability and social class can be seen in relation to educational outcomes where children with each type of disability, and without a disability, attending DEIS schools at second level are more likely to perform at a lower level than their counterparts in non-DEIS schools and the gap is particularly large for young people with specific learning, emotional/behavioural and physical/visual/speech disabilities (Banks et al. 2016). The authors suggested that these poorer academic outcomes may reflect the fact that middle-class families are better able to access the resources and supports to negotiate better outcomes and mediate the academic impact of disability (Banks et al. 2016, 48).

The intersection of disability also has a profound impact on how, and when, students are diagnosed with a SEN/disability as in the Irish education system, unlike many of our European partners, students must have a diagnosis that acts as passport to access supports (Lindsay and Desforges 2010). The cost of private assessments and the availability of public assessments has been cited in the literature as a major barrier to accessing appropriate supports (Squires et al. 2016). A sample of 119 parents in a study in Ireland in 2009 found that many of the parents had paid for private assessments in order to access resources (Flatman-Watson 2009). A survey of parental attitudes in Ireland identified that one of the greatest frustrations for parents was the delay in assessments, the use of private assessments by parents who could afford to get them, as well as the quota based referral system in place in schools (Armstrong et al. 2010). There is a material advantage for those families with greater financial resources as parents who can afford to pay for assessments have an advantage over those that cannot who have to wait for the diagnosis and resources (Rose et al. 2015, 3).

Children from economically inactive households are less likely to have their professional assessment carried out by a psychologist or psychiatrist compared to others and more likely to have their professional assessment carried out by a special class teacher (Banks et al. 2015, 40). This issue is not confined to Ireland. Coordinated Support Plans (CSP's) in Scotland which are more likely to act as a 'passport' to access resources, are disproportionately allocated to children in more advantaged areas highlighting how resources tend to be disproportionately accessed by families with greater social and economic capital (Riddell et al. 2010). This material advantage supporting some students to achieve better outcomes does not just exist in the school system. Many parents who have the resources to pay for private assessments do so specifically to access the DARE scheme to access HE which advantages them over others who do not have the same resources (Rose et al. 2015, McGuckin et al. 2013).

There is a dearth of literature that analyses the intersection of disability and social class in HE and the impact on retention although two studies are worthy of note. Quinn (2013), in an international study on retention in Europe among students from under-represented groups, was one of the few studies to consider disability and social class suggesting that SWD from middle-class families were better aware and able to advocate in relation to their rights and entitlements whilst those from lower socio-economic backgrounds had barriers in addition to a disability (Quinn 2013). Studies exploring issues of disability and retention also found that university staff considered social class to be an important factor when considering disability and dropout. In the case of some students, particularly those from higher socio-economic groups, their parents were well placed to advocate for them with regard to their entitlements while students from non-traditional backgrounds were less likely to complete their course of study as disabilities intersected with other barriers (Fleming and Finnegan 2011, Quinn 2013).

There have been some important contributions to disability research using an IS framework in education although the focus here has also often been the intersections of disability with race, class, and gender. Björnsdóttir and Traustadóttir (2010) in '*Stuck in the land of disability? The intersection of learning difficulties, class, gender and religion*' completed research with six young adults with learning difficulties in Iceland and used Weber's (2001) conceptual framework for understanding the intersection of disability, class, gender and religion to understand the lived experiences of these young adults with learning difficulties. Weber's (2001) framework is based on five interrelated themes - that disability is historically and geographically contextual, socially constructed, embedded in macro and micro relationships of power and that social categories are '*...interconnected social systems of oppression simultaneously influence all aspects of lived experience*' (Björnsdóttir and Traustadóttir 2010, 60). The study, using this intersectional framework, looked at how the intersection of disability, class, gender and religion affected the social participation of the participants who identified limited opportunities in education, low expectations and assumed progression to welfare or low wage/low status employment at best. Björnsdóttir and Traustadóttir (2010) outlined how disability, class, gender and religion intertwine, reinforcing the perception of the participants as asexual, eternal children, incompetent, dependant and unproductive in a system which guarantees inclusion but which delivers the lived reality of exclusion.

Björnsdóttir and Traustadóttir (2010) introduce key themes that are repeated in multiple narratives - the structure of social institutions that harm rather than help, the mapping and construction of boundaries that confine individuals to assigned social locations, the stigma attached to labels, and the intersection of disability and social class that produce different outcomes for different people.

Connor's (2006) study '*Michael's Story: "I get into so much trouble just by walking": Narrative Knowing and Life at the Intersections of Learning Disability*' applies an intersectional frame to the intersection of disability, social class and race (McCall and Skrtic 2009). Connor outlines the lived experience of Michael, a young 19 year old African American student from New York from a disadvantaged background labelled as learning disabled. Connor (2006) looks at Michael's school experience from an IS perspective noting that '*…while segregation by race and class are not officially sanctioned, separation according to disability is …Schools, therefore, are organizations that can significantly limit educational opportunities and contribute to social reproduction in terms of disability and race*' (Connor 2006, 160). Connor examines Michael's experience using Collins (2000) intersectional framework. Michael's experiences of discrimination, oppression and subjugation are reflected in each of the domains.

At a structural level Michael is contained literally in segregated classes and educational opportunities (by his disability), in school and public places and at work (by his race) and in his neighbourhood, job expectations and employment prospects (by his class). At a disciplinary level, Michael is thrown into the '*sifting and separating*' (Connor 2006, 160) that takes place in schools when students do not achieve to the level prescribed. Once 'identified' as 'different', he is separated and indeed segregated from other students, publically labelled, divided into a 'them' and 'us' hierarchy. Michael paints a picture of '*merciful teachers*', a curriculum and a system that fails to give challenging work in an educational environment imbued with a culture of low expectations. The hegemonic domain affirms the dominant ideology, identifying who or what is valued and not valued. Michael was horrified to be placed with '*the retards*' (Connor 2006, 156), associating the stigma with death or contamination such was the social impact. Connor notes that these labels which seem innocuous have in fact a far greater meaning for those thus labelled, like '*educationally imposed leprosy*' (Connor 2006, 161), a condition from which other students, and even teachers, retreat.

Michael is positioned as simultaneously inferior (based on disability) and as a criminal (based on race and social class). Connor notes how students like Michael are both invisible and hypervisible in terms of their surveillance, both in and out of school, by those in positions of power. At an interpersonal level, Michael resisted the dominant assumptions, rejecting the IEP Diploma for example, demanding the opportunity to get a regular Diploma. Connor notes that it is impossible to identify where, in Michael's life, race ends and disability or social class begins. Oppressions based on disability, race and social class operate simultaneously in Michael's life at both a macro and micro level '*flooding into everyday personal experience*' (Connor 2006, 162) impacting Michael both in and out of school, influencing and limiting Michael's opportunities in life.

Michael's experience is useful for this study because it shows the power of an individual resisting the individual and structural domains and the dominant assumptions and categorisation of disability operating at multiple intersecting levels. Michael's experience and outcomes are shaped by where he is simultaneously positioned in the context of his disability, his gender, his race, and his social class. There is no hierarchy and no dominant identity. Michael is, as so many students are in this study, multiply disadvantaged in complex intersecting ways.

There have been a number of studies concerning the intersection of disability and other identities in education that are also relevant to this study (Erevelles and Minear 2010, Ferri and Connor 2014, Gillborn 2015). Erevelles and Minear suggest that the modern configuration of special education has replaced more unacceptable forms of historic racially based segregation. The authors chronicle the histories of three individuals who have multiple identities. Eleanor Bumpurs was a 67 year old Black woman, who was mentally ill, shot by police in 1984 for resisting eviction from her New York apartment. Junius Wilson, who was black, deaf and poor, was born in 1908 and was falsely accused of rape, deemed mentally deficient, and placed in a mental institution for the rest of his life. Cassie Smith is the contemporary participant and very relevant to this research.

Cassie was a black child living in rural poverty in a lone-parent family in public housing. Cassie was moved to eight different schools in eight years, often without any reason, seen by schools as a problem and indeed as the problem. Cassie’s educational history was one of exclusion and of segregation. Cassie’s Mother reflected bitterly that their experiences (herself as a Mother and Cassie as a child) were of a system that was difficult to understand or navigate and that seemed to be trying to hurt rather than help them. Erevelles and Minear note how class and race both simultaneously played an important role in Cassie’s educational experience noting that privileged white students would have had a different experience, even with the same behavioural issues, because they would have had the social, cultural and economic resources to access professional help, better school support or indeed transfer to a private school.

These three histories show how race, disability and class mutually construct one another, positioning each individual at specific intersections that either value or devalue each person. Poor, black disabled people are at the very '*bottom of the barrel*', marginalised and disconnected from what, or who, is valued in society (Erevelles and Minear 2010, 127). Their experiences are defined not by any one element of their social identity, but how their multiple identities interweave, interconnect and constitute each other at all times in different contexts. Ferri and Connor (2014) concur suggesting that categories like race, disability and social class are constantly simultaneously shaping and influencing each other. Ferri and Connor (2014) highlight how educators rarely acknowledge how social and economic inequality, like race, influence disability classification and that even when social class is considered, crude measurements are often used (Ferri and Connor 2014, 475). Social class can therefore be seen as a '*floating signifier*' often used in ways that flatten or ignore difference (Ferri and Connor 2014, 477).

Gillborn (2015) completed research with Black middle-class parents and their children with SEN in England exploring how IS can be used as an aspect of CRT examining the intersection of race, class and gender in education. The study examines the educational strategies of Black middle-class parents as they attempt to navigate the SEN system. In this study, it was parents not schools who drove the needs assessment process, using their social and cultural (friendships and networks) and economic capital (financing private assessments) to make the most of the system (Gillborn 2015, 280). The study affirms other studies (McCall and Skrtic 2009, Riddell et al. 2010) identifying that the social capital of middle-class parents is important and can act as a protective factor mitigating the impact of disability. These studies suggest that IS can add another dimension to understanding the experience, the barriers, the influences and the strategies, of students with disabilities and their families as they navigate the education system.

The research outlined above indicates how IS has been used in education to reveal new and important knowledge at the intersection of disability, social class and gender.

3.7.2 Intersectionality, Disability, and Higher Education

Although IS has been a central theme and framework in critical feminist theory its influence in areas like higher education has been limited (Museus and Griffin 2011, 9). There have been a number of studies using IS in HE in recent years that provide useful insights for this research. Liasidou (2014) identifies that students with disabilities are both under-represented in HE and have high dropout rates and that intersecting sources of disadvantage are the reason. Disability support when provided in HE, whether services, supports or technology, are '*incomplete and even pernicious*' (Liasidou 2014, 131) in terms of how they stigmatise students unless underpinned by an understanding of how disability is constituted. Liasidou identifies how SWD are not a homogenous group noting that students from advantaged backgrounds have been shown to be better able to access supports in HE.

Liasidou (2014) argues that in HE, a medical model conceptualisation of disability means that students have to request '*reasonable accommodations*' and supports tend to be separate from mainstream provision, with little involvement with academics and with segregated provision for some supports like examinations. SWD in HE are singled out as different and stigmatised rather than included through an inclusive discourse (Liasidou 2014, 124). The research suggests that low progression to HE and high dropout rates by disabled students need to be viewed through an IS perspective connecting their experience as a disabled student to other aspects of their identity; where they live, their socio-economic background, financial pressures, parental and peer support and social marginalisation. In relation to student identity, Liasidou (2014) argues that the medical model which underpins disability support provision in HE ensures that SWD are well aware in HE of their subordinate position, either emulating hegemonic norms or consciously not accepting their own disability.

Museus and Griffin (2011) make similar suggestions identifying how a one-dimensional understanding of disability in HE in the US can inadvertently perpetuate assumptions that actually contribute to other inequalities. College access routes for example, developed to broaden access, can exclude some sub-groups if there is little understanding of who or why some groups are particularly disadvantaged (Museus and Griffin 2011, 11). Reid and Knight (2006) similarly identify how labelling minority students as Learning Disabled (LD) affects college admissions in the US. While there are increasing numbers of students with disabilities progressing to HE, these statistics hide the over presentation of ethnic minority students in special education in high school and their underrepresentation in HE. There has been an increase in the numbers of students labelled LD for example but the primary benefit has been to white upper class high income families (Reid and Knight 2006, 20). The burden of navigating college admission processes is placed on the individual student, they need to identify what supports they need, advocate for themselves, self-report, articulate their needs, and coordinate support with little recognition of the context of race or class (Reid and Knight 2006, 21). The authors suggest that applying an IS lens to college admission processes would identify the most disadvantaged and support greater equity.

A study in Scotland is one of the few studies to suggest that the experiences of SWD in HE vary by social class. The study analysed the progress made in expanding the number of SWD in higher education and their wider social characteristics using case studies of eight institutions and 48 disabled students (Riddell et al. 2005). Half of the case study institutions were Scottish and half were English, and they also varied in relation to their history (four were pre-1992, three were post-1992 and one was a college of further and higher education). The students were selected to reflect differences in disability type, gender, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation. The study suggested that SWD in HE were not a homogenous group and suggested that students with dyslexia, who tend to be male and middle-class, had been the greatest beneficiaries of the expansion in HE, whereas poorer SWD, and those with more significant impairments, have been less likely to be included (Riddell et al. 2005).

Fordyce et al. (2015) reported on '*Educational outcomes of young people in Scotland who are deaf or hard of hearing: intersection of deafness and social class*'. This study, based in Scotland following the 2007 recession, completed interviews with 30 young people (aged 18-24) who were deaf or hearing impaired. The interview data was analysed alongside administrative and survey data on schools and post school outcomes. The study involves one of the first analyses of the intersection of social class and disability in young people's post school outcomes. Parents' advocacy skills, which were related to their socio-economic status, and their ability to make informed choices about their children's education, were identified as of great benefit to children in this study. The advocacy power of parents was important not just during school years but into post school education options and the labour market. In contrast, young people from less advantaged backgrounds had more troubled post school outcomes. The data used included the area where participants lived which had been categorised using the SIMD (Scottish Index Multiple Deprivation) where neighbourhoods are ranked on seven different aspects of deprivation. The researchers carried out both an intracategorical (individual experiences are shaped by multiple dimensions of inequality) and an intercategorical analysis (comparing the experiences of people with different socio-demographic characteristics) (Fordyce et al. 2015, 289). The study noted how national policy failed to recognise the positive outcomes for more advantaged children who were deaf or hearing impaired compared to the more limited opportunities for those from poorer backgrounds and highlighted the strong associated between poverty and SEN. Although this research focussed on young people who were deaf or hearing impaired, the study notes the importance of an IS approach more broadly into research looking at the intersection of disability and social class and the materially different experiences and outcomes for different students (Fordyce et al. 2015, 285), an issue which is directly relevant to this study.

These insights are relevant to the current study and suggest that IS can provide a more nuanced understanding of how disability is conceptualised and configured in HE, how it intersects with social class, and the impact for different students.

3.8 Applying Intersectionality to the Current Research

Practitioners who are '*frontline actors*' are drawn to IS for solving social problems that are linked to complex social inequalities (Collins 2015, 15). As a practitioner and frontline actor in the field of academic support for SWD in HE, I increasingly became aware of inequality in the context of the social background of students with disabilities accessing higher education. My own commitment to social justice makes the research a natural fit with intersectionality's focus on historically marginalised communities. This research examines progression to HE in Ireland at a national level, retention in HE at a national level and the student experience of ten participants with disabilities at one university in Ireland.

The characteristics of the students have been disaggregated to allow for within, and between group, differences to be analysed. Recognising the difficulties in keeping multiple variables in play at the same time (McCall 2005), this study is focussed on the intersection of disability and social class/socio-economic disadvantage. IS allows for both an intracategorical analysis (examining how individual experiences are shaped by multiple axes of inequality) and an intercategorical analysis (comparing the experiences of students with disabilities with different socio-economic characteristics). Ferri and Connor (2014) suggest that for an intersectional approach to be most effective it should be simultaneously inter and intra categorical, an approach previously used in a Scottish study (Fordyce et al. 2015). These analyses are central to this study.

By applying IS to the available data, the intention is to explore the findings using this unique approach. In line with one of the central principles of IS, the purpose of the study is to support transformative action by revealing how disability and social class, oppression and privilege, are created, justified, and maintained, in the complex and complicated lives of SWD in HE. In using IS as an approach to interpret the research findings, this research seeks to explore how these two social identities relate and are intrinsically interconnected with each other, how they mutually constitute and reinforce each other, and the impact on student identities, lives, opportunities, experiences and outcomes.

Disability and social class as concepts are both complex and contested. IS can explore these social identities in a new way, challenging binary conceptions of identity, challenging essentialism and homogeneity, revealing oppression and privilege. Much policy in Ireland has been determined using ‘single identity markers’, treating SWD and working-class students as homogenous groups. The needs of some populations have been based on stereotypes from culture, the media, history and politics (Hancock 2007, 65). IS offers the opportunity to challenge that conceptualisation and thinking. IS allows me to trace the emergence of disability and social class as concepts, their origins, and their representation in education. IS offers a framework to contextualise this within the structures of major social institutions, the bureaucratic administrative processes that maintain boundaries within schools and higher education institutions, the hegemony that justifies and maintains the boundaries, and the lived day to day experiences of students who navigate this complex terrain.

IS expects ambiguity and seeks to explore rather than consuming difference into the sameness of specific identities. IS does not expect to find a perfect case study but can identify patterns of discrimination that can reveal complex inequality. Most importantly IS is a framework that reveals oppression and privilege recognising that there are few pure victims or oppressors. IS thus creates the opportunity to contribute to a new understanding of how disability and social class function in education and society in Ireland. IS encourages the use of mixed methods. Combining qualitative and quantitative was important in this study in order to provide a complete body of evidence to support the analysis. In particular IS focusses on the individual identity but does so with the purpose of illuminating power structures that reproduce inequalities. This research while analysing quantitative national data, also wanted to explore the lived experiences of individual students to examine the processes of power that operate to frame differential opportunities for students in HE. The complexity of IS as an approach allows this and the testimonies from the study participants is central to this study.

3.9 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter I introduced intersectionality (IS) as a theoretical framework arguing that IS provides a framework for this study to examine how disability intersects with social class at a macro and a micro level of the individual experience in relation to progression to HE, retention within HE, and the student experience in education. I propose to use IS to challenge singular, unidimensional approaches to inequality, by identifying how disability *intersects* with social class to create complex inequity in education. This study challenges the concept of the '*universal voice*' (Crenshaw 1989, 154) suggesting that this voice only speaks for a subset of that group, often the most privileged, thereby hiding and silencing those that are multiply burdened and marginalised. In this study, I examine disability in a new way, revealing inequalities previously hidden, providing an alternative analytical lens to reveal the way that social identities, social structures, and social institutions, work together to create, sustain, justify, and reproduce inequality in education.

IS is utilised in the next chapter where it has been used to inform the methodology of this research as revealed in the findings chapters which follow.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This is a study about inequality in education in Ireland. More specifically, it is a study that has a unique focus in that it seeks to identify complex inequality at the intersection of disability and social class in higher education (HE) in Ireland. I developed the methodology of this study in response to the findings of the literature reviewed in the previous chapter, the complexity of the study questions, and the centrality of the student experience in this inquiry. The methodology was developed to address some of the limitations and the gaps evident in literature and practice in the field and to answer complex research questions focussed on the intersection of privilege and power at both a macro social structural level and at the micro level of the individual student experience. The aim of this chapter is to identify for the reader the challenges in developing this methodology and the unique methodological approach and focus that I developed to meet these challenges.

I begin this chapter by reminding the reader of the research questions that frame this study. I then elaborate on the methodological framework that shaped the enquiry situating the research within a social constructivist and an advocacy/participatory paradigm. I discuss ontological and epistemological relationships and lay bare how these influences shaped my approach to the study. In the previous chapter, I introduced intersectionality (IS) as the theoretical framework that guides this study to explore how the identities of students with disabilities (disability and social class) intersect to create unique and complex disadvantage in education. This chapter discusses some of the methodological challenges with such a complex theoretical approach.

I outline how my research plan evolved to answer the research questions both as a macro quantitative analysis of the patterns of inequality in progression to and retention within HE, and as a micro qualitative evaluation of the intersection of disability and social class in the day to day lives of SWD in education. I justify the mixed methods research model adopted in the study and I outline both the potential benefits and possible limitations of this approach. I outline the three layers of data analysed in this study and outline the research design developed and explain the relationship between the layers of data used in the study. I explain how I employed each method and I detail data and participant selection and recruitment, data generation, and data analysis techniques.

I then outline the ethical principles that were central to the study and clarify how I ensured that I safeguarded the participants throughout. Finally, I explore the strengths of the approaches chosen, the study limitations, and the tensions between my own professional role as an internal policy maker and gatekeeper in a higher education institution and my emerging role as a critical researcher.

4.2 Reminder of Research Topic

At this stage, it is useful to remind the reader of the research topic. The research seeks to contribute to a greater understanding of how disability and social class are constructed, intersect, and resisted, in the lives of SWD from different social backgrounds in education in Ireland. I explore this objective through three research questions. The questions explore the impact of the intersection of disability and social class on the pattern of applications and eligibility for the DARE and HEAR schemes, on the retention/non-progression of DARE eligible students within HE, and finally on how disability and social class in Ireland are constructed, and resisted, as social identities in the lives of individual students and their families in education in Ireland. The research questions seek to identify how broad macro-level social and societal structures are connected to the micro level of individual experience and how SWD in different social situations live their lives.

My desire to look past single categories of analysis and consider the complex inequity revealed at the intersections of these social identities shaped how I formed these three research questions. I use these questions to identify where this inequity exists, how it is connected to multilevel processes of power operating at both a macro and micro level, and how these processes of power create, shape, sustain and reproduce systems of privilege, oppression, and domination.

The research questions are explored through analysis at a macro social structural level (national patterns of application by students with disabilities to the DARE scheme and the retention of SWD in higher education) and at the micro level of the individual (how SWD differentially experience inequality in education). I found that this clarity created both a focus for me as to the appropriate theoretical framework and dictated the question of what methodologies and methods were needed in the research and the justification of those choices.

Within a social constructivist and an advocacy/participatory paradigm and the theoretical framework of IS, my research approach is a mixed methods study exploring how disability and social class intersect in the lives of young adults in higher education (HE) in Ireland to reveal complex inequality, oppression, privilege and power. The research has a strong social justice perspective and explicitly seeks to influence national policy and practice.

4.3 Epistemology and Ontology

This section seeks to clearly articulate what I believe exists and how I understand reality (ontology), as well as how I know the world or how I believe knowledge is created (epistemology), and my own value judgements (axiology). I do this to identify how these singularly, and often together, influenced all levels of this inquiry including my choice of research topic, the theoretical framework that I use to guide the study, data generation, participant selection, data analysis, and ethics.

I have challenged myself throughout this journey with the need to become more familiar, and indeed confident, with my own researcher identity. I am aware that there are a mass of contradictions and tensions between my own professional position and the research inquiry. I approached this research study with the purpose of exploring how SWD are positioned in HE, how they see and understand themselves, disability, and the education system, and the equity of opportunity and outcomes available to them. I wanted to complete a study that would be useful, that could be transformative, personally, institutionally, and nationally, and that could advance the equality of all SWD in education.

Reflexivity is an important element of an IS informed approach in this study. Reflexivity is a process of critical reflection requiring the researcher to *"…constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process and subject these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their 'data'"* (Mason 1996, p. 6). Being reflexive made me think about my own markers of identity (biological sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, social class, disability, age, and religion), and how markers of identity intersect to afford privilege and/or disadvantage. I believe that my own preconceptions, values, social position, and interests shaped the research processes and knowledge production in this study. I believe that qualitative research cannot and should not be totally objective and found that this subjective approach encouraged me to position myself within the study and yet to challenge my own assumptions about social identities. I approached the research questions with a reflexive approach challenging the dominant assumptions around disability (a deficit located as a fault within the individual, a personal tragedy, a negative shameful state of being) as rooted in policy and practice derived from the social political and historical discourses within which understandings of disability are perpetuated. Over the course of the inquiry, I also challenged the construction of disability within my own HEI and the part that I play in developing and maintaining that construction.

The methodological influences that I most prominently draw upon in this study are social constructivism and an advocacy/participatory paradigm both of which I justify further in this chapter. There is a vast amount of literature exploring various research paradigms. These paradigms are often presented as worldviews that are polar opposites or in complete opposition to one another (Crotty 1998, Guba and Lincoln 2005, Mertens 2005). Positivism, originating with the ideas of Auguste Comte, has traditionally been the dominant paradigm in the social sciences, suggesting, from a theoretical perspective, that there is one measurable objective truth and that within this truth there is *"an assurance of unambiguous and accurate knowledge of the world"* (Crotty 1998, 18). Positivism has been closely associated with quantitative methodologies that are suggested can provide a certainty of objective and quantifiable measurement proving an objective truth. A constructivist ontology holds that there is no one singular objective truth, rather that there are multiple truths or versions of reality, arguing that *"reality is socially constructed"* (Mertens 2005, 12) and that all truth is subjective (Cohen et al. 2000). Constructivism has been primarily associated with qualitative methodologies valuing individual and multiple perspectives of the world.

In this study, I situate my research in a constructivist paradigm, convinced that reality (and much of what we assume to be true about social identities) is socially constructed. In this paradigm, individuals *"…seek understanding of the world in which they live and work"* developing subjective meanings of their experiences which are multiple, complex and varied (Creswell 2007, 20). I believe that there is no single truth, no single reality, rather multiple versions of truth and reality depending on where each of us is positioned, the social and political context in which we are situated, and our own individual social location.

This paradigm is central to IS, the theoretical framework that I have chosen for this study. IS is concerned with the complex multi-dimensional ways that individuals live their lives and how they interpret and navigate their day to day experiences of oppression, privilege and power (McCall 2005). Intersectionality as a paradigm (Collins 1990, Hancock 2007, Dhamoon 2011, Hesse-Biber 2011, McCall 2005) is, positioned with other constructivist perspectives, in seeing reality as historically and socially constructed emerging as it does from critical legal studies, critical race theory, and critical race feminism (McCall 2005). In this perspective, I believe that people with a disability have multiple complex intersecting identities that are socially constructed. The IS perspective posits that the dominant negative, individualised, medicalised, and deficit-based assumptions of disability are assumptions rooted in policy and practice derived from the social political and historical discourses within which understandings of disability are perpetuated (as outlined in the previous chapter).

Collins (2015) identified that there are varying epistemological perspectives in IS and that conceptualisations of IS are varied; some see it as a perspective, a concept (Knapp 2005), a type of analysis (Nash 2008), a methodology (Yuval-Davis 2006), a research paradigm (Hancock 2007) or a type of data (Bowleg 2008). In this study, I assume a social constructivist stance suggesting that social identities, whether disability, gender, class, ethnicity, or race, relate to social ontologies, that is to conceptions about ways the world is organised and that *"These act like maps, pointing to where sets of relations are situated, manifested in categories and materialised in concrete relations"* (Anthias 2013, 6). In this study, I understand that the concepts of disability and other identities are socially constructed phenomena that will always mean different things to different people in different contexts. There is no one objective reality but rather multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge (Mertens 2005). In this approach, we are as researcher and participants, partners, co-creators, in the construction and generation of meaning. I believe that my own background as a working-class student in education, and as a professional in HE, has also shaped my own interpretation of reality. I see my own personal, cultural, professional, and historical experiences, as central to this research.

I situate this study within both a social constructivist and an advocacy/participatory paradigm convinced that these paradigms are complementary in that they overlap and reinforce one another in this study (Creswell 2007, 16). A key focus of the study is not just to identify negative outcomes in education from the current stigmatised construction of disability but also to challenge this construction and to progress issues of social justice by supporting a human rights approach to addressing the needs of SWD in education and society. Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) identify that the key features of an advocacy/participatory paradigm is the potentially transformative power of the inquiry to bring about social change, to address important and current societal constraints, aiming to create a political debate to support real change. In this paradigm, the problems and the research questions explored aim to understand specific issues or topics including *"the conditions that serve to disadvantage and exclude individuals or cultures, such as hierarchy, hegemony, racism, sexism, unequal power relations, identity, or inequities in our society"* (Creswell 2007, 24).

In my professional role, I see a practical and useful purpose in that this paradigm contains an action agenda for reform with the aim of changing the lives of participants, institutions, and indeed researchers and these agendas are central to my objectives in this study (Creswell 2007, 21). Using an advocacy/participatory paradigm is also important in terms of my own critical reflexivity and the changing and developing professional positionality of my role as Director of Access at Maynooth University throughout this research. I argue that situating this study within both a social constructivist and an advocacy/participatory paradigm can inform my professional practice, inform institutional and national policy, and address systemic issues of how we understand disability and the impact on the lives of SWD in the context of inclusion and inequality.

Critically, this paradigm situates participants as central to the research, collaborating on the production of knowledge. I outlined in the previous chapter how a key feature of national policy, and practice, has been the often invisibility of the voices of people with disabilities themselves and their experiences in education. Participants in advocacy/participatory research projects are often under-represented or marginalised groups, whether those differences take the form of gender, sexuality, religion, class, or disability or indeed some intersection of these identities. A key focus of this study is to place, at the heart of the inquiry, the voices of young people with disabilities and to position this in terms of their experiences in education. The inquiry is collaborative in nature, completed "with" the participants rather than "on" or "to" them. I position the participants in this study as active collaborators, contributing to a collaborative exploration of complex inequity, while seeking to progress an agenda of social justice and change.

Finally, a social constructivist and an advocacy/participatory paradigm are both central to who I am as a human being and as a researcher. I am committed to equality in education and passionate about how we can challenge singular unidimensional representations of disadvantage to reveal complex embedded inequity. The focus in this study is to reveal the lives and experiences in education of those whose voices are often silenced and whose experiences are ignored and marginalised. These paradigms therefore fit well with both the focus of this study, my own view of reality, and my belief in how knowledge is both socially constructed and context dependent.

4.4 Research Design and Methodological Approach

4.4.1 Intersectionality as a Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality (IS), introduced in chapter 3, is a theoretical framework that illuminates how social identities (disability, social class, race, gender, sexuality etc.) are created, justified, and sustained and how they intersect with macro social structural systems (ableism, classism, racism etc.) at the micro level of the individual experience to reveal hierarchies of privilege and oppression. I considered that IS might be the obvious theoretical framework to answer the research questions in this study. An examination of IS through a methodological lens however suggested that this theoretical approach presented a number of methodological challenges that I needed to consider and these challenges, and how I addressed them, are outlined below.

The first challenge concerned whether this framework, developed initially to understand and explain the marginalisation of Black women in the United States, could be adapted to understand and explain disability as a social identity and the experiences of SWD in education in Ireland. IS has long been criticised for its limited potential as an analytical framework to move beyond the ‘big three’ of gender, race and class and reflect the needs of other marginalised communities. Patricia Hill Collins (1990), stated that IS, although primarily focussed on the intersection of race, class and gender, could be applied to other categories of oppression (Collins 1990). I believe, as other researchers have suggested, that IS, as a theoretical framework, can be widely applied to the study of other social groups, does not inherently privilege any social category, and can include any people whose micro and macro-level experiences intersect at the point or intersection of social inequalities (Hancock 2007, Carbado 2013, Bowleg 2012). I considered that the framework could be adapted to my study as the core principles of IS, mutually constituted interdependence; interlocking oppressions and privileges; multiple experiences of race, gender, sexuality, and other identities, are relevant to the oppression of all marginalised groups (Hesse-Biber 2012).

Much of the literature outlined in the previous chapter identified how SWD experience barriers and challenges in education, including HE, although most have identified a single identity category, disability, as the primary focus of their investigations. An assumption in such studies is that disability is a deficit, the primary and indeed only disadvantage, and that all SWD are equally disadvantaged. An IS informed approach allows for more nuanced understandings of social identities, of the context of people’s lives, making visible the complexities of intersecting identities, social location and socio-historical structures (Hunting 2014, 12). As a researcher I believe that the emerging strength of IS is its capacity to expand beyond its original application to explain the complexity of the lives of marginalised and oppressed groups including people with SWD and their experiences and outcomes in education. I therefore felt, on balance, that IS was a useful theoretical framework that could be adapted to answer my research questions.

I identified that one of the great strengths of IS informed research is how it seeks to address and ameliorate inequity and this approach is underpinned by a strong social justice objective. This approach resonated with me as an IS informed approach seeks to identify the centrality of power and the structural conditions that produce or reinforce inequity recognising that other approaches risk identifying the problem as rooted in the individual. In this study, I sought to address issues of the true and meaningful participation of participants, issues of power and knowledge production, and to attend to the complexities of social issues with the aim of advancing social justice. This approach was very relevant to the research questions as it challenges the medical model of disability, revealing the dynamics of oppression for this highly stigmatised group, identifying factors that shape experiences, sustain stigma and create barriers.

The complexity of an IS approach presented me with some difficult methodological challenges. I found the potential for IS research both exciting and daunting in equal measures particularly because methodologically there is little agreement about how to conduct IS research (Bowleg 2008). McCall (2005) suggests that the defining feature of IS is its complexity and yet IS has been accused of lacking a precise methodological approach (Nash 2008) and indeed for having no methods associated with it at all (Phoenix 2006). McCall suggests that three different methodologies can be used in an IS framework to inform methodological approaches; anticategorical, intracategorical and intercategorical (McCall 2005, 1775). A study examining the intersection of social class and deafness for example in Scotland used both an intracategorical and intercategorical analysis (Fordyce et al. 2015, 288). The intracategorical analysis looked at how individual experiences are shaped by multiple dimensions of inequality (qualitative) while the intercategorical analysis compared the experiences of people with different socio-economic characteristics to identify patterns of inequality (quantitative). I felt that this approach could be adapted to answer my research question using the data to support both an intracategorical analysis (examining how multiple axes of inequality shape experiences) and an intercategorical analysis (comparing outcomes of SWD with different socio-economic characteristics).

The next section outlines my justification for choosing a mixed methods research model as the most appropriate methodology to answer the research questions.

4.4.2 Rationale for a Mixed Methods Research Model

Having considered the complexity of the research questions and the centrality of the student experience, I decided that a mixed methods research model was the most appropriate methodology for this study as mixed methods, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, uses the strengths of both approaches and can *"answer research questions that could not be answered in any other way"* (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003, 10). Yin (2009) agrees noting that a mixed methods approach can address complicated research questions and can gather a stronger base of evidence than can be accomplished by any single method in isolation (Yin 2009, 63). I was aware at the outset that the research questions were complex and that a single approach to data analysis might be inadequate.

One advantage of a mixed methods approach is that the model encourages researchers to select the methods most appropriate to the way their study has developed and this is the position that I adopted over the course of this study (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010, Mertens 2012). In my professional role, I have always been attracted to quantitative data. Within a policy framework, particularly a HEI, quantitative data often has more credibility and gives the impression (often incorrectly) of objectivity and certainty. However, my experience of quantitative data is that these data can present a rather flat and inadequate picture of complex issues. The data may indicate patterns and outcomes for example that suggest inequity but with no real clarity as to why those patterns exist, what the real meaning is within them, and how that inequity is experienced.

At the outset of this study, I was initially committed to a qualitative study only as I felt that my area of interest was *why* patterns of inequity exist rather than *what* patterns exist. Qualitative data has the potential to add meaning and depth and context to address complex questions. I also believe that the realities of the lives of real people provide the most powerful testimony with the potential to reveal oppression and inequity and support an agenda for change. However, I found this position impossible to hold as a singular approach in this study for a number of reasons outlined below.

Intersectionality, as a theoretical framework, is key to this study and this approach places great emphasis on the importance of qualitative data because IS is focussed on the lived experience of people, paying particular attention to the voices of those living on the margins experiencing different types of oppression (Symington 2004). A singular qualitative approach therefore would have been consistent with IS as a theoretical framework and with a social constructivist and an advocacy/participatory paradigm. Qualitative data would certainly bring a richness and depth to the study and would acknowledge the ‘expert’ position of the participants.

In isolation, however, I felt that a purely qualitative study, while consistent with an IS approach, ran the risk of highlighting inequitable participant experiences that were unconnected to macro social structures of power. Qualitative research in isolation relies heavily on the personal interpretation of histories, both by the participant and researcher. I was also conscious that I hold a position of power within the university in my own professional role. I felt that there were risks with a small group of participants as there might be a desire to please me and to tell me what I wanted to hear. In qualitative studies, participants will also have partial and indeed multiple views of reality. One of the other risks with a purely qualitative approach is participant recruitment, where participants may be involved in the study because of either very positive experiences or indeed very negative experiences.

I initially considered a solely quantitative approach but felt that there were also limitations to quantitative research only, particularly as such an approach is not consistent with an IS informed framework. Firstly, the suitability and appropriateness of the quantitative data presented a methodological consideration. More studies might well have used an IS approach were it not for the difficulties in accessing suitable quantitative data (Scott and Siltanen 2012). Data in national studies for example can often be inadequate for an IS informed analysis because national level data is often collected with the assumption of homogeneity of cases and the independence of variables, an approach which is contrary to an IS framework (Symington 2004). An IS approach requires that the available data be disaggregated by race, class, age, gender and other identities where possible to facilitate this analysis. IS informed research *"demands that sample populations allow for an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon"*, that the available data be as representative as possible with regard to the population being studied, while also being heterogeneous enough to interrogate how various categories intersect to differentially shape experience (Hunting 2014, 10).

I identified that the data available for the study was a complete national census of all students who applied to the DARE scheme and who were applying to HE in Ireland in 2010. I also identified that this data set could be merged with a subset of all students who had applied to the DARE scheme and who also applied to the HEAR scheme. These data could be refined to another subset consisting of the students who were eligible for DARE and who had progressed as new entrants to HE to one of the 11 HEI’s participating in the DARE scheme to identify non-progression from 1st year to 2nd year of study in HE. I identified that I could disaggregate the data using a range of intersecting variables including disability and social class to facilitate this analysis. I was happy that this national dataset provided a unique and compelling opportunity to analyse the intersection of disability and social class at a national macro level.

It was clear that this analysis of quantitative data alone would offer a significant contribution to a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of the intersectional disadvantage that affects all SWD in HE. I concluded that these quantitative data, however, while immensely valuable and addressing a current gap in knowledge, would provide a partial perspective only. The major weakness of this approach was that a purely quantitative study risked the identification of macro patterns revealing power structures that were divorced from the testimony of the reality of lives of the people most directly affected by this marginalisation. The analysis might also highlight inequitable outcomes for some students with disabilities but provide no explanation as to why this inequity exists.

Most researchers suggest that either a qualitative or mixed methods approach is appropriate (Scott and Siltanen 2012) but that an IS framework requires an IS informed stance, a curiosity as to how multiple social categories interact (Bowleg 2008). I knew that I had a curiosity as to how social categories intersect but I was convinced that an IS informed stance alone might be insufficient to provide a compelling analysis of intersecting inequities. Hesse-Biber (2012) suggests that a mixed methods research approach is the most appropriate methodology for IS. Hancock (2007) and Spierings (2012) go further and suggest that within an IS framework, if a researcher wants an answer to a policy research question and complex phenomena that is comprehensive, valid, and generalisable, that multiple methods are not just suggested, but essential. I agree and felt that a mixed methods approach most faithfully represents an IS informed approach which suggests that different expressions of inequality, the experiential and the structural, are inextricably connected as *"…how individuals experience inequality in their daily lives is intimately tied to how inequality is configured as a characteristic of social structures (including institutions, laws, and government policies)"* (Scott and Siltanen 2012, 7). An IS approach also suggests that when analysing or presenting data, this must be supported by context to ensure that identities are not isolated from the particular histories, social relations and institutional contexts that produced them (Hesse-Biber 2012). This study therefore situates these mixed methods analyses more broadly within historical contexts, structures, cultures, ideologies and policies to reflect structures of inequality and power while retaining the individual experiences that shape and construct social structures (Bowleg 2012).

In summary, I decided that a mixed methods approach, using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data, was necessary to address the complexity of my research questions. I identified that a mixed methods approach could achieve a macro and micro level of analysis, could triangulate data, and would address issues of trustworthiness, transferability, reliability and validity in the study, issues that I discuss later in this chapter. I justify my approach as a mixed methods IS informed analysis that offers *"…insights into the structural configuration of inequality that may not be apparent from qualitative analysis alone"* (Scott and Siltanen 2012, 6). I believe that a mixed methods approach could provide the most useful lens to answer the complex research questions by examining the categorical treatment of social identities and the multidimensional ways that SWD experience life, how they see themselves, and how others see and treat them. The patterns of inequity could be faithfully revealed through the quantitative analysis but the voices of the participants would ensure that their experiences remained front and central in the study.

The next section outlines the three sources of quantitative data analysed in the study to answer the research questions within the theoretical framework of intersectionality.

4.5 Quantitative Data Sources

This study reports on a quantitative analysis of a national census of SWD who applied to HE in Ireland in 2010 and who applied to the DARE scheme. The most recent scheme data available to me at the outset of the study was for 2010 and 2011. I decided to focus on the 2010 data only as it allowed me to analyse national patterns of applications to DARE and HEAR and to link these data to the students who subsequently progressed to HE to analyse patterns of non-progression. This approach also allowed me to link these quantitative data to the student experience of HE as five of the student participants in the study started HE in Ireland in 2010 would therefore also have been included in the analyses in chapters 5 and 6. There were three separate sources of quantitative data identified, and later merged in this study, to facilitate these analyses. These three separate sources of quantitative data are outlined below.

1. Firstly, students who applied for entry to HE through the Central Applications Office (CAO) in 2010 could opt in to the DARE scheme by ticking the relevant box on the CAO application form and these data are used in the analysis. The Data Manager at the University of Limerick (UL), who provided the schemes with an analysis of national data in a number of published reports, provided the national data for 2010 to me for this study. This study reports on 2,161 applicants to DARE in 2010.
2. Secondly, students who applied for entry to HE through the CAO in 2010 could also apply for the HEAR scheme and these data are used in the analysis. The Data Manager at UL, as before, provided the national data on DARE applicants that had also applied to HEAR in 2010 to me for this study. This study reports on students who applied and/or were eligible for both HEAR and DARE in 2010.
3. Thirdly, the CAO confirmed that 462 students nationally had applied for, were eligible for DARE, and participated in HE in one of the 11 participating DARE HEIs in the 2010/11 academic year. All 11 HEI's[6] that participated in DARE in 2010/11 agreed to provide data on these students to identify students who participated in HE in the 2010/11 academic year but who did *not* progress from 1st to 2nd year of study in their HEI in 2011/12.

---

[6] Seven universities (University College Dublin (UCD), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Dublin City University (DCU), National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM), University College Cork (UCC), National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG), University of Limerick (UL); Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT); the National College of Ireland (NCI); Mater Dei Institute of Education (MDI).

These data, although a national census, only capture students who self-identified and applied to the DARE scheme as a route into HE. The data set does not include students, who for a whole variety of reasons, did not apply to the DARE scheme. This census also includes school leavers with disabilities only (18 to 22 years old) and thus does not include students who are older and cannot use this route to access HE.

I obtained these three separate sources of quantitative data separately, and I then merged them, to facilitate the intersectional analysis of the quantitative data using a number of independent and dependent variables. These variables are outlined below.

4.5.1 Quantitative Data Variables

The independent variables identified are disability (suggested by application/eligibility for the DARE scheme) and social class (suggested by three proxies – school type, home address/area where applicant is living, and application to both DARE and HEAR (as the HEAR scheme uses an intersectional multi-indicator approach to identify disadvantage). I provide further information on each of these variables below.

All applicants to DARE provide a range of information as part of the application process (gender, home address, school attended) and provide information on their category of disability. There were 11 possible disability categories in DARE in 2010/11 including Asperger's Syndrome/Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Blind/Vision Impaired, Deaf/Hearing Impaired, Dyspraxia (also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder or DCD), Mental Health Condition, Neurological Conditions Including Brain Injury and Speech and Language Disabilities), Physical Disability, Significant Ongoing Illness (including Epilepsy, Diabetes, Cystic

Fibrosis, and Gastroenterology Conditions), Specific Learning Difficulty (includes Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, and Dyscalculia) and Other (none of the above).

In relation to social class, there are challenges in accessing consistent comparable relevant measures of social class (Fordyce et al. 2015). Using data provided as part of each applicant's DARE and HEAR application, in this study, I use three triangulated measures to suggest social class/socio-economic disadvantage. These three variables are school type, area/applicant's home address, and application to both DARE and HEAR (as the HEAR scheme uses an intersectional multi-indicator approach to identify disadvantage). These three proxies for social class are outlined in brief below and I provide a more detailed outline of the robustness of these proxies of social class in Appendix C.

I identified school type as the first proxy for social class. To identify school type, the second level schools attended by DARE applicants were individually identified as public schools, schools participating in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) scheme, private schools (fee-paying), revision/grind schools (fee-paying) or special schools (attended by students with disabilities only). These categorisations are described in more detail in chapters 5 and 6 and in Appendix C.

I identified area/home address as the second proxy for social class. The area/home address of all DARE applicants had been coded as part of the national DARE process using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index (SA). The HP Deprivation Index is widely used in Ireland as a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area. The Deprivation Index scores are a composite index of ten census measures including age dependency rate, population change, primary education, third level education, persons per room, professional classes, semi and unskilled classes, lone parents, and male and female unemployment rates (Haase and Pratschke 2012, 2). These measures cover the demographic profile, social class composition, and labour market situation of each 'small area' as defined by the Central Statistics Office. Each small area is assigned a relative index score categorising each area into one of eight categories as extremely affluent, very affluent, affluent, marginally above average, marginally below average, disadvantaged, very disadvantaged and extremely disadvantaged. Deprivation index scores range from over 30 (extremely affluent) to below -30 (extremely disadvantaged) (Haase and Pratschke 2012, 4). Area, coded by the HP Deprivation Index, was therefore available for all of the DARE applicants. This categorisation is described in more detail in chapters 5 and 6 and in Appendix C.

I identified students who had applied for both DARE and HEAR as the third proxy for social class. The HEAR scheme uses an intersectional multi-indicator approach to identify socio-economic disadvantage using a range of financial, social and cultural indicators or criteria. There are six HEAR indicators related to income (family income within HEAR income threshold, family has Medical Card/GP Visit Card, family receives a means tested social assistance payment), socio-economic group, attendance at a DEIS school and area profile. All applicants must meet Indicator 1, the HEAR Income Limit, plus a correct combination of two other indicators to be eligible for HEAR. This categorisation is described in more detail in chapters 5 and 6 and in Appendix C.

These three proxies for social class provided robust triangulated measures to suggest socio-economic background/social class and added to the reliability and validity of the quantitative data to support the analyses and answer the research questions as the data could be disaggregated by disability and social class and so was suitable for an IS analysis.

The dependent variables, or what I sought to quantitatively measure at the intersection of disability and social class, were (1) patterns of application by students to the DARE scheme, (2) patterns of eligibility by students who had applied to the DARE scheme, and (3) patterns of non-progression by students who were eligible for the DARE scheme and who progressed to one of the 11 HEIs participating in the DARE scheme in 2010/11 but who did not progress from 1st to 2nd year of study in HE in 2011/12.

4.5.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

I was initially challenged by the question of '*how to do*' quantitative analysis using an IS approach. Quantitative analysis using an IS informed approach is less developed than qualitative analysis with issues hampering the development of quantitative analysis including the availability of disaggregated data, small sample sizes and the interpretive limitations of quantitative techniques (Scott and Siltanen 2012). Traditionally, researchers using quantitative methods have sought to progress an IS informed approach to quantitative data analysis by investigating individual axes of inequity (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality) considering the potential interconnectedness between these axes (Rouhani 2014). McCall (2001) suggested that quantitative analysis should focus on an aggregate structural level of analysis, identifying which dimensions and in what combinations, are producing patterns of inequality, an approach that could be progressed in this study. This form of quantitative IS analysis *"…aims to uncover the structural configuration of complex inequalities"* (Scott and Siltanen 2012, 6).

I considered that the risks with an IS approach to the analysis of quantitative analysis were considerable. One risk was the potential to assume that one dimension of inequality was the most important, a hierarchical notion rejected by IS which emphasises the importance of understanding specific intersections of inequality dimensions as interconnected clusters of identity and socially structured experience (Scott and Siltanen 2012, 9). Another risk related to IS quantitative analyses is the potential to lean towards an additive rather than intersecting approach. In an additive approach, the researcher adds to the disability analysis considerations of social class, gender, age, ethnicity and other identities. This approach is contrary to an IS approach as it perpetuates the assumption that these dimensions of inequality are somehow separate and can be understood in isolation from each other. Categories in IS informed quantitative analyses are not considered to be isolated or discrete but rather differentially experienced, fluid, and mutually constituted (Hunting 2014). In this study, disability is not assumed to be more important than social class, nor are they examined as separate from each other, as it is how they intersect that produces the unique representation of complex inequality.

Scott and Siltanen (2012) identified six features of an IS approach to inequality research and analysis and these principles were adapted for this study and rigorously applied to ensure that these analyses remained true to the IS framework. These principles assume that the identity being examined is a dimension of inequality (not to be ignored or assumed), to avoid a priori assumptions about which dimensions of inequality will be relevant (as you cannot know this in advance) and to avoid a priori assumptions about how inequality dimensions will be related to each other. The principles also suggest that the researcher should reject any a priori notions of hierarchy for any inequality dimension, to regard inequality dimensions as intersecting (not additive) aspects of inequality and to consider IS as definitive of the overall structure of inequality. Finally, a researcher should include in the analysis as much as possible about the context of experiences.

There are various opinions as to the suitability of current quantitative techniques for the analysis of IS ranging from being generally confident about the suitability of current approaches (Spierings 2012), awareness that current techniques are limited (Hancock 2007, McCall 2001) and that quantitative analysis, with its positivist associations, is incompatible with an IS approach (Bowleg 2008). I believe that quantitative data is valuable and important and that quantitative analysis can produce results that are theoretically, and experientially, meaningful while remaining true to the core feminist underpinnings of IS (Scott and Siltanen 2017, 374). McCall's work (2001, 2005) has been identified as a '*turning point*', identifying the strengths of quantitative IS informed analysis suggesting that researchers examine how IS itself is positioned, not as an 'add on' in the research study, but more definitive of overall structures of inequality (Scott and Siltanen 2017, 375).

Using IS as a theoretical framework, I analysed the quantitative data in SPSS. The analyses consist of a series of bivariate comparisons that offers a descriptive rather a multivariate analysis. The data support both an intracategorical analysis (examining how multiple axes of inequality shape experiences) and an intercategorical analysis (comparing outcomes of SWD with different socio-economic characteristics). The analysis seeks to identify and map patterns of inequality and to *"identify which dimensions and in what combinations are producing the more general pattern of observed inequality"* (Scott and Siltanen 2012, 6).

4.6 Qualitative Data Sources

The study reports on a qualitative analysis of interviews with ten young people with disabilities who were eligible for DARE and progressed, following the completion of their Leaving Certificate examinations, to undergraduate programmes of study at one HEI in Ireland. As part of this study, the ten students participated in one interview, and nine of the ten students participated in a second interview, at two different time points, during or after the completion of their studies in HE. One student was not available to be interviewed a second time. This longitudinal study thus captures the lived experiences, perspectives, and emerging insights of the participating students, revealing how students with disabilities experience, understand, and navigate the education system in Ireland. A key aspect of these analyses is to explain how broad macro-level social and societal structures are connected to the micro level of individual experience and how students with disabilities in different social situations live their lives.

There were a number of challenges in ensuring that the qualitative data was true to the IS informed approach and that participants were afforded the opportunity to share their personal stories about how the multifaceted interactions of disability and social class, influence the educational experiences and outcomes of young people with disabilities in Ireland. These challenges broadly related to participant recruitment and selection, the use of semi-structured interviews and IS informed qualitative data analysis. The next section explores each of these issues in more detail.

4.6.1 Participant Recruitment and Selection

Purposive sampling occurs where the participants in a study are carefully or purposefully selected, based on the population that the study seeks to examine where *"…the processes being studied are most likely to occur"* (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, 202). In this approach, researchers handpick the cases to be included because they are in possession of the particular characteristics being sought, they are the *"knowledgeable people"* (Cohen et al. 2005, 115). The purpose of interviews is not to study every case but rather to find out something that can apply to many by studying a few examples as *"…We need the sample* *to persuade people that we know something about the whole class"* (Becker 1998, 67 in Silverman 2000, 110). I felt that purposive sampling was a suitable approach for my study because the study concerned only students eligible for DARE. More specifically the study was concerned with the experiences of working-class students who were eligible for both the DARE and HEAR schemes and who had progressed to HE. The purposive sample in this study was all students who were eligible for DARE in 2010 or 2011 and who had subsequently accepted a place at one HEI in Ireland.

There were a number of ethical and methodological challenges in the participant recruitment and selection process. The overall number of potential participants was 75 students only with the number of potential participants eligible for both HEAR *and* DARE much smaller. The sample needed to be as representative as possible while being heterogeneous enough to allow for inductive exploration (Hunting 2014, 10). I was concerned about gender balance, about representing a broad range of disabilities, and including students from a variety of school types and social backgrounds to facilitate an IS informed analysis. I had hoped to include ten participants in the study and to include as broad and as representative a sample as possible.

I contacted all 75 students in the sample by email once and invited them to participate in the study. I contacted students eligible for both DARE and HEAR a second time, as they are a particular focus of the study. 11 students volunteered to participate and 10 students with disabilities who progressed, following the completion of their Leaving Certificate examinations, to undergraduate programmes of study in HE, participated in the study.

4.6.2 Interview Participants

The ten young people who participated in the study were all born in the early 1990's and were all in their early twenties at the time the study. These participants would have experienced the education system both during the boom of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ and the ten years of deep recession that followed the banking crisis in 2008, a period characterised by cuts in public expenditure across the education system. The participants were in the education system after the introduction and implementation of key equality legislation, including the Education Act (1998) and the EPSEN Act (2004). The participants experienced both primary and second level education during a time when there was a massive increased investment in special education characterised by increased Resource and Learning Support teachers, SNA’s, assistive technology, and examination supports. In relation to HE, although the HEAR scheme was initially established in 2000, it was relaunched with the DARE scheme as national schemes in 2009. As these students all started HE in either 2010 or 2011 they would have been amongst the earliest cohorts to benefit from the expansion of both schemes as well as the coordinated campaign to raise awareness of the opportunities for children with disabilities and children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds to use the schemes to access HE.

The ten participants were a diverse group of students representing various geographic locations, genders, socio-economic backgrounds, school types, and disability categories. The diversity of the student participant backgrounds and individual locations supported both an intracategorical analysis (examining how multiple axes of inequality shape individual experiences) and an intercategorical analysis (comparing the experiences of students with disabilities with different socio-economic characteristics).

All ten students were eligible for DARE and progressed to HE in Ireland. Six of the participating students were female and four were male students. The students lived in both urban and rural areas in Ireland and in both affluent and socially deprived areas (suggested by home address identified through the Pobal HP Deprivation Index). A wide spectrum of disability categories is represented in the student group including mental health, significant illness, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and sensory disabilities (deaf, hearing impaired, blind). The ten students were studying a variety of different third level courses and represented various years of study. At the time of the study, one student had withdrawn from their programme of study (at the start of 2nd year) and one student was considering withdrawing from university (subsequently withdrew at the end of 3rd year). The remaining eight students were on track to complete their undergraduate degrees or had already commenced postgraduate programmes of study.

Three of the participants were eligible for both the DARE and HEAR schemes. One further participant applied for HEAR although she was deemed ineligible. These four students share some commonalities in terms of the intersection of disability and social class although their experiences or characteristics are not identical. One participant, for example, met five of the six indicators required for the HEAR scheme, suggesting deep intersectional disadvantage, while two participants met three indicators. All four students share some characteristics, as they were all eligible for the SUSI maintenance grant, family income was from social welfare, and all experienced financial pressures. For the purposes of the study, I categorised these four students as lower socio-economic group status. The remaining six students in the study were eligible for DARE only, were not eligible for the student grant, and family income was from employment. For the purposes of the study, I categorised these students as higher socio-economic group status.

The ten students attended a variety of school types. Two students attended DEIS schools, one at primary level and one at secondary level. DEIS schools are located in areas identified as socially disadvantaged, have a higher proportion of students from more diverse backgrounds and have more behavioural issues, absenteeism, and lower rates of progression to HE than non-DEIS schools. Two students attended fee-paying schools, one at primary level and one at second level. The fee-paying school sector in Ireland has a higher proportion of students from more advantaged backgrounds and very high rates of progression to HE. In this study, two students attended special schools. One student attended a primary school for children with dyslexia for two years and one student attended both a primary and secondary school for deaf students for all of her education. Special schools in Ireland have very low rates of progression to HE. No students in the study were based in special classes and the most common form of academic support was student withdrawal from mainstream classes for resource teaching.

The participants in the study were a rich dataset, being as representative as possible while being heterogeneous enough to allow for inductive exploration and supported an IS informed analysis. Appendix D provides summary data and an overview of each student outlining the individual and complicated nature of their lives and interactions as a SWD. This Appendix can be referred to throughout the reading of the study to remind the reader of the characteristics of each student. While such a presentation style is more complex, and may demand more of the reader, it reflects and respects the IS approach that the depth and complexity of each individual's biography and experience is important in the context of revealing how intersecting oppressions conspire and interlock to create inequality and limit opportunities for SWD. I have also included a Participant Table (Appendix E) that provides the main characteristics of the participants in summary form.

4.6.3 Longitudinal Study

The initial interviews yielded rich data about school and HE experiences but were also unsatisfactory in some respects.

Most of the participants were only developing an awareness of disability as an identity and of how they might challenge this construction. In addition, all students were either in first or second year and were at the earliest stages of their own journeys in HE. The term ‘longitudinal’ describes studies that are conducted over a period of time (Cohen et al. 2007, 211). To consider in greater depth how the participants experienced HE over a longer period of time, and their developing awareness of disability, I decided to develop a longitudinal aspect to the research. This involved interviewing the participants a second time to benefit from their experience of another year in HE/study and/or another HEI/employment and their developing consciousness about their own identity. This yielded greater depth and added to the reliability and validity of the study outcomes. The first interviews took place in November/December 2012 with the second interviews taking place in March/April 2014.

The next section justifies my choice of semi-structured interviews as a means of collecting qualitative data.

4.6.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

The main qualitative research method employed in the study was the use of interviews. From an IS perspective, I identified that interviews were necessary to better understand how disability and social class intersect in the lives of SWD, the multidimensional ways that SWD experience life, how they see themselves, and how others see and treat them.

In the research planning stage, I was aware that there are methodological challenges with interviews that required careful thought and planning. Interviews are, at a basic level, an *“interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest”* (Cohen et al. 2005, 267). From the outset, and in line with an IS approach, the interviews needed to be reciprocal in nature, and participants needed to be empowered to co-construct knowledge and to *"discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard their situation from their own point of view"* (Cohen et al. 2005, 267). The advantage of the interview as a method of gathering data is that there is the potential to add greater depth but interviews are also prone to bias and subjectivity on the part of both the interviewer and the participants (Cohen et al. 2005, 269). I considered a number of interview formats in the planning stage of the study. I considered focus and group interviews initially but quickly discounted these options. An IS informed approach does not believe in the homogeneity of identities nor that SWD necessarily share a common identity, experiences or background. In addition many students prefer, and should be free, to choose not to disclose a disability to others. I also knew from experience that few students would be willing to share the detail of their own individual lives in a group setting.

I felt that the best option for this study was individual interviews allowing students the space, privacy, dignity, and time, to share their own unique experiences. I considered structured interviews initially as these interviews are organised in advance with the sequence and wording of questions already fixed and the interviewer having little freedom to make modifications (Cohen et al. 2005, 273). A structured interview, however was not consistent with an IS approach which reifies the testimony of individuals while the unstructured interview ran the risk of a possible lack of comparability. I favoured a semi-structured interview as a middle of the road approach balancing the desire for comparable data with the potential to allow the participants to freely share their stories in a way that recognised their position as experts (Bogdan and Biklen 1998).

I finalised the choice and order of questions after I completed a pilot interview with a colleague in summer 2012, who I selected on the basis of their educational background and their familiarity with the study issues. The first interviews with ten participants, using a semi-structured interview format, took place in November/December 2012. A second interview with nine of the original participants, as one participant was unavailable for the second interview, took place in March/April 2014. I scheduled interviews to last approximately one hour using a qualitative approach that was guided by the span of focus and significance of biographical context that characterised life history. I recognised at the outset that this research concerned testimony of a sensitive nature and that recounting experiences from the past might make participants uncomfortable or even distressed. I planned the interviews in line with my approach that interviews are a *"social, interpersonal encounter, not merely a data collection exercise"* (Cohen et al. 2005, 279).

I planned the interviews as a social event, establishing an atmosphere to encourage the participant to speak freely. I was careful to establish rapport, clear about my own knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, while recognising the importance of their own unique and valuable experience. I was careful not to deviate from the interview format and schedule while retaining the flexibility to follow up observations or perspectives that might add to the overall depth of the data (Cohen et al. 2005, 279). The ethics of the interview in relation to informed consent, confidentiality, beneficence, and non-maleficence, were embedded in the planning, design, and interview process (Cohen et al. 2005, 279).

The interviews generally took place in my office at times convenient for the participants. One interview took place in a city centre office to facilitate a participant. It was clear at the outset that the richness of the student testimony provided real depth and context to the quantitative data. Qualitative data has the benefit of flexibility offering the potential to expand the sample or using further interviews *"building upon each other or exploring changing views and experiences"* (Blaxter et al. 2006, 154). I offered participants the opportunity to attend for a second interview to allow students to further consider their own social identities as SWD over a longer timeframe. The issue of identities had emerged during the first interviews and benefitted from further examination.

The interview questions, listed in Appendix F, were inspired by elements of each participant's life history that gave the participants the opportunity to share their experiences as a SWD from primary, to secondary school, and into HE. The literature review had identified a number of common themes impacting on the educational experiences of SWD including financial constraints, access to assessments, academic expectations, consistency of supports, influence of peers, positive and negative influences, push and pull factors, the value of DARE and the experience of HE. I wanted to explore the experiences of these students in a way that would allow them to be the expert, to be the *"knowledge holders"*. The interview questions were broadly framed to explore these themes.

I used open-ended and, a combination, of direct and indirect questions. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to answer as they chose, with no restrictions, in brief or at length, with due time for consideration and reflection. This format also allowed me to follow up the flow of the interview with further questions when unexpected answers were further discussed. The mixture of direct and indirect questions provided clarity and suited the student-focused approach. Students were asked for example who was the most positive influence on their journey in education as a SWD and were also asked to reflect on the structure of the special education system itself.

The interview data were recorded during the interview and I took notes of key points and themes. I reviewed the data after the interview and noted my overall impressions as well as any concern about the participants. Where there was concern I followed up with the participant to ensure that they felt supported in the process. All participants were offered a transcript for comment and where comments or amendments were suggested, these changes were faithfully made.

4.6.5 Qualitative Data Analysis

The question of '*how to do*' intersectional qualitative analysis proved particularly challenging. Hunting (2014) provided guidance on the various stages of an IS informed qualitative research study suggesting that IS should be considered at each stage of the research process from initially framing the research, the importance of reflexivity, the pursuit of social justice, how to collect and measure data, sampling and interview questions and format, and data analysis and interpretation. I adapted this framework into a table and used this to ensure that IS as a theoretical framework informed all stages of the qualitative element of the study.

It was challenging to identify how to analyse the qualitative data to reflect the lived experience of individual students while locating the analysis within the complex social, political and structural relations of power. I identified that an intersectional analysis approach using Collins' matrix of domination (1990) conceptual framework could meet this challenge and provide a useful structure to frame the analyses of the qualitative data. I outline the matrix of domination conceptual framework below and explore this framework in more detail in chapter 7.

4.6.5.1 The Matrix of Domination as a Conceptual Framework

Patricia Hill Collins suggested that race, class, and gender initially, and sexuality, age, ethnicity, nation, religion, and ability in later works, are major axes of societal systems of oppression and power, that these axes are mutually constructing and intersecting systems of power, and that they gain meaning in relation to each other (Collins and Bilge 2016). These systems are suggested to be fundamental organising axes of society that operate together as social hierarchies to create and define the experiences of all groups in society (Andersen and Collins 2004). Collins suggests that these axes should not be seen as benign or natural, as their role, as systems of power, is to systematically produce, reproduce, maintain, and justify social inequalities (Collins 1990; 2000).

Collins developed a conceptual framework for understanding these *"interlocking"* oppressions as a *"matrix of domination"* (Collins 1990, 225). This matrix is an analytical tool that Collins suggested to be a more complete way of understanding power, of where it exists, and how we all are positioned in varying relationships to it (Collins 2000, 274). This matrix includes the macro (group level) and the micro (individual level) approaches to understanding power that is exercised at the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal levels of analysis. Each of these levels represents a domain of power and each level serves a very particular purpose to organise, to maintain, to reinforce, and to justify inequality and oppression. This matrix suggests that oppression is organised through the structural domain, enforced and managed in the disciplinary domain, justified and legitimised in the hegemonic domain and experienced in the interpersonal domain where individuals live their everyday lives. Power is exercised at, and between, the various domains to secure domination so that dominant groups can get the greatest share of resources available and thus maintain their superiority.

Collins used the matrix of domination framework to illustrate the intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender, specifically in the lives of Black women (Collins 2000, 276). In the structural domain, Collins suggested that large-scale social institutions, including the legal system, labour markets, schools, housing industry, banking, insurance, and the media, worked together to disadvantage Black women confining them to poorly paid and vulnerable jobs, to racially segregated underfunded public schools, and to poor social services and healthcare. Multiple forms of segregation, by race, class, or gender, particularly racial segregation, have been critical to producing these inequitable outcomes. Collins suggests that although racial segregation was outlawed in law, that it has not been outlawed in practice and that these institutions work together to ensure that Black women are *"excluded from exercising full citizenship rights"* (Collins 2000, 277). Collins describes how the structural domain limits the rights of Black women, the disciplinary domain, through its use of rules and bureaucracy, manages and enforces this process, while the hegemonic domain stereotypes Black women as *"…the mammy, matriarch, jezebel"*, using these stereotypes to restrain, contain, and limit their choices and opportunities (Collins 2000, 276). Each domain links together to interlock and sustain each other. In the interpersonal domain Black women experience these interlocking oppressions on a daily basis in every aspect of their lives both within, and between, all social institutions, where their inferior position, which is inevitable in this structure, is suggested to be a personal and individual failure rather than the systemic production and reproduction of inequality. Collins suggests that analysing how power operates in each domain can illuminate the dynamics of complex social phenomenon because the inferiority and subordination or oppression of particular groups, on the basis of these axes of oppression, is not natural, fixed or inevitable. Rather, these systems are instead part of one overarching, interconnected, interlinked, and mutually sustaining, structure of domination (Collins 2000).

The matrix of domination is a useful analytical tool that can reveal how dominant groups in society create and sustain the construction of both the '*ideal*' and the '*others*', and positions them as polar opposites. The '*ideal*' is positioned at the centre of society, representing who or what we intrinsically value, while the '*others*' are positioned on the edges of society, on the margins, excluded, scorned, isolated, alienated, invisible or indeed hypervisible '*sticking out like a sore thumb*'. The '*others*' are constructed as unidimensional homogenous characters and are stereotyped in negative and constraining ways. The matrix acknowledges the complexity and contradictions in these axes of oppression suggesting that while people have little difficulty identifying their own oppression or victimisation that they typically fail to see that this matrix contains *"…few pure victims or oppressors. Each individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privileged from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone's lives"* (Collins 1990, 229). The matrix can therefore identify across the four domains, at a macro and micro level, how oppression operates, challenging dominant hegemonic understandings of complex social identities, illustrating how all people who are oppressed are also both advantaged, and disadvantaged, in unique and individual ways.

The next section outlines how I applied the matrix of domination framework to the analyses of qualitative data.

4.6.5.2 Applying the Matrix of Domination Framework

I was intrigued at the outset of this study by the capacity of the matrix of domination framework to map how oppression operates at both the macro and micro levels of individual experience to reveal complex intersectional disadvantage and privilege. The matrix also offered the potential to map how individual activism and resistance operates to challenge dominant hegemonic assumptions. I was concerned however by the capacity of this framework to address social systems of oppression, other than race, class, and gender, and the oppression of Black women, and in particular, whether the matrix could provide a conceptual framework to understand the intersection of disability (largely ignored by Collins) and social class.

Collins identified that although she developed the matrix of domination framework to explain the intersection of race, class, and gender in the lives of Black women in the US, race, class, and gender, are no more important than other categories of oppression. Rather, these were the fundamental categories of analysis in the American setting when the framework was being developed in the 1990's, and so significant in the US that they fundamentally shaped all other categories (Andersen and Collins 2004). Collins believed that the larger value of the matrix was not only what it could reveal about the oppression of Black women but also what it could reveal about *"the social relations of domination organised along other axes such as religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and age"* and *"the more universal process of domination"* (Collins 1990, 227). The initial axes were later broadened from that initial focus on race, class and gender to the *"…more recently visible categories of ethnicity, age, ability, and/or sexuality"* (Andersen and Collins 2004, 9). Collins identified that other groups may encounter and explore different dimensions of the same matrix because what these systems all share is an overarching relationship related to domination and the types of activism it generates (Collins 1990, 226). This '*politic of domination*' as referred to by bell hooks (1989) is an approach that posits that these social systems and hierarchies are underpinned by a common ideology, by a belief in domination, and by the oppositional positioning of the superior and the inferior, that are central to all of these systems (Collins 1990, 226).

I concluded, therefore, that this framework could be adapted for this study as it examines the intersection of two major axes of oppression, disability and social class. These systems are most relevant in an Irish context at this historical juncture where disability and social class are central and fundamental organising structures of Irish society. The central themes of common stigmatising ideologies, domination, oppression, resistance and activism, that are central to the matrix of domination framework, are also central to this analysis and are explored throughout this study. However, the four domains, even when used by Collins, are not neat or tidy, as they intersect and interlink and are connected in multiple ways. I see that this is both a strength of the framework (as it more completely represents the complexity of disadvantage and privilege) and one of the challenges with its application (as themes are unruly and resonate often across more than one or indeed all of the domains). There were some tensions as a result when adapting the framework to this study. These tensions and uncertainties are discussed throughout the study and where relevant I outline the rationale for placing particular themes within particular domains and the challenges in doing so.

The next section outlines how interview data was analysed and how I identified themes and sub themes in the study.

4.6.5.3 Thematic Analysis

I recorded the interviews, with the participants' consent, and then transcribed these recordings verbatim. I also listened on numerous occasions to the actual recordings to recreate the interview process. I did not use a software package to analyse the data for a number of reasons. Firstly, there were a limited number of interviews to be analysed and I was immersed in the process and the experiences of the participants. I also felt that computer based analysis can fragment data and risks simplifying the analytic process and devaluing the study participants (Merrill and West 2009). Analysing the participant experiences was a deeply intuitive, complex, and challenging process in terms of my own experience and self-knowledge.

I used thematic analysis to analyse the interview data as this method "*can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions*" (Braun and Clarke 2006, 97). Thematic analysis involves searching across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke 2006) and is a widely used method for analysing qualitative data (Boyatzis 1998, Braun and Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis, as a research method, can be used across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches, and is compatible with advocacy and constructivist paradigms. I used thematic analysis within the constructivist paradigm, relevant to my study, analysing the data to identify how reality was created in the data, applying an inductive (data driven) approach and latent level (reading beyond) analysis. I used this approach recognising that to answer my questions would require a beyond the surface reading and interpretation of the data where I would bring my own knowledge and myself to the data. I was aware that cultural context was key in this approach because my role as a researcher is to describe and interpret the data to make sense of the experiences; it does not make sense without this interpretation.

The interview data were analysed based on a three-stage process that involved preparing the data for analysis by transcribing the participant accounts, using a coding process to identify overarching themes, and representing the data to provide a coherent analytical narrative (Creswell 2007). The procedures used for the analysis largely followed the six suggested phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke including familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun and Clarke 2006, 87).

I initially familiarised myself with the depth and breadth of the interview data by reading, and rereading, the entire data set. This kind of repeated active reading helped me to see patterns that were relevant to the research questions. During this phase, I highlighted key paragraphs, sentences, or words, marking some ideas for coding that I could consider in later phases. Having listened to the recordings and read through the transcripts, I began the process of coding. Coding involves identifying interesting features of the data that suggest some repeated themes/patterns across the entire data set (Braun and Clarke 2006, 89, Merrill and West 2009). I recorded the codes using a spreadsheet with selected participant responses, and associated illustrative quotes, entered into the grid. A sample of this grid is provided in Appendix G. I also recoded and refined the data on future readings.

It was at this point, with cross case analysis, and using the matrix of domination as a conceptual framework, that I initially identified some overarching themes to capture "*some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set*" in relation to the research questions (Braun and Clarke 2006, 82). I understood my role as a researcher in an IS informed analysis is to contextualise the experiences of the participants as shaped by *"…socio-historical intersections of power and oppression"* (Hunting 2014, 13). My own role would be in interpreting the data with an IS informed lens to *"make explicit the often implicit experiences of intersectionality, even when participants do not express the connections"* (Bowleg 2008 in Hunting 2014, 13). This approach was useful because I identified the issue of identity, for example, as a central theme even though it was not explicitly discussed in the interviews. I identified that this theme was still valid, using my ability as a researcher to contextualise testimonies, to identify key themes and to interpret them in a way that was true to the participants' voices and experiences, the context and the research question. This issue also speaks to the suitability of my methodology and the emergence of my own consciousness and growth as a researcher.

I reviewed the initial themes identified by re-reading the entire data set to ensure that the themes worked in relation to the data and I coded some data missed in earlier stages as coding is an '*ongoing organic process*' (Braun and Clarke 2006, 91). I had not coded for example for the absence of an Individual Education Plan or for positive/negative role models. As part of this refinement, I also identified a number of sub themes within the overarching themes that were useful to give structure to a number of larger complex themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, 92). For example, the analysis using the structural domain contained four overarching themes including (1) Individualisation of Disability, (2) Segregated Schools, (3) Embedded Obstacles, and (4) Economy and Employment. I identified a number of sub themes so that the Individualisation of Disability theme for example contained two sub themes of Individual Education Plans and Variable Individualised Support, while Segregated Schools contained three sub themes of Segregation by School, Segregation within Schools, and Segregation by School type.

At this stage, I was confident that I had identified the overarching themes and sub themes, how they fit together within the matrix of domination conceptual framework, and the overall story that they told about the research questions. I developed a thematic map illustrating the themes in each of the four domains of the matrix of domination. I have included the thematic map developed to represent the Hegemonic Domain as Appendix H. Once I had named the more fully worked out themes, I was able to commence the final analysis and write up of the chapter where I embedded the most compelling extracts from the participant experiences to capture the essence of the issue identified within a broader analytic narrative in relation to the research questions (Braun and Clarke 2006, 93). Although I recognise that no label captures the complexity of individual students, to assist the reader, I provide an identifier after each participant quote capturing the pseudonym, disability, socio-economic group and specific interview.

The findings were interpreted in this light, in relation to the research questions, the themes identified, and the use of IS as a theoretical framework.

4.7 Ethics

This study presented a number of ethical challenges for me that I broadly group into three main themes. The first ethical challenge concerned how to position my own background, my own assumptions, life experience, and myself honestly in the research. This challenge concerned my own position as a researcher, my 'insider' position of power, and the possible advantages and risks for participants. The second challenge related to my approach to ethics; a formal procedural task versus a continuous ongoing reflective process fundamental to my integrity as an honest researcher. The third ethical concern related to demonstrating the respect shown to participants in the research and the principles that underpinned our relationship as co-creators of knowledge.

In relation to the first ethical challenge, as a researcher, I was conscious that my own life experiences shaped all aspects of the study from the research question, data collection, and interpretation of findings (Creswell 2007, Mertens 2005). I acknowledge that how I understand disability and social class in relation to widening participation and HE are based on my own personal and professional experiences and views about the structures of society. These understandings determined how I framed the research questions, how I interacted with the study participants, how I positioned the study issues, and the concluding policy recommendations. Acknowledging the subjectivity of my own lens and my own positioning within the study was important while also recognising that the participants are the true owners of the information collected (Creswell 2007). This awareness helped me to find and acknowledge my own position in the study.

I was aware from the outset that the study, as it involved marginalised groups, needed to be actively sensitive to power imbalances ensuring that the participants' voices were represented honestly in the study (Mertens 2005, Creswell 2007). An ethical challenge was my own position as a researcher, my 'insider' position of power, and the possible advantages and risks for participants. As an employee of the University, and the person who approves disability related supports, there were challenges, conflicts, and risks to be addressed. I was cognisant that in my position within the University, and the HEAR/DARE management group, that I had access to national data and was in a position to request student participation that was advantageous and unique.

In relation to access to national quantitative data, I followed the established procedure to access DARE and HEAR scheme national data. I applied in writing to the Chairperson of the DARE/HEAR Strategic Development Group (SDG), who were responsible for national oversight of both schemes, with a specific request for data and a brief outline of the intended research and the SDG approved my request in December 2011. Once approved, the SDG Chairperson communicated the data request to the University of Limerick/ CAO data manager who then provided the most recent DARE and HEAR national data (2010 and 2011) for the purposes of the study.

In relation to data on retention, I contacted all 11 HEI's that participated in DARE in 2010/11 with a specific request for data and an outline of the intended research. Each HEI individually agreed to provide data on students who did not progress from 1st to 2nd year of study in their HEI in 2010/11 for the purposes of the study.

As an employee, I was aware of my responsibility to my employer particularly where student testimonies might show the University in an unfavourable light. Within the study, I was careful to acknowledge my professional position while separating my professional and research roles. I addressed this risk with participants in the study Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form where I emphasised the nature of voluntary participation, the value of honest responses, and the impartiality of my involvement. I acknowledged my dual role with each participant at each meeting carefully outlining the distinction between my professional role and the research. I was clear with participants that the aim of the study was to be useful and to inform the institution with regard to policy and practice.

I was also aware of the risks and possible conflicts of interest for participants. Current students might feel that that they had to be part of the study or could not be honest or critical about their experiences at the university. As a researcher, I questioned how I might respond to negative feedback or to challenges in the way that I myself understood disability. Some students might have been more likely to participate because of a positive or negative view of their experiences at the university. I took certain steps to address these risks including stressing the value of open honest responses. All ten participating students were at different stages in their own educational journey, in different years, including one student who had withdrawn. While the power dynamics of interviewing students cannot be changed, I made every effort to ensure that students felt the interviews were a safe and controlled space for and by them. In relation to my own position of power, I dressed more casually for the meetings, used language that was more informal, was open about my own working-class background in education, and aligned myself with the student perspectives when they were describing their school/college experiences. I assured invited participants at very stage that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that their participation, contribution, or withdrawal would not affect their supports in university. I emphasised the reciprocal nature of the relationship from the outset and participants spoke about how they were anxious to tell their stories, to be heard, and to have their experiences help others.

My approach to the ethics of this study is that ethics are not a formality but rather a continuous ongoing reflective process of engagement underpinned by key principles. The participants in the study were all students with disabilities and were all anxious and passionate that their voices were heard. I consulted publications on ethical issues relevant to the research including Guidelines for including people with disabilities in research (National Disability Authority (NDA) 2002), Ethical Guidelines for Disability Research (NDA 2009) and Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (British Educational Research Association (BERA) 2011). Standard principles underpin these guidelines including respect for the needs and rights of participants, informed and ongoing consent, security of personal data, and managing distress or the consequences of the research. I embedded these principles in my research study proposal and they formed part of the application for ethical approval for the research that was approved by the Maynooth University Ethics Committee in April 2012 and April 2014.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) however suggest that *"procedural ethics"* are not sufficient and that I needed to consider how the research purpose, methods and reporting would abide by ethical principles and practices in an ongoing manner as there are ethical issues at each stage in the research process (Cohen et al. 2007). The authors suggest the development of a personal code of ethical practices to ensure that research continues to rigorously anticipate and address ethical issues (Cohen et al. 2007) using an ethical checklist. I was anxious to ensure that I was rigorous in my approach and so I adapted their suggested checklist for my own study to ensure that I addressed ethical dilemmas and challenges in an ongoing, rigorous, reflective manner.

The third ethical concern related to demonstrating the respect shown to participants in the research and the principles that underpinned our relationship as co-creators of knowledge. Issues for consideration included informed and ongoing consent, confidentiality, participant feedback, communication, and possible harm to participants. These issues were considered and addressed through the choice of methodology and in my own ethics checklist adapted from Cohen et al. (2007, 76, Box 2.9) and are outlined below.

I wanted to be clear with potential participants from the outset about the purpose and procedures of the research. I prepared a detailed participant information sheet which was part of the ethical approval sought from the Research Ethics Committee at Maynooth University and it was provided to all potential participants (see Appendix A). I contacted all potential participants by email only so that they could freely choose to participate and attached an Information Sheet providing detail on the study. The Information Sheet outlined the purpose of the research, details on confidentiality, consent, and the dissemination of findings, and contact details for supervising academic staff within the university. At the outset of the interview, I provided an Informed Consent Form that clarified the purpose of the study, reiterated the issue of consent, confidentiality and the rights of the participant to review and agree the interview content. As this study progressed, I considered that a second interview would be beneficial to further explore issues raised in the first meeting with participants. The Research Ethics Committee granted approval to a revised proposal with this additional stage of interviews. I invited all participants to a second interview and the same principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and dignity, were reiterated. A revised Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form (Appendix B) were prepared, signed, and retained by participants as part of that revised process.

At the outset of each interview, I always reiterated the issue of consent and of choice. I know that it can be easy for participants to provide consent in theory but I was anxious that all participants could consider and reconsider their participation at any time. I ensured that all participants signed and retained a copy of their consent to participate. I also retained a copy of their consent to participate. I was clear with all participants that this research was a personal journey and was unconnected to my professional role in the university. I informed participants that they could refuse to take part and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. After the interviews were transcribed, I offered all participants the opportunity to review the interview transcript. Where participants requested transcript amendments, I made these changes.

The overriding issue for me as a researcher was to the dignity, privacy and interests of the participants ensuring that these were respected and protected at all times. I have made every effort to conceal the identities of participants, to maintain confidentiality and to anonymise the data. I offered participants appropriate supports and I specifically advised them of the option to access counselling support after the interview. I asked all participants to indicate if they had any particular support needs or requirements. After a number of interviews where the participants recollected distressing issues, I contacted the students individually to ensure that they were still happy to participate. At all times I have been honest and fair in communicating with participants, dealing with personal data, and in representing their experiences.

In summary, my ethical challenge was to strike the right balance between the rationale and the benefits of the research with the integrity of the study, possible risks, and conflicts of interest. The ongoing reflexive and proactive approach to ethical dilemmas and challenges ensured that ethical principles were maintained and that the research focus was reciprocal in nature, focussed on the *"multiple-perspective stories of individuals and who tells the stories"* (Creswell 2007, 24).

This process ensured that the study did not just have ethical approval but addressed as Mertens (2005) suggested the complexity of ethical issues including reciprocity, sensitivity to power imbalances, informed participative consent, confidentiality, a participatory research relationship, ensuring that the participants voices are accurately reflected in the study and clearly situating my own voice and experiences within the study.

4.8 Strengths of the Inquiry

I carefully considered at some length the strengths and limitations of this study. This was important for me remembering that my objective was to complete a study that would be useful, that could be transformative, personally, institutionally, and nationally, and that could advance the equality of all students with disabilities in education.

I outlined in the previous chapter how in national and institutional policy and practice, the participation, retention, and experiences of SWD in education are largely understood and analysed singularly, or when considered with social class, presented as if they are operating on parallel, rather than intersecting, tracks. One of the real strengths of this inquiry is the challenge to this approach which has positioned SWD as essentially homogenous, hiding and silencing the most marginalised within the group, who are different in other aspects of their identity. I believe that one of the greatest strengths of this inquiry is the use of IS to challenge unidimensional approaches to inequality, by identifying how disability *intersects* with social class to create complex inequity in education.

This study is based on a national census of all SWD who applied to DARE in 2010 and these data were merged with data on the SWD who had also applied to the HEAR scheme. These data sets were pre-existing but had not previously been merged for the purposes of analysis. These merged national data were then merged in turn with DARE eligible students who progressed to HE in 2010 and who did not progress from 1st to 2nd year of study in their HEI in 2011 to create a dataset which is unique and does not exist anywhere else. The merging of these three sources of data provided a data set that allowed for the disaggregation of data by disability and social class to facilitate an intersectional analysis. The quantitative data sets are unique in an Irish context and provide a major contribution to knowledge in this domain.

This study provides an IS informed analysis of the intersection of disability and social class and the impact on retention in HE in Ireland. This study addresses a gap in knowledge, nationally and internationally, about the intersection of disability and social class and non-progression in HE and provides a major contribution to scholarship in this specific domain.

Most qualitative studies on the experiences of SWD focus on the primary school experience, or the post-primary experience, or the experiences of SWD in HE. This study examines the experiences of SWD across the whole education system and provides a compelling picture of how inequality is created, maintained, sustained, justified, and reproduced across all education sectors. Using IS as a theory and the matrix of domination as a conceptual framework, the study provides a unique exploration of the experiences of SWD, particularly working-class SWD in education. The testimony of the participants provide a compelling insight into how inequality is experienced, and resisted, by SWD in multiple domains across the education system. This focus, and what it teaches us, as researchers, as professionals, and as educators, about how SWD experience education, is a key strength of the inquiry.

I also considered whether the results of the study were reliable. Cohen at el (2007) identified that reliability in quantitative data is essentially a synonym for the capacity of a researcher to replicate study results in a similar context, although reliability in qualitative data is a contested issue. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested replacing the term reliability in qualitative data with the terms 'credibility', 'consistency' or 'dependability'. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that one of the ways in which reliability in qualitative research can be determined is with inter rater reliability, where another observer with the same theoretical framework and observing the same phenomena would interpret them in the same way.

To address issues of reliability, I completed a full quantitative analysis of the same data on applications and eligibility to the DARE scheme in 2011 and similar results were achieved. In relation to qualitative data and reliability, while the experiences of all SWD are unique, the experiences of SWD could be explored, using the IS framework, in other HEI's or at a sectoral or national level. The use of IS as a theoretical framework, and the matrix of domination structure, could be replicated and would transfer easily to other research of this kind. The use of more recent quantitative data together with the contribution of qualitative data make this very suitable as an ongoing longitudinal research study.

I also consider that study validity is a strength of this inquiry. The concept of validity has to do with whether the study methods actually measure the issues explored (Blaxter et al. 2006). Validity is critical as *"validity is the touchstone of all types of educational research"* (Cohen et al. 2007, 134). With qualitative data, there is honesty, depth, and the richness of data that has to be achieved while considering the subjectivity of the participants, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives. Quantitative data characterised by careful sampling and appropriate statistical analysis still contains a measure of standard error that has to be acknowledged (Cohen et al. 2007, 133). The issue of validity was progressed through the triangulation of data that is central to the mixed methods approach in this study. Triangulation *"is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly qualitative research"* (Cohen et al. 2007, 141). The longitudinal aspect to the study also provided for triangulation as interviews were over a two-year period allowing participants the opportunity to reflect, mature, and deepen their experience in HE (Cohen et al. 2007, 146). This study used triangulated sources of data to answer the research questions and the analysis of data from each source provided consistent themes and outcomes.

In analysing data on retention, this study uses the methodology developed in the HEA progression studies classifying students in the same manner as New Entrants[7], Re-

---

[7] New Entrant - a student entering an undergraduate higher education programme for the first time.

Enrolling Student[8], Repeat Student[9], Internal Transfer Student[10], External Transfer Student[11], and as Non-Progressed[12] (Mooney et al. 2010, 14, Liston et al. 2016, Frawley et al. 2017). A study in relation to the retention of Access students published in 2013 *"We got them but can we keep them? An analysis of the progression of supplementary entry students who entered 5 Irish Universities in 2007"* also used the same methodological framework. Comparability with other research is a test of validity and the general overall outcomes on retention can be compared to the HEA 2010 report (Mooney et al. 2010). As there are no specific outcomes presented for SWD, however it is not possible to compare "like with like". The outcomes can however be compared to the UCC/CIT study (2010) which included nine HEIs, five of the seven Universities and four Institutes of Technology. The total sample was 438 participants, which is similar to this study. The outcomes are comparable and are also consistent with international studies. The outcomes on retention are also consistent with a large-scale national study on HEAR and DARE (Byrne et al. 2013).

There are also a number of limitations to this study and I outline these below.

4.9 Limitations of the Inquiry

This study includes students who applied to the DARE scheme and only includes young school leavers (aged 18 to 22 years old) who self-reported and applied to the DARE

---

[8] Re-Enrolling Student - students progressing to the next year of study on the same course without any interruptions. This category does not include repeat or transfer students.

[9] Repeat Student - present in the institution on their original course the following year, but enrolled in the same year of study as the previous year.

[10] Internal Transfer Student - Students transferring from their original mode or course of study to another programme within an institution, at the start of the new academic year

[11] External Transfer Student – students transferring from a course of study in their institution to another institution are described as external transfer students. These students are not tracked in this study and are deemed as having 'not progressed'.

[12] Non-Progressed – where a new entrant student ID does not appear in their institution's data return for the following academic year

scheme. The study does not include students who are older, who did not apply to the scheme, or who have a disability but who register with a disability service post-entry to HE.

In relation to the participants in the qualitative data a wide spectrum of disabilities are represented in the student group including mental health, significant illness, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and sensory disabilities (deaf, hearing impaired, blind). While the disabilities represented are comprehensive, and the stories reveal consistent themes, their stories should not be understood to represent all or even the majority of students with disabilities.

A limitation of the quantitative data used in the study is that the analyses begin at the point of student application to HE. There are no national data sets that can be used to compare these analyses to the characteristics of all second level students either by school type or by area of deprivation, an issue previously raised in the national evaluation of the DARE and HEAR schemes (Byrne et al. 2013, 129).

The IS approach used in this study is focused on the intersection of disability and socio-economic background/social class. However, an IS approach as Connor (2006) suggested may exclude other important markers of identity including nationality/ethnicity and sexuality among others. Identities too are by their very nature blurred and fluid so that it is impossible to determine when disability and social class are interlinked and interlocking or individually important. This study focused on the intersection of disability and socio-economic background/social class due to the gap in knowledge in this area, the limitations of the available data, and the scope of the study.

There is a strong qualitative element to this study. However, all histories are a snapshot of a life in flux, a brief picture of what it means to be an individual labelled as a SWD. The testimony and the perspectives of the participants may change over time or upon further reflection and capture just the experiences and recollections at a specific moment in time, in a specific context, within the parameters of this study.

4.10 Chapter Summary

The research questions explored in this study concern how disability and social class intersect in the lives of young adults in HE in Ireland to reveal complex inequality, oppression, privilege and power. I position the research within current and historical cultural, political, and societal contexts in Ireland that conceptualise disability as an individual pathologised deficit. The methodology planned for this research is based on a social constructivist and advocacy/participatory paradigm or philosophy and was guided by IS as a theoretical framework. I use a mixed methods research approach to achieve a macro and micro level of analysis, to triangulate data, and to provide trustworthiness, transferability, reliability and validity in the study.

Using an IS perspective, the quantitative analysis was focused on an examination at a macro social structural level of national patterns of application by SWD to the DARE and HEAR schemes and the retention of SWD in HE. Using an IS perspective, the qualitative analysis was focused at the micro level of the individual using semi-structured interviews to examine how SWD experience inequality in education. The mixed methods approach seeks to map how disability and social class intersect in the lives of SWD, to capture not only the experiences of individuals but also the social and structural influences on those experiences, the dynamics of oppression, privilege, power, and resistance.

The next chapter, using data from young people with disabilities who applied to the DARE and HEAR schemes in 2010, analyses the intersection of disability and social class, and the impact on the pattern of applications and eligibility for these schemes.

Chapter 5: DARE 2010 - Analysis of Applications and Eligibility

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the intersection of disability and social class in the context of young adults with disabilities who apply to the DARE scheme in Ireland. As described in earlier chapters, the DARE scheme was developed as a national scheme to support greater access by students with disabilities (SWD) to higher education (HE) in Ireland based on the premise that school leavers experience barriers related to disability that have a negative impact on their second level education and thus their chances of progression to HE. Students who are eligible for DARE can be offered a place in HE without reaching the points that are required by other students and are offered transition and post-entry supports. Using quantitative data from students who applied to the DARE scheme in 2010, this chapter explores patterns of application and eligibility for the scheme, at the intersection of disability and social class, to identify complex inequality in education in Ireland. Quantitative studies to date have not explored these intersections in this way and this unique approach offers a substantial contribution to knowledge in this domain.

The independent variables used in these analyses are disability (measured by application to the DARE scheme) and social class (measured by three proxies – school type, home address/area where applicant is living, and applications to both DARE and HEAR). I introduced each of these proxies for social class in chapter 4 and provide a detailed explanation of them in Appendix C. To remind the reader, school type refers to the second level school attended by DARE applicants which were individually identified as public schools[13], schools participating in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity Scheme (DEIS)[14] scheme, private schools (fee-paying)[15], revision/grind schools (fee-paying)[16] or special schools (attended by students with disabilities only). The area/home address of all DARE applicants has been coded using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index[17] which is widely used in Ireland as a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area. Students who applied for both the DARE and HEAR schemes are used as the third proxy for social class as the HEAR scheme uses an intersectional multi-indicator approach to identify socio-economic disadvantage using a range of financial, social and cultural indicators/criteria.

This chapter begins by providing a brief national overview of applications to the DARE scheme in 2010. I then provide a descriptive analysis of the intersection of disability and social class to measure (1) the pattern of DARE *applications* and (2) the pattern of DARE *eligibility* at each of these intersections to identify intersecting disadvantage. The analyses consist of a series of bivariate comparisons that offers a descriptive rather a

---

[13] This is not an Irish term as there is no 'public school' sector in Ireland as understood in the UK. I use the term 'public schools' in the study to identify second level schools *other* than those identified as DEIS, private schools (fee-paying), revision/grind schools (fee-paying); and special schools (attended by students with disabilities only). These public schools (as a school type) are the largest sector in the study and include approximately 480 secondary schools, vocational, comprehensive, and community schools.

[14] Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) is an initiative of the Department of Education and Skills aimed at lessening educational disadvantage and bringing about social inclusion in primary and second level education. Traditionally, few students from these schools go on to third level education. At the time of the study, there were 195 schools identified by the Department of Education as Skills (DES) as disadvantaged under the DEIS programme.

[15] At the time of the study, there were 56 private fee-paying schools identified by the DES.

[16] At the time of the study, there were 11 schools identified as revision/grind fee-paying schools. These schools exist in the private sector.

[17] The Pobal HP Deprivation Index analysed census data from 2006 by looking at electoral divisions which were at that time the smallest spatial units available. This index identifies three dimensions of affluence/disadvantage, Demographic Profile, Social Class Composition and Labour Market Situation. There are ten variables used under the three dimensions. The index looks at each small area and gives a relative index score to each area as Extremely Affluent, Very Affluent, Affluent, Marginally Above Average, Marginally Below Average, Disadvantaged, Very Disadvantaged or Extremely Disadvantaged.

multivariate analysis. The analysis seeks to identify and map patterns of inequality and privilege.

The analyses challenge the assumption that all students benefit equally from the DARE scheme. The analysis suggests that students are differentially positioned to take advantage of the DARE scheme depending on where they are simultaneously located at the interstices of disability and social class. The analysis also identifies how the DARE scheme, as a key access route into HE in Ireland, is accessed to different degrees by students from more or less advantaged schools, families, and communities, hiding the more positive outcomes for students in more advantaged locations and the more negative outcomes for working-class students with disabilities. This is revealed through the detailed analysis of DARE application and eligibility patterns which follow.

5.2 DARE – National Macro Patterns

Figure 5.1 provides an overview of applications by SWD to the DARE scheme in 2010 identifying national macro patterns including the total number of students nationally applying to the scheme, complete[18] and incomplete[19] applications, and overall eligibility and ineligibility for the DARE scheme. An eligible application is where a student completed a DARE application and was assessed as having met the scheme criteria. An

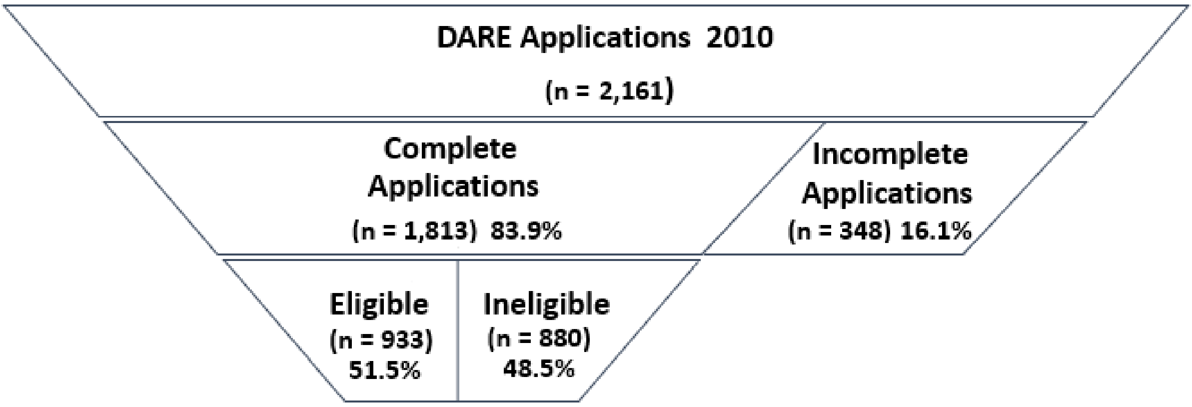
---

[18] All applicants to DARE were required to complete a two stage process to make a complete application to DARE. Applicants were required to tick a Disability/Specific Learning Difficulty box as part of their CAO application and complete Section A of the Supplementary Information Form where DARE applicants provided details on primary/other disabilities, academic supports provided in 2nd level and required in 3rd level, a personal statement outlining the academic impact, and specifically opted in to the DARE scheme. The second stage of the process required applicants to provide a Second Level Academic Reference (providing background on academic impact in 2nd level) and Evidence of Disability which had to be completed by the accepted Medical Consultant/Specialist for the disability or by a Psychologist for applicants with a Specific Learning Difficulty. Applicants must complete both stages of the process to make a complete application and to be assessed for eligibility under the scheme.

[19] An incomplete application is where an applicant applied to DARE and completed the Supplementary Information Form but did not provide any documentation (Second Level Academic Reference and Evidence of Disability). These applications were not assessed any further under the DARE scheme.

ineligible application is where a student completed a DARE application and was assessed as not meeting the scheme criteria. Applicants might be ineligible for a number of reasons, most commonly because the significance of the disability did not meet the scheme criteria, or because the medical evidence/documentation submitted was either not by the appropriate professional or was out of date.

Figure 5.1: DARE Applications 2010 Overview



In 2010, 2,161 young people with disabilities applied to the DARE scheme in Ireland. Of these, 1,813 (83.9 per cent) students made a complete application to DARE (applied and provided supporting documentation) while 348 young people with disabilities, or more than one in six DARE applicants (16.1 per cent), made an incomplete application to DARE (applied and did not provide any supporting documentation) and were not assessed any further for the DARE scheme. Of the 1,813 complete applications to DARE in 2010, 933 (51.5 per cent) applicants were assessed as eligible while 880 applicants (48.5 per cent) were assessed as ineligible.

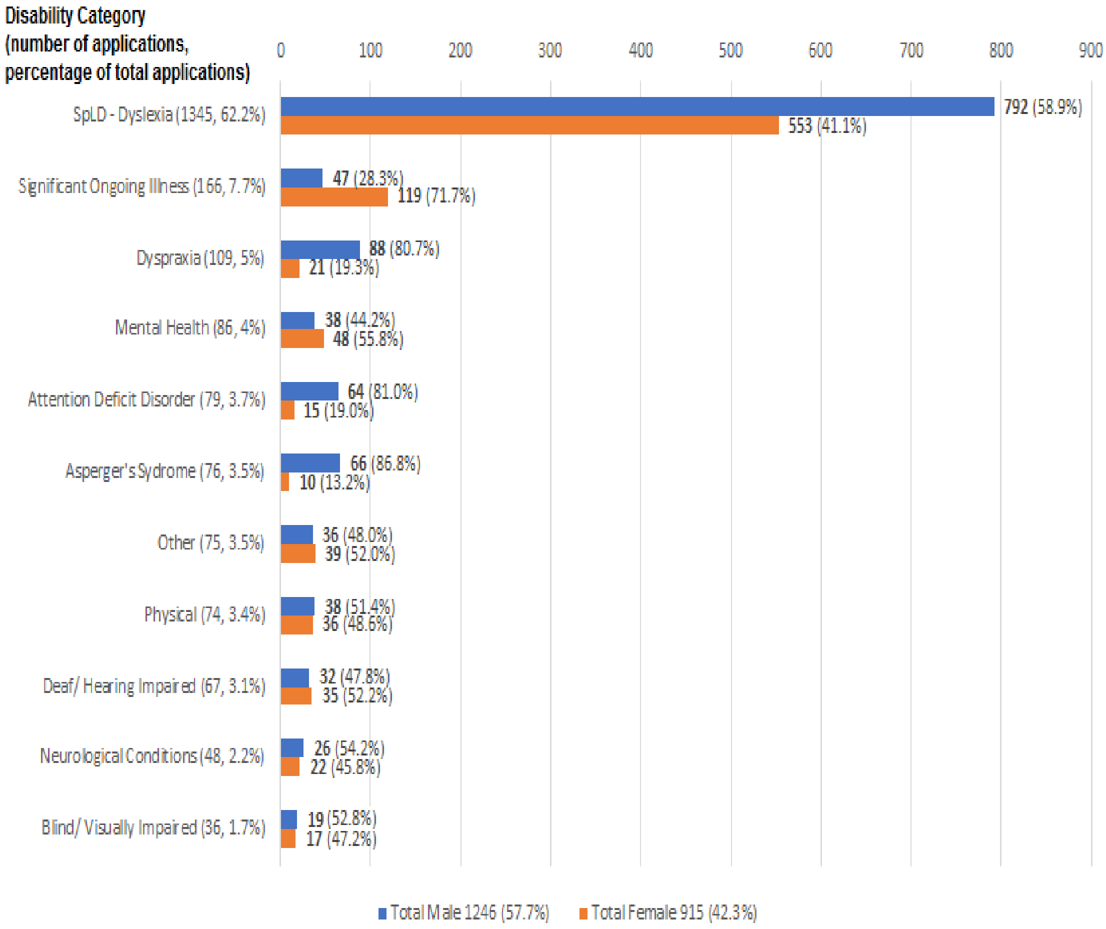
At a macro level, the data suggests that although a large number of students initially applied to DARE in 2010, that the numbers dwindle at each stage of the DARE process, suggesting that there may be barriers within the DARE application process/scheme for some students and their families.

The next section provides a descriptive analysis of the intersection of disability and social class to measure the pattern of DARE *applications* in 2010 to identify inequality in education in Ireland.

5.3 Who Applies to DARE? Disability Category and Gender

The analysis of applications begins by seeking to identify whether there are any variations in DARE applications by category of disability or by gender. Figure 5.2 analyses DARE applications by category of disability and identifies the percentage that each disability category represents, as a percentage of total applications, and within each disability category, also identifies patterns by disability category and gender.

Figure 5.2: DARE Applications 2010 by Disability Category and Gender (n=2161)



In 2010, the overwhelming majority of applications to DARE were from students with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) as 1,345 applicants (62.2 per cent) to DARE indicated that this was their primary disability. Students with a Significant Ongoing Illness (7.7 per cent) and students with Dyspraxia (5.0 per cent) accounted for the next highest percentage share of applications by disability category. Students who indicated that they were Blind/Visually Impaired, a key target for successive national access plans, accounted for just 36 applications to DARE in 2010 (1.7 per cent), the lowest percentage share of applications by disability category. Overall, apart from applications from students with a SpLD, there are small numbers of applications to DARE across all disability categories.

Analysis by category of disability and gender identifies that of the 2,161 applicants to DARE in 2010, 1,246 (57.7 per cent) were male and 915 (42.3 per cent) were female confirming some gendered patterns in the DARE scheme. The analysis reveals that males outnumber females significantly in relation to particular disability categories notably Asperger's Syndrome/Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder and Dyspraxia. In 2010 for example, there were 76 applicants to DARE who were assessed under the Asperger's Syndrome category of which 66 (86.8 per cent) were male and just 10 applicants (13.2 per cent) were female. Females significantly outnumber males in relation to two disability categories only, Significant Ongoing Illness and Mental Health. In 2010, 166 applicants (7.7 per cent) indicated that their primary disability was a Significant Ongoing Illness of which 119 (71.7 per cent) were female and 47 (28.3 per cent) were male. Under the Mental Health category females (55.8 per cent) also outnumber male applicants (44.2 per cent). While gender is not the focus of this study, there are patterns by disability and gender that are significant, an issue raised in previous research in an Irish context (McCoy et al. 2012). This study confirms that male and female DARE applicants are more evenly distributed in normative categories like sensory and physical disabilities, which had been suggested in previous studies (Fordyce et al. 2015).

This initial analysis suggests that SWD are not a homogenous group and that there are variations in patterns of application to DARE by category of disability and gender that suggest that young adults with disabilities may be more heterogeneous that is assumed by national policy and practice.

The next section analyses DARE applications to identify whether there are variations in applications by students to DARE suggested by where students live whether by county in Ireland, by postcode in the Dublin city area, and/or by individual small area coded by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

5.4 Are there Regional Differences in DARE Applications?

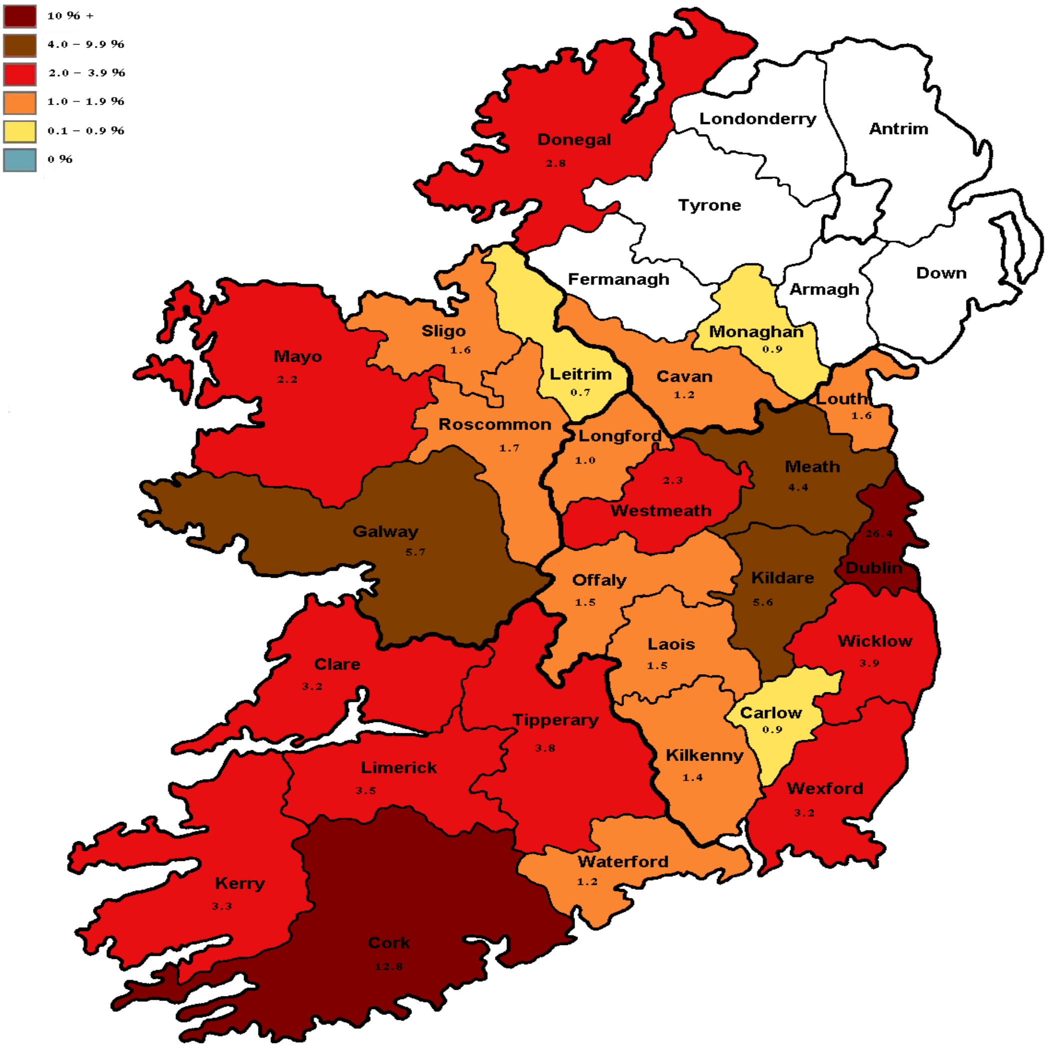
5.4.1 Analysis by County

This section examines the pattern of DARE applications by county in Ireland identifying that in 2010 there were applications to DARE from students living in every county in Ireland. I have represented these patterns in Figure 5.3 visually mapping DARE applications in 2010, by county, nationally. The percentage of applications accounted for by each county is identified and a coloured grid code has been provided so that the reader can see by colour the counties that accounted for the greatest percentage share of DARE applications.

Individual counties that accounted for more than 10 per cent of national applications to DARE are purple (counties Cork and Dublin). Counties that accounted for between 4 per cent and 9.9 per cent of national applications are marked in brown (the three counties of Galway, Meath, and Kildare). Counties that accounted for between 2 per cent and 3.9 per cent of national applications are marked in red (the nine counties of Wicklow, Tipperary, Limerick, Kerry, Clare, Wexford, Donegal, Westmeath and Mayo). Counties that accounted for between 1 per cent and 1.9 per cent are marked in orange and run through a swathe of nine counties across the centre of the country (Roscommon, Louth, Sligo, Laois, Offaly, Kilkenny, Waterford, Cavan and Longford). Finally the three counties that have the lowest share of applications to the DARE scheme are identified in yellow (Counties Carlow, Monaghan, and Leitrim).

This analysis identifies significant variations in the pattern of DARE applications by county that is not what might be expected given that disability is reasonably uniformly distributed nationally (CSO, Census of Population 2016).

Figure 5.3: DARE 2010 Applications by County

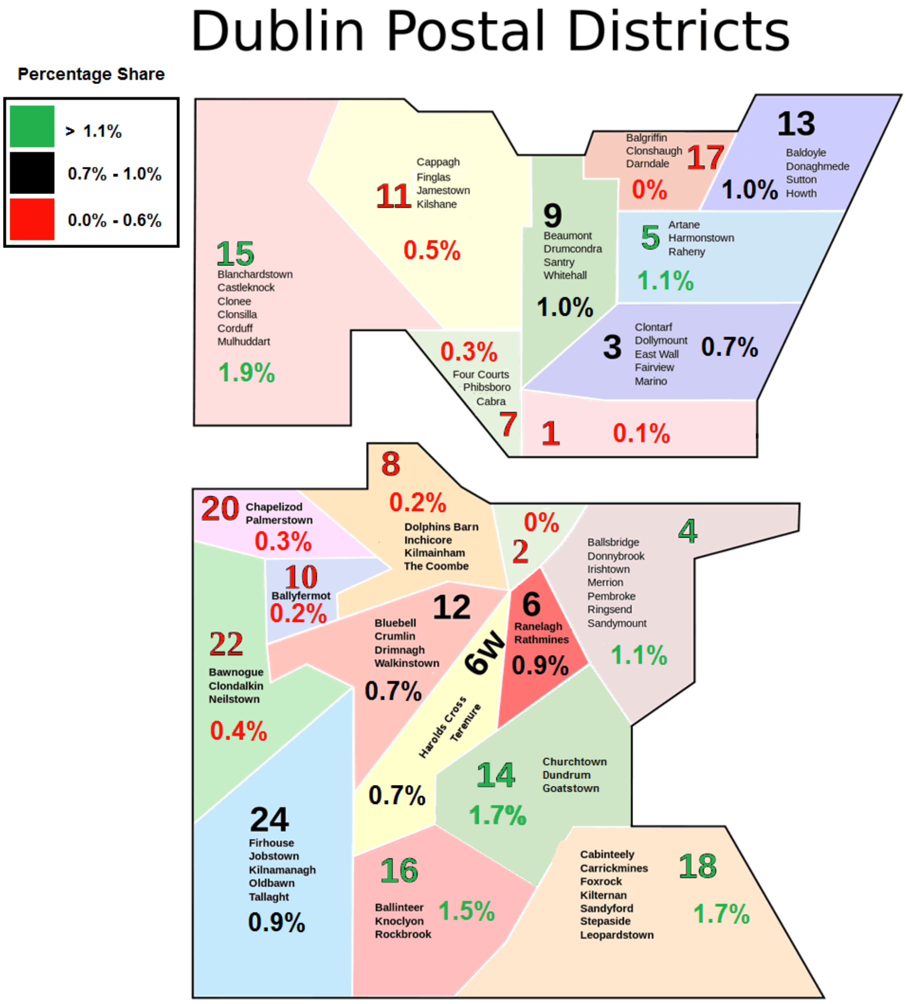


The analysis by county identifies that there are differentiated patterns of applications to the DARE scheme, at a macro level, by individual county. The county and city of Dublin for example combined accounted for 572 applications (26.4 per cent) to DARE in 2010, more than one in four of all applications nationally. Students in County Leitrim however made just 15 applications (0.7 per cent), the lowest number of DARE applications nationally by county. Six counties, Dublin (city and county), Cork, Galway, and the Dublin satellite counties of Kildare, Meath, and Wicklow, accounted for 1,273 applications (58.9 per cent), or almost six in ten of all DARE applications in 2010. While not empirically investigated, it may be that applications by county are influenced by population density and/or by the presence of fee-paying post-primary/ revision/grind schools that are located in these counties, an issue considered further later in this chapter.

5.4.2 Analysis by Postcode in the Dublin City Area

A further analysis by Dublin postal code identifies that there are also differentiated patterns of application to the DARE scheme within individual counties. Figure 5.4 identifies each postal code in Dublin city and visually maps the percentage share of DARE applications within each Dublin postal code. This analysis is useful because previous national studies have identified that progression to HE in Ireland is linked to home address/area with higher progression from more affluent areas and lower patterns of progression from more socially disadvantaged areas in the Dublin city area (O'Connell et al. 2006). In Figure 5.4, the postcodes with the highest percentage share of DARE applications are marked in green (Dublin 15, 4, 5, 14, 16, 18) and those postcodes with the lowest percentage share of DARE applications are marked in red (Dublin 11, 17, 7, 1, 20, 8, 10, 2, 22).

Figure 5.4: DARE 2010 Applications by Dublin Postcode



This analysis identifies that applicants living in Dublin 15 for example accounted for 40 (1.9 per cent) DARE applications nationally while there was just one application (0 per cent) from applicants living in both Dublin 17 and Dublin 2, two densely populated urban areas. This analysis reveals that within the Dublin city area, the more affluent postal districts (Dublin 15, 14, 18, 16, 4, 5, 9, 13, 24, 6, 3, 6W and 12) accounted for 321 applications (14.9 per cent) of all applications to the scheme nationally in 2010. This is in stark contrast to the low number of applications from some of the most socially deprived areas in Dublin with nine postal districts (Dublin 11, 22, 7, 20, 8, 10, 1, 2, 17) accounting for just 46 applications (2.1 per cent) of DARE applications in 2010.

The overall pattern of applications to DARE, by Dublin postal district, is consistent with the class related patterns of progression to higher education identified by the HEA (O'Connell et al. 2006). The analysis in this study reveals a similarly low rate of application to DARE from specific postal districts, where there are high rates of social disadvantage and low rates of progression to HE, in the Dublin area suggesting that there is a link between disability and social class in the context of applications by students to the DARE scheme. The analysis by Dublin postcode suggests, at a macro level, that applications to DARE are linked to social class and that working-class students from more socially deprived areas may be experiencing additional barriers and challenges to accessing the DARE scheme and that students in more affluent locations may be better positioned to take advantage of the DARE scheme.

The next section continues this analysis by analysing the home address/area of DARE applicants, coded by the Deprivation Index, and the impact on DARE applications of the affluence/deprivation of the areas in which students live.

5.4.3 Analysis by Area (Deprivation Index)

Figure 5.5/ Table 5.1 analyse DARE applications in 2010 by area/home address that has been coded using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index which is used in Ireland as a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area. The Deprivation Index, categorises each small area as Affluent, Very Affluent, and Extremely Affluent, Disadvantaged, Very Disadvantaged, and Extremely Disadvantaged, and as Marginally Above Average and Marginally Below Average. For ease of reporting I have combined these headings and report on areas as Affluent, Disadvantaged, Average, and Unknown (addresses that could not be coded using the Deprivation Index). As the Marginally Above and Marginally Below Average categories were so large, I considered splitting them, but as there were no significant differences in the outcomes of the analyses, and for consistency, they have been combined for the purposes of this study.

Figure 5.5: DARE Applications 2010 by Area/ Deprivation Index

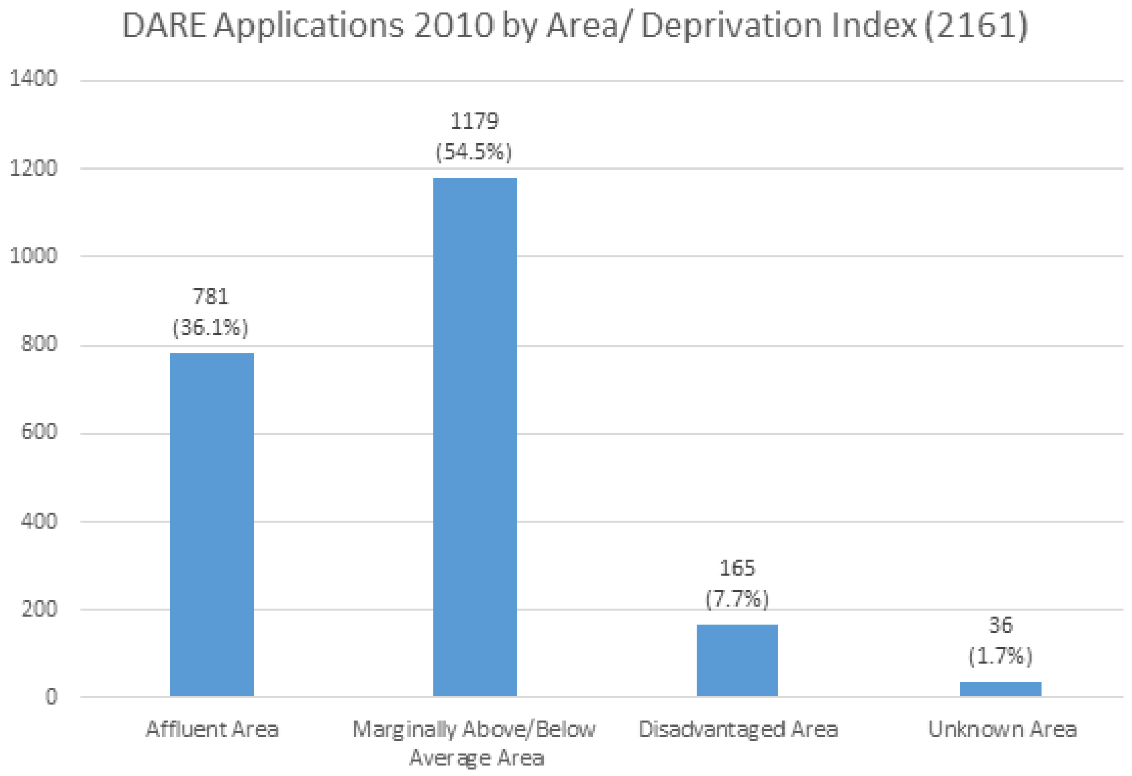


TABLE 5.1: DARE APPLICATIONS 2010 BY AREA/ DEPRIVATION INDEX		
Affluent Area	781	36.1%
Marginally Above/Below Average Area	1179	54.5%
Disadvantaged Area	165	7.7%
Unknown Area	36	1.7%
Total DARE Applications	2161	100%

Although the assumption may be that students applying to DARE are a homogenous cohort, this analysis by area identifies that this is not the case. In 2010, the majority, 1,179 (54.5 per cent) of the 2,161 applications to DARE, were from students living in areas defined as being Marginally Above Average (34.2 per cent) or Marginally Below Average (20.3 per cent) while 781 (36.1 per cent) of all applicants lived in areas classified as Affluent, Very Affluent or Extremely Affluent. In stark contrast, applicants from areas classified as Disadvantaged, Very Disadvantaged or Extremely Disadvantaged, accounted for just 165 (7.7 per cent) applicants from the 2,161 DARE applicants nationally. This analysis identifies that students in more affluent areas make more applications to DARE enhancing their opportunities to be eligible under the scheme and to progress to HE. Applicants from the most socially deprived areas, make the smallest number of applications nationally, restricting and narrowing their opportunities to progress to HE.

In summary, this analysis of the intersection of disability and social class suggests that where students live has an impact on the likelihood of making an application to DARE. DARE applications vary by county, within Dublin city by post code, and by area coded by the Deprivation Index. The analysis suggests that in the context of making a DARE application, where you live matters and that working-class students in more socially deprived areas are significantly less likely to even apply to DARE thereby restricting their opportunities to progress to HE.

The next section analyses DARE applications by school type to identify whether DARE applications are influenced by where students go to school.

5.5 Are there Differences in DARE Applications by School Type?

Figure 5.6/ Table 5.2 analyse DARE applications in 2010 by school type which refers to the second level school attended by the applicants identified for the purposes of this study as public schools, schools participating in the DEIS scheme, private schools (fee-paying), revision/grind schools (fee-paying) or special schools (attended by students with disabilities only). This analysis by school type is relevant because type of school attended has an impact on progression to HE with entry varying strongly by social class (Byrne 2009, Lynch and O'Riordan 1998).

Figure 5.6: DARE Applications 2010 by School Type

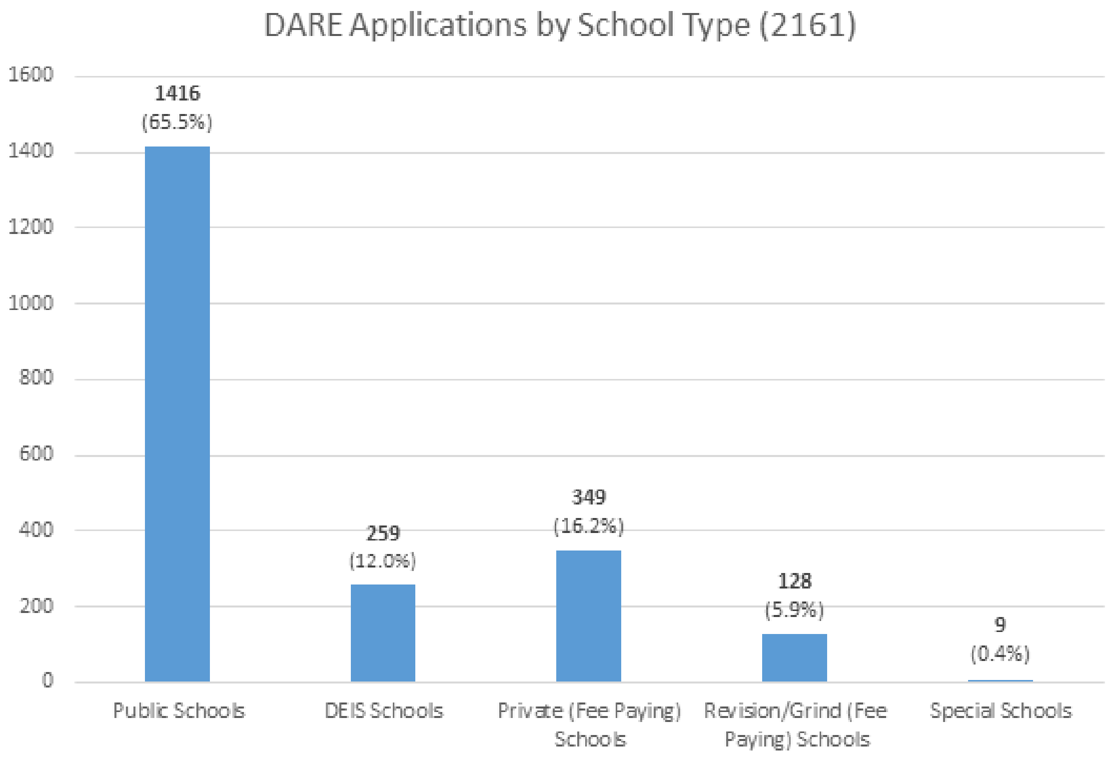


TABLE 5.2: DARE APPLICATIONS 2010 BY SCHOOL TYPE		
Public	1416	65.5%
DEIS	259	12.0%
Private (Fee-Paying)	349	16.2%
Revision/Grind (Fee-Paying)	128	5.9%
Special	9	0.4%
Total DARE Applications	2161	100%

Again, this analysis challenges the assumption of the homogeneity of SWD applying to the DARE scheme. In 2010, the majority, 1,416 (65.5 per cent) of the 2,161 applications to DARE, came from students attending schools identified as public schools in this study, the largest sector nationally proportionally. Students attending DEIS schools, a large sector proportionally of 195 schools, accounted for 259 (12.0 per cent) applications to the DARE scheme in 2010. In contrast, the 56 private fee-paying schools accounted for 349 applications (16.2 per cent) of all applications in 2010 and a further 128 (5.9 per cent) came from revision/grind fee-paying schools. The fee-paying sector, despite being a small number of schools nationally overall, accounted for 22.1 per cent of all applications to the DARE scheme in 2010, accounting for more than one in five applications to DARE in 2010. Special schools are notable because of the minute number of DARE applications in 2010 accounting for just nine applications (0.4 per cent) of the total number of DARE applications nationally.

This analysis is important because it suggests that some SWD, based in more advantaged schools, are better positioned to take advantage of the opportunities to use the scheme to access HE. The analysis suggests that working-class students attending DEIS schools are experiencing significant challenges in making DARE applications, an issue that is explored further in this chapter.

I completed a further analysis of the pattern of DARE applications within school type by individual schools and found that there is a pattern of more advantaged schools (fee-paying) accounting for large volumes of DARE applications in comparison to DEIS schools who have a pattern of either no applications or very few DARE applications. For example in 2010, although the fee-paying and revision/grind schools sector is small compared to the public or DEIS schools sector, just 11 revision/grind schools accounted for 128 (5.9 per cent) of all DARE applications nationally in 2010. Four of these schools submitted 10 or more DARE applications while one school submitted 62 individual DARE applications, accounting for 2.9 per cent of all DARE applications nationally in 2010. There were 56 fee-paying schools at the time of the study who made 349 (16.2 per cent) DARE applications in 2010. Out of the 56 fee-paying schools, 53 of these schools made DARE applications, a rate of 94.6 per cent. Again, there is a pattern of a high number of applications from individual schools with one fee-paying school submitting 22 applications, one making 19 applications and one making 20 applications to DARE. DEIS schools have a different pattern of DARE applications. There were 195 DEIS schools at the time of the study accounting for 259 DARE applications in total. These 259 applications came from just 108 DEIS schools with 87 DEIS schools (44.6 per cent) making no DARE application at all in 2010. DEIS schools also have a pattern of making a small number of DARE applications with 81 of the 108 schools (75.0 per cent) making either one or two DARE applications only.

In summary, the analysis of DARE applications for 2010 by school type identifies that young people with disabilities from public, and fee-paying schools in particular, are more likely to make a DARE application than working-class students with disabilities attending DEIS schools. Fee-paying schools also exhibit a pattern of applying to the DARE scheme and making large numbers of applications to the scheme suggesting that there may be a middle-class advantage at play. Working-class students with disabilities attending DEIS schools either do not apply at all to the DARE scheme, with almost half of DEIS schools making no DARE applications in 2010, or do so in small numbers from individual DEIS schools.

As the intersectional nature of disadvantage, the next section drills deeper into the data by considering the intersection of disability *and* area *and* school type and the impact on patterns of DARE applications.

5.6 Do Applications from School Sectors Differ by Area?

As analysis at specific intersections is so important to this study, Figure 5.7/ Table 5.3 considers the impact on DARE applications at the intersection of disability and school type and area. This analysis is relevant because it considers how complex disadvantage can be experienced in multiple intersecting and interconnected domains.

Figure 5.7: DARE Applications 2010 by School Type and Deprivation Index

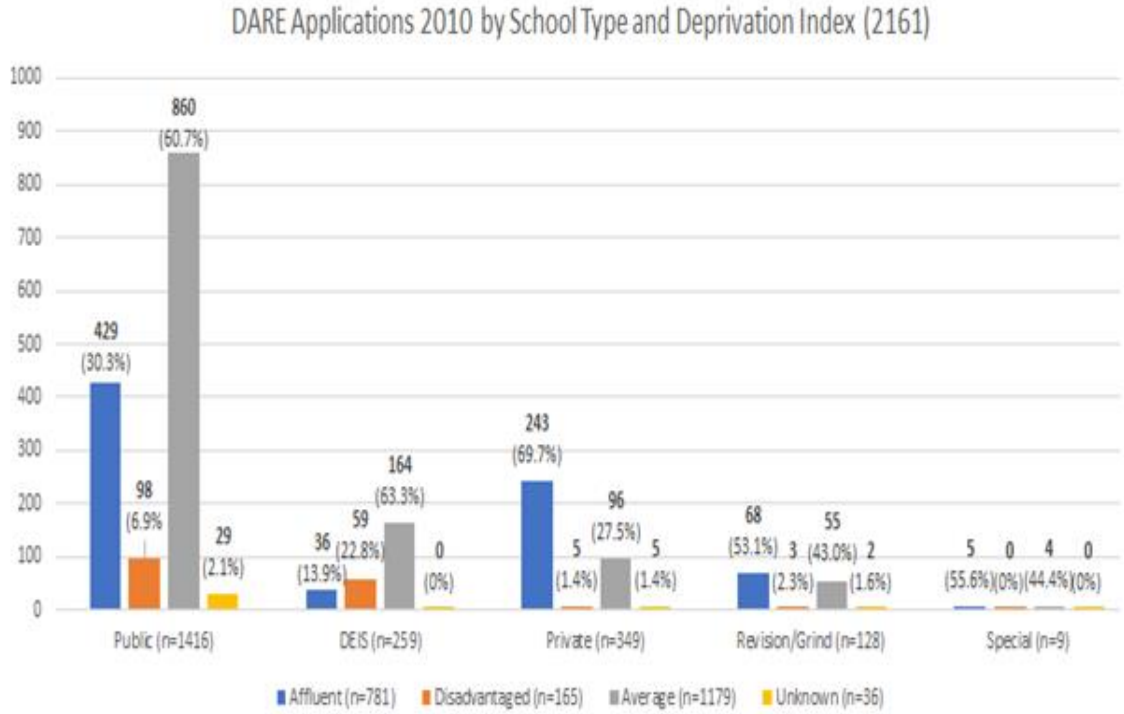


TABLE 5.3: DARE APPLICATIONS 2010
BY SCHOOL TYPE AND DEPRIVATION INDEX

School Type	**Total**	**Affluent Area**	**%**	**Disadvantaged Area**	**%**	**Marginally Above/Below Average Area**	**%**	**Unknown Area**	**%**	**Total %**
Public	1416	429	30.3%	98	6.9%	860	60.7%	29	2.1%	100%
DEIS	259	36	13.9%	59	22.8%	164	63.3%	0	0%	100%
Private	349	243	69.7%	5	1.4%	96	27.5%	5	1.4%	100%
Revision/ Grind	128	68	53.1%	3	2.3%	55	43.0%	2	1.6%	100%
Special	9	5	55.6%	0	0%	4	44.4%	0	0%	100%
Total	2161	781	36.1%	165	7.7%	1179	54.5%	36	1.7%	100%

Analysing the data by disability, school type, and area, provides a nuanced picture of the complex intersection of disability and social class. In relation to public schools, the majority, 860 (60.7 per cent) of DARE applicants attending public schools, are living in areas identified as Marginally Above or Below Average although 429 applicants (30.3 per cent), almost one-third, live in areas identified as Affluent. Students attending DEIS schools are also most likely (63.3 per cent) to be living in areas identified as either Marginally Above or Below Average although 36 (13.9 per cent) DARE applicants attending DEIS schools were living in areas identified as Affluent. This may speak to admissions policies in schools where for example students can be nudged to DEIS schools that are presented as more suitable/more resources for students with disabilities, an issue explored later in the participant accounts of the education system in chapter 7. Most significant in this intersectional analysis is that there are just 59 (2.7 per cent) students, from a total of 2,161 applicants, who applied to DARE in 2010 that were *both* living in an area identified as disadvantaged *and* attending a DEIS school. This is significant and would be the opposite of what might be expected given the concentration of SWD in DEIS schools. Students attending fee-paying schools were the most likely to be living in areas identified as Affluent. Students attending special schools were also most likely to be living in areas identified as Affluent (55.6 per cent) or areas identified as Marginally Above or Below Average (44.4 per cent). In 2010, there were no DARE applicants attending special schools who were living in areas identified as Disadvantaged, suggesting that there are additional challenges for these students.

In summary, school type and the area/deprivation index are individually strong indicators of the likelihood of making an application to DARE in 2010. Analysing the intersection of disability, school type, and area/home address, provides a more nuanced picture suggesting that privilege and disadvantage are experienced in complex intersecting ways.

Students living in the most affluent areas are likely to be attending fee-paying schools thereby improving their chances of applying to DARE. Working-class students with disabilities attending DEIS schools and/or living in the most socially deprived areas are the least likely to apply to DARE and are applying in minute numbers suggesting that these students are experiencing additional complex intersectional disadvantage.

The next section analyses DARE applications in 2010 by disability and social class measured by applicants who made applications to both the DARE *and* HEAR schemes.

5.7 Who Applies to DARE and HEAR?

The HEAR scheme was developed to support greater access to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to HE in Ireland based on the premise that school leavers experience barriers related to social class that have a negative impact on their second level education and thus their chances of progression to HE. The HEAR scheme uses an intersectional multi-indicator approach to identify socio-economic disadvantage using a range of financial, social and cultural indicators or criteria. Students who are eligible for HEAR can access a place in HE without reaching the points that are required by other students and they are offered a variety of transition and post-entry supports including financial support. The fact that students can apply to both the DARE and HEAR schemes is important because it is the only state mechanism, in the context of access to HE, which facilitates explicit consideration of disability and social class. This is a really positive aspect to the schemes although both schemes are positioned in policy and practice as separate and unconnected suggesting that although the opportunity is there to identify as a working-class student with a disability, that there may be some barriers for students with this in practice. This analysis is relevant because it can identify disadvantage at the intersection of DARE and HEAR and is unique as it provides an opportunity to analyse the outcomes for students who asked for consideration, in the context of progression to HE, on the basis of disability *and* social class.

5.7.1 Dual Applicants - Applying to both DARE and HEAR

Table 5.4 identifies total national applications to DARE in 2010 identifying students that applied to DARE only and students that applied (dual applicants) to both the DARE and HEAR schemes.

TABLE 5.4: DUAL APPLICANTS - DARE and HEAR APPLICATIONS 2010

Total Applications DARE 2010	**%**	**Application to DARE only**	%	**Application to DARE and HEAR**	%
2,161	100%	1,780	82.4%	381	17.6%

In 2010, although 2,161 students applied to the DARE scheme, the majority, 1,780 (82.4 per cent), applied to DARE only and 381 students (17.6 per cent) applied to both DARE and HEAR. The data on dual applicants suggest, at a macro level, that there is a pattern of students applying to both schemes that is welcome and positive. This cohort of 381 dual applicants, who applied to both DARE and HEAR, are further analysed in this section to identify intersecting disadvantage. The first section considers whether there are patterns related to dual applicants by area/Deprivation Index, to identify whether applications to both schemes are impacted by the affluence/deprivation of the areas in which students live.

5.7.2 DARE and HEAR and Area

Figure 5.8/ Table 5.5 analyse the 381 students who applied to both DARE and HEAR to identify patterns by area/Deprivation Index.

Figure 5.8: DARE and HEAR Applications 2010 by Deprivation Index

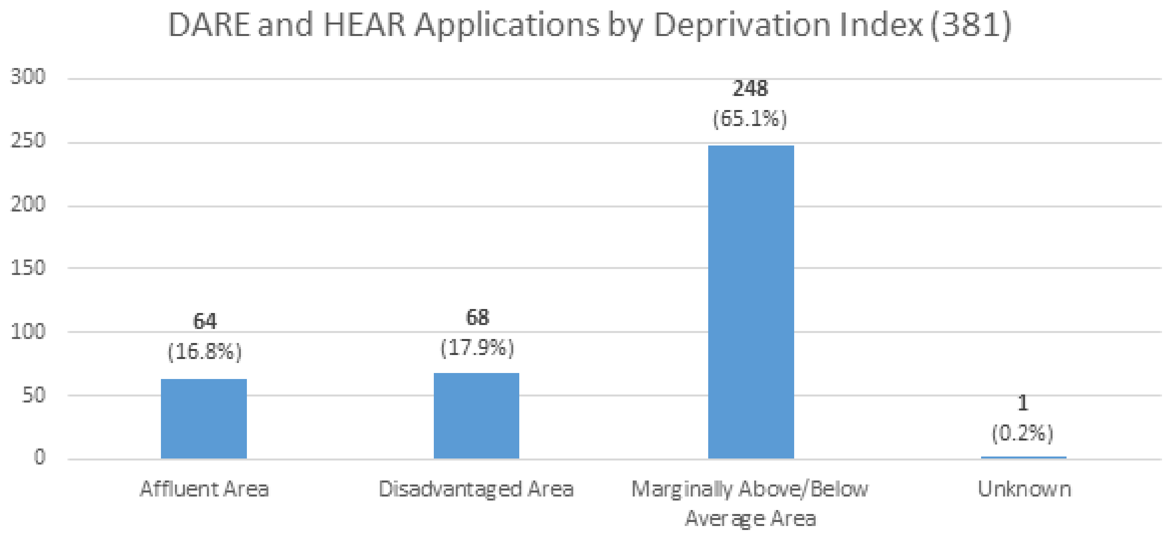


TABLE 5.5: DARE AND HEAR APPLICATIONS 2010 BY DEPRIVATION INDEX		
Deprivation Index	**Total DARE and HEAR Applications 2010 by deprivation index**	**% of overall DARE and HEAR Applications**
Affluent Area	64	16.8%
Disadvantaged Area	68	17.9%
Marginally Above/Below Average Area	248	65.1%
Unknown	1	0.2%
Total	381	100%

As the HEAR scheme is focused on identifying socio-economic disadvantage, I had expected that the majority of dual applicants to both schemes would be living in socially deprived areas. However, analysing dual applicants by area identifies that 248 (65.1 per cent), or more than six in every ten dual applicants, live in areas identified as Marginally Above Average (34.4 per cent) or Marginally Below Average (30.7 per cent). Although living in an area identified as deprived or disadvantaged is an indicator for the HEAR scheme, 64 (16.8 per cent) of the 381 dual applicants lived in areas identified as Affluent (13.7 per cent) or Very Affluent (3.1 per cent). By contrast, just 68 applicants (17.9 per cent) for both schemes lived in areas identified as Disadvantaged, suggesting that working-class students with disabilities account for a relatively small overall share of this cohort.

This analysis suggests that despite the focus of the HEAR scheme, dual applicants are most likely to be living in areas that are not the most socially deprived and that working-class students with disabilities, as defined by area, are less likely to be applying to both the DARE and HEAR schemes.

5.7.3 DARE and HEAR and School Type

Figure 5.9/ Table 5.6 analyse dual applicants by school type and identifies that there are important differences in the schools attended by dual applicants.

Figure 5.9: DARE and HEAR Applications 2010 by School Type

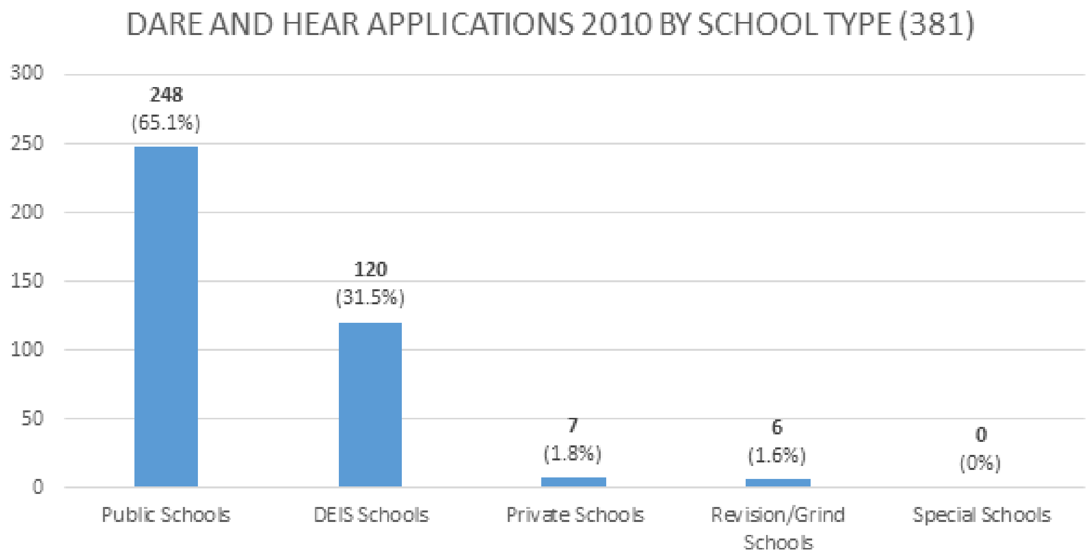


TABLE 5.6: DARE AND HEAR APPLICATIONS 2010 BY SCHOOL TYPE

School Type	Total DARE and HEAR Applications 2010	% of overall DARE Applications
Public	248	65.1%
DEIS	120	31.5%
Private	7	1.8%
Revision/Grind	6	1.6%
Special	0	0%
Total	381	100%

As attendance at a DEIS school is one of the national indicators of socio-economic disadvantage and a key focus of national policy, as well as an indicator for HEAR, I had expected that the majority of dual applicants would be attending DEIS schools. Analysing the data by school type however shows that the majority of dual applicants were attending public schools (65.1 per cent) with just 120 (31.5 per cent) dual applicants attending DEIS schools. Thirteen (3.4 per cent) dual applicants were attending fee-paying schools. There were no dual applicants attending special schools.

Dual applicants, and the intersectional disadvantage that they represent, are a core target for the DARE and HEAR schemes. The analysis suggests that these students are more likely to be attending public schools and less likely to be attending DEIS schools, a finding that is the opposite of what might have been expected given the focus of the HEAR scheme. The analysis suggests that dual applicants attending DEIS schools may require particular attention and support and that these students may be experiencing additional barriers in relation to accessing both schemes.

5.7.4 DARE and HEAR by School Type and Area

As the intersectional nature of disadvantage is so key to this study, Figure 5.10/ Table 5.7 consider the intersection of disability *and* school type *and* area for students who applied to both the DARE and HEAR schemes.

Figure 5.10: DARE and HEAR Applications 2010 by School Type and Deprivation Index

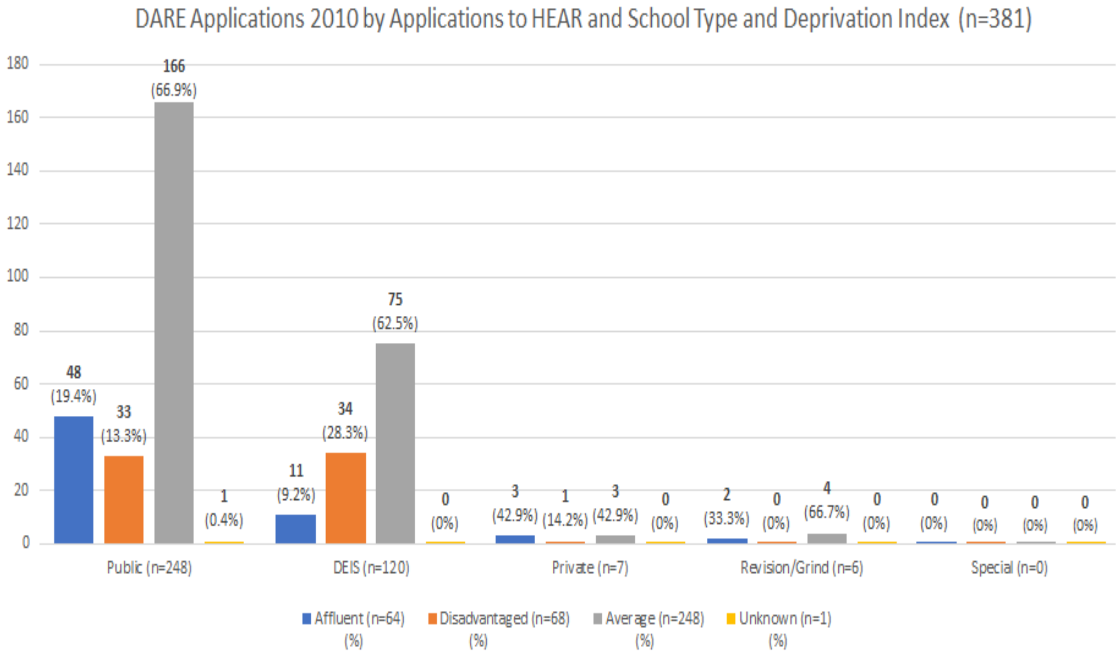


TABLE 5.7: DARE AND HEAR APPLICATIONS 2010 BY SCHOOL TYPE AND DEPRIVATION INDEX

School Type	Total	Affluent Area	%	Disadvantaged Area	%	Average Area	%	Unknown	%	Total
Public	248	48	19.4%	33	13.3%	166	66.9%	1	0.4%	100%
DEIS	120	11	9.2%	34	28.3%	75	62.5%	0	0%	100%
Private	7	3	42.9%	1	14.2%	3	42.9%	0	0%	100%
Revision/ Grind	6	2	33.3%	0	0%	4	66.7%	0	0%	100%
Special	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0%
Total	381	64	16.8%	68	17.9%	248	65.1%	1	0.2%	100%

Analysing dual applicants by disability, school type, and area, again provides a more nuanced picture of the intersection of disability and social class. In 2010, the majority, 166 (66.9 per cent), of dual applicants attending public schools were living in areas identified as Marginally Above or Below Average although almost one-fifth (19.4 per cent) live in areas identified as Affluent. There were 13 dual applicants attending fee-paying schools with one of those students living in a disadvantaged area and attending a fee-paying school. There were no dual applicants attending Special Schools.

Examining dual applicants who previously attended DEIS schools paints a concerning picture. In 2010, although there were 120 dual applicants attending DEIS schools, 75 (62.5 per cent) of these students were living in areas identify as either Marginally Above or Below Average and almost ten per cent of dual applicants attending DEIS schools were living in areas identified as Affluent. The intersection of DEIS school and disadvantaged area is crucial in this analysis. Although there are 120 dual applicants attending DEIS schools, there are just 34 (28.3 per cent) of these students who applied to both DARE and HEAR, that are attending a DEIS school *and* living in areas identified as Disadvantaged. This is a most compelling indicator of complex intersecting disadvantage in the lives of some SWD in education. Although 2,161 applied to the DARE scheme, we now find that the number of students who applied for both DARE and HEAR that were both attending a DEIS school *and* living in a disadvantaged area, accounts for just 34 (1.6 per cent) of all DARE applications nationally. The data suggests that these students are living the complex intersection of disability and social class in multiple domains that is conspiring to restrict their opportunities to progress to HE.

In summary, the analysis of dual applicants, suggests that dual applicants are most likely to be living in areas that are not the most socially deprived and that working-class students with disabilities, attending DEIS schools, and living in disadvantaged areas, are the least likely to apply to both DARE and HEAR The analysis suggests that although the HEAR scheme was established to create opportunities to access HE for working-class students, that working-class students with disabilities are not well placed to access these opportunities. A national review of the HEAR scheme suggested that the scheme might '*select out*' the more advantaged among the target socio-economic groups and thus support the most marginalised and disadvantaged within these groups to access HE (Byrne et al. 2013, 14). This analysis suggests that the HEAR scheme may also be inadvertently ‘selecting out’ working-class students with disabilities who are experiencing additional barriers to accessing both schemes.

The next section considers incomplete applications, that is students who applied to the DARE scheme but who did not provide any supporting documentation (and thus were not further considered) to identify the intersection of disability and social class within this cohort.

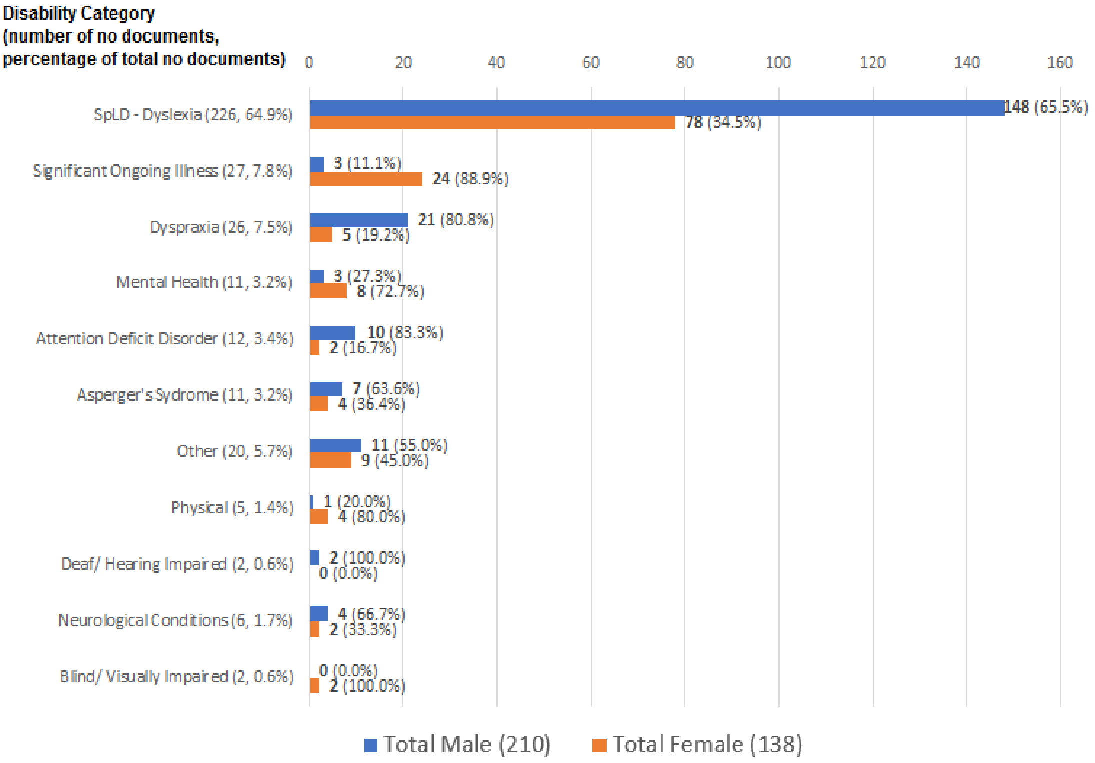
5.8 Who Applies to DARE and Provides no Supporting Documentation?

I outlined earlier in the chapter, that although, 2,161 young people with disabilities applied to the DARE scheme in Ireland in 2010, 1,813 (83.9 per cent) made a complete application to DARE (applied and provided supporting documentation) while 348 young people with disabilities, or more than one in six DARE applicants (16.1 per cent), made an incomplete application to DARE (applied and did not provide any supporting documentation) and were not assessed any further for the DARE scheme. In the next section, I focus on the 348 young people with disabilities who made an incomplete application to DARE. This analysis is relevant because these students are a large cohort proportionally. The analysis is also relevant because these students indicated that they had a disability and applied for the DARE scheme, but did not complete the application process, thereby losing the opportunity to be considered further for the scheme and restricting their opportunities to progress to HE.

5.8.1 Who makes an Incomplete DARE Application? Disability Category and Gender

I provided earlier in this chapter an analysis of applications by category of disability and gender. Figure 5.11 provides the same analysis of the 348 *incomplete* DARE applications by category of disability and identifies the percentage that each disability category represents, as a percentage of total incomplete applications, and within each disability category, also identifies patterns by disability category and gender.

Figure 5.11: DARE Incomplete Applications 2010
by Disability Category and Gender (n=348)



In 2010, the overwhelming majority of incomplete applications to DARE were from students with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) as 226 applicants (64.9 per cent) to DARE indicated that this was their primary disability but did not provide any supporting documentation. Students with a Significant Ongoing Illness (7.8 per cent) and applicants with Dyspraxia (7.5 per cent) accounted for the next highest percentage share of incomplete applications by disability category. The students least likely to make an incomplete application were students who were Deaf/Hearing Impaired (0.6 per cent) and students who were Blind/Visually Impaired (0.6 per cent), key targets for successive national access plans.

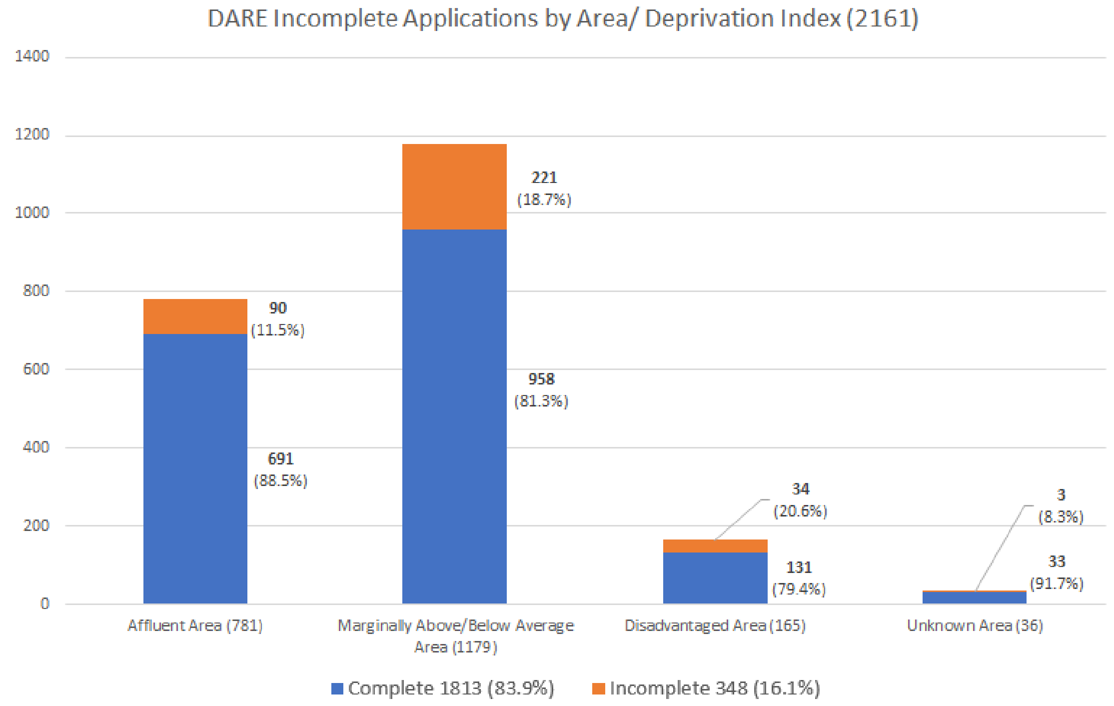
Analysis by category of disability and gender identifies that of the 348 incomplete applications to DARE in 2010, 210 (60.3 per cent) were male and 138 (39.7 per cent) were female confirming some gendered patterns in the DARE scheme. The analysis is broadly in line with the general gendered pattern of overall applications to DARE where males outnumber females significantly in relation to particular disability categories notably Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD), Asperger's Syndrome/Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder and Dyspraxia. Females significantly outnumber males in relation to two disability categories only, Significant Ongoing Illness and Mental Health.

Having provided this context, the next section analyses DARE incomplete applications to identify whether there are variations that are impacted by where students live, coded by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

5.8.2 Are there Differences in Incomplete DARE Applications by Area? (Deprivation Index)

I previously provided an analysis in this chapter of DARE applications by area. In Figure 5.12, I include students who made an incomplete application, comparing this cohort to overall rates of DARE applications by area. This analysis suggests that applicants from more advantaged areas are more likely to make a complete DARE application thereby improving their opportunities to progress to HE.

Figure 5.12: DARE Incomplete Applications 2010 by Deprivation Index



In total, as reported earlier in the chapter, out of the 2,161 applicants to the DARE scheme, 781 (36.1 per cent) applicants were from areas identified as Affluent of which 90 students (11.5 per cent) made incomplete applications, the lowest rate by area coded by Deprivation Index. Applicants from areas identified as Marginally Above or Below Average have a far greater likelihood of making an incomplete application, as 221 applicants (18.7 per cent) did not complete their DARE application. Applicants from areas identified as Disadvantaged account for the lowest overall share of DARE applications with just 165 (7.7 per cent) of DARE applicants nationally from the most socially deprived areas. However, applicants from these areas also have the highest rates of incomplete DARE applications, with 34 (20.6 per cent) applicants from disadvantaged areas not submitting supporting documentation. There are also notable differences by area of deprivation. For example, there were just 38 applicants to DARE nationally from applicants living in areas identified as Very Disadvantaged of which 13 (34.2 per cent), the highest rate by area overall, made incomplete applications.

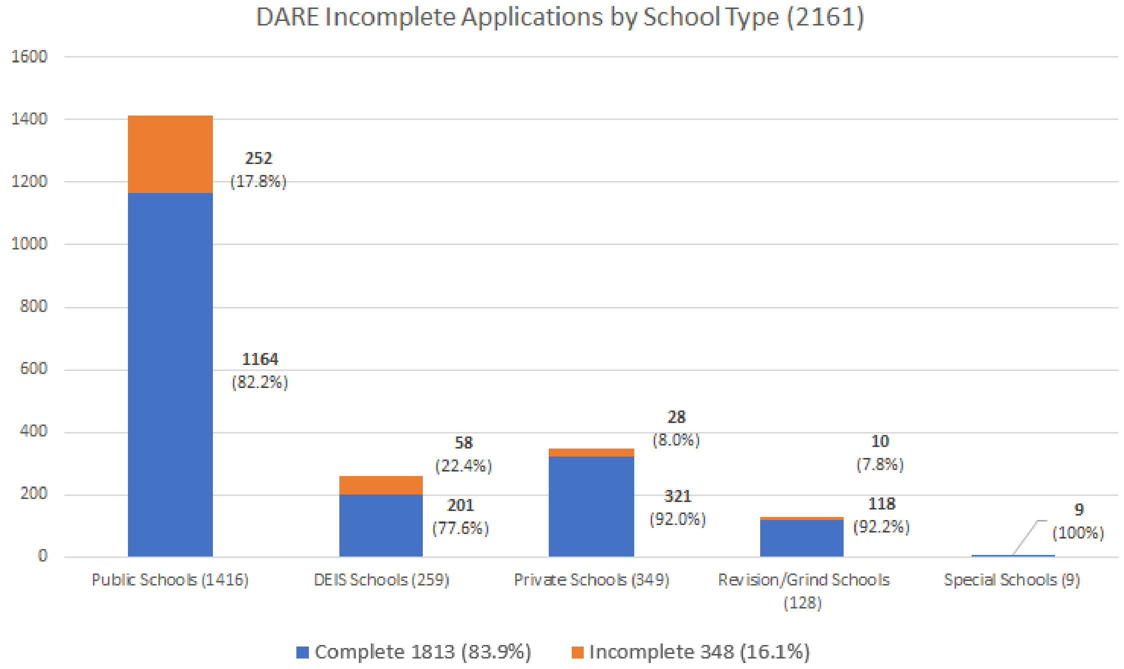
This analysis suggests that students in more affluent areas are more likely not just to make an initial application, but also crucially to make a complete application to DARE, enhancing their opportunities to be eligible under the scheme and to progress to HE. It may be that students in more advantaged locations may have better access to the documentation required for the scheme, and/or more support from schools/families to complete the DARE application process. These are relevant issues and are explored in more detail in the participant accounts of the education system in chapter 7.

Applicants from the most socially deprived areas, despite making a smaller number of applications nationally, are also the most likely to make incomplete applications with more than one in five students from the most disadvantaged areas who applied to DARE in 2010 providing no supporting documentation for their DARE application. This analysis suggests that the educational disadvantage experienced by working-class students with disabilities living in disadvantaged areas is complex and that the disadvantage is represented in multiple intersecting domains, constantly restricting and narrowing their opportunities to progress to HE.

5.8.3. Are there Differences in Incomplete DARE Applications by School Type?

I previously completed an analysis of all DARE applications by school type and I now add to this analysis in Figure 5.13 by analysing the students who made incomplete applications and comparing them to overall rates of applications to DARE by school type. The analysis identifies that there are significant differences in the likelihood of making an incomplete application that is connected to school type.

Figure 5.13: DARE Incomplete Applications 2010 by School Type



In total, as reported earlier in the chapter, DARE applicants attending special schools accounted for the smallest share of DARE applications nationally with just nine DARE applicants in 2010. I now report that this sector has the lowest rate of making incomplete applications (0 per cent) as all nine students submitted supporting documentation and made complete applications. Applicants from fee-paying schools were less likely to make an incomplete DARE application compared to students attending DEIS or public schools. Of the 477 DARE applications in 2010 from applicants attending fee-paying schools, (private and revision/grind schools combined), just 38 applicants (8.0 per cent) made incomplete applications. Applicants to DARE attending DEIS schools have the highest rates by school type of making an incomplete DARE application with 58 (22.4 per cent) students from the 259 applicants to DARE nationally from DEIS schools not providing any supporting documentation. In the previous section, we saw that applicants from DEIS schools applied to DARE in low numbers. This analysis shows that even if applicants do apply from DEIS schools, more than one in five of such applicants provides no supporting documentation and are therefore automatically excluded from the DARE scheme. Applicants from public schools also display high rates (17.8 per cent) of incomplete DARE applications suggesting that the provision of supporting documentation is not an issue confined to DEIS schools only.

This analysis is important because it suggests that some SWD, possibly based in more advantaged schools, are better positioned to take advantage of the opportunities to use the scheme to access HE. The analysis identifies that working-class students with disabilities attending DEIS schools are experiencing significant challenges in making complete DARE applications and that disability and social class intersect within schools, not only in the likelihood of making a DARE application, but also crucially in the likelihood of making a complete DARE application.

5.8.4 Are there Differences in Incomplete Applications by DARE/HEAR Applicants?

This section analyses incomplete DARE applications by dual applicants, applicants who made applications to both DARE and HEAR. These students are further analysed in this section to identify and consider intersecting disadvantage.

5.8.4.1 Incomplete Applications - DARE and HEAR and Area

I previously provided an analysis of students who applied to both DARE and HEAR by area and I now add to this analysis in Figure 5.14/ Table 5.8 by analysing students who made incomplete applications and comparing them to overall rates of applications to both DARE and HEAR by area.

Figure 5.14: DARE and HEAR Incomplete Applications 2010 by Deprivation Index

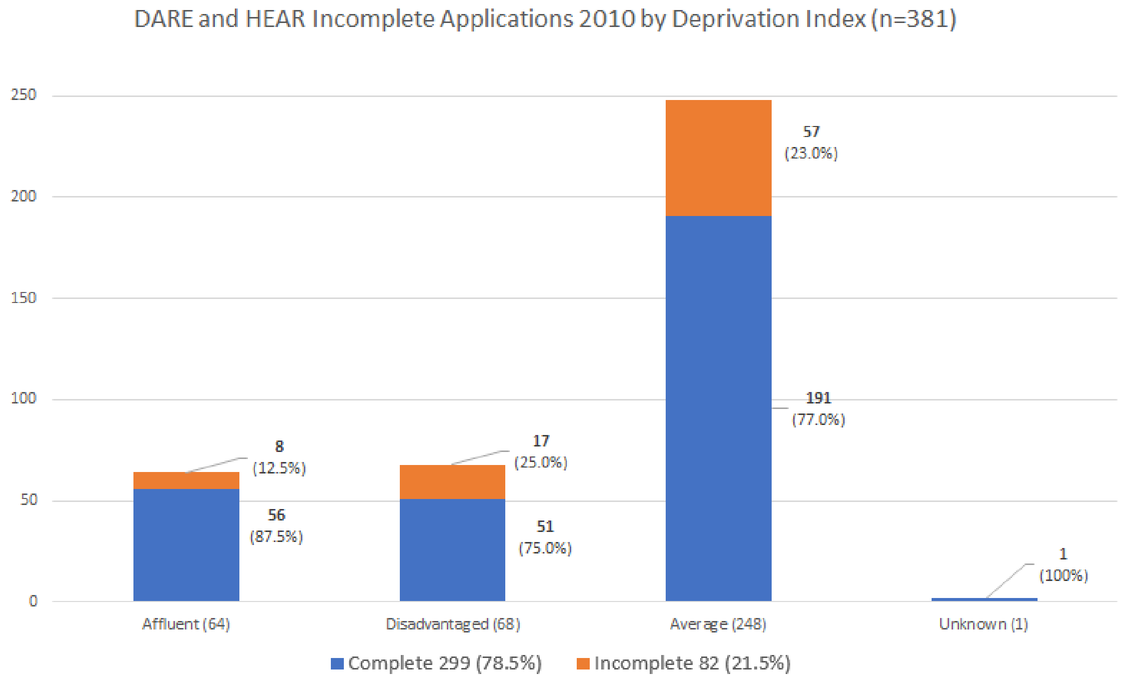


TABLE 5.8: DARE AND HEAR APPLICATIONS 2010 – DEPRIVATION INDEX AND INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS			
Deprivation Index	**Total DARE and HEAR Applications 2010 by deprivation index**	**No DARE Documentation Submitted**	**% of Total DARE and HEAR Applications by Area**
Affluent	64	8	12.5%
Disadvantaged	68	17	25.0%
Average	248	57	23.0%
Unknown	1	0	0%
Total	381	82	21.5%

An analysis of incomplete applications by area, identifies that dual applicants living in Affluent areas had the lowest rates of making incomplete DARE applications with just eight students (12.5 per cent) failing to make a full DARE application, the lowest rate by area. Dual applicants from areas identified as Marginally Above or Below Average had higher rates of making incomplete applications with 57 (23.0 per cent) out of 248 dual applicants failing to make a complete application. Working-class SWD, as defined by area, from the most socially deprived areas making applications to both schemes, have the highest rates (25.0 per cent) of making incomplete DARE applications. The rate varies within areas of disadvantage. For example, 20.9 per cent of applicants from areas identified as Disadvantaged made incomplete DARE applications in comparison to 31.8 per cent of applicants from Very Disadvantaged Areas and 33.3 per cent of applicants from Extremely Disadvantaged Areas, suggesting a link between the depth of disadvantage (as measured by area of deprivation) and making a complete DARE application.

This analysis confirms that dual applicants living in more socially advantaged areas are more likely to make complete DARE applications and that working-class students living in socially deprived areas are the most likely to make incomplete DARE applications, with one in four working-class students with a disability, that applied to DARE and HEAR, making an incomplete DARE application.

5.8.4.2 Incomplete Applications - DARE and HEAR and School Type

I previously provided an analysis of students who applied to both DARE and HEAR by school type and I now add to this analysis in Figure 5.15/ Table 5.9 by analysing the students who made incomplete applications and comparing them to overall rates of applications to both DARE and HEAR by school type. This analysis identifies that there are some commonalities in the schools attended by dual applicants who apply to both the DARE and HEAR schemes and do not provide supporting documentation.

Figure 5.15: DARE and HEAR Incomplete Applications 2010 by School Type

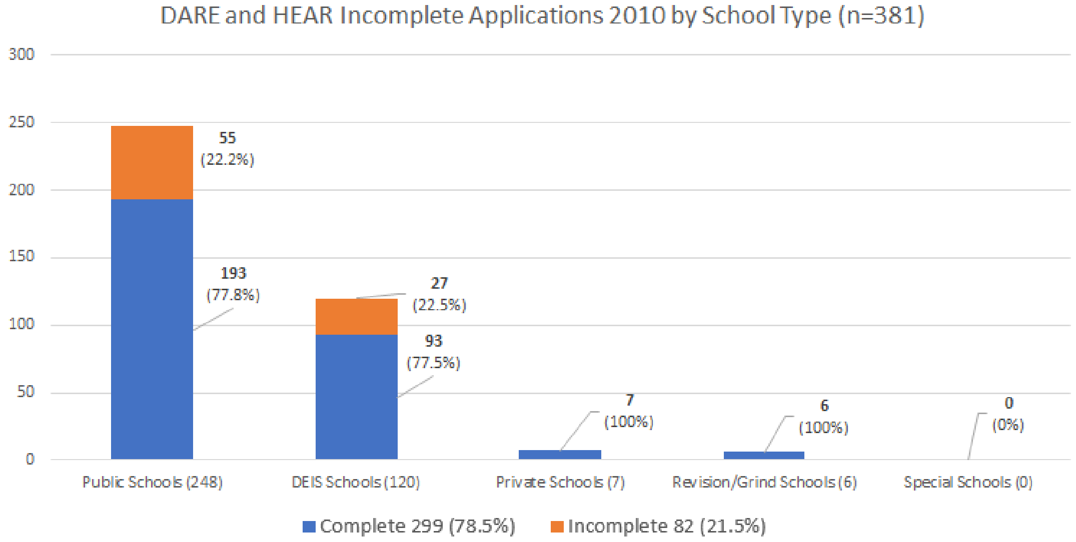


TABLE 5.9: DARE AND HEAR APPLICATIONS 2010 – SCHOOL TYPE AND INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS			
School Type	**Total DARE and HEAR Applications 2010**	**No DARE Documentation Submitted**	**% of Total DARE and HEAR Incomplete Applications by School Type**
Public	248	55	22.2%
DEIS	120	27	22.5%
Private	7	0	0%
Revision/Grind	6	0	0%
Special	0	0	0%
Total	381	82	21.5%

I previously reported that 381 students applied to both DARE and HEAR, and from this group 82 (21.5 per cent) students did not submit documentation as part of their DARE application. The analysis confirms that dual applicants from both public and DEIS schools have high and similar overall rates of not providing medical evidence in support of their DARE application. In 2010, more than one in five dual applicants attending public or DEIS schools did not make a complete DARE application thereby excluding them for further consideration under this scheme. Although the number of dual applicants from fee-paying schools is low overall, their capacity to make complete applications is high as of the 13 dual applicants attending fee-paying schools, all of these students provided supporting documentation.

Dual applicants, and the intersectional disadvantage that they represent, are a core target for the DARE and HEAR schemes. The analysis suggests that SWD attending public schools and DEIS schools are more likely to make incomplete applications suggesting that SWD applying to both DARE and HEAR attending public and DEIS schools may be experiencing similar disadvantage or some common barriers in relation to accessing the DARE scheme.

5.9 Summary of Who Applies to DARE

This section provided a descriptive analysis of the intersection of disability and social class to measure the pattern of DARE applications in 2010. This analysis, from an IS perspective, suggests that SWD in socially deprived areas are educationally disadvantaged in a multitude of complex intersecting ways. The data identified that SWD from the most deprived areas (as measured by post codes in the Dublin area and the Deprivation Index) and most disadvantaged schools (as measured by school type) are less likely to apply to DARE and are less likely to make a complete DARE application compared to SWD from more socially advantaged backgrounds. This analysis does provide unique evidence, from an intersectional perspective, that not all students and communities are benefiting from access to the DARE scheme equally. The analysis also suggests that communities that already show high rates of progression to HE are consolidating their advantage through the DARE scheme.

The analysis supports the contention that SWD are diverse and heterogeneous challenging the assumption of homogeneity that underpins the DARE scheme. The analysis suggests that working-class SWD may be experiencing additional barriers in the

DARE application process. These barriers may be connected to challenges in providing the required supporting documentation, or having it in the right time frame, or from the required medical professional. It may be that the demands of the application process itself nudge working-class SWD out of the scheme or that these students are poorly positioned in terms of support with the process from family and/ or school. Whatever the reason, at each stage of the DARE process working-class students are increasingly marginalised in a scheme that was ostensibly established to support their progression to HE. These inequities have real consequences in the lives of working-class SWD narrowing, restricting, or denying then opportunities to progress to HE.

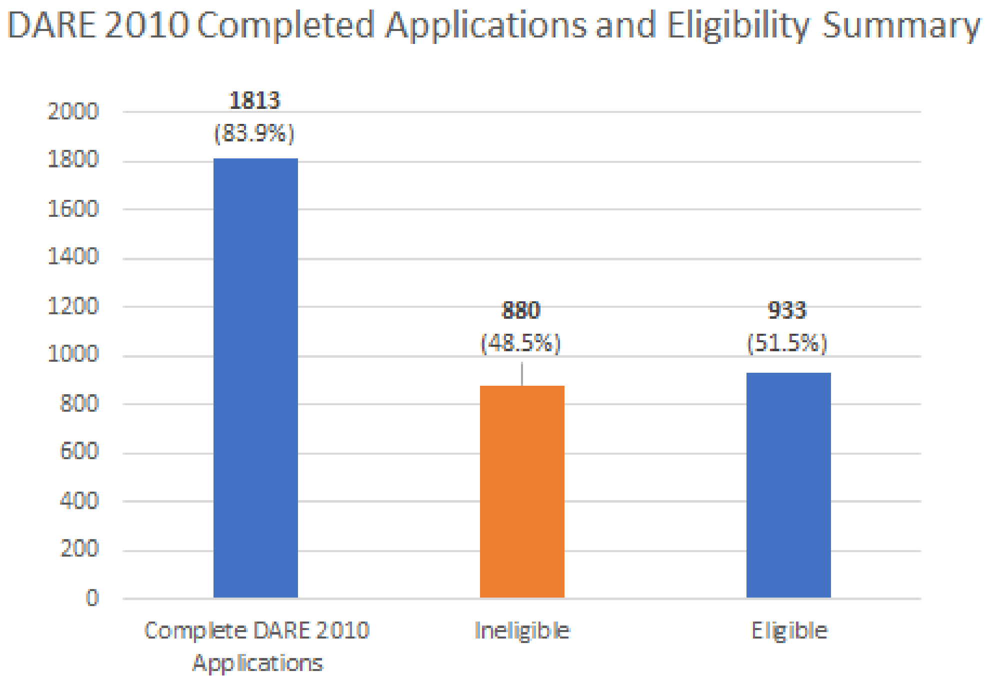
The next section provides a descriptive analysis of the intersection of disability and social class to measure the patterns of DARE eligibility to identify complex inequality in education in Ireland.

5.10 Who is Eligible for DARE?

The previous sections identified inequality in the context of applications to DARE. Eligibility for DARE is crucial however as it allows students who are assessed as eligible to be considered for a reduced points place in HE in Ireland. The next section examines patterns of eligibility at the intersection of disability and social class to identify if inequality in relation to applications is repeated, or even consolidated, in the context of eligibility for the DARE scheme.

As reported earlier in this chapter, there were 2,161 applicants to DARE in 2010, of which 348 applicants (16.1 per cent), made an incomplete application to DARE (applied and did not provide any supporting documentation) and were not assessed any further for the DARE scheme. In Figure 5.16, I report on the 1,813 students that completed DARE applications identifying that 933 (51.5 per cent) of these applicants were assessed as eligible while 880 applicants (48.5 per cent) were assessed as ineligible.

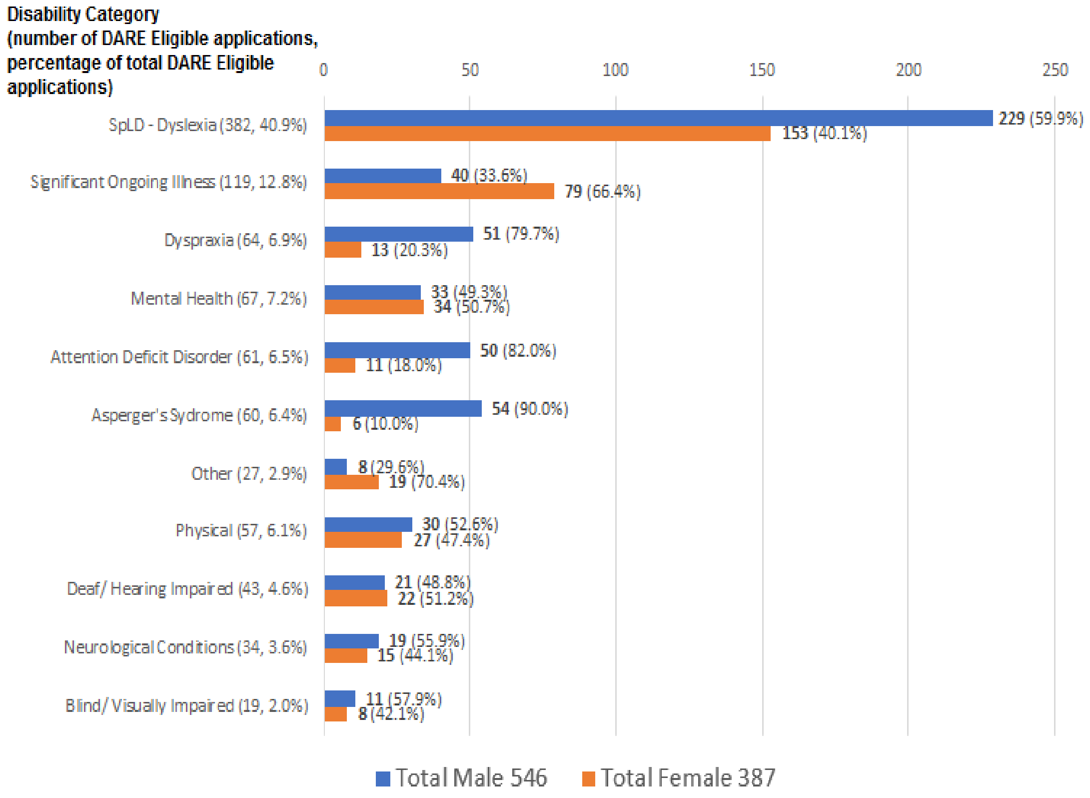
Figure 5.16: DARE Completed Applications and Eligibility 2010 Summary



5.11 Who is Eligible for DARE? Disability Category and Gender

As with similar analyses in earlier sections of this chapter, the analysis of eligibility begins by seeking to identify whether there are any variations in DARE eligible applications by category of disability or by gender. Figure 5.17 analyses DARE eligible applications by category of disability and identifies the percentage that each disability category represents, as a percentage of total eligible applications, and within each disability category, also identifies patterns by disability category and gender.

Figure 5.17: DARE Eligibility 2010 by Disability Category and Gender (n=933)



In 2010, the majority of eligible applications for DARE were from students with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) as 382 applicants (40.9 per cent) to DARE indicated that this was their primary disability and were eligible for the scheme. Students with a Significant Ongoing Illness (12.8 per cent) and students with a Mental Health Condition (7.2 per cent) accounted for the next highest percentage share of eligible applications by disability category. The students least likely to be eligible were students who were Blind/Visually Impaired (2.0 per cent), key targets for successive national access plans.

Comparing eligibility by disability category as a percentage of those who made complete applications identifies that, as a percentage, the categories most likely to be ineligible under the scheme, having made a complete application, were students who were Deaf/Hearing Impaired (43 eligible out of 65 complete applications - 66.2 per cent), students who were Blind/Visually Impaired (19 eligible out of 34 complete applications

- 55.9 per cent) and students with a Specific Learning Difficulty (382 eligible out of 1,119 complete applications - 34.1 per cent). These patterns probably reflect the fact that these disability categories needed to evidence impact with regard to specific criteria whereas other disability categories were eligible once a diagnosis was provided by the required professional.

Analysis by category of disability and gender identifies that of the 933 eligible applications to DARE in 2010, 546 (58.5 per cent) were male and 387 (41.5 per cent) were female confirming some gendered patterns in the DARE scheme. Males were more likely to be eligible in relation to particular disability categories notably Asperger’s Syndrome/Autism (90.0 per cent), Attention Deficit Disorder (82.0 per cent) and Dyspraxia (79.7 per cent). Females were more likely to be eligible under the Significant Ongoing Illness category (66.4 per cent). This analysis identified that eligibility was more evenly distributed among normative categories of disability.

Having provided this context, the next section analyses DARE eligible applications to identify whether there are variations in eligibility that are impacted by where students live coded by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

5.12 Are there Differences in DARE Eligibility by Area (Deprivation Index)?

Figure 5.18/ Table 5.10 analyse patterns of DARE eligibility by area/Deprivation Index.

Figure 5.18: DARE Eligibility 2010 by Deprivation Index

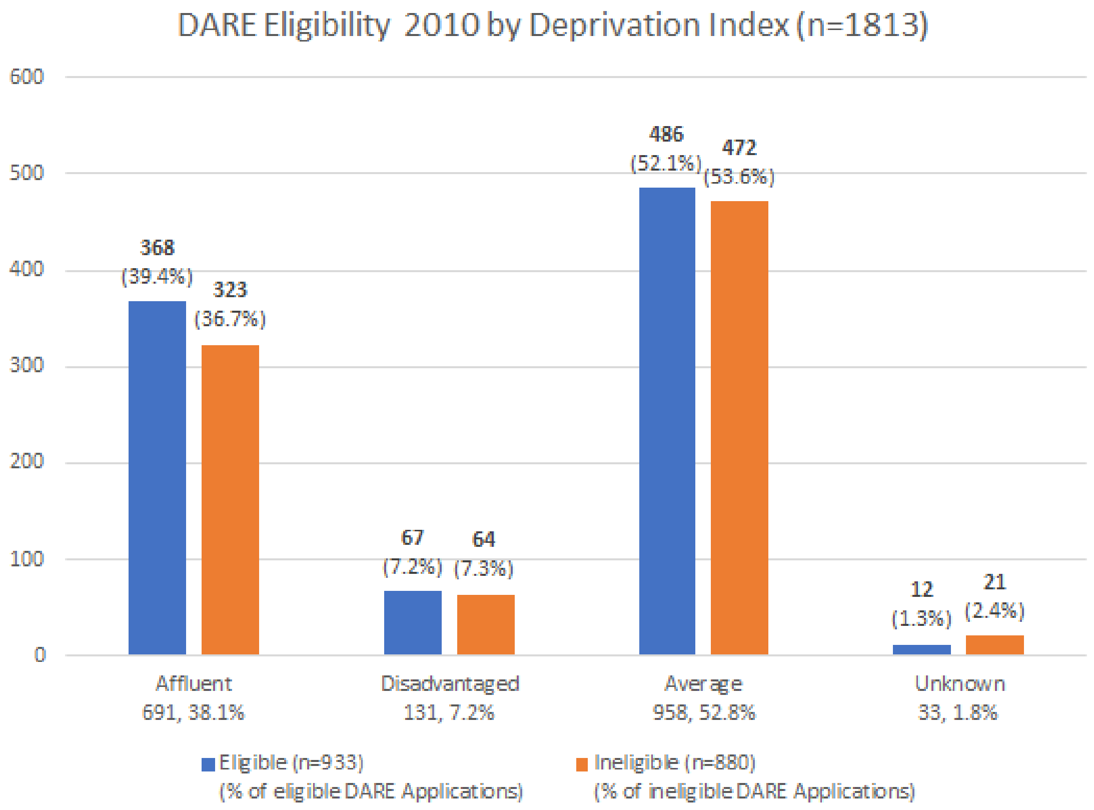


TABLE 5.10: DARE ELIGIBILITY 2010 BY DEPRIVATION INDEX

Deprivation Index	DARE Eligible	%	DARE Ineligible	%
Affluent	368	39.4%	323	36.7%
Disadvantaged	67	7.2%	64	7.3%
Average	486	52.1%	472	53.6%
Unknown	12	1.3%	21	2.4%
Total	933	100%	880	100%

Analysing DARE eligibility in 2010 by area/deprivation index confirms that the majority, 486 (52.1 per cent) of applicants eligible for the DARE scheme, were from areas identified as either Marginally Above or Below Average. The next largest share of eligible applicants were from areas identified as Affluent with 368 (39.4 per cent) applicants living in these areas. I reported earlier in the chapter that applicants from Affluent areas accounted for 36.1 per cent of all DARE *applications* but now account for 39.4 per cent of all *eligible* DARE applications, consolidating their advantage within the scheme. Applicants from more affluent areas are thus not only more likely to make a DARE application, they are also more likely to make a complete application, and we can now see are also more likely to be eligible for the scheme, consolidating their access to DARE at every stage of the process.

Applicants from the most socially deprived areas accounted for just 67 (7.2 per cent) eligible DARE applicants nationally in 2010, a stark and compelling reminder of the invisibility of working-class students with disabilities in HE. I reported earlier in the chapter that applicants from areas identified as disadvantaged accounted for 165 (7.7 per cent) of DARE applicants but now account for 7.2 per cent of all eligible DARE applications, highlighting how working-class students with disabilities lose ground at every stage of the DARE process. Almost four out of every ten students eligible for DARE are living in affluent areas while working-class SWD, living in the most socially deprived areas, are the least likely to be eligible for the DARE scheme.

5.13 Are there Differences in DARE Eligibility by School Type?

Figure 5.19/ Table 5.11 analyse DARE eligibility in 2010 by disability and school type. An examination of the schools attended by DARE applicants by school type and by DARE eligibility status reveals a pattern again of a consolidation of advantage in terms of DARE scheme eligibility.

Figure 5.19: DARE Eligibility 2010 by School Type

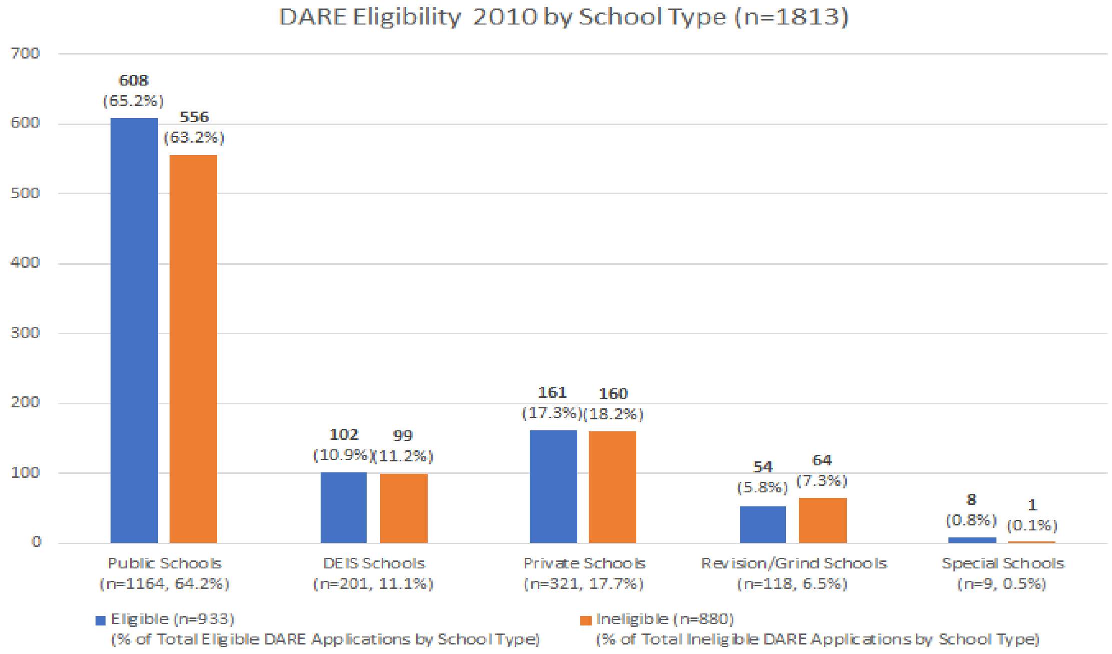


TABLE 5.11: DARE ELIGIBILITY 2010 BY SCHOOL TYPE				
School Type	**DARE Eligible**	**% of Total DARE Completed Applications by School Type**	**DARE Ineligible**	**% of Total DARE Completed Applications by School Type**
Public	608	65.2%	556	63.2%
DEIS	102	10.9%	99	11.2%
Private	161	17.3%	160	18.2%
Revision/Grind	54	5.8%	64	7.3%
Special	8	0.8%	1	0.1%
Total	933	100%	880	100%

Applicants from special schools have the lowest number of DARE applications nationally but the highest percentage rate of eligibility by school type under the DARE scheme in 2010 with eight (88.9 per cent) of their nine applications deemed eligible. Applicants from public schools account for 608 (65.2 per cent) eligible DARE applications, the largest cohort by school type. I reported earlier that applicants from private and revision schools, accounted for a total of 477 applications to the DARE scheme in 2010, a combined share of 22 per cent of DARE applications. They account for 215 (23.1 per cent) of DARE eligible applicants in 2010. Applicants from DEIS schools, accounted for 12.0 per cent of all applications but only 102 (10.9 per cent) of all eligible applications. In summary applicants from fee-paying private and revision/grind schools (overrepresented as a sector) are consolidating their overall advantage in terms of the number of applications by also increasing their share of eligible applications accounting for almost 1 in 4 of all eligible applications. By contrast, applicants from DEIS schools, (underrepresented as a sector) have lower rates of eligibility and account for a little over one in ten of all eligible DARE applications in 2010.

5.14 Does Eligibility by School Sectors Differ by Area?

As the intersectional nature of disadvantage is so key to this study, Figure 5.20/ Table 5.12 analyse DARE eligibility by school type *and* area.

Figure 5.20: DARE Eligibility 2010 by School Type and Deprivation Index

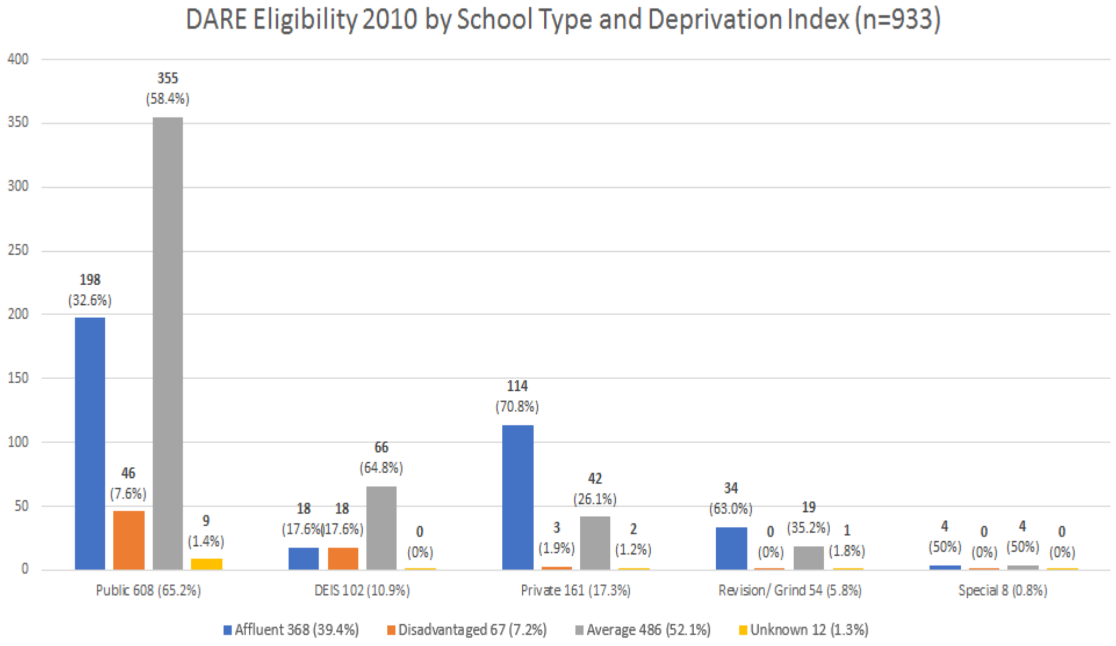


TABLE 5.12: DARE ELIGIBILITY 2010
BY SCHOOL TYPE AND DEPRIVATION INDEX

School Type	Total Eligible	%	Affluent	%	Disadvantaged	%	Average	%	Unknown	%
Public	608	65.2%	198	32.6%	46	7.6%	355	58.4%	9	1.4%
DEIS	102	10.9%	18	17.6%	18	17.6%	66	64.8%	0	0%
Private	161	17.3%	114	70.8%	3	1.9%	42	26.1%	2	1.2%
Revision/ Grind	54	5.8%	34	63.0%	0	0%	19	35.2%	1	1.8%
Special	8	0.8%	4	50.0%	0	0%	4	50.0%	0	0%
Total	933	100%	368	39.4%	67	7.2%	486	52.1%	12	1.3%

Figure 5.20/ Table 5.12 highlights the reality of the intersection of disability, DEIS, and disadvantage which is key to this study and is crucial in this analysis. DARE eligible students attending fee-paying schools were most likely (68.9 per cent) to be living in areas identified as Affluent. There were eight DARE eligible students attending special schools and none of these students were living in areas identified as Disadvantaged.

There were just 102 (10.9 per cent) DARE eligible students attending DEIS schools in 2010. Of those 102 students, 66 (64.8 per cent) were living in areas identified as either Marginally Above or Below Average. Eligible DARE applicants attending DEIS schools were equally as likely to be living in areas identified as Disadvantaged or areas identified as Affluent with just 18 students (17.6 per cent) living in these areas. This analysis reveals the true nature of intersecting disadvantage where from a total of 933 eligible students, there were just 18 (1.9 per cent) students eligible for DARE nationally that previously attended a DEIS school, *and* lived in an area identified as Disadvantaged.

In summary, this analysis suggests that applicants to DARE from the most advantaged schools and areas are more likely to have a DARE eligible application than applicants who are from the most socially deprived areas and attend the most disadvantaged schools.

The minute number of DARE eligible students attending DEIS schools and living in disadvantaged areas reveals the compelling impact of the intersection of disability and social class. Students from the most affluent areas account for almost four in ten of all eligible DARE applications in 2010 while working-class students from socially deprived areas accounted for less than one in ten of all eligible DARE applications. This is a stark finding suggesting that there are a myriad of barriers hindering access to this scheme for working-class students with disabilities.

5.15 Who is Eligible for DARE and HEAR?

This final section analyses dual applicants, those who applied to both DARE and HEAR, to examine how those cohort of students fared in the context of DARE eligibility. These students are a key national priority and provide a unique opportunity for students to request consideration on the basis of disability and social class.

5.15.1 DARE and HEAR Eligibility

Figure 5.21/ Table 5.13 identify that from 1,813 complete DARE applications, 299 (16.5 per cent) students made both a DARE and HEAR application, a number that seems positive and suggests strong awareness of both schemes.

Figure 5.21: Total DARE and HEAR Applications/ Eligibility 2010

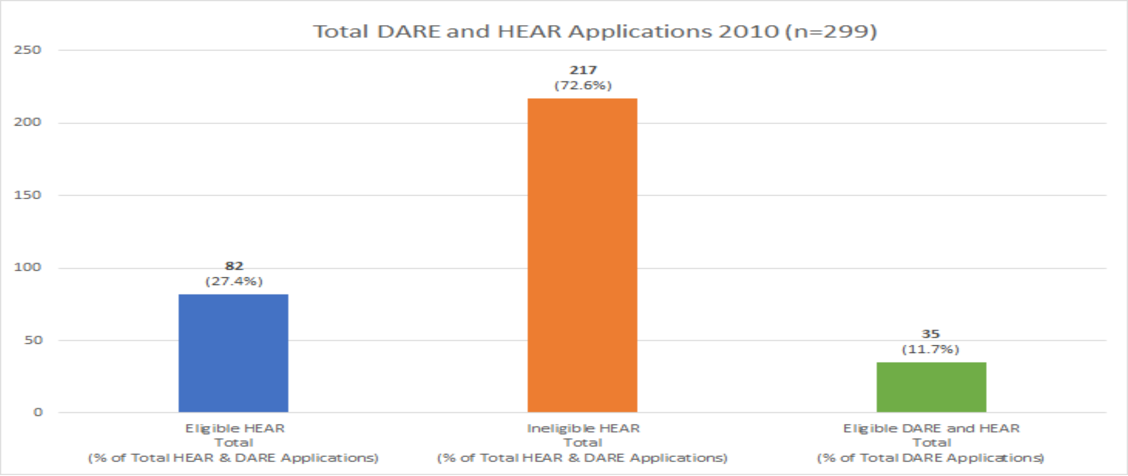


TABLE 5.13: DUAL APPLICANTS 2010 - ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE FOR DARE AND HEAR							
	Ineligible DARE	**%**	**Eligible DARE**	**%**	**Totals**	**%**	**% of Total Dual Applicants**
Ineligible HEAR	115	53.0%	102	47.0%	217	100%	72.6%
Eligible HEAR	47	57.3%	35	42.7%	82	10%	27.4%
Total	162	54.2%	137	45.8%	299	100%	100%

From the 299 students that applied for both schemes. 137 (45.8 per cent) students were eligible for DARE, a generally positive outcome. In relation to eligibility for HEAR however the picture is quite different as of the 299 who applied to both schemes, there were just 82 (27.4 per cent) applicants eligible for HEAR while there were 217 applicants (72.6 per cent) ineligible for HEAR. The data identified that more than seven out of every ten dual applicants were ineligible for HEAR suggesting that this cohort is experiencing significant barriers in relation to the HEAR scheme.

This analysis also considers a most fundamental representation of the intersection of disability and social class reflected in the numbers of students eligible for both schemes. As outlined earlier, one of the strengths of both schemes is the opportunity for students to request consideration, in the context of progression to HE, on the basis of disability *and* social class. This analysis reveals however that the total number of DARE applicants eligible for both DARE *and* HEAR is minute with just 35 (11.7 per cent) dual applicants eligible for both schemes. The outcome needs to be considered in relation to where the process started as 2, 161 students initially applied to the DARE scheme. We now find that at the end of the process that there are just 35 students eligible for both schemes, representing just 1.6 per cent of the total national pool of DARE applicants in 2010. This statistic is the most compelling evidence of the intersecting nature of disadvantage in the lives of working-class students with disabilities in education in Ireland.

5.15.2 Are there Differences in Eligibility for Dual Applicants by Area?

Figure 5.22/ Table 5.14 analyse these 35 eligible dual applicants by area confirming the complex picture of intersectional disadvantage.

Figure 5.22: Dual Applicants 2010 – Eligibility by Deprivation Index

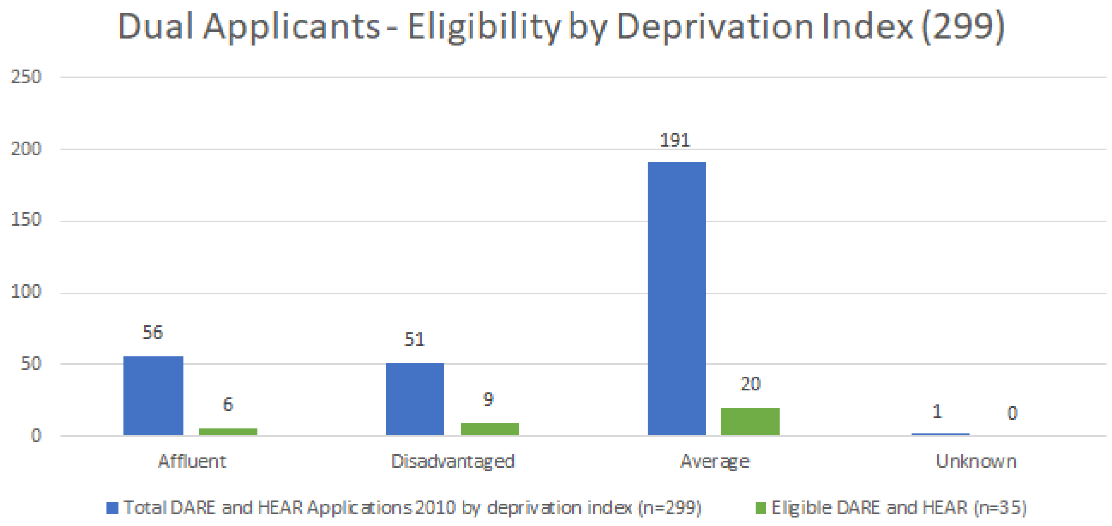


TABLE 5.14: DUAL APPLICANTS 2010 - ELIGIBILITY BY DEPRIVATION INDEX			
Deprivation Index	**Total DARE and HEAR Applications 2010 by deprivation index**	**Eligible DARE and HEAR**	**%**
Affluent	56	6	17.1%
Disadvantaged	51	9	25.7%
Average	191	20	57.2%
Unknown	1	0	0%
Total	299	35	100%

Analysing applicants who were deemed eligible for both schemes by area confirms that the majority (57.2 per cent) of the 35 students eligible for both schemes were living in areas either Marginally Above or Below Average. Six applicants eligible for both schemes (17.1 per cent) were living in affluent areas while just nine (0.5 per cent) applicants nationally from a total possible pool of 1,813 completed applications were eligible for HEAR and DARE and were living in areas identified as disadvantaged.

5.15.3 Are there Differences in Eligibility for Dual Applicants by School Type?

Figure 5.23/ Table 5.15 analyse DARE eligibility for dual applicants by disability and social class.

Figure 5.23: Dual Applicants 2010 – Eligibility by School Type

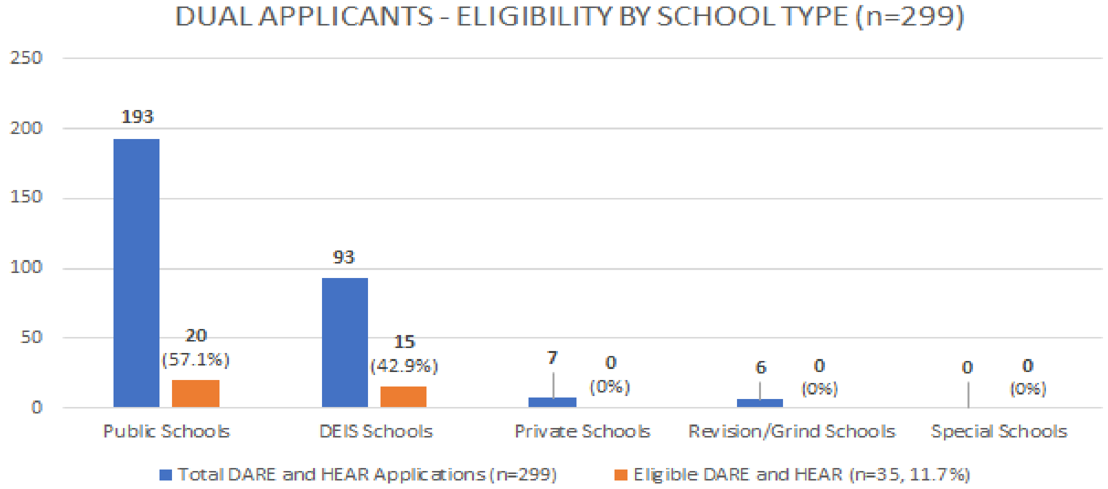


TABLE 5.15: DUAL APPLICANTS 2010 - ELIGIBILITY BY SCHOOL TYPE			
School Type	**Total DARE and HEAR Applications**	**Eligible DARE and HEAR**	**%**
Public	193	20	57.1%
DEIS	93	15	42.9%
Private	7	0	0%
Revision/Grind	6	0	0%
Special	0	0	0%
Total	299	35	100%

In 2010, of the 35 students eligible for both schemes, the majority (57.1 per cent) of students were attending public schools. There were just 15 (42.9 per cent) students nationally previously attending DEIS schools that were eligible for both DARE and HEAR in 2010. The analysis confirms that although 1,813 students made complete DARE applications, that just 35 (1.9 per cent) were eligible for both schemes and that within this there were just 15 (0.8 per cent) who were eligible for both schemes and attended a DEIS school.

5.15.4 Are there Differences in Eligibility for Dual Applicants by School Type *and* Area?

Figure 5.24/ Table 5.16 analyse the intersection of disability, school type, and area.

Figure 5.24: Dual Applicants 2010 – Eligibility by School Type and Deprivation Index

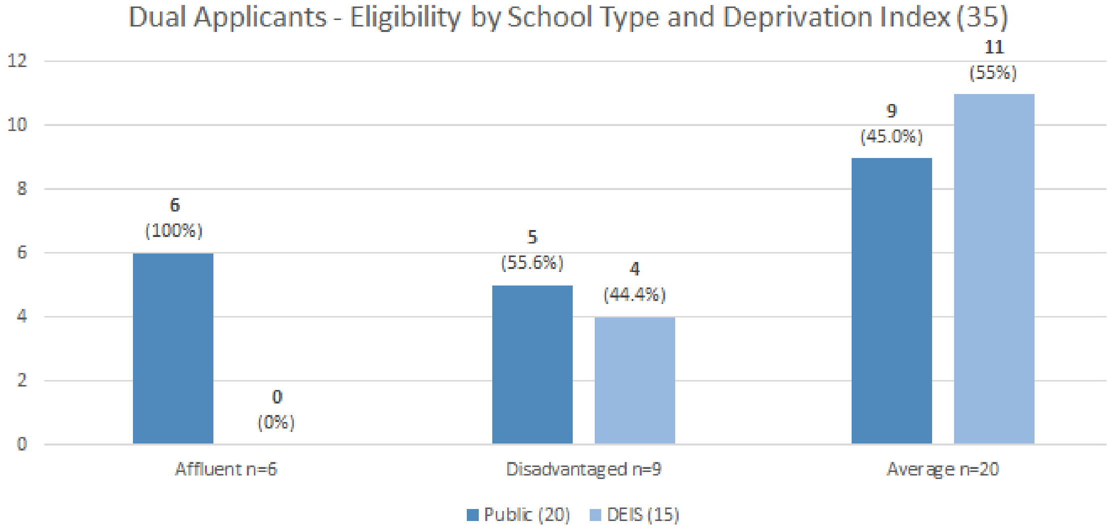


TABLE 5.16: DUAL APPLICANTS 2010 - ELIGIBILITY BY SCHOOL TYPE AND DEPRIVATION INDEX								
School Type	**Affluent**	**%**	**Disadvantaged**	**%**	**Average**	**%**	**Total**	**%**
Public	6	100%	5	55.6%	9	45.0%	20	100%
DEIS	0	0%	4	44.4%	11	55.0%	15	100%
Total	6	100%	9	100%	20	100%	35	100%

Figure 5.24/ Table 5.16 identify that the majority (45.0 per cent) of the 35 applicants who were eligible for DARE and HEAR were attending public schools and were living in areas identified as Marginally Above or Below Average. 11 (73.3 per cent) of the 15 applicants attending DEIS schools, who were eligible for both schemes, were also living in areas identified as Marginally Above or Below Average. The intersection of disability, DEIS, and disadvantaged area has been crucial throughout this chapter. In this final stage of the DARE application process, we now see that from a total pool of 1,813 completed DARE applications, there were just nine (0.5 per cent) students eligible for both DARE

and HEAR, a key focus of national policy, that were living in areas identified as disadvantaged and of these just four (0.2 per cent) students eligible for both schemes were *both* attending a DEIS school *and* living in a disadvantaged area.

This analysis of dual applicants is the most compelling evidence of the complex and hidden intersection of disability and disadvantage in the lives of SWD in Ireland. SWD are eligible for both schemes in minute numbers and even those that are eligible are unlikely to be living in a disadvantaged area and attending a DEIS school.

5.16 Summary of Who is Eligible for DARE

This analysis suggests that the educational disadvantage experienced by SWD is more complex and intersectional than has previously been assumed in national policy and practice. The analysis identifies that working-class students are eligible for DARE in small numbers and that even if eligible, they are less likely to be attending a DEIS school or to be living in an area of social disadvantage, a finding also identified in recent research relating to 2015 and 2016 DARE cohorts (Nic Fhlannchadha 2017). Dual applicants, who are eligible for both schemes, are also less likely to be attending a DEIS school and to be living in the most socially disadvantaged areas.

This analysis of eligible DARE applications suggest that the advantages enjoyed by students from more advantaged locations, as part of the DARE application process, are consolidated in the context of scheme eligibility, that some SWD in more advantaged locations are better positioned to take advantage of the DARE scheme, and that the scheme is not meeting the needs of working-class students with disabilities. Indeed, the scheme may very well be having the unintended consequence of advantaging SWD already benefitting by social class and further disadvantaging a most marginalised group of students experiencing complex intersectional embedded educational inequality.

5.17 Chapter Summary

A national study of the DARE and HEAR schemes argued that the DARE scheme may not be meeting the needs of students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and that the scheme should address the gap *"…in terms of the intersection between disability and social disadvantage"* suggesting that this intersection was constraining school leavers in accessing the scheme (Byrne et al. 2013, 239). The study raised concerns about the low numbers of DARE eligible applicants attending DEIS schools and that DARE applicants from fee-paying schools were *"approximately five times more likely than non-fee-paying schools"* to make a DARE application (Byrne et al. 2013, 152). The study suggested that *"...a middle-class advantage is likely to be at play"* (Byrne et al. 2013, 156) and that the DARE application process *"may be biased in favour of those with greater financial resources at their disposal to access medical or psychological reports"* (Byrne et al. 2013, 115).

The intersectional analysis in this chapter both supports, and adds to the findings from this study, by analysing patterns of application by students who applied to DARE, including those who applied to both DARE and HEAR, to provide a unique analysis of the intersection of disability and social class and HE. The analysis at the intersection of area, school type and applications to DARE and HEAR have also been crucial throughout this chapter and both support and add to previous study findings. The chapter provides evidence that all students with disabilities are differentially positioned, in the context of accessing the DARE scheme, depending on where they are located at the interstices of disability and social class. The quantitative data presented illustrates the complex intersecting layers of multiple disadvantage in different arenas and the myriad of ways that social class and disability intersect to restrict the choices, opportunities, life chances and outcomes for young working-class students with disabilities in Ireland. This analysis identifies profoundly inequitable outcomes for working-class students with disabilities that apply to the DARE scheme. The analysis suggests that being positioned in more affluent areas and/or schools advantages some students with disabilities in similar locations while working-class students with disabilities living in socially deprived areas and/or attending DEIS schools are marginalised at each stage of the DARE process in the context of social class.

In this chapter, disability, DEIS, and disadvantage, intersect, interlock, and conspire to restrict the opportunities for working-class students with disabilities to access the DARE scheme. Working-class students with disabilities are less likely to apply to DARE, less able to complete the DARE application process, less likely to be eligible for DARE, less likely to be eligible for DARE and HEAR, and ultimately less likely to progress to HE than their more affluent peers. These inequities have real consequences in the lives of working-class SWD narrowing, restricting, or denying them educational opportunities. By contrast, young people from more socially advantaged backgrounds are better positioned to access the DARE scheme and to use it to create educational opportunities.

Weber argues that it is the power that accrues from occupying positions of dominance in various hierarchies that *"enables large numbers of people in similar locations to have privileges/advantages in a situation"* (Weber 1998, 28). This intersectional analysis suggests that this argument is valid and that students with disabilities in more advantaged locations in Ireland have access to privileges and advantages that are not available, or are out of the reach, of working-class students applying to DARE, thereby reproducing inequalities in education. This inequity has been largely hidden in the past and is revealed in this chapter through the intersectional analysis. These issues are explored further in the participant accounts of the education system in chapter 7.

The next chapter continues this quantitative intersectional analysis by following the cohort of DARE eligible students, introduced in this chapter, who subsequently progressed to higher education in Ireland in September 2010. The chapter analyses the retention/non-progression in higher education of these students (students who did not progress from 1st year of study in 2010/11 to 2nd year of study in 2011/12) to identify patterns of inequity at the intersection of disability and social class.

Chapter 6: DARE 2010 - Analysis of Retention/ Non-Progression DARE Eligible Students in Higher Education

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the intersection of disability and social class in the lives of young adults with disabilities, eligible for the DARE scheme, who entered higher education (HE) in Ireland in September 2010. As described in earlier chapters, the DARE scheme was developed as a national scheme to support greater access by students with disabilities (SWD) to HE in Ireland and students who are eligible for DARE can be offered a place in HE without reaching the points required by other students. This chapter continues to follow the students, introduced in the previous chapter, who were eligible for DARE and who subsequently progressed to one of the 11 higher education institutions[20] (HEIs) participating in the DARE scheme in Ireland in September 2010. Using quantitative data from students eligible for the DARE scheme in 2010, this chapter analyses the retention/non-progression (students who did not progress from 1st year of study in HE in 2010/11 to 2nd year of study in 2011/12) of these students, at the intersection of disability and social class, to identify complex inequality in education in Ireland.

Supporting the retention of all students in HE is a key national policy imperative in Ireland (Liston et al. 2016, 5) although data on the retention in HE of specific equity groups has been limited, and where provided, has reported on social class and has not reported on the retention of SWD (Mooney et al. 2010, Liston et al. 2016 and Frawley et

---

[20] All HEI's in Ireland do not participate in the DARE scheme. There were 11 HEI's participating in the DARE scheme in 2010, the seven universities (Dublin City University, National University of Ireland Galway, Maynooth University, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin, and University of Limerick), two Institutes of Technology (Athlone Institute of Technology and Dublin Institute of Technology) and two Colleges (Mater Dei Institute of Education and National College of Ireland).

al. 2017). A national study of the DARE and HEAR schemes identified that having controlled for a range of characteristics that DARE and HEAR entrants had the same probability of progressing to 2nd year as other students (Byrne et al. 2013). The small body of research relating to the retention of SWD in HE in Ireland, and internationally, has not explored the intersection of disability and social class and the unique approach in this study offers a substantial contribution to knowledge in this domain.

The independent variables used in these analyses were also used in the previous chapter and are disability (measured by application to the DARE scheme) and social class (measured by three proxies – school type, home address/area where applicant is living, and applications to both DARE and HEAR). I introduced each of these proxies for social class in chapter 4 and provide a detailed explanation of them in Appendix C. To remind the reader, school type refers to the second level school attended by DARE applicants which were individually identified as public schools, schools participating in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity Scheme (DEIS) scheme, private schools (fee-paying), revision/grind schools (fee-paying) or special schools (attended by students with disabilities only). The area/home address of all DARE applicants has been coded using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index which is widely used in Ireland as a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area. Students who had applied for both DARE and HEAR are used as the third proxy for social class as the HEAR scheme uses an intersectional multi-indicator approach to identify socio-economic disadvantage using a range of financial, social and cultural indicators or criteria.

This chapter begins by providing a national overview of the students that applied for DARE in 2010 and started as DARE eligible new entrants in HE in Ireland in September

2010. I then provide a descriptive analysis of the intersection of disability and social class to analyse the retention/non-progression in HE of these students (students who did not progress from 1st year of study in 2010/11 to 2nd year of study in 2011/12) to identify patterns of inequity at the intersection of disability and social class. The analyses, as with the previous chapter, consist of a series of bivariate comparisons that offers a descriptive rather than a multivariate analysis. The analysis again seeks to identify and map patterns of inequality and privilege.

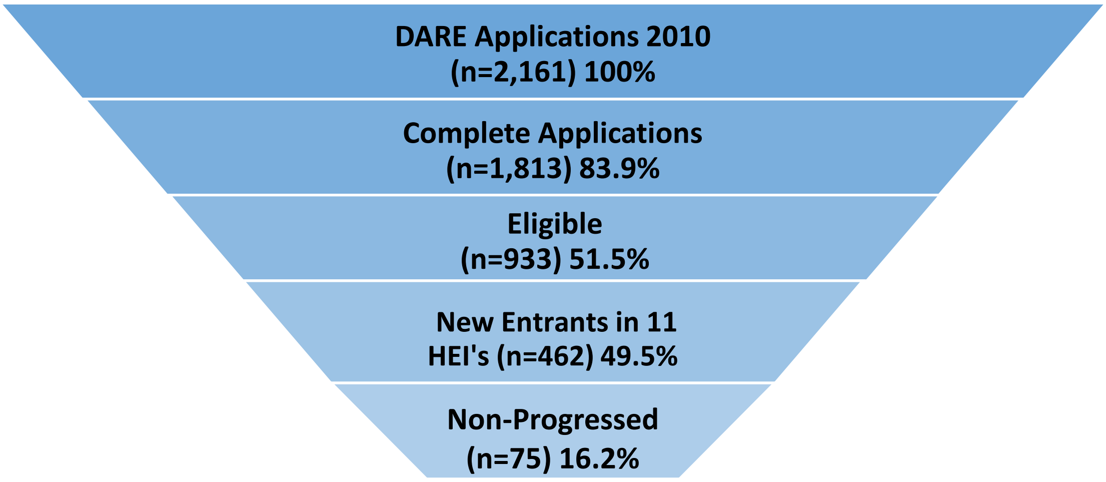
The analyses challenge the assumption that students with disabilities are a homogenous group and that they experience HE in the same way, with the same outcomes. The analysis suggests that all SWD are differentially positioned within HE depending on where they are simultaneously located at the interstices of disability and social class. This chapter identifies that working-class students with disabilities experience compelling additional challenges that are leading to profoundly inequitable educational outcomes in HE. This is revealed through the detailed analysis of student non-progression in HE which follows.

6.2 DARE 2010 National Macro Patterns

6.2.1 Overview DARE Applications, Eligibility, New Entrants and Non-Progression

Figure 6.1 provides an overview of the students, introduced in the previous chapter, who applied to DARE in 2010 and who started in one of the 11 HEI's participating in the DARE scheme in September 2010, and identifies the outcomes in the context of those that did not progress from their 1st year of study in HE in 2010/11 to their 2nd year of study in 2011/12.

Figure 6.1: Overview DARE 2010 Applications, Eligibility, New Entrants and Non-Progression in 11 DARE Higher Education Institutions



I identified in the previous chapter that in 2010, 2,161 young people with disabilities applied to the DARE scheme in Ireland, that 1,813 (83.9 per cent) students made a complete application to DARE (applied and provided supporting documentation) and that 933 (51.5 per cent) students were assessed as eligible. This chapter now follows these students into HE identifying that 462 (49.5 per cent) of these DARE eligible students progressed as first time new entrants to undergraduate programmes of study in one of 11 HEIs participating in the DARE scheme in Ireland in September 2010. From this cohort of DARE eligible new entrants to HE, 75 (16.2 per cent) students did not progress from their 1st year of study in 2010/11 to their 2nd year of study in 2011/12.

The next section provides a more detailed overview of the status of these students at the start of their 2nd year of study classifying students in the same manner as national studies, as New Entrants[21], Re-Enrolling Student[22], Repeat Student[23], Internal Transfer Student[24], External Transfer Student[25], and as Non-Progressed[26] (Mooney et al. 2010, 14, Liston et al. 2016, Frawley et al. 2017).

6.2.2 How do DARE Eligible New Entrants Fare in Higher Education?

Table 6.1 provides an overview of the student status of the 462 new entrants to HE in September 2011 (at the start of their 2nd year of study), identifying those who re-enrolled, repeated, transferred internally, deferred, graduated, did not register, and did not progress into 2011/12.

---

[21] New Entrant - a student entering an undergraduate higher education programme for the first time.

[22] Re-Enrolling Student - students progressing to the next year of study on the same course without any interruptions. This category does not include repeat or transfer students.

[23] Repeat Student - present in the institution on their original course the following year, but enrolled in the same year of study as the previous year.

[24] Internal Transfer Student - Students transferring from their original mode or course of study to another programme within an institution, at the start of the new academic year

[25] External Transfer Student – students transferring from a course of study in their institution to another institution are described as external transfer students. These students are not tracked in this study and are deemed as having ‘not progressed’.

[26] Non-Progressed – where a new entrant student ID does not appear in their institution’s data return for the following academic year

TABLE 6.1: DARE ENTRANTS 2010/11 - STUDENT STATUS 2011/12

Student Status 2011/12	**Total Students**	**% of the Total**
Re-enrolled: progressing to the next year of study on the same course without any interruptions	327	70.8%
Repeat: present in the institution on their original course the following year, but enrolled in the same year of study as the previous year	44	9.5%
Transfer Internally: students transferring from their original mode or course of study to another programme within an institution at the start of the new academic year	9	1.9%
Deferrals: deferred the programme of study	2	0.4%
Graduated: graduated from the programme of study	1	0.2%
Did Not Register: accepted a place through CAO and did not register with the HEI	4	0.9%
Non-Progressed: where a new entrant student ID does not appear in their institution's data return for the following academic year	75	16.2%
Total New Entrants 2010/11	462	100%

The analysis confirms that 462 DARE eligible students started as new entrants in one of the 11 participating HEI's in 2010/11. From these 462 new entrants, 382 (82.6 per cent) students are categorised as progressing in 2011/12 given that these students re-enrolled, repeated, transferred internally or returned to start 1st year having deferred. In 2011/12, 44 (9.5 per cent) students are repeating (present in the institution on their original course but enrolled in the same year of study as the previous year), accounting for almost one in every 10 DARE eligible students that progressed to HE in 2010/11. Two students deferred their places in 2010/11 and started in 1st year in 2011/12. One student graduated having started and completed a one-year course in 2010/11 and four students accepted a place at a HEI but did not take up their places. In 2011/12, 75 (16.2 per cent) DARE eligible students who were new entrants to HE in September 2010/11 are identified as non-progressed to the second year of their studies in September 2011/12. This non-presence rate is broadly comparable to national non-progression rates across all sectors which was 16 per cent for 2012/13 and 15 per cent for 2013/14 (Frawley et al. 2017, 13).

At a macro level, the data suggests that although a large number of students initially applied to DARE in 2010, that the numbers continue to dwindle at each stage both in terms of patterns of application and eligibility to the DARE scheme, as explored in the previous chapter, and in terms of the retention of these DARE eligible students within HE. This suggests, at a macro level, that there are barriers for some SWD and their families both in getting into HE and crucially in being retained within HE. At a macro level, the national overview of non-progression is initially positive suggesting that non-progression rates for DARE eligible students are broadly comparable to national non-progression rates across all sectors.

The next section provides an overview of patterns of non – progression by category of disability, by HE sector[27] and by gender. This is provided as context to support the intersectional analysis by disability and social class that follows later in the chapter.

6.2.3 Does Non-Progression Vary by Category of Disability?

Figure 6.2/ Table 6.2 analyses non-progression by disability category and identifies that although the overall non-progression rates for DARE eligible students (16.2 per cent) is comparable to the national non-progression rates, that there are significant variations in non-progression rates by category of disability.

---

[27] The 11 HEI's were categorised as Universities (Dublin City University, National University of Ireland Galway, Maynooth University, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin, and University of Limerick), Institutes of Technology (Athlone Institute of Technology and Dublin Institute of Technology) or as Other Colleges (Mater Dei Institute of Education and National College of Ireland.

Figure 6.2: DARE Entrants Non-Progression 2011/12 by Disability Category

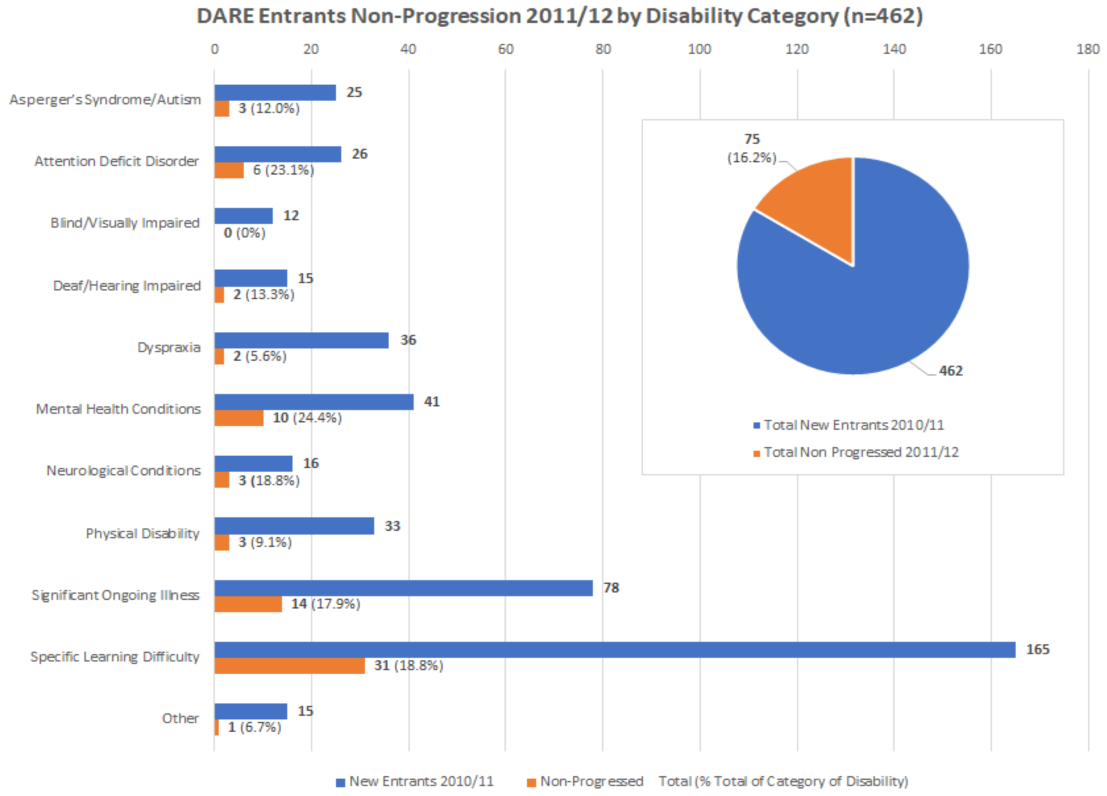


TABLE 6.2: DARE ENTRANTS NON-PROGRESSION 2011/12 - DISABILITY CATEGORY					
Category of Disability	**New Entrants 2010/11**	**% by Category of Disability**	**Total Non-Progressed**	**% of Total Non-Progressed**	**% Total of Category of Disability**
Asperger's Syndrome/Autism	25	5.4%	3	4.0%	12.0%
Attention Deficit Disorder	26	5.6%	6	8.0%	23.1%
Blind/Visually Impaired	12	2.6%	0	0%	0%
Deaf/Hearing Impaired	15	3.2%	2	2.7%	13.3%
Dyspraxia	36	7.8%	2	2.7%	5.6%
Mental Health Conditions	41	8.9%	10	13.3%	24.4%
Neurological Conditions	16	3.5%	3	4.0%	18.8%
Physical Disability	33	7.1%	3	4.0%	9.1%
Significant Ongoing Illness	78	16.9%	14	18.7%	17.9%
Specific Learning Difficulty	165	35.7%	31	41.3%	18.8%
Other	15	3.2%	1	1.3%	6.7%
Total New Entrants	**462**	**100%**	**75**	**100%**	**16.2%**

In 2011/12, at a macro level, the majority of the 75 students who did not progress to their 2nd year of study, 31 (41.3 per cent), are students who have a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD). The next highest non-progression rates by disability category are students with a Significant Ongoing Illness (18.7 per cent) and students with a Mental Health Condition (13.3 per cent). This is not surprising as these categories of disability also comprise the largest numbers of new entrants. Students with a SpLD accounted for 165 (35.7 per cent) of all new entrants while students with a Significant Ongoing Illness (16.9 per cent) and students with a Mental Health Condition (8.9 per cent) accounted for the next highest percentage share nationally of new entrants by disability category.

An analysis by the percentage of students non-progressed within each disability category is more revealing and identifies that students who indicated that their primary disability was a Mental Health Condition have the highest rates of not progressing into year 2 of their programmes of study in HE. Almost one in every four DARE eligible students with a Mental Health Condition is leaving HE in the first year of study, a finding that is consistent with previous research in an Irish context (UCC/CIT 2010). There are also high rates of non-progression for students who indicated that their primary disability was Attention Deficit Disorder (23.1 per cent), Neurological issues (18.8 per cent) and a Specific Learning Difficulty (18.8 per cent). The lowest rates of non-progression are for students who were Blind/Visually Impaired, a key target for national access plans, all of whom either progressed or were repeating first year. Students with Dyspraxia were also significantly more likely to progress to second year in HE with two (5.6 per cent) of the 36 new entrants in that category not present a year later. There are also lower rates of non-progression for students with Physical Disabilities (9.1 per cent) and students who were Deaf/Hearing Impaired (13.3 per cent), also key targets for national access policy.

In summary, this analysis identifies that the non-progression of DARE eligible new entrants varies significantly by category of disability in HE in Ireland. The high non-progression rates across most categories of disability are a concern and suggest that there may be barriers affecting the retention in HE of all SWD at a macro level and that there may be additional barriers and challenges for some specific disability categories.

The next section provides an overview of patterns of non – progression by HE sector, and within sector, by gender.

6.2.4 Does Non-Progression Vary by Higher Education Sector and Gender?

National studies have identified that the rates of non-progression generally in HE vary between sectors with higher rates of non-progression for students in the Institute of Technology (IoT) sector in comparison to students in the University sector (Frawley et al. 2017, 7). Gender has also been identified as an issue in relation to non– progression in HE across all sectors (Frawley et al. 2017, 7). Gender, although not the focus of this study, emerged as an issue and Figure 6.3/Table 6.3 analyses the non-progression of DARE eligible students to identify patterns of non-progression by HE sector *and* by gender.

Figure 6.3: DARE Entrants Non-Progression 2011/12 by HE Sector and Gender

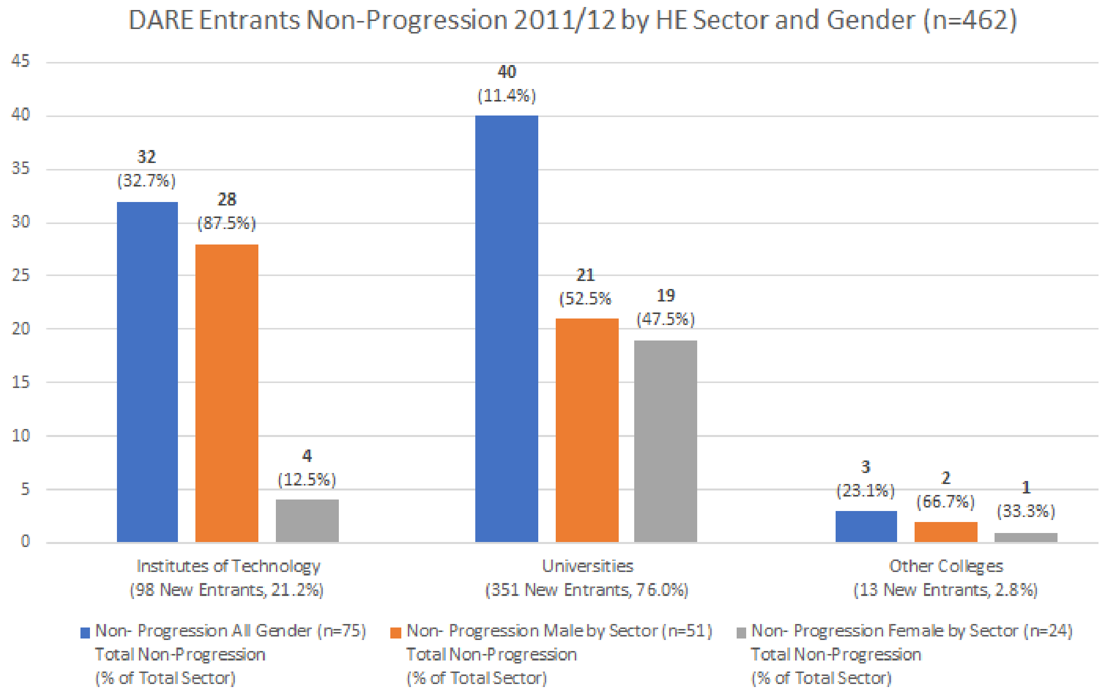


TABLE 6.3: DARE ENTRANTS NON-PROGRESSION 2011/12 - HE SECTOR AND GENDER

HE Sector	**Total New Entrants**	**% of Total**	**Non-Progression**	**% of the NP Total Sector**	**Non-Progression Male by Sector**	**% of the Total Male**	**Non-Progression Female by Sector**	**% of the Total Female**	**% Total**
Institutes of Technology	98	21.2%	32	32.7%	28	87.5%	4	12.5%	100%
Universities	351	76.0%	40	11.4%	21	52.5%	19	47.5%	100%
Other Colleges	13	2.8%	3	23.1%	2	66.7%	1	33.3%	100%
Total Entrants	462	100%	75	16.2%	51	68.0%	24	32.0%	100%

Of the 462 new entrants to HE, 351 (76.0 per cent) started programmes of study in one of the seven universities while 98 (21.2 per cent) attended one of the two IOTs and 13 (2.8 per cent) attended one of the three colleges in the DARE scheme. This analysis identifies that the non-progression of DARE eligible new entrants is a particular concern for the IoT sector where of the 98 DARE eligible new entrants in the IOT sector in 2010/11, 32 (32.7 per cent) were not present one year later. This non-presence rate is significantly higher than the national non-progression rates for the IOT sector which was

23 per cent for 2012/13 and 21 per cent for 2013/14 (Frawley et al. 2017, 13). The non-progression rate in the university sector (11.4 per cent) is closely aligned to the national non-progression rates for all students in the university sector, which was 11 per cent for both 2012/13 and 2013/14 (Frawley et al. 2017, 13).

There is also a strong gendered pattern by HE sector. Of the 75 DARE new entrants in 2010/11 who were not present in 2011/12, 51 (68.0 per cent) new entrants who did not progress were male and 24 (32.0 per cent) new entrants who did not progress were female. This is consistent with national studies that have identified that females are more likely than males to progress to the following year of study across all sectors (Frawley et al. 2017, 7). The majority of males not present in this study are studying in the IoT sector where 28 males (87.5 per cent) were not present in 2011/12 in comparison to four (12.5 per cent) females. This is consistent with other research, which finds a higher non-presence rate among males in the IoT sector largely due to the nature of course provision, as well as the diversity of the student composition, in that sector (Frawley et al. 2017). The university sector also has slightly more males not present overall, 21 (52.5 per cent) male versus 19 (47.5 per cent) female although the gap is much smaller.

At a macro level, this analysis identifies that DARE eligible students are more likely not to progress in HE if they are studying in the IoT sector in comparison to the university sector and that male students are more likely not to be present in the second year of their programme of study, a trend identified previously in a national study in an Irish context (Byrne et al. 2013, 193).

6.2.5 Summary

The initial analysis, at a national macro level, of the non-progression of students who were eligible for DARE and entered HE in 2010/11, suggests that non-progression rates for DARE eligible students at 16.2 per cent is broadly comparable to national non-progression rates across all sectors which was 16 per cent for 2012/13 and 15 per cent for 2013/14 (Frawley et al. 2017, 13). The analysis, however, also identifies that this national non-progression rate hides different outcomes in HE that vary by category of disability, by HE sector and by gender. This data, at a macro level, identifies that SWD in HE are not a homogenous group and that there are important differences in their outcomes in HE. These analyses reinforce the argument explored throughout this study that these students are a far more heterogeneous group than is assumed by national policy and practice.

The next section commences the intersectional analysis analysing initially the non-progression of DARE new entrants by area/home address using the Pobal Deprivation Index, to identify whether there are variations in non-progression in HE impacted by the affluence or deprivation of the area in which students live.

6.3 Are There Differences in Student Non-Progression by Area (Deprivation Index)?

Figure 6.4/ Table 6.4 analyses the non-progression of students by area/home address coded using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index which is used in Ireland as a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area. As described in the previous chapter, the Deprivation Index categorises each small area as Affluent, Very Affluent, and Extremely Affluent, Disadvantaged, Very Disadvantaged, and Extremely Disadvantaged, and as Marginally Above Average and Marginally Below Average. For ease of reporting I have combined these headings in Table 6.4 and report on areas as Affluent, Disadvantaged, Average, and Unknown (addresses that could not be coded using the Deprivation Index).

Figure 6.4: DARE Entrants Non-Progression 2011/12 by Area

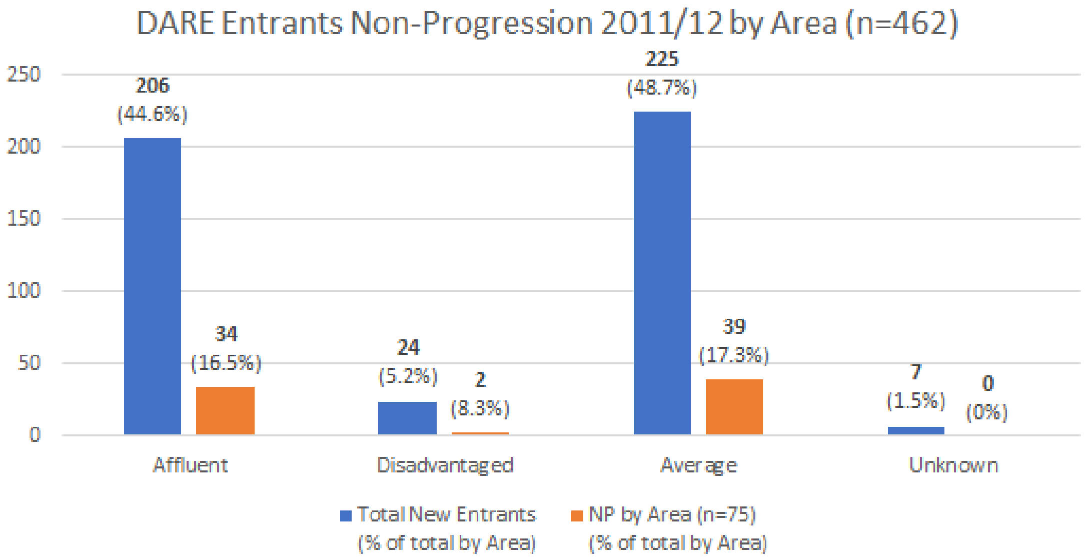


TABLE 6.4: DARE ENTRANTS NON-PROGRESSION 2011/12 - AREA				
New Entrants by Deprivation Index	**Total New Entrants**	**% of the Total by Area**	**Non-Progression by Area**	**Non-Progression as % of Total New Entrants by Area**
Affluent Area	206	44.6%	34	16.5%
Disadvantaged Area	24	5.2%	2	8.3%
Marginally Above/Below Average Area	225	48.7%	39	17.3%
Unknown Area	7	1.5%	0	0%
Total Entrants	462	100%	75	16.2%

The analysis confirms that of the 462 DARE eligible new entrants who started HE in 2010/11, the largest percentage of students were living in areas identified as either Marginally Above or Below Average, accounting for a combined 225 (48.7 per cent) students. Students from areas identified as either Affluent or Very Affluent accounted for almost as large a share, with 206 (44.6 per cent) students who progressed to HE. In contrast, DARE eligible students from Disadvantaged or Very Disadvantaged areas accounted for just 24 (5.2 per cent) new entrants in 11 HEIs in Ireland in 2010/11, confirming the stark reality of the minute numbers of students with disabilities from areas identified as socially deprived progressing to HE in Ireland.

An analysis by non-progression confirms that students from Affluent and Very Affluent areas had a non-progression rate of 16.5 per cent while students from Marginally Above Average areas and Marginally Below Average areas had a slightly higher non-progression rate of 17.3 per cent. While DARE new entrants from Disadvantaged and Very Disadvantaged areas account for just 24 (5.2 per cent) of the 462 students who progressed to HE in 2010/11, just two students did not progress to their 2nd year of study, a non-progression rate of 8.3 per cent, the lowest by sector. This is significant because it suggests, at a macro level, that these students although progressing to HE in small numbers, can succeed. The positive outcome also suggests that the DARE scheme may be creating additional opportunities for working-class students to progress to HE and/or that students are receiving the necessary support in HE. The data may also speak to the resilience of these students, an issue explored in more detail in the participant accounts of the education system in chapter 7.

In summary, the compelling nature of educational inequity in Ireland at the interstices of disability and social class is revealed by the minute numbers of working-class students with disabilities from socially deprived areas who are eligible for DARE and progress to HE in Ireland. This analysis suggests that where you live has some impact in the context of retention in HE although students from more socially deprived areas have lower non-progression rates once in HE than students from more advantaged areas.

The next section analyses non-progression by school type to identify whether retention in HE is influenced by where students go to school.

6.4 Are There Differences in Student Non-Progression by School Type?

Table 6.5 analyses non-progression by school type to identify whether retention in HE is influenced by where students go to school. As described in the previous chapter, this analysis is important because type of school attended has been identified as having a significant impact on the educational trajectory of second level students and on the likelihood of progressing to HE in Ireland (McCoy and Byrne 2011, Byrne 2009, Lynch and O'Riordan 1998). In relation to school type, as with the previous chapter, second level schools attended by DARE applicants have been identified as public schools, schools participating in the DEIS scheme, private schools (fee-paying), revision/grind schools (fee-paying) or special schools (attended by students with disabilities only).

TABLE 6.5: DARE ENTRANTS NON-PROGRESSION 2011/12 - SCHOOL TYPE

School Type	**Total New Entrants**	**% of the Total**	**Non-Progression by School Type**	**Non-Progression as % of Total New Entrants by Area by School Type**
Public	284	61.5%	39	13.7%
DEIS	37	8.0%	16	43.2%
Private	102	22.1%	14	13.7%
Revision/Grind	37	8.0%	5	13.5%
Special	2	0.4%	1	50%
Total Entrants	462	100%	75	16.2%

Table 6.5 reports that of the 462 DARE eligible new entrants to HE in Ireland in 2010/11, the majority, 284 (61.5 per cent), were previously attending public schools. Students previously attending a small number of fee-paying schools accounted for a combined 139 (30.1 per cent) new entrants to HE in 2010/11. There were 195 second level DEIS schools that accounted for just 37 (8.0 per cent) DARE eligible entrants to HE in 2010/11 and just two (0.4 per cent) DARE eligible new entrants from students previously attended special schools. The analysis identifies that most DARE eligible new entrants were

previously attending public schools, a not unexpected finding as this is a large sector proportionally. The fee-paying sector, although a small number of schools proportionally, accounted for three in every ten DARE eligible new entrants to HE in 2010/11. There is a very low rate of progression to HE for students previously attending special schools and from working-class students attending DEIS schools.

The overall national rate of non-progression by DARE eligible new entrants in HE was previously reported in this chapter as 16.2 per cent, a rate comparable with national rates more generally. However, the analysis by school type identifies that there are stark and concerning differences in non-progression that vary by the school previously attended by that student. Of the 462 DARE new entrants, 37 (8.0 per cent) were previously attending DEIS schools. From this small number of new entrants, 16 (43.2 per cent) students were not present in HE one year later. The rate of non-progression from DEIS schools (43.2 per cent) is concerning and sharply contrasts with non-progression from students previously attending public schools (13.7 per cent), private schools (13.7 per cent) and revision/grind schools (13.5 per cent) where the rates are all broadly similar.

This analysis suggests that where you go to school matters and that students, eligible for DARE, who previously attended a DEIS school, are progressing to HE in very small numbers and once in HE are at a far greater risk of not being retained. This is a significant finding and has implications for policy and practice in HE.

Although gender is not the focus of this study, gender did emerge in this analysis by school type as important, and I provide some additional analysis exploring these specific intersections below.

Figure 6.5/ Table 6.6 analyse the non-progression of DARE new entrants in 2011/12 at the intersection of disability, school type *and* gender.

Figure 6.5: DARE Entrants Non-Progression 2011/12 by School Type and Gender

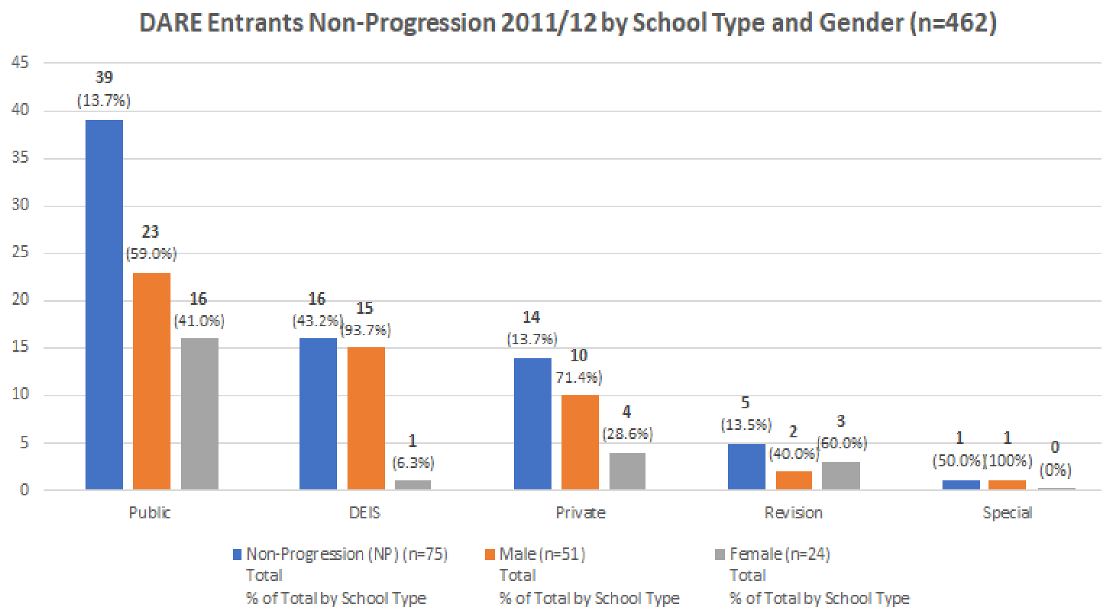


TABLE 6.6: DARE ENTRANTS NON-PROGRESSION 2011/12 - SCHOOL TYPE AND GENDER

School Type	Non-Progression	Male	% of Total Non-Progression by School Type	Female	% of Total Non-Progression by School Type	Totals
Public	39	23	59.0%	16	41.0%	100%
DEIS	16	15	93.7%	1	6.3%	100%
Private	14	10	71.4%	4	28.6%	100%
Revision/ Grind	5	2	40.0%	3	60.0%	100%
Special	1	1	100%	0	0%	100%
Total Entrants	75	51	68.0%	24	32.0%	100%

The analysis by school type *and* gender suggests that non-progression is a particular issue for male students who account for the majority (68.0 per cent) of new entrants not progressing to second year, in comparison to females (32.0 per cent). This is a particular concern for students attending DEIS schools where the analysis identifies particularly gendered patterns. I identified in the previous section that of the 37 students from DEIS schools that started in HE in 2010, that 16 (43.2 per cent) students were not in HE one year later. This analysis by gender identifies that of the 16 students that did not progress from DEIS schools, 15 (93.7 per cent) students were male while just one (6.3 per cent) was female.

In summary, this analysis suggests that non-progression in HE, from 1st to 2nd year of study, is influenced by school type where working-class students from DEIS schools are significantly less likely than SWD from other school sectors to progress to their second year of study and be retained in HE. Despite students from DEIS schools accounting for just eight per cent, or less than one in ten of DARE new entrants to HE in 2010/11, they account for more than one in five of the DARE eligible new entrants not present in HE in 2nd year. Gender emerges as a factor in this analysis where male students are more likely not to progress and this issue is striking for male new entrants from DEIS schools. This analysis suggests that disability, social class, and at times gender, intersect in the lives of students in the context of their retention in HE, shaping and directing more negative outcomes for working-class, particularly male working-class students with disabilities, previously attending DEIS schools.

As analysis at specific intersections is so important to this study, the next section considers the intersection of disability, school type *and* area.

6.5 Does Non-Progression by School Sectors Differ by Area?

Table 6.7 analyses non-progression by area, coded by Deprivation Index, *and* within each area, non-progression by school type.

TABLE 6.7: DARE ENTRANTS NON-PROGRESSION 2011/12 - SCHOOL TYPE AND AREA

Area	**School Type**	**Non-Progression**	**% Non-Progression**	**Total New Entrants by Area**
Affluent Area	Public	18	17.8%	101
	DEIS	4	44.4%	9
	Private	11	14.9%	74
	Revision/Grind	1	4.5%	22
	Special	0	0%	0
	Total	**34**	**16.5%**	**206**
Marginally Above/Below Average Area	Public	20	12.3%	162
	DEIS	11	50.0%	22
	Private	3	12.0%	25
	Revision/Grind	4	28.6%	14
	Special	1	50.0%	2
	Total	**39**	**17.3%**	**225**
Disadvantaged Area	Public	1	5.9%	17
	DEIS	1	16.7%	6
	Private	0	0.0%	1
	Revision/Grind	0	0.0%	0
	Special	0	0.0%	0
	Total	**2**	**8.3%**	**24**
Unknown Area	Public	0	0.0%	4
	DEIS	0	0.0%	0
	Private	0	0.0%	2
	Revision/Grind	0	0.0%	1
	Special	0	0.0%	0
	Total	**0**	**0.0%**	**7**
Total	Public	39	13.7%	284
	DEIS	16	43.2%	37
	Private	14	13.7%	102
	Revision/Grind	5	13.5%	37
	Special	1	50.0%	2
	Total	**75**	**16.2%**	**462**

In relation to non-progression, Table 6.7 confirms that there were 206 DARE eligible students who entered HE in 2010/11 who were living in areas identified as Affluent and that 34 (16.5 per cent) students living in these areas did not progress to their 2nd year of study. The analysis by area and school type identifies that students attending private schools or revision/grind schools living in an affluent area had the lowest rates of non-progression (14.9 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively) in comparison to students living in an affluent area who previously attended public schools who had a non-progression rate of 17.8 per cent. There were nine students who entered HE in 2010/11 who lived in areas identified as Affluent and who attended a DEIS school and four (44.4 per cent) of these students were not present one year later, the highest non-progression rate by area and school type.

A similar examination identifies that there were 225 DARE eligible students who entered HE in 2010/11 who were living in areas identified as Marginally Above/Below Average and that 39 (17.3 per cent) of these students did not progress to their 2nd year of study. There were 22 students who were attending DEIS schools and who lived in areas identified as Marginally Above/Below Average and 11 (50.0 per cent) of these students were not present one year later, again the highest non-progression rate by area and school type.

There were just 24 students who entered HE in 2010/11 who were living in areas identified as Disadvantaged and of this small number, 17 were previously attending public schools, while just six students were attending DEIS schools. In relation to non-progression, students attending public schools, even if they lived in a disadvantaged area, had lower rates of non-progression (5.9 per cent) compared to students living in disadvantaged areas who were attending a DEIS school (16.7 per cent).

This intersectional analysis is significant because it confirms the interconnected and intersectional nature of disability, DEIS and disadvantage, not just in the context of getting in to HE, but also most importantly, in the likelihood being retained within HE. For the students in this study, attending a DEIS school had a negative impact on retention in HE regardless of where they lived.

The next section analyses non-progression by disability and social class measured by students who applied/eligible for both the DARE *and* HEAR schemes.

6.6 Non-Progression of Students eligible for DARE and HEAR

To remind the reader, at the end of the last chapter, there were 35 students (from a national pool of 2,161) who were eligible for both the DARE and HEAR schemes. The analysis in this section confirms that from this small pool of 35 eligible students, that there were just 14 students eligible for both schemes who entered one of the 11 HEI's participating in the DARE scheme in 2010. They are a small census nationally but provide useful learning about how disability and social class intersect in relation to non-progression for a most vulnerable population of students in HE. I firstly provide a brief overview of this cohort to provide some context for the intersectional analyses that follow later in this section.

The 14 students eligible for both DARE and HEAR are a diverse group of students by disability category although the majority, nine (64.3 per cent) of the 14 students, had a Specific Learning Difficulty. There were no students eligible for both schemes with a sensory or physical disability, the categories that are prioritised nationally. There was just one student eligible for both schemes with Asperger's Syndrome, one student with Attention Deficit Disorder, one student with a Mental Health Condition and two students with a Significant Illness. Nine (64.3 per cent) of the 14 students were previously attending public schools, with just five (35.7 per cent) previously attending DEIS schools. Ten of the 14 students lived in areas that were either Marginally Above or Marginally Below Average and two students were living in areas identified as Affluent. It was surprising that just two of the 14 students eligible for both HEAR and DARE were from areas identified as Disadvantaged. A stark reminder of the inequity in education is revealed by the fact that there were no students eligible for both DARE and HEAR who progressed to HE in Ireland in 2010 that both attended a DEIS school *and* lived in a disadvantaged area.

The next section analyses the non-progression of students eligible for DARE who applied/eligible for DARE and HEAR and considers the impact by area and by school type.

6.6.1 Are There Differences in Non-Progression for Students who apply/are eligible for DARE and HEAR?

Figure 6.6/ Table 6.8 analyses the non-progression of students eligible for DARE and HEAR and compares this to (1) students eligible for DARE who made no HEAR application, and (2) students eligible for DARE who applied for but were ineligible for HEAR.

Figure 6.6: DARE Entrants Non-Progression 2011/12 by DARE and HEAR Applications

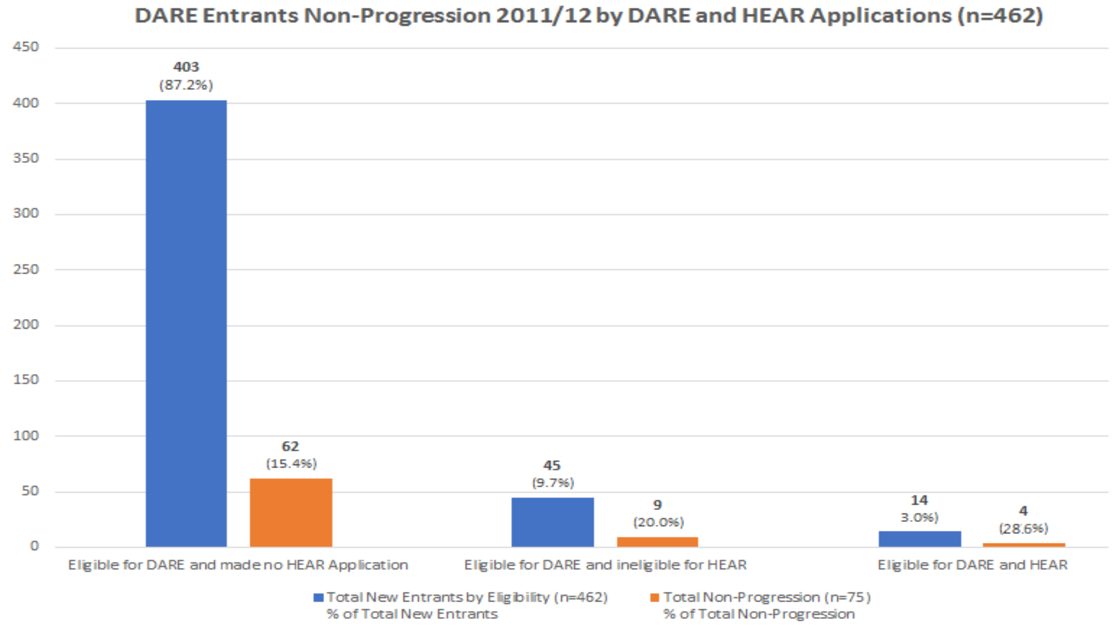


TABLE 6.8: DARE ENTRANTS ELIGIBLE FOR DARE AND HEAR - NON-PROGRESSION 2011/12

New Entrants	**Total New Entrants**	**% of Total Entrants**	**Non-Progression**	**% of Total New Entrants**
Eligible for DARE and made no HEAR Application	403	87.2%	62	15.4%
Eligible for DARE and ineligible for HEAR	45	9.7%	9	20.0%
Eligible for DARE and HEAR	14	3.0%	4	28.6%
Total Entrants	462	100%	75	16.2%

Of the 462 DARE eligible entrants in 2010, 403 (87.2 per cent) students made no application to HEAR and were DARE eligible only. There were 45 (9.7 per cent) DARE eligible entrants who applied to HEAR and were ineligible while just 14 (3.0 per cent) DARE eligible entrants in 2010/11 were eligible for *both* DARE and HEAR. The analysis of non-progression of this student cohort, suggests that SWD who make no application to HEAR are more likely to be retained in HE as 62 (15.4 per cent) of these students did not progress to their second year of study. Students who apply to HEAR and are ineligible have a higher rate of non-progression with 9 (20.0 per cent), or one in five of these students, not present in HE at the end of first year. There were just 14 students nationally who entered HE in Ireland in 2010 who were eligible for both schemes and of these, four (28.6 per cent) new entrants were not present in HE after the first year of study.

This analysis is important because it suggests that students who apply to or are eligible for DARE and HEAR (working-class students with disabilities) are a most vulnerable group and that they are more likely to leave HE in the first year of study confirming the negative intersection of disability and social class and the impact on retention in HE. Most importantly, this analysis confirms that students eligible for both schemes have the highest rates of non-progression across all three cohorts, an important finding in this study.

6.6.2 Are there Differences in Non-Progression for Dual Applicants by Area (Deprivation Index)?

Table 6.9 analyses non-progression of students eligible for DARE and HEAR by area to identify if where students live has an impact on retention.

TABLE 6.9: DARE ENTRANTS ELIGIBLE FOR DARE AND HEAR NON-PROGRESSION 2011/12 - DEPRIVATION INDEX

Deprivation Index	Total DARE and HEAR Eligible New Entrants	%	Non-Progression	%	Non-Progression as % of Total New Entrants
Affluent	2	14.3%	1	25.0%	50.0%
Disadvantaged	2	14.3%	0	0%	0%
Average	10	71.4%	3	75.0%	30.0%
Total	14	100%	4	100%	28.6%

This analysis confirms that the majority (71.4 per cent) of the 14 students eligible for HEAR and DARE in HE were living in areas identified as Average using the Deprivation Index with just two students (14.3 per cent) living in areas identified as either Disadvantaged or Affluent. In relation to non-progression, although the two students from areas identified as disadvantaged were both retained in HE, students eligible for both schemes have high rates of not progressing to 2nd year.

6.6.3 Are there Differences in Non-Progression for Dual Applicants by School Type?

Table 6.10 analyses non-progression of students eligible for DARE and by school type to identify if where students go to school has an impact on retention.

TABLE 6.10: DARE ENTRANTS ELIGIBLE FOR DARE AND HEAR NON-PROGRESSION 2011/12 - SCHOOL TYPE

School Type	Total DARE and HEAR Eligible New Entrants by School Type	%	Non-Progression by School Type	%	Non-Progression as % of Total New Entrants
Public	9	64.3%	1	25.0%	11.1%
DEIS	5	35.7%	3	75.0%	60.0%
Total	14	100%	4	100%	28.6%

An analysis of non-progression by school type paints an ever more concerning picture about non-progression and attending a DEIS school. The majority (64.3 per cent) of dual applicants progressing to HE were from public schools while the majority of those not progressing (75.0 per cent) were from DEIS schools. Of the nine students eligible for both DARE and HEAR who progressed to HE from public schools, just one (11.1 per cent) was not present in 2011/12 while three (60.0 per cent) of the five new entrants eligible for both schemes from DEIS schools were not present one year later. This is the highest rate of non–progression across all the analyses completed in this study. This is a most stark and compelling statistic highlighting the complex inequity that exist for students with disabilities and confirms again the negative link between, disability, DEIS and complex intersectional disadvantage.

6.6.4 Summary Non-Progression by Students Eligible for DARE and HEAR

The analysis of non-progression by dual applicants highlight some interesting patterns suggesting that there are considerable additional barriers for students who have a disability *and* who are from a disadvantaged background in being retained in HE. The

HEAR scheme uses economic, social and cultural indicators and a broader *"additive/intersectional definition of socio-economic disadvantage"* and is focussed on identifying the most socio-economically disadvantaged students to support their progression to HE (Byrne et al. 2013, 14). This study suggests that the HEAR scheme is not meeting the needs of working-class students with disabilities to support improved access to HE. Working-class SWD are eligible for HEAR in minute numbers and even if they do progress to HE, they are more likely than any other group of students not to be present in HE at the start of their second year of study.

6.7 Chapter Summary

National studies of non-progression have suggested that continued monitoring of educational outcomes in HE by reference to various student characteristics including socio-economic background and disability status is vital to assess Ireland's progress towards greater equality (Mooney et al. 2010, 59). These national studies however do not report on the retention in HE of students with disabilities and fail to identify how social identities, including disability and social class, intersect, intertwine and interlock, to shape outcomes for the most disadvantaged students in HE. A national study of the HEAR and DARE schemes identified that, having controlled for a range of characteristics, that although DARE and HEAR entrants had the same probability of progressing to 2nd year as other students, that the DARE scheme may not be meeting the needs of students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and that the scheme should address the gap *"…in terms of the intersection between disability and social disadvantage"* (Byrne et al. 2013, 239).

The unique intersectional analysis in this chapter provides evidence that all students with disabilities are differentially positioned within HE depending on where they are located in the context of the intersection of disability and social class. The quantitative data in this chapter supports the analyses completed in the previous chapter, and adds to the findings, identifying complex intersecting and interconnected layers of disadvantage illustrating how disability and social class intersect to restrict and constrain not only the opportunities to progress *to* HE but also crucially the opportunities to be retained *within* HE. This analysis identifies that being positioned in more affluent areas/schools advantages some students with disabilities while working-class students with disabilities living in socially deprived areas and/or attending DEIS schools are marginalised within HE in the context of social class.

In relation to non-progression, the analysis in this chapter identifies that the non-progression rates for DARE eligible new entrants (16.2 per cent) are comparable to non-progression rates nationally for all students across all sectors although rates vary within, and between, sectors in HE and by category of disability and by gender. There are high non-progression rates for many disability categories suggesting that the retention of students with disabilities in HE is an issue for many students across most disability categories. The analysis suggests that where you live has some impact in the context of retention in HE although students with disabilities from poorer areas have higher progression rates once in HE than students from more advantaged areas. DARE eligible new entrants from public and fee-paying schools have almost identical non-progression rates (13.5 per cent to 13.7 per cent) compared to students from DEIS schools who have the highest non-progression rate (43.2 per cent). Of the 37 students from DEIS schools who progressed to HE in 2010/11, a minute number of new entrants nationally, 16 (43.2 per cent) of these students were not present in HE one year later. There are a tiny number of students eligible for both HEAR and DARE in HE and yet these students had the highest rates of non-progression with four (28.6 per cent) out of the 14 students who were eligible for both schemes not present in HE in Ireland in 2011/12. Of the four students eligible for both schemes who did not progress to their second year of study, three (75.0 per cent) were previously attending DEIS schools.

These macro patterns suggest that there are barriers at a macro and micro individual level for students with disabilities both in progressing *to* HE (as described in the previous chapter) and progressing *within* HE (as described in this chapter). These analyses challenge the assumption of homogeneity of students with disabilities identifying that disability and social class and, at times, gender, intersect and interlink in student's lives, shaping and directing outcomes within HE. The analysis suggests that all students with disabilities experience challenges in HE and that working-class students from disadvantaged social backgrounds experience compelling additional challenges that are shaping their educational outcomes in HE.

This chapter, and the previous chapter, have provided a quantitative analysis of applications and eligibility for DARE and the retention of DARE eligible students in HE in Ireland. These analyses provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of the intersectional disadvantage that impacts all students with disabilities, particularly working-class students in HE. The quantitative data however, while valuable, provides a partial perspective as it highlights inequitable outcomes for working-class students with disabilities but provides no explanation as to why this inequity exists. The next chapter seeks to deepen our understanding of this phenomenon by examining the daily lives and social identities of ten young people with disabilities who were eligible for DARE and progressed, following the completion of their Leaving Certificate examinations, to undergraduate programmes of study at one university in Ireland.

Chapter 7: Student Stories: Experiences of Disability and Social Class in Education in Ireland

7.1 Introduction

The two previous chapters analysed quantitative data revealing how macro social structural trends are reflected as statistical patterns in application and eligibility for the DARE scheme and the retention of students with disabilities (SWD) in higher education (HE) in Ireland. These broad patterns reveal, at a macro level, that working-class students with disabilities are less likely to apply or to be eligible for the DARE scheme and are less likely to be retained in HE, in comparison to students from more advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. These quantitative data are a significant contribution to a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of the intersectional disadvantage that impacts all students with disabilities in HE.

This chapter seeks to deepen our understanding of this phenomenon by examining the daily lives, and social identities, of ten young people with disabilities who were eligible for DARE and progressed, following the completion of their Leaving Certificate examinations, to undergraduate programmes of study at one HEI in Ireland. As part of this study, the ten students participated in one interview, and nine of the ten students participated in a second interview, at two different time points, during or after the completion of their studies in HE. This chapter continues to follow the students introduced in the previous two quantitative chapters as five of the participants started HE in Ireland in 2010 (and therefore would have been included in the analyses in chapters 5 and 6) and five students started HE in 2011. This longitudinal study thus captures the lived experiences, perspectives, and emerging insights of the participating students, revealing how students with disabilities experience, understand, and navigate the education system in Ireland.

A key aspect of these analyses is to illustrate how broad macro-level social and societal structures are connected to the micro level of individual experience and how students in different social situations live their lives. An intersectional analysis approach using Collins' matrix of domination (1990; 2000) conceptual framework, introduced in chapter 4, has therefore framed these interviews. As discussed in earlier chapters, this matrix suggests that the oppression of marginalised and subordinate groups is organised through four domains of power; the structural domain (organises oppression), the disciplinary domain (enforces and manages oppression), the hegemonic domain (justifies and legitimises oppression), and the interpersonal domain (where individuals live their everyday lives). I adapted this framework as an analytical tool to enhance our understanding of the lives of young people with disabilities, and more specifically at times, the lives of young working-class people with disabilities, in education. The chapter uses these four domains to explore the central themes that emerged from the student life stories revealing the student experiences of disability and the intersections of disability and social class. The analysis also reveals how the four domains of oppression themselves mutually connect to sustain and support each other, intersecting and interlocking in the lives of all SWD to create a *"…prison from which there is little escape"* (Hancock 2007, 65).

The analyses illustrate how disability and social class intersect powerfully to direct and shape the social identities and educational experiences of all students with disabilities. Each student in this study is both advantaged and disadvantaged in unique ways. The richness of their testimony reveals what it means to be labelled with a disability in education and how students understand and experience disability in their daily lives.

Students with disabilities are positioned in policy and practice in Ireland as a homogenous group sharing common experiences in life and in education. The testimonies from the students who participated in this study provide a counter narrative to these dominant hegemonic understandings of disability revealing how all students with disabilities are individually situated at the interstices of disability and social class and how this directs, shapes, and influences their daily lives, educational experiences and life opportunities.

All of the students share a determination to succeed and an awareness of the perceptions of misrecognition of their positioning. Their stories show their extraordinary resilience, activism, and resistance, even in the face of adversity and multiple barriers. It also highlights the interaction between these barriers and the facilitating factors within their lives, like family support, good teachers and sometimes personal resilience. Their stories challenge the concept of meritocracy in education and illustrate that what it means to have a disability depends on each individual's simultaneous location in various social hierarchies; disability and social class, as illustrated in this study, or indeed others like gender, ethnicity, sexuality or race.

7.2 Student Participants

Ten students, Karen, Grace, James, Tracey, Rebecca, Anna, Gary, Eamonn, Conor, and Niamh[28], participated in this study and share their experiences as students with disabilities in education. The ten students were all completing undergraduate programmes of study at one HEI, a national leader in widening participation in university education in Ireland (HEA 2014). The HEI has a diverse student body and a record of innovative and inclusive transition and post-entry student supports. Five of the students commenced their

---

[28] These names are pseudonyms.

undergraduate studies in 2010 and five commenced their studies in 2011. They are a diverse group of students representing various geographic locations, genders, socio-economic backgrounds, school types, and disability categories. The diversity of the student participant backgrounds and individual locations supported both an intracategorical analysis (examining how multiple axes of inequality shape individual experiences) and an intercategorical analysis (comparing the experiences of students with disabilities with different socio-economic characteristics).

As outlined earlier, all ten students were eligible for the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) scheme, a national admissions route introduced to support greater access to HE for students with disabilities. Six of the participating students were female and four were male students. The students lived in both urban and rural areas in Ireland and in both affluent and socially deprived areas (suggested by home address identified through the Pobal HP Deprivation Index). A wide spectrum of disability categories are represented in the student group including mental health, significant illness, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and sensory disabilities (deaf, hearing impaired, blind). The ten students are studying a variety of different third level courses and represent various years of study. One student had withdrawn from their programme of study and one student was considering withdrawing from university. The remaining eight students were on track to complete their undergraduate degrees or had already commenced post graduate programmes of study.

Three students (Tracey, James, and Grace) were eligible for both DARE and the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) route, a national admissions scheme introduced to support greater access to HE for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. One further student (Karen) applied for HEAR although she was deemed ineligible. These four students share some commonalities in terms of the intersection of disability and social class although their experiences or characteristics are not identical. Tracey for example met five of the six indicators required for the HEAR scheme, suggesting deep intersectional disadvantage, while James and Grace met three indicators. All four students share some characteristics as they were all eligible for Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), the national student grant scheme, family income was from social welfare, and all experienced financial pressures. For the purposes of the study, I categorised these four students as lower socio-economic group status. The remaining six students in the study (Rebecca, Anna, Eamonn, Gary, Conor, and Niamh) were eligible for DARE only, were not eligible for the student grant, and family income was from employment. For the purposes of the study, I categorised these students as higher socio-economic group status.

The ten students attended a variety of school types. Two students attended Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) schools, one at primary level and one at secondary level. Two students attended fee-paying schools, one at primary level and one at second level. In this study, two students attended special schools. One student attended a primary school for children with dyslexia for two years and one student attended both a primary and secondary school for deaf students for all of her education. No students in the study were based in special classes and the most common form of academic support was student withdrawal from mainstream classes for resource teaching.

Appendix D provides summary data and an overview for each student outlining the individual and complicated nature of their lives and interactions as a SWD. This Appendix can be referred to throughout the reading of this chapter to remind the reader of the characteristics of each student. Appendix E provides a shorter summary of the characteristics of the student participants.

7.3 Chapter Structure

This chapter is broadly focused on the interview questions that asked participants about their educational journey before, and after, progressing to HE, their experiences of life as a student with a disability, their educational experiences, and outcomes. Continuing the discussion first introduced in chapter 4, I remind the reader of Collins' matrix of domination conceptual framework (Collins 1990; 2000), introduce each of the four domains of power in the matrix, and then provide an analysis of the student participant experiences in education under each of these domains. This analysis also outlines the tensions in adapting the matrix of domination conceptual framework to this study, where themes fitted well in this adapted structure and where there were tensions, challenges, or a struggle to fit some findings into aspects of these domains. A synthesis of results is provided in the introductory and summary sections to each of the domains to better signpost the reader throughout the chapter. The chapter concludes with an overall synthesis of results and some discussion of the findings.

7.4 The Matrix of Domination

As outlined in chapter 4, Collins describes race, class and gender as an *"interlocking system of oppression"* (Collins 1990, 222). Collins developed a conceptual framework for understanding these *"interlocking"* oppressions as a *"matrix of domination"* (Collins 1990, 225). I justified in chapter 4 adapting the matrix of domination framework as this study examines the intersection of two major axes of oppression, disability and social class. I also identified how the four domains, even when used by Collins, are often messy and untidy as they intersect and interlink in multiple ways. In this chapter, there were some tensions as a result when adapting the framework to this study. These tensions and uncertainties are discussed throughout the chapter and where relevant I outline the rationale for placing particular themes within particular domains and the implications of doing so.

In the structural domain, the four key themes that emerged from the student narratives can be broadly summarised as (1) the individualisation of disability and social class, (2) segregated schools, (3) embedded obstacles and (4) economy and employment. In the disciplinary domain, there were three overarching themes including (1) assessment and categorisation of disability and social class, (2) attending the 'right' school and (3) powerlessness and the student voice. In the hegemonic domain, there were three overarching themes including (1) language and images of disability, (2) stigma and shame, and (3) invisible role models. Finally, in the interpersonal domain, there were six overarching themes including (1) student identity, (2) school expectations, (3) familial expectations, (4) relationships with teachers/lecturers, (5) resistance and agency, and (6) the power of a supportive family. In the next section, I introduce the structural domain of power in the matrix and then provide an analysis of the student participant experiences in education under this domain.

7.5 Introduction Structural Domain

The structural domain, in the matrix of domination conceptual framework, represents how social institutions, the legal system, education, housing, healthcare, the economy, banking and the media, are structurally organised to reproduce inequality in society, enforcing dominant ideologies that maintain the advantage of the most privileged, keeping the marginalised on the fringes of society in unequal and oppressed positions (Collins 1990; 2000). The structural domain, at a macro level, represents how social *"institutions are organized to reproduce subordination over time"* (Collins 2000, 277). Collins suggests that the way that social institutions are organised is not accidental, natural, or impartial. Rather, they are deliberately structured to advantage those with the greatest resources and to disadvantage those who are marginalised. In society, the influence of the structural domain is often hidden or obscured or unchallenged and normalised. A lack of access to housing, education or employment for example, and the gap between those that can access preferential positioning, and those that cannot, is suggested and accepted as a failure of individuals or their culture rather than systemic structural oppression (Collins 2000, 279). In this domain, social institutions portray themselves as objective and neutral in their treatment of different groups when in fact they differentiate continuously and inequitably on the basis of race, class, gender, and other axes of oppression including religion, sexuality, nation, ethnicity, and ability (Andersen and Collins 2004, 216). The structural domain is enormously influential, large-scale, and system-wide, and so influential that it yields slowly, if at all, and with great reluctance, to change (Collins 2000).

The students' narratives in this study were analysed using the structural domain, as specified in Ireland, as the overarching theme, looking at how the macro structures affected their experiences. Within the structural domain, the policy discourse which is dominant in Irish education is a medicalised pathologised individualised model that primarily sees problems for children and young people with disabilities as individual deficits located within the child or young person whereas how we understand normality and how the system caters for the majority, is the locus of the problem (Kenny et al. 2000). Social class is similarly constructed as an individual deficit, a lack of ability, or effort, or the deficits of a working-class culture. In the normative sense, these social categories are suggested to be the permanent, immutable, and fixed, biological characteristics of individuals rather than a design of dominant groups in power who have most to gain from this understanding. The dominant culture defines the meaning of these social categories as polarised opposites thereby creating a fixed hierarchy and social ranking. This hierarchy identifies an ideal and preferred state of being (able-bodied/middle-class) compared to an undesirable and inferior state of being (disabled/working-class).

These understandings of disability and social class are firmly embedded in the practices and beliefs of major social institutions/organisations in Ireland like education and are major organising principles of society and personal identity. Analysis of the student experiences in the structural domain in this study illustrates how social institutions are organised to create and uphold social inequalities and how all students with disabilities, particularly working-class students with disabilities, are assigned to different pipelines, and nudged or steered towards different options. The analysis suggests that schools and HE are organised to impede and limit the achievement and progression of all SWD, particularly working-class students with disabilities. This is the '*leaky pipeline*' where students are lost within a system that is actually structurally and deliberately configured to support their marginalisation and disempowerment (Collins and Bilge 2016, 179).

The following section elaborates on the four key themes that emerged from the student narratives that lie in the structural domain of the matrix of domination framework. These four themes can be broadly summarised as (1) the individualisation of disability and social class, (2) the segregation/separation of students on the basis of disability and/or social class, (3) the embedding of obstacles in social institutions to impede or restrict educational opportunities for SWD, and (4) restricted access to the economy/labour market.

Analysing the student experience within the structural domain was challenging in a number of areas. Firstly, the structural domain, in this study, is a fundamental and formative domain in the context of the lives of the student participants. The findings in the structural domain are, as a result, more detailed and complex than for the other domains. I justify this level of detail and complexity in this part of the chapter as the influence of this domain was so powerful, and the structures and embedded obstacles so significant, in the lives of the students and their families in this study. The structural domain therefore merited this more detailed and explicit level of analysis. Secondly, the structural and disciplinary domains in particular themselves intersect and interlink. The separation of students on the basis of disability and/or social class within special schools, fee-paying or DEIS schools for example, can be seen as how social institutions are organised to reproduce oppression (structural domain) or how oppression is enforced (disciplinary domain). I placed the four themes that strongly emerged from the student narratives within the structural domain as they fit most easily within this domain and can be seen as critical to the oppression of all SWD. These themes also however resonate, echo, and splash into other domains throughout the study suggesting that power is effectively exercised both within, through, and between each of the intersecting domains.

7.5.1 The Individualisation of Disability

The individualisation of disability, mandated at a national legislative and policy level and implemented in education, is one of the strongest themes emerging from this study. The student experiences suggest that the individualised model of disability which locates the '*problem*' of disability within each individual, instead of within the education system, is endemic at a structural level across the education system in Ireland. Although most students in this study had a positive experience in education, the depth of the detail of their lives identified that some students had a very negative school/college experience which impacted enormously on their wellbeing. Most importantly, all students spoke about the individualisation of support, the variability and inconsistency of support, their powerlessness in these arenas, and how individual instances of a lack of awareness, cruelty and/ or kindness were enormously impactful. Even when supports were provided, these were inconsistent and often dwindled away when teachers/lecturers lost interest or forgot about the needs of the student as there was no school/college framework to support institutionally consistent inclusive approaches. Individual teachers/lecturers who were very supportive were identified although these were isolated cases rather than the majority.

The student narratives suggest that the individualisation of disability, within the structural domain, is an essential part of the construction of the disabled identity of students. In the structural domain, students in the education system have a 'problem' and a 'deficit' located within themselves as individuals. In this domain, students are positioned as '*the problem*' and thus they have no rights and rely instead on individual instances of support and kindness in a system that is configured to marginalise and disempower them. In the structural domain, the individualisation of disability is illustrated by two key themes: the absence of Individual Education Plans (IEP's) at school level and the ad hoc and variability of supports for all SWD across all education sectors and levels. These two themes are outlined below.

7.5.1.1 Individual Education Plans

All ten students in the study were eligible for DARE suggesting that the impact of their disability/learning difficulty was significant. Most of the students had multiple reports from multiple medical professionals confirming a range of disability categories and eight of the ten students were initially diagnosed at a young age in primary school. In this study Tracey and Karen have significant mental health issues, James, Rebecca, Anna, and Eamonn have dyslexia, Grace has a significant illness, Gary is blind, Conor is hearing impaired and Niamh is profoundly deaf. None of the ten students in the study had an IEP provided by the school.

The role of an IEP is to identify the educational supports to be provided to each individual to address the impact of disability and to monitor the impact of the effectiveness of these supports over time. In this study, no students were aware of or used the term Individual Education Plan, although all students referred to the ad hoc nature of support. Karen, for example, who had missed three months of school identified that there was no plan in place to mediate the impact of disability stating that "*No, there was nothing at all*" while Anna, who has dyslexia, identified the same issue stating again that "*No, there was nothing like that at all*". The student accounts suggested that students negotiated academic support and that this support was often driven by parents:

"*…because they made sure before I got into school (referring to his parents communicating with the school), "Gary needs this, are you going to help? Are you going to get this technology?" If they said "we'll see what we can do", (his parents would say) "it's just not good enough. You're either, you're going to do it, or you're not going to do it"*. [Gary, Blind, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"*Well at the start of the year, my Mam would go in to all the teachers and just explain it to them…some of them were nice and then others weren't very nice*". [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

The lack of an IEP impacted on the students in this study in significant ways. Students in the study felt that there was no acknowledgement of the impact of disability, no identification of student need, and no entitlement to a structured school response. The lack of an IEP individualised disability for every student in the study as students felt that they had no right to support/awareness and were positioned as subordinate, individually requesting rather than being guaranteed support as a human right. The primary experience for all the students in this study as a result was little acknowledgement or awareness of the academic impact of disability and either the complete absence of support or the variability of ad hoc supports that needed to be individually negotiated. The experiences of all students in the study was that even basic supports (even in special schools) needed to be carefully requested, randomly granted or denied, depending on who was making the decision, how strongly parents advocated for supports, and the individual kindness of individual teachers or lecturers.

The structural domain suggests that social institutions are structurally organised to reproduce inequality in society, to enforce dominant ideologies that maintain the advantage of the most privileged, and thus to keep the marginalised on the fringes of society in unequal and oppressed positions (Collins 1990; 2000). At a structural level, IEP's are not compulsory in schools and the section requiring them in the EPSEN Act (2004) has not been enacted into law. The lack of access to IEP's in the school system positions young people with disabilities, at the outset, and in all their engagement with positions of authority within the school, as individually inferior and subordinate. This approach, mandated in national legislation and policy, affirms that the '*problem*' is located within each individual and that their academic needs must be negotiated rather than guaranteed in a systemic way within the education system. The lack of IEP's suggests that the primary purpose of the medical and psychological assessments completed for all the students in the study, at school level, seemed to be for the purposes of the identification of disability rather than the provision of support. At a structural level, the absence of a legal entitlement to IEP's suggests that students are effectively constructed as SWD within an individualised deficit-based and medicalised model of disability and positioned within the education system as inferior and subordinate.

The next section analyses how students live and experience this individualisation of disability both within schools and the HE system.

7.5.1.2 Variable Individualised Support

In this study, the experiences of the participating students suggest that the education system, at all levels, is structurally organised to meet the needs of the dominant group (the most able – students without disabilities) at the expense of the subordinate inferior group (the least able – students with disabilities). The most powerful impact of the individualisation of disability, mandated at a national legislative and policy level, is how supports for SWD are organised within the education system. The individualisation of disability and the variability and ad hoc nature of support was evident in all of the schools and HE experiences of the students participating in the study. This section outlines the individualisation of disability experienced by all of the students in the study, across all levels of education.

Karen and Tracey were both diagnosed by the HSE with significant mental health issues as young children. Their differing experiences reveal the individualised nature of support and the enormous impact, both negative and positive in different contexts, on both students. Karen was diagnosed with significant mental health issues in her teens and describes how there was no support or awareness of the impact of her disability by her school despite the severity of the academic impact. Karen received no IEP, no technology, no notes from missed classes, and no academic tuition to help her catch up with what she had missed even though ongoing absenteeism was an issue and she had missed a block of several months of school. Karen's mental health issues were positioned, within the school, as an individual deficit, a weakness, an unusual and isolated occurrence that was specific to her, and her alone.

"I don't think she [School Vice Principal] really understood, that I wasn't just sixteen and putting it on, like I did actually have a problem. I wasn't just making myself cry so I could get off school. Do you know what I mean, it was a lot more difficult to deal

with…and the fact that there was this blatant, just get over it and get on with it, made me feel an awful lot worse and made it an awful lot harder to come in." [Karen, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Tracey was also diagnosed with significant mental health issues by the HSE when she was nine/ten years old. Tracey, who lived in a very deprived urban area, describes two very different experiences at primary and secondary levels of education. Tracey describes how her DEIS primary school provided no support for her at all and had no understanding of mental health and where her mental health issues were positioned as an individual deficit. The locus of the problem was suggested by the school to be Tracey's home environment:

"Yeah but when we sent for a report from the school to be sent to the psychiatrist they, for some reason they wouldn't do it initially and they were very kind of judgemental of my Mam for, for I don't know, like thinking it was her fault that I was/had ended up the way I had or was diagnosed or whatever, but she eventually had to go over to the school and explain that she went to the psychiatric service herself and wanted to have me (assessed)... They just initially thought that I was with a psychiatrist because you know something was wrong at home or something like that". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Tracey and her family made a conscious decision to move Tracey to a non-DEIS secondary school outside of her own local area to seek better supports and improve her opportunities. In this new environment, Tracey experienced a more inclusive school ethos and philosophy (although still individualised within the school) that was more aware of the difficulties that all students experience and that supported her more effectively:

"...at the start of 5th year then I stopped going to school because I couldn't handle the work load with everything else that was going on so I was out for most of 5th year. I was in hospital and when I, they supported me then because they would send me information and emails about things like if I wanted to do this or needed help with this

and then when I went back to school the Vice Principal set up different like personal classes with teachers so I could catch up, so I would have like extra tuition and extra time to catch up like with the resource teacher". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Tracey highlights that the school approach and supports were a critical factor in her new secondary school supporting her to achieve and to progress to higher education. The shared and differing experiences of Karen and Tracey suggest that the individualised merciful approach to support for SWD in education is endemic. There are different approaches between schools, and even within different schools by different teachers, suggesting that each student, and their families, individually negotiate with schools, and teachers, seeking individual support, although to varying degrees of success.

A most significant finding is that this pattern was common across all the students in the study. Gary, who is blind, tried to remember everything that he heard in the class because he could not take notes himself. Most teachers, however, would not give Gary notes before classes although one more sympathetic teacher *"gave notes to my SNA [Special Needs Assistant] so I had them beside me in a class."* Conor, who had a hearing impairment, asked teachers to use a Radio Aid so that he could hear what was being discussed in class. A Radio Aid can be used by teachers by hanging it around their necks during class so that it magnifies their voices and students with hearing impairments can then hear what is being taught in the classroom. One might imagine that such a request was a minor inconvenience although responses to this request varied by teacher within the school where *"...some of them just dismissed it and just told me to sit up at the front of the class. One of them flat out refused to wear the Radio Aid".* Conor suggested that how teachers help you is based, not on a supportive national framework, or by legal protection or guarantees, or even the direction of school Principals, but on the individual approaches of teachers because *"The school itself doesn't really have much input into as* *to what the teacher can or can't do in the class so yeah it's really all down to hoping that you get a good teacher."* [Conor, Hearing Impaired, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Support for all of the students in the study varied across schools, within schools by individual teachers, and even teachers who were supportive initially were inconsistently supportive. Anna was diagnosed in primary school with dyslexia and comes from a professional family with strong supportive parents. Anna found that supports were largely unavailable in secondary school where there were low expectations that she could achieve academically. Even where teachers were initially sympathetic to her request for support (notes in advance of class), this support would soon be forgotten, and Anna would resume her position of invisibility:

"There was one teacher that I suggested I, this was only when I was in fifth year, I went up and I said 'is there any way that you could give me the notes before I go into class, so that I'm not taking down the stuff'. And she was great and she started photocopying and giving me the notes, but then she would get tired, and she would start to stop giving them to me. And then she'd go, 'oh yeah, yeah, yeah, I will get them for you'. And then it kind of dwindled". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Anna's experiences suggest that the concept of variability of support and requesting/negotiating rather than demanding rights is entrenched from an early age. Anna describes the hostile environment in her secondary school, describing the ongoing conflict as a '*battle*', trying to negotiate support, feeling inferior, isolated, different, worthless, unable, powerless, and disabled. Anna's experiences suggest that the individual deficit model of disability is deeply embedded where for example her school repeatedly suggested that Anna's learning difficulties and conflict with the school were primarily a problem with her/her family's inability to accept her academic limitations. Anna describes powerfully how in this uncertain policy context, interactions with her school had to be carefully negotiated by her Mother who developed strong advocacy skills on her behalf. Anna describes how these interactions with the school were orchestrated to manage the potential for resistance or hostility. Instead, her Mum used her social and cultural capital to negotiate supports:

"…because she knows that even if you go in fighting hard, walls will coming crashing down around you but if you take the small steps and if you follow procedure, if you go around the bush instead of going straight through it you actually get more out of it, if you're sweet and if you say stuff like; 'this would be helpful; if we could do this'…".
Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

Rebecca was diagnosed with dyslexia in primary school and describes in painful detail the lack of support and her invisibility in a school that had no academic expectations of her. Rebecca describes the variability in approaches in secondary school where one teacher consistently undermined her, provided no support and constantly had lower expectations for her even compared to other students in the same class who were achieving at a lower level that she was. In contrast another teacher had high expectations and gave her extra classes to support her and believed that she could achieve.

The inconsistency of support extends beyond the absence of an inclusive teaching environment. It also extends to refusing supports specifically requested to address academic need. Rebecca's assessment for example recommended that she be provided with a laptop which the school refused *"because I could be messing on it or whatever during class".* This lack of awareness of impact was immensely damaging and isolating for her as well as acting as a tangible barrier. Even when her parents offered to pay for the laptop privately, this support was still denied, a decision which they were not able to overturn suggesting that even parents can meet with hostility and negativity and be rendered powerless in this arena. James's diagnosis (which was paid for privately) recommended that James have the use of a scribe for state examinations, a support that was subsequently refused by the school and this had major implications for him in examinations. Anna had a similar experience and talks about how although she arrived at secondary school with an assessment outlining her difficulties there was little awareness of the impact or of a school plan for supporting her. She describes a painful isolated negative school experience:

"The teachers didn't understand at all. I had great difficulty taking notes, so, they would write on the board constantly and I couldn't write and I couldn't listen at the same time. It was a huge difficulty so I just plod along myself like". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

The variability and inconsistency of student support and awareness is not confined to schools but is endemic across the education system. Similar to the school experience where students identified some teachers as more supportive than others, a number of the students experienced the same issue in HE. The constant reiteration of individual failings at multiple levels of education means that students experience a constant battle between the dominant ideologies suggesting that disability is an individual deficit and their own desire to succeed in the face of endemic barriers. Other students, while generally describing a more inclusive approach described similar individual instances of support, or conflict, or even refusal to provide support in HE:

"No I think it depends on lecturer to lecturer because this year I approached one of my lecturers who has his notes and they are written on clear sheets of paper and he projects them up onto the screen and we have to take them down, …and I asked him if it would be possible to photocopy them and give them to me and he said he would look into it and he came back to me and basically said he had read up on it and he wasn't obliged to give me the notes and therefore he wasn't going to but then like the (name of Department deleted) department are quite good because all of their notes are typed notes they project them up and they are all accessible to us on Moodle". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

"Yeah it varies depending on department, but more so between lecturers, I could go to a lecturer and say 'I am really struggling on this' he will be like grand but I could go to

someone else and he could be like 'well maybe'...". [Grace, Significant Ongoing Illness, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

"I found the (Dept. name deleted) department incredible. They're constantly like, I have a separate centre for my listening test, which I'll be having this week, and I said to my lecturer, who I've only had since, I've only had her in first year, I said 'I need a separate centre for a listening test', and she never questioned my difficulties at all, and she just put it in place". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

The variable support in HE was very impactful and reflects the structural domain where the deficit again is assumed to be located in the individual rather than a reflection of a failing of the system. Students had little sense of entitlement to supports. Connor (2006) suggested that in the face of dominant negative definitions of individual social identities that individuals are pressured to submit to or even justify the dominant processes as fair even though they know that the process can be damaging or negative for them. In this study, in most cases, although students challenged the fairness of the system, they were mostly accepting of their status and indeed sought to excuse or explain particular failures. Most students felt that teachers either were not trained to support SWD or did not feel that it was their responsibility to do so but that they should not be blamed for that:

"…when you're not trained to deal with it I suppose. I can't really blame them...." [Karen, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"...say if you had a class of 30 and maybe 10 of them were having difficulties in different areas and needed like different approaches like, it is very difficult to put out class plans for 10 different people rather than just 1 class. I don't know. I think they did more than what they should have done or what they were supposed to do..." [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

"Well I went to a mainstream school where maybe I could have gone to the School for the Deaf, I am not sure or a DEIS school, but so it's just a matter of they haven't been taught to deal with kids with a disability of any kind so I wouldn't blame them entirely for it at all." [Conor, Hearing Impaired, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

These experiences suggest that students have internalised their difficulties and that they accept and rarely challenge the fairness or adequacy of the education system itself. Students feel that their difficulties are individual to them and so they excuse or seek to justify these approaches even where those approaches have been clearly damaging or are implicitly unfair. The power of the structural domain can be seen in this study where students did not feel that they deserved more from a system that should be configured to support them. Most students felt that teachers who did support them were kind, suggesting that support is viewed as benevolence rather than a human right. Students who had more positive experiences spoke of an inclusive environment where teachers were supportive, developed personal caring relationships with students and where there were other students, or teachers, who had a disability/learning difficulty.

Even in inclusive environments, however, students and their families were aware that support is not guaranteed and that parents and students have little power or influence in this arena. In this climate, parents advocate for their children to get support, and negotiate with the school/HEI as part of that process with varying degrees of success. All of the parents, with just one exception, had a key supportive role as they acted as advocates for their children with the school when it came to school supports. Parents acted as a crucial conduit between the student and the school mediating for support. Anna reports how her parents constantly mediated with the school as they tried to carefully negotiate the support that they felt that she needed. Gary's Mum also negotiated supports, *"fighting"* with his Primary School Principal and secondary school refusing to accept less than he needed identifying to the school that what was being offered was *" just not good enough"*. Even Niamh who attended the School for the Deaf found that she needed her parents to advocate for her there noting that *"…my parents got involved strongly and said 'no this* *is what we need' and then the school had to accept my parents' opinion."* [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

The inconsistencies in experience within and across schools shows how the structural domain plays a significant part in student experiences. This study suggests that the structural domain has created an educational environment where the individualised model of support is endemic and the suggested reality of an inclusive system of education where supports follow students in an inclusive environment is revealed in the lives of the SWD in this study as an illusion. Connor (2006) had identified the concept of '*merciful teachers*' and these are present throughout the system in this study. The lack of consistency and recognition of student needs contributed to feelings of anxiety, frustration and a lack of belonging in the students. All students in this study were impacted by the individual model of disability, seeking individual supports and navigating systems, with varying outcomes and success. Previous studies have indicated that the social capital of middle-class parents can act as a protective factor for children with SEN when it comes to negotiating or advocating for support (Fordyce et al. 2015, Gillborn 2015). The evidence in this study supports that conclusion. Having strong advocates who could negotiate for children and young adults with disabilities was critical in securing appropriate supports. In some cases however, even middle-class advantage, could not entirely protect young people from the impact of the individual deficit model of disability which is endemic in all sectors of education. All students in this study battled, in varying degrees, with a system which is structurally configured to support those constructed as 'able' (and therefore of great value) and individualises those constructed as disabled (and therefore of little value). The structural domain, in this study, impacted on all the students in negative and damaging ways.

The next section examines how the construction of SWD as negative social identities is tangibly consolidated through the public segregation and separation of SWD from mainstream students exemplified through the structural and unequal configuration of the education system.

7.5.2 Segregated Schools

Within the structural domain, the second major theme to emerge from the student narratives was how the education system in Ireland is structurally organised to enforce segregation and separation, both by disability and by social class. Some students with disabilities in this study were steered towards ‘special schools’, that is schools attended by students with disabilities only. Students who attend mainstream schools are also separated from mainstream (able) students and attended special or resource classes. Students living in disadvantaged areas are also segregated in DEIS schools where there are far more diverse student bodies and a concentration of SWD. Students also have the option, in theory, of attending fee-paying schools, if they can pay for it, thereby improving their position, maximising their academic potential and their opportunities to progress to HE. The separation and segregation of children by disability (in special and mainstream schools) is mandated by law and the separation and segregation of children by social class (in DEIS or fee-paying schools) has been an unintended consequence of national policy in Ireland. These options are suggested to be reasonable even though students within these different contexts have poorer or better academic outcomes and greater or more limited opportunities to progress to HE.

Within the structural domain, the student experiences suggest that the very existence of segregated or separate educational provision suggests that these are reasonable options and that these options allows the status quo to remain unchanged in mainstream schools.

The student narratives also suggest that SWD experience ‘soft’ barriers (both overt and covert) and are steered and nudged towards contexts that are deemed to be more suited to their inferior status. This section considers how students navigate the structural stratification of the education system, their experiences, and the impact on their opportunities and outcomes.

7.5.2.1 Segregation by School

Two students in this study attended special schools and their experiences shed some light on how and why students might choose this segregated option and their educational experiences in special education. Rebecca was diagnosed with dyslexia when she was in primary school and went to a primary school for children with dyslexia for third and fourth class on the recommendation of the psychologist who completed her initial assessment. Attending a special school was suggested to be a reasonable, and indeed the very best option for Rebecca, even though it meant moving away from her own local school and local friends. There was no question raised either by the professional who diagnosed Rebecca, or the Principal of the primary school that Rebecca was attending, as to why her educational needs could not be met in a mainstream primary school classroom. Implicit in this suggestion was that Rebecca’s ‘special’ needs could not be met in a mainstream school by a mainstream teacher and that a special school would better suit her status. Many students were being referred to this same special school and Rebecca suggested that she was ‘*lucky*’ to get a place there suggesting that special education is seen as a benevolent and caring option rather than punishment and segregation.

Rebecca found that attending a special school was a very positive experience and that she would recommend that any child with dyslexia should attend a special school. The primary benefit seemed to be different teaching methods where *“the homework was completely different”* with resulting improvements in her spelling and reading and her confidence. The biggest difference for Rebecca seemed to be knowing that there were other children like her with dyslexia in the school as she had felt very alone in her previous primary school:

"Yeah I do feel that it helped a lot… like I still kept in contact with the people who I met in there and I think it was good that I knew that I wasn't the only person with dyslexia... because there was so many of us around and when I was in school, nobody else was, so I always used to wonder why I was so different…" [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Rebecca, in describing the special school, seems to be describing a school that was inclusive, aware of the impact of a learning difficulty, and responsive to different academic needs. Rebeca provided a real insight into the unchanged structural configuration of her mainstream school describing how she would re-join her class in her regular primary school if she had a day off. She did not really enjoy that experience although she liked meeting up again with her friends. Rebecca describes in brutal detail how even though she re-joined her class very occasionally, and although the teacher must have known that she was in a school for children with dyslexia, that the teacher would play a cruel spelling game that singled her out as different from her peers, as weaker, a pattern that she found emotionally upsetting:

"I didn't really like it sometimes because they used to have spelling tests or whatever, where you would have to stand up, and he'd just throw the ball at you and ask you to spell something and he used to ask me as well, and I wouldn't like to do that". [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Rebecca describes the experience of being "slagged" about having dyslexia in her mainstream school and that she found that experience really upsetting. She is talking here about her experiences in primary school and whether she, or even her peers, actually even understood what dyslexia meant:

"I didn't really have a clue like, but people used to slag me for being dyslexic when I was younger which I didn't like. I don't like the girls now even because of it but I don't know, they didn't even know really as well." [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Rebecca articulates how even young children understand and know that dyslexia and disability is inherently negative, something to be ashamed of, that can be used as way of situating other children in a negative and inferior position. It is something to be feared as well and a status that is inherently negative and undesirable. Young children don't understand the detail of why dyslexia/disability/difference is a stigma but even at a young age they understand the power of the words and how they can be used against others. This issue, and its power, is further explored in the hegemonic domain.

Rebecca's experiences suggests that the 'special' school is not special, it is inclusive and caring where difference is not individualised and internalised. Rebecca valued the experience in her 'special' school because her experiences there challenged the isolation and inferiority of her experiences in her mainstream school. However, she returned to a mainstream environment that was unchanged in ethos and practice. Within the mainstream school classroom, fundamentally ableist practices and philosophies remained embedded, reifying children deemed to be 'normal' and constructing children with SEN as inferior, lesser and negatively inferior.

Niamh, who is profoundly deaf, attended both a primary and secondary school for the deaf both as a boarder and a day pupil. Niamh's experience as a student attending a 'special' school resonates with Rebecca's experiences where this 'special' school was not special for any other reason other than all the students and teachers used sign language as a means of communication. The importance of not being made to feel different emerges again in Niamh's experience. Niamh did not feel in her school that she was different or that (she was made to feel) she had a disability. Niamh felt that she was part of a regular school with regular experiences and that she was just a student:

"I had a very positive experience in school. I had such fun with my peers, I never felt left out unlike many in mainstream schools. I was part of a big family which felt great. I am grateful for that experience". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"No, I felt I had no disability in my school as everyone was the same. Everyone was Deaf and they sign so I felt I was not Deaf but I was just me". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Niamh only felt different when she went to HE where she was visibly different:

"I like to see myself as just a student but sometimes I can't help but feel I am a student with a disability because of the interpreter I have with me and the note taker too. People treat me differently so I know they see me as a student with disability. I prefer to see myself as just a student". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Niamh is aware that although attending a school for the deaf seemed like a choice, that children who are deaf can be steered towards such schools, and that implicit within that choice is a trade-off. Niamh suggested that her parents were, from the time that she was born, concerned that Niamh would not have the best academic opportunities in a special school (based on their own experiences) but that this would be compensated for by the fact that she would have a more inclusive education and that she would not be socially isolated:

"When I was born ...with my Mother, she cried. The first thing she thought about was school. She went to (name of school) herself and she didn't have a good experience so she was really worried. She wasn't sure if she wanted to put me in mainstream school or in a deaf school. She thought like if I had to go to a deaf school I would have an ok education and brilliant social skills or go to a hearing school and have a brilliant education but no social skills". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

As a family, they were able to use their financial resources to provide Niamh with ongoing academic tuition privately (outside of school) to mitigate the negative academic impact of attending a special school using their economic and social capital to improve her opportunities and choices. Niamh suggested that deaf students who tried to access mainstream education (resisting their assigned locations) regretted it because they were made to feel different in mainstream schools where students are publically identified and withdrawn from mainstream classes for additional classes:

"One of my friends went to mainstream school. She said she felt embarrassed because she had to be taken out for extra English and Maths classes and one to one, so she felt like she was a bit left out or she was the odd one out but compared to when I was in a Deaf School, I didn't feel like I was the odd one out, I felt like I was the same as everyone else so I didn't feel like I was deaf. I felt I was normal". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

Niamh did recognise that her academic choices were more limited in the special school and this narrowed academic choices and limited options to progress to HE as most of the students in her class "*"Yeah, most of them did PLC, I think only two of us out of eight went to university".* Niamh also suggested that the configuration of the school did not prepare her well for a mainstream academic environment:

"I felt …the small classes I felt were too small. There were only four girls in my class, which meant less challenges and I was less prepared for university. Going from a class of four to a class of 400 was a major struggle for me. I got little attention from lecturers which was really strange for me. I felt that the school offered so much support that they kind of put me in a bubble-wrap instead of preparing me for third-level". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Niamh considered leaving her special school and going to a fee-paying school to improve her academic opportunities but found that the option was not available to her. While an interpreter was available for free in her special school, an interpreter would have to be financed by her family if she went to the fee-paying school, highlighting the often obscured structural barriers that confine SWD to specific locations.

Rebecca's and Niamh's experiences suggest that students with disabilities can be steered or nudged towards special schools that have the advantage of appearing to be more inclusive and aware and supportive of disability. Special schools are, in this study, positioned as inclusive positive educational environments. They can also, as suggested by the student experiences in this study, reduce choices and opportunities and potentially steer students towards more limited trajectories. There are real material and emotional and psychological barriers to seeking other options. Structurally however the very existence of these special schools mean that segregated education is presented as a reasonable option to address the seemingly special needs of students with disabilities. The impact of this is that mainstream schools have no impetus to become inclusive and to adapt to provide an education for all children and young people. At a macro level the education system is configured to sort young people with disabilities into alternative segregated, and possibly inferior, educational environments on the pretext of such students needing a 'special' education. The education system has mandated these options as reasonable, necessary, and indeed beneficial for the students involved although the outcomes suggest that the reality is the opposite.

The next section examines how SWD who access mainstream schools experience the education system.

7.5.2.2 Segregation within Schools

In this study, SWD are not just segregated in special schools. They are also routinely separated and segregated in mainstream schools. Indeed, segregation for most if not all of the school day in special classes, and withdrawal from mainstream classes for resource teaching, is the dominant form of support for SWD in mainstream schools in Ireland. Rebecca and Niamh both referred to how the dominant form of support for children with disabilities in mainstream schools is not an inclusive mainstream classroom environment but rather withdrawal from mainstream classes. Both also identified that such withdrawal was not necessarily in the best interests of students as students are visibly and negatively identified as having a disability thereby publically stigmatising them. In addition, students are withdrawn from regular classes to receive support and then miss out on what is being delivered in the mainstream classroom, a process which seems inherently unfair and structured to deny young people the opportunity to succeed academically.

James and Rebecca, who both have dyslexia, suggested that while they needed additional academic support, that being withdrawn from mainstream classes meant that they missed what was being taught in the mainstream classroom, a form of support for students that seemed configured to isolate and disadvantage:

"They'd sometimes take you out of class and there was a resource teacher there that would do like, go through reading and stuff like that with you. But the problem was that like, if you're doing them in school they take you out of class, so you're there missing the stuff that's gone on in class… So then you might be learning something else but you're missing out on something else and you have to catch up". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Rebecca and Anna questioned whether the teachers providing resource teaching were appropriately trained to provide such support and suggested that some of the resource teachers themselves seemed unware of the academic impact or the challenges facing SWD. Anna suggested that the teacher providing resource support for her seemed to have little understanding about the impact of dyslexia or how it might be supported. Rebecca identified how the support that she had with resource was imbued with low academic expectations describing how the resource teacher let her do what she wanted when she should have been pushing her to achieve more academically:

"I liked the extra English that I got, but I don't think, like sometimes there was one lady and she used to just let me do whatever I wanted and of course I'm just going to want to

sit there or whatever and then sometimes I'd do my homework with her like so I wouldn't have to do it when I get home. I suppose that's a good thing as well but I should have been doing it the same as everyone else at home where she could have been helping me with extra subjects…They're meant to drive you to do stuff… not just to let you sit back and relax". [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Again, the variability in experience is important. Some students identified how the support they received outside of the classroom was pivotal to their experience in school. Tracey describes her resource teacher as *"amazing"*. Eamonn describes how his resource teacher was one of the most important positive influences in his school experience. Nonetheless, Eamonn also suggests that just attending resource classes implies that you cannot achieve academically and that having taken lower level English in the Leaving Certificate that he could have been pushed more (by his resource teacher) and encouraged to aim higher:

"If I really put my head down I really could have done it, I don't know if I was feeling sorry for myself. I was going to resource and I thought I couldn't do it. Yeah, I don't know I think it's, they could have probably (pushed him more) I think it's just that I was going to resource and stuff like that you wouldn't think I would be able to but now I sort of regret not trying it". [Eamonn, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

The critical issue about resource teaching is that the mainstream classroom environment remains the same. Classes continue without students who have been withdrawn for support. The teachers continue to teach secure in the knowledge that the 'special' teaching required by SWD is happening outside of the mainstream classroom and away from mainstream students. Parents, and indeed children who do not have disabilities, are secure in the knowledge that the education system resources are focussed on the most able students. Students with disabilities internalise the necessity to separate them from mainstream classes and students. Rebecca outlines most powerfully how having left her special school for children with dyslexia and returning to mainstream schooling that the regular classroom remained unchanged. Rebecca found that the same strategies that isolated and embarrassed her were played out repeatedly with her peers, in primary and secondary level, reinforcing her sense of difference, isolation, and impacting on her fragile self-esteem. At second level Rebecca describes in painful detail how she sat at the back of the mainstream classroom during the Irish class that she had been exempted from. In this space she is literally invisible (and also hypervisible), occasionally being asked to participate in a class that she was excluded from, highlighting her isolation and difference:

"I just had to stay at the back of the class and do my own work and sometimes they'd ask me questions in the Irish class and some teachers would ask me in Irish and I'm like 'I've never done Irish before'." [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Withdrawing children from mainstream classrooms is national policy mandated at a national level and implemented at school level. The analysis at a structural level suggests that the segregation of SWD exists not only in special schools, but also by the segregated form of special education that exists within the schools themselves. The students in the study valued extra support although some also identified how the way that such support is structured, both in delivery outside of the classroom and imbued with lower expectations, was damaging to them. The withdrawal of students for support outside of mainstream classrooms enforced a sense of negative and public labelling, difference and isolation, that was impactful for many students in the study. This form of public segregation was, in this study, central to the construction of a negative student identity and was reinforced in multiple domains.

The next section outlines how students are also segregated by school type and how this impacts on the student experience and outcomes.

7.5.2.3 Segregation by School Type

An analysis of the student narratives within the structural domain also suggests that SWD are also segregated, both positively and negatively by school type, attending DEIS and fee-paying schools, and reporting varying experiences. At a structural level, the education system is organised to provide a range of educational options. Students can, in theory, attend a range of school types, available to students with greater or lesser economic, social and cultural resources. Students who attend fee-paying schools have high rates of progression to HE. DEIS schools have been identified as underfunded, with high rates of staff turnover, a preponderance of deficit-based remedial instruction, poorer curricular offerings, and limited opportunities to progress to HE. In the structural domain, the education system can be seen to be stratified by social class and that it is how these schools are organised and structured that supports student success or failure. Students reported various experiences in this regard, and the nuances of individual experiences and contexts are key, although the intersection of disability and social class is very visible in this domain.

Gary, who is blind, had a very supportive family and a largely positive school experience. Gary chose to attend a private fee-paying secondary school where he enjoyed smaller classes and better relationships with his teachers as important factors. Gary felt that his parents chose a private fee-paying school to ensure that he was appropriately supported in school and to give him the greatest opportunities possible in education. Gary’s family were prepared to make financial sacrifices to give him this opportunity. James, who has dyslexia, however chose to attend a DEIS secondary school, outside of his local area, because it was a smaller and more rural school and it was welcoming although he recognised that such schools have fewer resources:

"Yeah, I think the school the school was very supportive, they didn't have many facilities like but like they made the most of what they had and you know and they just went with it...." [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Both of these examples suggest that SWD make individual choices in relation to attending particular school types and that these choices are nuanced and complex. For both Gary and James, school type was less important than the perception or possible guarantee of an inclusive and supportive educational environment.

The complexity of the intersection of disability and social class in the context of school type is described well through Tracey's experiences suggesting that working-class students with disabilities in urban areas are particularly vulnerable in the education system. Tracey is of particular importance to this study as she is one of the few students nationally who was eligible for both DARE and HEAR, was living in an area identified as Very Disadvantaged, and progressed to HE. Tracey, although she does not use the words social class, is very aware of the inferiority of her class position both in the sense of where she lives, the school she attends, and in society, and on that basis, I particularly focus on Tracey's experiences in this section.

Tracey lives in an area of urban disadvantage characterised by high levels of social deprivation. This is an area, and a community, that Tracey describes as *"fragmented and broken".* Tracey describes attending a DEIS primary school in this area outlining how low social and academic expectations are the norm in that school and where *"the teachers just become burnt out so quickly because they are trying to deal with different social issues every single day".* Tracey's experiences suggest that within her community, that the structure of her school and other social institutions, work together to create and reproduce inequality where students are not encouraged to succeed in education, where the costs of education are a material barrier, and where there are less visible, but powerful barriers, related to low educational expectations and social inferiority:

"…because from a very early age you're not encouraged to continue with education". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"…like the police or the local council or the teachers in primary school just don't treat you like you're worth anything and I think when you see that you start believing it…" [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"The teachers or I mean I don't think it's in a direct way but I think it's the fact that the fees are expensive and people can't afford them…" [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"The teachers didn't have any respect for us and that was really hard because you don't have any confidence in yourself when the people you're supposed to look up to don't respect you…" [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Tracey has already, by virtue of her social class/physical location, been sorted into a position of social inferiority with an assumed educational trajectory (low educational aspirations and achievement, negative interactions with the police, social housing, limited opportunities to access further education or employment opportunities, state dependency/low income). This low social status is reinforced when she is also diagnosed with a mental health issue as a young child in primary school. Tracey lives the reality of the intersection of disability and social class, interlocking, interconnecting, creating a prison characterised by tangible barriers and limited opportunities:

"I think I mean if you're coming from a disadvantaged area it's hard enough and then if you have a mental health problem it's even harder". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

In a primary school located in a socially deprived area, struggling to cope with challenging social issues, Tracey's family requested and tried to negotiate support for Tracey within the school system but found that there was no support available. Tracey has been diagnosed/labelled as a SWD but this label, like her social class, suggests that containment is required rather than support. Tracey and her family suggested that the barriers in her local DEIS primary school were so formidable and so intersected with barriers in other institutions (local authority housing, public mental health services) that her family chose to seek out better options and create better opportunities for success. They made the decision that she would attend a secondary school outside of her own local area, which they felt would give her the best opportunity of a better education and more life opportunities. Tracey and her family literally lifted her, deliberately, out of the confines of her geographical area and her designated social positioning to create new opportunities. Tracey describes how her second level experience in this new school environment changed the trajectory of her life. Tracey outlined the key factors that supported her in this new environment; the proactive nature of the support at school, strong awareness and support for mental health issues, caring relationships with teachers, a school culture of high expectations and teachers having a personal interest in the success of all students. Tracey particularly refers to strong role models, the leadership of the Principal and the inclusive and supportive nature of the school climate that Tracey identified as a primary reason for her success.

"…I mean for me personally it was the fact that the teachers respected me and that was something I had never experienced in primary school so it was almost like I went from feeling completely worthless for living in the area that I lived in and coming from the background that I did and then I went to the school where it didn't matter and the only thing that mattered was that you know I work hard…" [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Tracey is living the intersection of disability and social class in every aspect of her daily life. Tracey's experiences suggest that the social disadvantage in deprived urban areas is so impactful with underfunded and under resourced schools, with the prevalence of mental health issues, and poverty and all of the attendant social issues, that children in such environments with disabilities have little or no opportunities to succeed. Indeed their positioning in such unfavourable locations suggest that their low social trajectories are both directed and assured.

These analyses suggest that in the structural domain, the education system in Ireland is stratified by social class and by disability. The experiences of the students suggest that the structural configuration of schools as special schools, DEIS schools, fee-paying schools, offer differing opportunities for students with disabilities. Special schools are presented as more inclusive options although in reality they serve to segregate children from mainstream education and restrict their choices and opportunities. In mainstream schools, how special education is constructed as an individual deficit requiring withdrawal from mainstream classes and support outside of the mainstream classes is also structured to isolate, stigmatise, to identify and to lower expectations and academic achievement. Students are also segregated by school type with differing school contexts offering more or less resources and opportunities. The structural domain has constructed and validated these different constrained options for young people with disabilities creating or limiting their opportunities and educational outcomes. Indeed, in some respects the most powerful manifestation of the intersection of disability and social class is the capacity of SWD and their families to navigate the education landscape seeking out the environments that offer the best opportunities for support and success.

The next section looks at how obstacles are embedded within the education system and how schools and HE are organised and configured to ensure that these obstacles limit choices and constrain opportunities for students, particularly working-class students with disabilities, in education.

7.5.3 Embedded Obstacles

The student experiences in this study suggest that, at a structural level, there are obstacles to SWD progressing in education that are embedded and interlinked across multiple social institutions. The primary themes identified as barriers are related to the assessment processes and financial barriers.

7.5.3.1 Access to Assessments

The current findings point to the assessment process acting as a structural challenge for the students in this study especially where they did not meet a clear category of disability, where there was a HEAR and DARE criteria requirement, or some financial constraints. The issue of timely access to assessments and the gateway that the assessment opens to school and college support has been an issue well evidenced in research (Flatman-Watson 2009, Armstrong et al. 2010, Rose et al. 2015, Squires et al. 2016). There was variance across the experiences of students with different disabilities in relation to accessing assessments. Of the five students who accessed their assessment through the publicly funded Health Service Executive (HSE), the experience was primarily a positive one. These disabilities were mental health (two students), significant illness (one student), Deaf (one student), and hard of hearing (one student). One student (blind) accessed all of his assessments privately.

The primary issue in this study seems to lie with a diagnosis of a Specific Learning Difficulty such as dyslexia, a non-normative category where diagnosis is primarily based on the judgement of an expert professional (Riddell et al. 2010), which are more stigmatised (O’Connor and de Luca 2006), and which have been found to be diagnosed more often in students living in the most disadvantaged areas (Riddell 2009). There were four students in this study who had a diagnosis of dyslexia. Just one student (Eamonn) had their assessments provided by the school. Eamonn reported that he was diagnosed with dyslexia in third or fourth class, when he was approximately seven years old. Eamonn was provided, by the school, with a broad range of supports and an updated assessment just before his Leaving Certificate examination.

The remaining three students paid for assessments, often multiple assessments, privately. The assessment process for these students was driven by parents, rather than the school, who saw an assessment/diagnosis as essential to access support. James, who was later eligible for HEAR and DARE and experienced significant financial hardship, was diagnosed with dyslexia when he was in third class and yet his family funded all of his assessments privately. There did not seem to be the sense that the school might provide an assessment because *"…well like Mum and Dad wouldn't kind of like go looking for stuff like that so they just kind of took it upon themselves yeah"*. Rebecca was diagnosed first when she was seven years old and she attended a primary school for children with dyslexia for third and fourth class. Rebecca reported that she was assessed firstly in primary school, just before she was going into secondary school and then again just before she was due to go into third level. She reported that only one of the reports was funded by the state and the others privately. The school refused funding for a report for DARE and her family then funded that report privately as well. Anna was diagnosed at the age of seven with dyslexia by a private psychologist as her parents felt that asking the school for support was not an option as help would have been refused. In relation to paying for the report Anna felt that her parents would have struggled but would have found the money *"…if it means that I'll get the help that I need"*. [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

The ten students in this study were all eligible for DARE and so would have provided the required evidence of disability. Assessments are seen by families/students as the passport to academic support, eligibility for accommodations in state examinations, and DARE eligibility, and so are inherently valuable. There is evidence that parents, rather than schools, drove the assessment process, an issue previously identified in research with Black middle-class parents and children with SEN in England (Gillborn 2015). Families in this study that could not access assessments through their school paid for them privately, if they could find the resources to do so, in order to create opportunities for their children. Students who can access assessments use them to unlock school supports and to facilitate progression to HE. Students who cannot access assessments, often for financial reasons, have access to academic and examination support, as well as progression through DARE to HE, effectively blocked, limiting their opportunities and choices. This study suggests that access to assessments, particularly for non-normative categories of disability, is a structural barrier and advantages or disadvantages families/students who are situated differently in the context of socio-economic background/social class.

7.5.3.2 Financial Processes

The findings of this study point to financial constraints acting as a structural challenge for some of the students in this study. In this study, all families used their financial resources to improve the positioning of their children. Parents, for example, paid for private psychological assessments so that their children could get the crucial diagnosis and access supports in schools and HE. Parents paid for up to date assessments (denied through the public system) to ensure that their children could access examination supports for state examinations and be eligible for DARE. Parents paid for academic tuition outside of schools and additional resources or paid for private schools to support better educational opportunities.

The financial barriers at school level are consolidated in HE where students were already struggling with disability or illness. A number of students identified that SUSI, the national student grant, was insufficient and that they struggled with some of the basic costs of college, and were forced to take on, often excessive amounts of part-time work, to pay college costs. As a result, they had less time for their studies and this impacted on their academic outcomes and progression. Many of the families in this study who were struggling financially made enormous financial sacrifices to access resources for their children that they felt were essential to improve their options. Students who relied on state support were in a very vulnerable position suggesting that the intersection of disability and social class is particularly impactful in this domain. The student narratives suggest that students with disabilities, particularly working-class students, are enormously impacted by the financial barriers that are embedded across the system. In the structural domain, the student experiences suggest that these obstacles are embedded across multiple arenas constricting opportunities, restraining students in the context of choice and opportunities, and steering students with disabilities towards their designated and inferior trajectories.

James's experiences are a good example of how financial barriers are embedded across multiple social institutions and how disability and social class powerfully intersect to direct and dictate his life trajectory. James who was eligible for DARE and HEAR chose to attend a secondary level DEIS school by choice. James's family, despite experiencing financial hardship, funded all four of his assessments privately to ensure that he could access support. An assessment confirming dyslexia recommended that James should have the use of a scribe for state examinations, as he had a writing difficulty, a support that was refused by the school. James suggested that this school decision was based on cost, rather than need, and that the decision affected him greatly in his examinations.

James's social class intersects with his disability most powerfully in HE where the environment was less inclusive than his school. James experiences both social, material and cultural barriers in this environment. At a structural level, James is eligible for SUSI, the national student grant scheme that was established to remove financial barriers to accessing HE. However, the level of that grant is increasingly insufficient to meet the actual costs of HE and so he undertook excessive part-time work in order to fill that gap and pay for his college costs:

"I remember in 1st year like my parents were just after putting a small extension on to the house and they had to pay off a loan for that so they couldn't give me any money so I was working and I think I might have had €10 or €20 to live on for the week like… And that's for like you know I'd often like some weeks I'd have to pay for the bus and after that I might have just €10 for food". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"And last year I was working so I'd say that might have had an effect on my exams as well because I was working one day a week and sometimes I was at work two days at the weekends… Just to kind of keep money up because like the grant just about covers, like it just covers rent so then you've like other things like bills for heating, electricity, food and travel as well to put on top of that". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

James is well aware of the inferiority of his position and how other students have far greater opportunities to succeed:

"… if you look at a lot of people who are failing or are doing bad they are all working weekends and stuff because they like, they need the money and then you have the people like, who don't work at weekends because they have like parents are just giving them money every week or whatever… And like they do so much better and they are more rested as well because at the weekend they might have done a couple of hours on an assignment but they have rested and the rest of us are working and we have no work done". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

James is already struggling in HE with dyslexia and a very demanding academic programme of study. He needs more time to keep on top of his college work (due to the impact of dyslexia) but has little time (due to the impact of excessive part-time work). The result of this, not unexpectedly, is that James failed a number of examinations and had to repeat a full year. However, the SUSI scheme does not allow for students having to repeat a year and so he was not eligible for a grant for that repeat year. James borrowed from the credit union to meet the costs of repeating the year, working even more part-time hours to service that debt and the costs of college. The inadequacy of the national grant scheme is not the only structural financial barrier. The financial barriers are embedded across the system. James identified how the Access Office reduced the hours that SWD could access cheaper printing in the office failing to appreciate that many students, like James, relied on the Access Office for cheaper printing:

"I'd say like stuff like printing is more important than exam supports because there is no point going and having great facilities for an exam if you don't have the material for the exam so". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

For James the financial barriers and pressures which are immense interlink with other structural issues. James needed more time to complete academic work because of his disability but there was little awareness of this from lecturers. James received examination support in HE for end of semester examinations but no extra time for shorter in course assessments. James had little time to keep up academically because he has to engage in so much part-time work to pay for HE as there is no financial support from home. Working excessively means that he cannot meet the academic demands of the course and so he conforms to the stereotype of the underachieving student with a learning difficulty. James, from a social class perspective, has few of the advantages that other students might have in the context of the material resources to support them financially, to pay for additional academic support/grinds, or reduced necessity to take on part-time work. Social class is also important in the context of a real awareness of the risk of spending so much money on HE when that child has a disability and so might not succeed academically. James has little confidence in the value of HE, a lack of confidence due to the impact of dyslexia, and a strong fear of investing in the costs of HE and the very real possibility of failure:

"...there is always the fear would you be able to support the student you know in college, will they have the funds and whatever, so you have what's the point in spending all that money on a child who is not going to do great in exams...". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

The structural domain has a particularly adverse impact on James's experiences where disability and social class intersect and interlock. The barriers for James are pervasive and his experience suggests that the structural domain impacts negatively over time on James's expectations, on his student experience, and on his capacity to stay in HE. For James, his increasing lack of confidence and the financial and personal sacrifices are such that it is likely that he will conform to his expected trajectory and leave HE without completing his programme of study

"...at the moment I am finding college quite stressful and I suppose it is quite irritating like because I have been putting in all the work, I have done every assignment, gone to every lecture, every tutorial, and at the end of the day I am not doing great so there is not much more I can do, so I am kind of tempted to just see if I can get a job ...". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

James, living the intersection of disability and social class, is less certain about the benefits of HE, less convinced that the sacrifices will guarantee a reward, less confident about his academic ability, and has little access to the material resources to support his HE experience. If James had sought additional student funding in HE, he would have had to navigate a system that is also individualised, has to be requested, requires students to self-identify as 'poor' and complete a detailed application process, experiencing more structural barriers. James is aware of the inadequacy of the student grant system but in trying to desperately stay in college buries himself in part-time work thereby marginalising himself within the HEI. The stigma associated with financial hardship and the desire to keep such family matters as private may have prevented him from seeking further help. James's experiences also suggest that students may, in the face of enduring endemic barriers, eventually submit to the dominant negative ideologies embedded in every domain that suggests and affirms that SWD, and indeed students from inferior social class backgrounds, are implicitly unable, inferior, and are less likely to succeed. James's experiences suggest however that the barriers he experiences are not natural or unexpected but are embedded into the system steering James, as a working-class student with a disability, out of education, restricting his options and limiting his opportunities to succeed.

The working-class students in this study reported similar experiences with access to finances suggesting that these financial barriers are embedded in multiple locations across the education system. These are reported as inadequate welfare and student grant systems that suggest equity, but that are configured so that families cannot meet the costs of education, and the inadequacy of underfunded and under-resourced health systems that directly impact on the capacity of students to stay in education. Tracey, living in an urban deprived area and experiencing a mental health issue, describes the intersection of these barriers in the education system very well:

"And also my Dad every year would get like Carers Respite. My Mam would keep most of that for the school year. That would put us through school". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"And also I don't know what I found hard was even in our school you would have like voluntary contributions. My Mam would always feel obliged to pay them but I mean we barely had it to pay so I think that's it's almost like you feel left out from other people

because you're struggling to pay that". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"Well the psychiatrist service that I had was public so we didn't have to pay for that and we were so blessed with that because my psychiatrist was amazing, she was really good to me. But like waiting to go in to hospital, the waiting was like four months and that was short and we couldn't have afforded a private hospital, that was too expensive. So I think that was really hard for my parents because they were trying to keep a constant watch on me ..." [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

The working-class students in the study describe how a lack of money limited access to additional academic support/grinds or meant that they struggled to meet the basic costs of books and materials. In this study, families and students made enormous sacrifices to try to meet these costs:

"..there was a time actually I did need grinds, em I got grinds in 3rd year and she actually managed to get them for free through some sort of welfare thing they did some sort of free grinds system and I went to them a couple of times ...". [Karen, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

"It's more I think the HEAR issue was coming through literally with only one parent working trying to go to college on that. My father was on disability at the time as well so it was just, it was a struggle getting to it like; and even thinking about going through college and then the books and all this coming on top of it as well so". [Grace, Significant Ongoing Illness, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Having economic capital meant that families could pay for private school, additional tuition, the essential diagnosis/assessment, school trips and extra-curricular activities. James's experiences, and the experience of other working-class students in this study, outline how multiple financial barriers are structured into the system, intersecting with other structural barriers to constrict the opportunities and constrain the options for SWD. Working-class SWD are immensely vulnerable in this area and their experiences in this study suggests that they achieve '*despite*' these financial barriers although often at great personal cost and hardship. These barriers can initially seem isolated and unconnected but when revealed in the structural domain they represent a tangled and inescapable web of domination and oppression structured to determinedly steer SWD, particularly working-class SWD, out of education and into inferior options.

The next section analyses student perceptions of access to employment as a graduate with a disability suggesting that the economy, as a social institution, is also organised to restrict opportunities and constrain choice for people with disabilities.

7.5.4 Economy and Employment

This study suggests that the negative social identities of SWD are created and consolidated in education but are also endemic in society and the economy. The way that the economy is structured and organised ensures that even though SWD may graduate from HE that their inferior status is still maintained. Within the structural domain, the students in this study suggest that SWD are steered towards lower income and lower status employment and have few rights (as in education) in this environment. The structural configuration of education that positions SWD as inferior in education is dominant also in the economy where the structural and disciplinary domains continue to exert influence confirming and affirming that disability is inherently negative, deficit-based, and inherently undesirable.

The constructed and negative identity of disability is so powerful that the students in this study suggested that the impact is felt across society, even for graduates from HE. Eight of the ten students in the study suggested that they would not disclose to an employer that they had a disability. All of the students felt that disability (as was the case in education) would be seen as negative, might lead to them being treated differently, and would limit their opportunities for employment. The students suggested that disability, and the inherent shame and stigma associated with disability, was best hidden. The following quotes demonstrate this:

"Because you don't have a hope of getting a job, you really don't have a hope of getting it and no matter how much you try with an illness the minute they see it you're gone, ... if they see that, they are not going to want to employ you because they have so many other candidates that don't have a disability". [Grace, Significant Ongoing Illness, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

"I suppose I would probably prefer if people didn't know because in case they do think differently like you know". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

"... but I can't help but feel that potential employers see them especially part-time employers, and then they think I will put his CV away and look for other ones you know". [Conor, Hearing Impaired, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

Niamh suggested that the low expectations that are endemic in education are also embedded in the economy and that low status jobs are created for people who are deaf suggesting that people with disabilities are steered towards lower status employment like community employment schemes. Niamh also highlighted the endemic structural barriers for people with disabilities in the economy pointing out for example that there are no national funds to pay for interpreters in a work context and no imperative for them to do so. This perspective suggest that the obstacles to equitable employment for people with disabilities opportunities are both psychological (disability is constructed and understood as inherently negative and deficit-based) and material (there is no funding available to support employers with the additional costs related to disability).

The student perspectives in this study suggest that the negative assumptions about disability created in education persist long after education, even after HE, confining even graduates with disabilities to uncertain support and low status opportunities with little chances of career progression. The student narratives also identify how social institutions interlink and interlock to ensure that people with disabilities have constrained opportunities and lower status in multiple social environments. This is the matrix of domination that Collins describes as a web of oppression conspiring to restrict opportunities and choices for the SWD in this study in multiple influential domains (Collins 1990; 2000).

7.5.5 Summary of Structural Domain

In this study, the matrix of domination conceptual framework highlights how education, and other social institutions, are structurally organised to reproduce the subordination of all SWD, particularly working-class young people with disabilities over time, and how (constrained) agency operates within this domain. This analysis highlights how policies and procedures across social institutions work to exclude all students with disabilities from exercising full citizenship rights. The intersectional analysis which is central to this conceptual framework highlights how these policies and procedures particularly impact working-class students with disabilities to negatively affect their education experience, opportunities and outcomes. Institutions are powerful actors capable of reproducing inequality. The student experiences in this study suggest that how disability is conceptualised and structured at the macro level of education as a social institution is enormously influential in the lives of SWD and their families and that the structural domain has a defining impact on how students experience disability in education and how their own negative identities are created, constituted, and reinforced. This conceptualisation acts to disadvantage all SWD, while simultaneously advantaging those who have the social, cultural and/or economic resources, to challenge their positioning.

The four key themes that emerged from the student narratives that lie in the structural domain of the matrix of domination framework are (1) the individualisation of disability and social class, (2) the segregation/separation of students on the basis of disability and/or social class, (3) the embedding of obstacles in social institutions to impede or restrict educational opportunities for SWD, and (4) restricted access to the economy/labour market. At the macro level, an individualised model or conceptualisation of disability is dominant. SWD are publically labelled, losing their privacy, negatively individualised, identified as different and inferior, and forced to integrate, rather than be systematically included, in existing structures. Students know and feel their inferior position and know that the stigma of disability, inferiorisation and difference is endemic. They are at the mercy of individual schools and HEIs, teachers/lecturers, some of whom make great individual efforts to support them and others who undermine and refuse to provide even the most basic supports. SWD experience an individualisation of disability, segregated school options that positions them as different and inferior, segregated support within schools that publically highlights that difference, and a stratified system of educational provision that supports families with greater resources to improve their positioning. SWD and their families experience embedded financial barriers that constrain choice and that directs and influences student experiences and outcomes. The stigma of disability is just as pervasive in employment so that even graduates with disabilities find that they are still steered towards inferior opportunities and trajectories hiding the stigma of disability and difference.

All students with disabilities are oppressed and marginalised in this system. Families with greater social, cultural, and economic resources, are better placed to navigate the system better and maximise resources. Working-class SWD are uniquely vulnerable because of the lack of guaranteed inclusive supports and the reification of a combative and individualised education system which is underpinned by negative deficit-based assumptions about disability. In such a national macro policy context, families, who can do so, must negotiate and navigate at an individual level through a terrain that is filled with conflict and uncertainty.

This analysis of the structural domain, highlights how legislators, policy makers, and professionals, have conspired to create, justify, sustain, and hide, how education as a social institution, is structurally configured and deliberately organised to limit opportunities and reproduce inequality, particularly for working-class students with disabilities. In this domain, the oppression and marginalisation of SWD in education and other social institutions, is not natural but inevitable and assured.

7.6 Introduction Disciplinary Domain

Collins (2000) identifies that the second domain of power in the matrix of domination is the disciplinary domain which manages power relations *"through the way in which organizations are run"* (Collins 2000, 280). The disciplinary domain manages oppression by controlling and organising human behaviour through administrative practices, processes and bureaucracy (Collins 2000). The disciplinary domain is the enforcement arm that underpins the structural domain, restraining, controlling, containing, and disciplining oppressed groups. One of the most powerful aspects of this domain is how the domain disciplines people in ways that set some people onto paths or trajectories that make some options seem more visible and more appropriate and other options seem out of reach or even irrelevant to some people (Collins and Bilge 2016). Bureaucracy is an important mode of social control and is very effective in both *"reproducing intersecting oppressions and in masking their effects"* (Collins 2000, 281). This domain is typified by discipline, enforcement, and control, and by the creation and enforcement of hierarchies. Surveillance is also an important part of the disciplinary domain and constitutes a major mechanism of bureaucratic control ensuring that subordinate groups are appropriately monitored and disciplined.

The special education system is a good example of effective bureaucratic control. Within this system, the processes and practices to identify SEN are presented and accepted as efficient, logical, benevolent, and in the best interests of all students. The disciplinary domain enforces the individual medicalised deficit-based model of disability (created and justified at a macro level) by identifying difference/deficits, '*sifting*' and '*sorting*' students into a hierarchy, whose value is inherently oppositional in nature, the 'able' and the 'disabled' (Connor 2006). SWD in this disciplinary domain once *identified* as '*failing*' or not achieving according to normed expectations are referred to *expert* professionals who, using apparently objective medicalised criteria, can *diagnose* a disability. Once that disability or special educational need is diagnosed students *must* enter the bureaucratic system of special education. Students are then *classified* into disability categories which ostensibly is to ensure that SWD get appropriate academic support so that they can achieve to their potential. In practice, in the disciplinary domain, SWD in schools and HEIs, are labelled, identified as different, and are separated, and sometimes segregated, for some, most, or all of their education, from the 'able' students. Students are aware of the negativity and power of the label assigned to them, their own powerlessness in this domain, and often internalise that stigma by seeking to hide that identity, identifying how the disciplinary and hegemonic domains intersect. Analysis of the interview data revealed three themes that relate specifically to the disciplinary domain. These three themes can be broadly summarised as (1) assessment and categorisation processes, (2) attending the 'right' school, and (3) power (lessness) and the student voice. These themes and their impact on the student experience are described in the following sections.

7.6.1 Assessment and Categorisation Processes

In this study, we can see evidence that the medical model of disability is endemic in Ireland through the medicalised assessment processes in schools and the DARE processes in HE experienced by SWD. These processes are so embedded at a macro structural level that they are largely accepted by students/families as reasonable, necessary, justified, benevolent, in the best interests of the child/young person, as well as in everyone's best interests (teachers and other students). The assessment process is compulsory in that students have no choice as assessments are positioned (via the structural and disciplinary domains) as necessary to access support and to access DARE. The student stories suggest that the special education bureaucracy and processes of identification/diagnosis are embedded, ingrained, endemic and normalised. The assessment processes are managed by those in authority at a national level including the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO's) and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) giving them authority, professional expertise, and recognition in the face of those most marginalised. There is also a reliance on *"expert"* psychologists/medical professionals that is related to the dominance of professional knowledge in society. The combination of the medicalisation of disability and the unquestioned reification of the knowledge of expert professionals creates a powerful enforcement regime in education.

The medicalised processes are reified by those in authority in schools who use them as a gateway to identify those that have additional needs and to access/deny support. The unquestioned authority of the professionals suggest that their determinations cannot be disputed. The processes are cemented in HE when a plethora of medical evidence is required for DARE and again in HEIs where disability professionals enforce the same medicalised processes. There is an emphasis in these processes on identifying and proving disability by providing medical '*evidence*' which localises the '*problem*' as an individual medical *"deficit"* or negative *"difference"* that is located within the individual person. This individualised deficit-based approach to disability (firmly established in the structural domain) in enforced in the disciplinary domain and has profound implications both for how SWD see and understand their own identities, and for how educators and student peers, understand and see them.

Students in this study largely accepted the medicalised assessment processes as it was so key to accessing either support in school, state examination accommodations, eligibility for DARE, exemptions for languages for HE matriculation purposes, and support in HE. The bureaucracy of special education is immensely efficient and powerful and there is no avoiding the special education machinery as the necessity for identification and measurement of difference is required and consolidated at every level. Students in this study internalised this conceptualisation, mostly passively accepting the individualised medicalised model, particularly as children and young adults. The experiences of SWD in this study suggest that the medicalised assessment process has a profound impact on how students conceptualise their own identity as a SWD. These medicalised processes reveal the students who are *"failing"* to achieve in comparison to their peers and also have a profound impact on how students see themselves, and how educators and other students see them, often affirming that the learning difficulty is personal, individual, biological, medical, natural, and permanent.

In this process, students once identified as 'failing' are labelled through an extensive categorisation system. The labelling of students as 'different' and inferior was incredibly powerful and was understood by students to create a clear hierarchy of difference. These students are, in this disciplinary process, created as SWD and positioned as inferior.

There are negative assumptions embedded in this labelling process that was very impactful for all the students in the study. Students labelled as a student with a disability were assumed to be on different/lower educational trajectories than the more able students by the students themselves, by parents, by teachers, and by their peers:

"When I was doing my Leaving Cert, they told me to apply to PLC courses, that I wouldn't be able for anything other than a PLC course... They said that there was no way that I'd be able to get into university." [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"... but then like you also have the attitude of their family and teachers and that saying well 'you know you don't do great in school what's the point in going to college' or *whatever, so I suppose not that they would say that openly but I would say that there is always that thoughts around it."* [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

Students reported that the public labelling as a SWD was immensely damaging and clearly and publically identified who was *"normal"* and who was *"not"* and students were very aware of this. Labelling identified the able students as superior, mainstream, able, and academic while SWD were publically labelled as inferior, different, disabled and not academic.

"...like when you're told you're Dyslexic, you're always told what you can't do, like you know 'you can't spell very good, you can't read very well, you can't write very well' but they don't tell you what you can do. I suppose that can sometimes you know like because you're always told the negatives." [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Only later, especially after entering HE, do SWD start to suggest that this model, rather than being benevolent, is implicitly unfair and harmful or that disability is not about deficit or difference but a normal part of the human condition:

"…But like once I got through the Leaving Cert, you know, once you get a bit older, you don't care how different you are to be honest." [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"…and I don't like people labelling people with a disability because I don't think that's right and I don't think it's very politically correct either. But also I mean with something like depression, like I am only now starting to realise that's it's not solid. It's not something that's there for your entire life … For the first time I am kind of like, maybe I don't have depression, maybe it's something that's a phase in my life so I don't think it's right to be diagnosed really with things" [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"No, I don't know, I don't know what you would consider it as though. Maybe it's just like a...Yeah, I think it might be just like someone having brown hair and blue eyes instead of you know (referring to what a disability is)". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

It was unclear the value of having students assessed/diagnosed. In theory students are assessed in order to identify appropriate supports. However, no students had an IEP in second level and there appeared to be no connection between educational impact and educational support. The purpose of the assessment seemed to be primarily to identify and label SWD. Once identified as '*not normal*' the label stuck with students, being justified and reinforced in every sector. The labelling is a very public process that creates negative feelings of shame and inferiority. Students can, and do try to hide their disability, but this is very difficult to do. Students can visibly be seen to leave mainstream classes for resource teaching, using the special education resource room, taking examinations in separate venues or attending separate orientation programmes in HE ensuring that any possibility of retaining anonymity is lost.

The disciplinary domain suggests that SWD/special education students do not simply exist; they are very effectively identified and constructed and created in the disciplinary domain, contributing enormously to how individual student identities are constituted as disabled or classed. The structural and disciplinary domains intersect, combine, and mutually support each other in these processes. One could not exist without the other.

This study suggests that the labelling process itself is immensely damaging for students because the label, while seemingly benevolent or innocuous, is loaded with assumptions, negativity and assumed or suggested trajectories (low expectations, limited opportunities, low status employment). The study also suggests that the disability label does not act as a passport to support and seems to be more for the purpose of the identification, separation, and segregation, of students who are *"failing"* rather than to actively support students who have additional learning needs.

7.6.2 Attending the 'right' school

One of the key themes to emerge from this study is how SWD are steered towards schools that are positioned as the 'right' school for them, more suitable and more appropriate to their status. In some cases, some mainstream schools suggest, nudge or steer students, to other schools that might be more appropriate to their 'special' needs, suggesting that the disciplinary domain is effective in restricting the choices available to students. The student experience also however suggests that families resist their designated positioning, using their social, cultural and economic resources to actively seek better opportunities and outcomes (Gillborn 2015). One of the ways that they do this, in this study, is by seeking or moving their children to schools/HEIs that were seen to be more inclusive, welcoming, supportive, and more suited to their status as a SWD. This theme was challenging to place within the matrix structure as the theme is equally appropriate in either the disciplinary domain or the interpersonal domain (as it represents the power of resistance and activism). I have placed this theme in the disciplinary domain as I concluded that steering/nudging SWD towards inferior educational options is a key way of controlling SWD ensuring that students are contained in their assigned (inferior) locations.

In this study it was clear that having a SEN/disability did influence the school and university choice for most students. Of the ten students in the study, six students made deliberate choices about the school they attended based on the belief that they would get better supports for their disability. For example James and Tracey both chose schools that would ‘suit’ their status. James chose to attend a DEIS secondary school, outside of his local area, because it was a smaller and more rural school and it was welcoming. Tracey chose a non-DEIS secondary school, outside of her own local area, for exactly the same reasons. Both students identified the supportive nature of the school that they chose to attend as pivotal in the context of improved educational opportunities and outcomes:

“Yeah, I think the school the school was very supportive, they didn’t have many facilities like but like they made the most of what they had and you know and they just went with it. But a lot of schools just kind of go through the motions and do what they have to do and what’s necessary but like this school really did kind of make the effort like...” [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

“…I mean for me personally it was the fact that the teachers respected me and that was something I had never experienced in primary school so it was almost like I went from feeling completely worthless for living in the area that I lived in and coming from the background that I did and then I went to the school where it didn’t matter and the only thing that mattered was that you know I work hard…” [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Anna also moved primary school for the last two years of her primary education having experienced a very negative school climate and enjoyed these two years in what she perceived to be a much more inclusive school environment. Gary (who is blind) described the difficulties accessing a supportive school, and explains how one school that he had initially considered suggested that they might not be the right environment to be able to support him. The school suggested initially that he was *“…a health hazard”* and asked him to prove that he would be safe in the school:

"…they had me walk down a hall, and they put an obstacle in front of me, they had like a wheelie, I don't know, something on wheels with metal material hanging out and they made me walk directly in front of it and see if I could walk around it". [Gary, Blind, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Although the school later offered him a place, this process made his family determined that he would not attend this school. This decision in some respects was not a choice as he had been nudged/steered towards a different educational environment. Gary chose as a result to attend a private fee-paying secondary school where he enjoyed smaller classes and better relationships with his teachers. Gary felt that his parents chose a private fee-paying school to ensure that he got personal supports even though they struggled to pay the fees. This was directly related to their concern that he be appropriately supported.

There were similar processes operating when making a decision about third level options. Students spoke of the HEI that they chose to attend, that has a national reputation for inclusion and widening participation, as attractive because of being located in a more rural area, smaller, with a welcoming and proactive approach as well as comprehensive supports for SWD. Students sought out environments where diversity was welcomed and where their difference would be less obvious:

"Like, I picked like my secondary school because it was in the country and it was quiet and small, I suppose (name of HEI) as well like it's not, I wouldn't say it's small but it's smaller than some of the other colleges… and it's in the country as well." [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"I just fell in love with this place. I want to go here, I want to go here and I went to UCD and Trinity but I preferred it here...The atmosphere and the size as well and I think the community..." [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"I wanted to go to the best university for music and I knew that (name of HEI) was the best and I put that as my first choice. And then Mum found out that the Access Department is the best in Ireland". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"The lecture halls and stuff seemed more welcoming in a way say than UCD for example. Have you been to a UCD lecture hall? They are massive. A bit intimidating at times so yeah". [Conor, Hearing Impaired, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Overall, there emerges a pattern of students changing schools, of choosing to attend specific schools, or choosing special schools or fee-paying schools primarily to get better support. Students valued being welcomed. Students valued schools/colleges where they would not be isolated, alone, or seen as different. Parents and students navigated the system to choose different schools and negotiate better opportunities for their children in different educational contexts. The concern seemed to be that children with SEN/disability need support if they are to have opportunities and better outcomes. In this study, some SWD are also steered or directed, consciously or unconsciously, towards schools/HEIs that are suggested to be more suitable or appropriate to their status as a SWD even though these may be more disadvantaged contexts. These decisions can also however be seen to be framed by the processes of subordination so effectively embedded through the matrix of domination.

7.6.3 Power (lessness) and the Student Voice

A key aspect of the disciplinary domain is to ensure that SWD passively accept their positioning as inferior. In this domain, the assessment and labelling processes position students as inferior. The risk with such an approach is that students and their families will rail against this unequal treatment and demand equality. Students and parents are, however, structured in this domain to have no power and are encouraged/pressured to submit to a system suggested to be benevolent and working in their interests. This lack of socially sanctioned power experienced by SWD, their parents, and families, across all social institutions, in this study was identified as an important lever within the matrix of domination to support the oppression and subordination of all SWD.

In this study, a number of students identified how powerless they were in a system that seemed structured to disempower them. Karen refers frequently to how powerless she felt and the lack of being heard, of having no voice in school, in the health system, or in HE:

"Oh a hundred per cent, like it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter what the problem is it could be an argument with a student and a teacher, the student is always wrong, it doesn't matter what it is…Oh absolutely, honestly I think students who have no sort of disabilities or problems, I think they have no voice so do you know what I mean. I think if you have any extra needs or whatever you definitely have even less of a voice because they don't have any time for the rest of the students as it is". [Karen, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

Karen had the same experience in HE where she refers to being powerless again, forced to take supports in the HEI by her Disability Advisor:

".. And she said 'well, at the time you might want them' (referring to supports in HE). I said 'no honestly I'll be fine, I didn't need them in school'. She said 'well this is different' and she didn't let me say no and she forced me to have them and I was quite upset about that because I felt like that she didn't think I was competent enough for it". [Karen, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Rebecca talks about how she hated to read out loud in class and yet how she was forced to do so feeling powerless in this area. Anna talks about how she had no voice in secondary school continuously being treated as a child:

"Yeah definitely even through the school system you are not consulted on issues, yeah you have no power... I mean you are treated as a child and even as you progress I mean that does not change, so you're relying on, you voice your opinions but you are straight away shot down" [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

This was also a feature of her experience in HE where *"…like I feel like I'm constantly trying to fight through the degree to get what I deserve.... And sometimes I'm not heard, at all".* [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Not having a voice, not being heard, seemed to be a real issue when students were younger. As they got older they seemed to get stronger and more confident. Tracey and Gary spoke about becoming more aware and more confident as they got older to push against the barriers:

"Yeah, definitely because I felt like I didn't have a voice at the time, and it wasn't really till my Senior Cycle that I began to feel like I did …and as well because I had more confidence in myself as I grew older it was kind of easier to push against them but whereas when I was younger I wouldn't have, like I'd say there is something wrong with me and I should just stay in my little old box where I am kept". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

"...you know 1st Year you don't have a voice, its only when you get older and you can explain things in your own way that people start to understand so … I always feel that I have given back so they understand if they ever have another student not to put them straight in a box and let them be an individual". [Gary, Blind, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

Where there were stronger relationships with teachers, advocating for yourself did not seem to be an issue. Lack of a voice was not an issue for Grace who developed her illness in transition year. Grace already had strong relationships with teachers who knew her and this seemed to be an important factor for her success. Feeling powerless was also not an issue for James or Eamonn where the ethos of the schools were quite inclusive or for Niamh who went to the School for the Deaf. Five of the students however in this study spoke about how their voice was not heard and about how powerless they felt to influence the decisions being made about them. This issue has been identified as not specific to Ireland and indeed is replicated in international studies where *"in none of the countries we visited, and in none of the global documents was there any serious consideration of using the child's views and their interests as they perceived them when planning for their learning"* (Rix et al. 2013, 189). Three of those students who identified this as a key issue had very negative school experiences. More inclusive schools seemed to encourage students to be more active partners in their own learning and school experience.

In the disciplinary domain, parents try to exert influence or improve their children's positioning. However, parents in this system are also largely marginalised where the disciplinary domain exerts a powerful and challenging influence. Parents in this arena are suggested, as in Anna's case, to be meddling, or difficult, unwilling or unable to accept their children's limited academic ability. Parents in this context have to battle to be heard and to request, suggest, or ask for supports for their children. Nonetheless parents exert a powerful influence challenging the disciplinary domain and supporting their children to resist their inferior trajectory. This theme is further explored in more detail in the interpersonal domain.

7.6.4 Summary Disciplinary Domain

Analysis of the interview data revealed three themes that relate specifically to the disciplinary domain including (1) assessment and categorisation processes, (2) attending the 'right' school, and (3) power (lessness) and the student voice. In this study the disciplinary domain efficiently and ruthlessly enforces the SEN machinery and system to individualise, identify, separate, and segregate SWD from other students. The system reifies medical professionals and the identification and diagnosis processes. All students must submit to the process where SEN/disability is identified and uncovered and students enter a process so efficient and routinised that there is no escape. Students are efficiently and publically labelled, sorted into a clear hierarchy of the 'able' and the 'unable', the 'normal' and the 'different', the 'mainstream' and the 'others'. The power here lies predominantly in the hands of professionals who sift, sort, and separate the students identified and constructed as weaker students from those on mainstream trajectories.

Schools and HEI’s implement and rigorously enforce this system which is suggested to be in the best interests of all students. These bureaucratic processes control individual student’s behaviour, defining their self-identity and their expectations and limiting their opportunities. Students know that this label is negative and so they try to hide it in every sector. Once students enter special education, the system is so bureaucratic, so efficient, and so accepted as natural and benevolent, that there is no way out. The ‘sticky labels’ identified so negatively in international literature are ever present in this study allowing children to access resources but following them determinedly from school to school and into HE (Rix et al. 2013, 191).

I had assumed at the outset of this study that school type was very important. In the qualitative aspect of this study, school type was less important than the construction of a supportive ethos and climate. At a structural macro level, students and their families know that the inclusive supportive national framework that is guaranteed by legislation for SWD does not exist in reality. Families also know that negotiating with schools/social institutions can be a challenging environment with variable success in which they have little power or influence. In this context, families who can do so, move children to environments that they feel will support disability, suit their status as a SWD, and/or offer better opportunities and outcomes for their children. Decision making in this area is powerfully influenced by the processes of subordination and inferiority conceptualised and enforced at all levels. Choosing the ‘*right*’ school is thus positioned as matter of individual choice rather than the inevitable outcome of a system structured to marginalise all SWD, particularly working-class SWD. Schools and education institutions enforce the conceptualisation of disability conceived at a structural level and maintained at a school/HE level. Schools and HEIs thus limit opportunities, reproduce inequalities, and reinforce the rights of those with the resources to demand them, limiting the rights of those who have no voice.

In the disciplinary domain, the education system does not erase ‘otherness’, this domain uses the SEN machine to create and accentuate difference with a systematic denial of the value and worth of particular groups and a requirement to behave and aspire to the ‘normal’ ideal. The disciplinary domain obscures the effects of reproducing intersecting oppressions (Collins 2000, 281). By highlighting the intersection of disability and social class in special education in the disciplinary domain, it becomes clearer how inequality is reproduced and sustained in the lives of all SWD.

7.7 Introduction Hegemonic Domain

The hegemonic domain refers to the power of *“ideology, culture, and consciousness”* and is the third domain in the matrix of domination conceptual framework (Collins 2000, 284). This domain is incredibly powerful, and its importance lies *“in its ability to shape consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies”* (Collins 2000, 285). These ideologies and images have a specific purpose which is to construct superior and inferior identities and to restrict the options and the opportunities available to some people (inferior) and to constrain them while creating opportunities for others (superior). The ideologies and images are *“remarkably tenacious”* (Collins 1990, 68), defining the ‘outsiders’ and the ‘others’, clarifying the boundaries of normal society. These ideologies permeate all levels of society and represent deeply entrenched ways of thinking about one group (inferior) and other groups (superior). This domain influences how people’s identities are constituted and how people see themselves as disabled or classed. This domain is so powerful that it is embedded into the psyche of all individuals, dictating and determining what we believe to be true (Collins 1990). This domain influences consciousness and identity in children (and parents, peers, teachers and educators, and society) from their earliest years and these ideologies are embedded in all levels of education mutually sustaining and reinforcing these negative ideologies. The ideologies are difficult, if not impossible to resist, and they are represented and reinforced in multiple domains including popular culture, folklore, media, curricula, and textbooks.

This domain is so powerful that it impacts on how people see themselves, how we perceive and understand others, the attitudes and every day interactions and behaviour of others, how people behave and conform, accepting their inferior identity, submitting to the assigned grouping and status and accepting their inferior treatment as justified. Within this domain, a discourse of ‘normalcy’ creates subordinate groups, constructs subordinate identities, and justifies negative and discriminatory attitudes towards individuals/groups identified as inferior. Groups are defined as homogenous and as having certain characteristics and these characteristics are then used to justify their unequal treatment. The hegemonic domain underpins and sustains the other domains by acting *“as a link between social institutions (structural domain), their organizational practices (disciplinary domain), and the level of everyday social interaction (interpersonal domain)”* (Collins 2000, 284). The unequal and discriminatory practices embedded in the structural domain and enforced in the disciplinary domain can then be justified in the hegemonic domain where for example Black women are portrayed as stereotypes, as mammies, welfare mothers, “hoochies”, and jezebels, justifying their unequal treatment (Collins 2000, 284). These stereotypes are so powerful that Black women are seduced, pressured, and encouraged to believe that they deserve their unequal treatment and to accept this unequal status. Dominant groups justify the hierarchies created by the structural and disciplinary domains as a design of nature. In this matrix they are seen to be a design of power to reproduce inequality and to ensure that dominant groups retain, maintain, and extend their share of resources and power. The power of the hegemonic domain is in how it justifies the maintenance of the status quo.

In this study, the hegemonic domain influences how people are constructed as disabled and/or classed requiring them to submit to this negative identity even though to do so positions them as inferior. What is valued in society is made clear in numerous interlocking interlinked ways in multiple arenas. In these spaces, disability and social class matter. The dominant images of disability (and social class), introduced in earlier chapters, that has been constructed in this domain is of negative difference, neediness, dependency, inability, inferiority, vulnerability, people who are pitiful, powerless, and worthless. The polar opposite of this image has been constructed in this domain as the able-bodied student, academic, sporty, powerful, independent, worthy, an image reified as the normal or ideal standard. The hegemonic domain suggests that the able-bodied student is superior to the student with a disability who is inferior. The hegemonic domain reifies this ideal and reinforces difference and 'otherness' justifying the boundaries between the dominant groups ('normal') and the oppressed or marginalised groups ('the others'). Not measuring up this ideal is seen as an individual failure, a fault of nature, a limitation of effort, talent, work, or ability. These images are atypical but are immensely powerful.

This ideology is sustained and reinforced by generating feelings of stigma and shame. The people represented by these images internalise them. People stigmatised through these ideologies know that it is inherently negative and so try to hide it. All others also know that this is an inherently negative and low status positioning and so they instinctively and consciously retreat from it for fear that they might be tainted even by association. In this domain, Collins suggests that the power of the matrix is how the oppressed submit to the very system that fosters their own subordination (Collins 2000, 283). The hegemonic domain is incredibly powerful in pressuring and seducing SWD to accept and submit to their negative and undesirable status, to conform to the implicit low expectations, accepting their label, even though they know that it is implicitly negative, and has a far deeper and malignant meaning.

An analysis of the student experiences affirms the power of the hegemonic domain suggesting that students internalise the negative inferiority suggested by disability and low social class. As increasing numbers of students with disabilities are accessing mainstream education and HE, their experiences identify how their subordination in the education system is maintained and assured. Three themes emerged from the student experience relevant to this domain. These three themes can be broadly summarised as (1) the negative language and images of disability, (2) stigma and shame and (3) invisible role models. These three themes are explored in the following sections.

7.7.1 Language and Images of Disability

The analysis of the students' interviews supported the view that the language of disability in education is inherently negative. The individualised and medicalised model of disability in Ireland (created in the structural domain and enforced in the disciplinary domain) means that students have no choice and must enter the realm of *special* education where they can be *diagnosed* or *identified* or *disclose* that they have a disability. They must provide *evidence* of disability. The language all suggests something inherently hidden, something negative and undesirable that must be discovered. The disability categorisation processes also use the language of deficits. Students are diagnosed by powerful professionals with learning *difficulties, syndromes, issues, impairments, problems, and disorders*. In HE, all students who wish to access support must *register* with a disability, suggesting something inherently undesirable and different. This is the negative language of disability that all students internalise and navigate in education and society.

In this study, the negativity and stigma of a SEN/disability label was pervasive and common to all but one of the students in the study. Niamh was the only student who strongly identified with her disability and who felt that being deaf was an important and valued part of who she is:

"I am proud I am Deaf. I know this may sound strange to you but being Deaf is not a disability, it is a culture. I am very influenced by my Deaf parents and their friends to be proud of who I am and the culture I belong to". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

For Niamh, this positive identification was connected to a powerful counter narrative within the deaf community that positioned being deaf as a positive state of being and a positive and affirmative culture that supported this construction. This identification was supported however by the fact that her parents were deaf and were part of a vibrant and proud deaf culture and community. Collins identifies the hegemonic domain as a critical site for crafting a counter narrative to these hegemonic ideas that would support a changed consciousness. Niamh's experiences suggest that this can be achieved even in a society dominated and saturated by negative stigmatised ableist ideologies.

This positive identification with disability was not the experience for the other nine students in the study for whom the negativity associated with the disability label was pervasive. This acceptance of disability as inherently negative, and the internalising of these beliefs that are seen to be endemic in society, is an important finding in this study. All nine students believed that having a disability was inherently negative, associated with not being able to do things, with being slow, unable, with dependence, with a lack of academic ability. The following quotes demonstrate this;

"… so like if you look at any disability it's always thought to be slow in some aspect like, whether it's someone not being able to walk or someone not being able to write or read or not being able to talk... Well like that's what like disabilities are always like. They are always told what you're not able to do and not what you can do like". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"Yeah, I feel a lot like that, say you see someone in a wheelchair and you feel the need that you have to do everything for them. I would say it annoys them when people are sort of saying 'oh I will do that for, I will do that for you' even though they can do it themselves, do you know that kind of thing. You feel like everyone just feels sorry for you". [Eamonn, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"…an awful lot of people have the perception that if you have a disability you can't be, you can't do academically well, it isn't true…" [Grace, Significant Ongoing Illness, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

In this study, the power of the hegemonic domain is immense. The students in the study identified strongly negatively with the stereotypical language and images of disability. The students were all anxious to clarify that they did not feel that they had a disability:

"…because when I think of disabilities I think of wheelchairs and stuff like that but I wouldn't, I know I have one but I wouldn't say I have a disability". [Eamonn, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"...you know like I don't have a disability". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

"Well I am not too sure how to interpret that word to be honest. Maybe you know I have some difficulties that most other people don't have but I am not sure if that's a disability as such so no I don't think I am disabled". [Conor, Hearing Impaired, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"Dyslexia like I don't know I wouldn't look at it as a disability as such because a disability is quite a harsh word…" [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

The student experiences suggest that they did not wish to be seen as a SWD, a state of being which was accepted as inherently undesirable.

7.7.2 Stigma and Shame

Stigma and shame are important enablers in the hegemonic domain to maintain the negative ideologies used to construct the disabled identity. Feelings of stigma and shame were endemic in this study and assumptions about the negativity of disability were pervasive among students, teachers and student peers. James did not want to draw attention to himself in class by asking the teacher for help because other students would think that *"…you're the slow one in the class"*. James also felt that students associated dyslexia with a lack of academic ability because:

"…like it's just sometimes like in secondary school and primary school probably I would have, sometimes I'd go in and people my own age would be asking 'why do you get that help for exams and stuff', … and they kind of think 'ah well he is slow' and I am not sort of thing". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Eamonn talks about how even though his school friends were aware that he has dyslexia that he would not bring the issue up in conversation because there is a negativity associated with it. He suggests that more educated people might see disability differently because:

"…with lecturers because you know they're educated people, they know, but friends and all, you wouldn't. I know you should but it like they just drop your intelligence down a level". [Eamonn, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Tracey similarly felt that she could not discuss mental health with her friends feeling that mental health issues were always something to be hidden and *"to be ashamed of"*, highly stigmatised, and that the stigma is so pervasive that *"…it's really hard to be able to talk about it"*. Tracey has also experienced the negative language of disability, which is so rooted in the individual and so permeated by negative assumptions that it *"…implies that you're not fully able to function almost"*. [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

James also speaks really powerfully about what it means to have a label of dyslexia and how low expectations and assumptions about what this means can become a self-fulfilling prophecy because:

"I think a lot of people like when they are in secondary school or primary school they're told 'you can't do this' and 'you can't do that', it means oh well sure I may as well give up, there is no point like". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

James suggests that the word disability is a *"harsh"* word and that parents, teachers, and his peers all understand disability as implicitly negative, focussed on what you cannot do rather than on what you can do. James suggests that this understanding of disability is pervasive and is conveyed in both subtle and more obvious ways, implicitly hierarchical and oppositional in nature. James speaks powerfully about how disability is constructed as polar opposites constructing people in binary terms:

"That's the kind of, sometimes the attitude people can only think like of people being smart or stupid. They can't really think of people being like having other challenges facing them". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

For James, his more positive experience, particularly in secondary school, was connected to being like the others, not being identified as different, which was seen to be implicitly negative and inferior. Within the hegemonic domain, James's experience, even in an inclusive school, suggests that the stigma and shame associated with disability is pervasive and endemic. James attended a secondary school that he felt was inclusive, had many students who were receiving additional support, had a unit for students with autism and had students in the school with disabilities including ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome. The school were very supportive of facilitating *"…not requests but kind of things that they kind of need".* James' experiences suggest however, that negative assumptions about disability are ingrained in families, schools, among teachers and peers.

James suggested that people associate dyslexia with being inferior, being slow, a deficit, and a weakness:

"I still think of it as being like it's Dyslexia is considered like it's considered a disability so I suppose like if you're told you have a disability it's considered, like having a disability it's considered to be negative anyway". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

These constructions of disability as inherently negative are not challenged in HE. Rather they are consolidated and reinforced. Anna describes how the language of disability in HE is so public and negative. Anna felt that the language of disability was quite muted (therefore more positive) in the HEI that she attended for her undergraduate degree in comparison to the HEI where she undertook a postgraduate course after graduation. Anna describes seeking out support in her new college and finding the 'Disability Support Centre', identified in public as an inherently negative position:

"…they call it the Disability Support Centre and I have a huge issue with that, My God that's really labelling and when I got down there it took me 3 weeks to actually find the building to begin with, because I thought I am not really under this, you know like I don't have a disability". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

Anna also describes how public and individually shameful this negative positioning is when she found out that her assignments needed to have a physical sticker placed on them identifying that she had dyslexia:

"I went to submit an assignment and my lecturer turns to me and goes 'so do you have a sticker for your assignment' and I said 'a what?' And he went 'do you have a dyslexia sticker' and I was like 'what, sorry I need a sticker saying I am Dyslexic on it' and he says 'yeah you get it from the Support Centre' it's a big huge sticker apparently, its red or something, and it says, 'this student has Dyslexia, this student has x, y and z' and you have to stick it on your script before handing it up". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

Rebecca describes *being "slagged" by* other girls because of her dyslexia which still really upset her as an adult suggesting that peers also know the stigma of disability and use it as a weapon to target some children while carefully also distancing themselves from that inferiority. Gary suggested that he was very sociable and had lots of friends which was helped by the fact that he did not look as if he had a disability, suggesting that if he looked disabled that this might be seen negatively by others.

Students internalise these feelings of shame and difference and only become aware, particularly, in HE, of how damaging these constructions of disability, endemic in the system, actually are:

"Yeah, I mean I, like when I went to Secondary School I like literally had no confidence whatsoever and I mean it took years and years, like I am only like beginning to think hey maybe I am not stupid and I think I internalised that so much that it was completely embedded in who I was…" [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

"It was, yeah it was very tough. It was quite hard. I did not really get the support that I needed. It was; it knocked my confidence completely". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Rebecca who had a very negative school experience also had a distressing experience with a lecturer who wrote on her assignment early in 1st year that *"…I shouldn't be in third level and all this stuff... I nearly dropped out of college because of it".* Rebecca had already, throughout school, been conditioned to believe that she could not achieve and she internalised these experiences impacted by low self-esteem and a belief that her difficulties were an individual failing. The casual and cruel comment from a lecturer in HE was so powerful that it almost led to her leaving college.

The student experiences in this study suggest that the power of the hegemonic domain is pervasive and has a massive impact on the identities of students. The stereotypical assumptions about disability, the negative language and images, the assumptions implicit in labels, are damaging for all of the students in the study. The hegemonic domain connects in these students' lives with the other domains to ensure that SWD understand that their position in the hierarchy is implicitly negative, inferior, and undesirable. In doing this, it is also clear that educators, peers, and other influencers also understand that disability, special education, is the equivalent of educational leprosy (Connor 2006), a state of being that the students in the study, and others, retreat from.

7.7.3 Invisible Role Models

One way to counter the dominant negative ideology is to offer students powerful role models in their lives that would offer a strong counter narrative to the construction of disability as inherently undesirable and inferior. Despite the commitment to inclusive education, students in this study found that there were few teachers who had disabilities themselves who could act as strong role models. For Niamh, a large part of her positive school experience was that her teachers were deaf and teachers and students all used sign language. None of the other nine students mentioned teachers who were open about how they themselves had mental health issues or had a physical or sensory disability.

Two students, who both had positive inclusive experiences in secondary school, both mentioned teachers who were open about having dyslexia as being very encouraging for them. James mentioned that it was important that there were younger teachers in his school that were more aware of learning difficulties and that *"I know one of my teachers, my Physics teacher was Dyslexic"* suggesting that this was a strong role model for him. Eamonn also had a strong role model in the school reporting that it was very important for him that his Resource teacher also had dyslexia:

"Yeah it was nice to actually see that it could be done rather than no teacher has Dyslexia. A good number probably do and maybe they don't parade around saying it,

they might hide it themselves, no it's always nice to see there is a steady step up and you can do it if you want to". [Eamonn, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

"…like she did History in college as well so we got on great because what she liked, I liked the same thing, and she went through the same thing". [Eamonn, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

It is interesting that Eamonn plans on becoming a teacher suggesting that his own experience would benefit other students with disabilities when he is teaching:

"Yeah I think it will benefit me in some way, everything has its plus and negatives like but it will benefit me, it will be easier if I see other kids with it you will be able to relate to them more, I might be able to help them, I might be able to relate to them more, I might be able to spot it easier than other people". [Eamonn, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

No students mentioned that there were any lecturers in HE who had a disability of any kind. The power of staff in HE to influence consciousness however is clear. Anna describes the impact of a lecturer who spoke positively about dyslexia and helped support her aspirations noting that:

"I remember saying it to one lecturer and he keeps, every time I go to see him he keeps saying I have a friend who is dyslexic and he's doing his PhD. And he's completely encouraging, and it's great". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

The importance of teachers as role models was key in this study. Some students identified how teachers who were open about having a disability themselves acted as powerful and inspiring role models. Students generally suggested that they could not see their own identities represented in the teaching profession which might have challenged negative assumptions and dominant ideologies and normalised disability. This study suggests that the invisibility of teachers/lecturers with disabilities stigmatised disability further and works to reinforce the dominant ideology that disability is inherently negative and represents inability rather than ability.

7.7.4 Summary Hegemonic Domain

In this study, the student experiences suggest that this domain is incredibly powerful. Three themes emerged from the student experience relevant to this domain including (1) the negative language and images of disability, (2) stigma and shame and (3) invisible role models. The dominant negative ideology of disability is pervasive across all sectors. Unlike race or social class, disability does not make students feel proud, the opposite in fact. All students, except one, did not feel that they themselves had a disability, which was understood to be implicitly negative. The impact on individual students was powerful. Students understood and saw themselves, with a disability, as implicitly different and inferior. A disability was associated strongly with stigma and shame as well as with difference. Students really struggled with the disability label and the low expectations which manifested as hiding their disability and having low confidence. Students struggled to resist these dominant stigmatising ideologies. Their sense of difference and negative deficits was reinforced across all education sectors and into employment.

In this study, there were no teachers/lecturers who identified as having a mental health, physical or sensory disability. Students cannot see their own identities represented in those that are powerful and have the capacity to challenge negative assumptions and dominant ideologies. Hiding a disability, among those who have the power to influence, is widespread. Students feel that they must conform to the dominant image, represent what is valued in society, and hide or erase obvious signs of a disability. Students in the study had mostly disabilities that were invisible (mental health, dyslexia, illness). Nonetheless, the stigma of even being associated with disability/difference was powerful and endemic. These negative ideologies are constructed in the hegemonic domain but are embedded in the consciousness of children and young adults, those who are positioned as inferior and superior. It is also embedded in the consciousness of teachers and educators, in parents and families, and across powerful social institutions. These ideologies are incredibly powerful and are almost impossible to resist as they are reaffirmed and reinforced in multiple domains securing the oppression of people on the margins.

7.8 Introduction Interpersonal Domain

Finally, the fourth domain in the matrix of domination is the interpersonal domain that influences individuals' everyday lived experiences (Collins 1990, 276). The impact of the other three domains flood into the everyday lived experiences of people and reveals how oppression impacts people in their everyday lives, in the day to day practices of how people treat one another, and in ways that are *"systematic, recurrent, and so familiar that they often go unnoticed"* (Collins 2000, 287). The interpersonal domain is interconnected with the other three domains in the matrix of domination because it is here that individuals negotiate and interact with the other three domains within all of the different aspects of their lives. Their oppression moves between micro and macro contexts, flowing into and between all domains, to direct and influence everyday lives and experiences. In the interpersonal domain, all students experience oppression in all aspects of their lives. Students who are positioned at the intersections of disability and social class, have differential access to the social, economic and cultural power necessary to resist their assigned locations. Within and between these domains, the intersections are so powerful, that it is difficult to see where disability ends and social class begins in the lives of individual students.

These four interconnected domains of power do not however in Collins (2000) matrix of domination represent total power. All individuals have agency, however constrained, and can resist their created identity in various ways through developing *"oppositional knowledge"* and *"a changed consciousness concerning everyday lived experience"* (Collins 2000, 275). In the interpersonal domain, people with inferior identities can submit to the dominant ideology, can resist or indeed accept the ideology in some respects and actively reject other aspects. In this study, students resisted dominant homogenous understandings of disability and social class, presenting a counter narrative suggesting that disability is a natural part of the human condition and that it is not deficit-based, rejecting binary categories, refusing to accept the negative label, pushing back against the dominant ideologies, and challenging the system as unfair and discriminatory. The students in this study resist the negative controlling images and beliefs, resist internalising the identity imposed on them by the dominant group, becoming more aware of how power is configured to support oppression. In this space, people have the potential to define and value themselves. This resistance reflects individual personal power by virtue of personal insight and knowledge or individual personality suggesting that power can be achieved in spite of a lack of socially sanctioned power (Weber 1998, 28). The matrix of domination however while responsive to human agency recognises that although individual empowerment is crucial *"…only collective action can effectively generate lasting social transformation of political and economic institutions"* (Collins 1990, 237).

This domain represents the personal relationships that SWD have and the different interactions that make up the reality of their daily lives. In this domain, students reveal the personal impact of the routine labelling and the *"sorting"* and *"sifting"* of special education which positions students as socially inferior. Students describe the unassumed nature of routine interactions, their sense of isolation and difference, the impact of low expectations, and negative personal engagement with teachers and lecturers. Students also describe individual acts of resistance and individual agency where they, and their families, push back against the assumed positioning, as they seek academic and social success and career and life opportunities. The following section describes six themes which emerged in the interpersonal domain. These six themes can be broadly summarised as (1) student identity, (2) school expectations, (3) familial expectations, (4) relationships with teachers/lecturers, (5) personal resistance and agency and (6) the power of a supportive family.

7.8.1 Student Identity

In this study, the student narratives identified how their identities as a student with a disability were constructed as different and inferior and their own identities were characterised by experiences of difference and isolation. Within the interpersonal domain, there was some evidence that positive experiences were related to being ‘like’ others; and students who were having a more positive experience often spoke of how important it was that they were not different to their peers. For many of the students in the study it was important that they were not alone and that there were other students or indeed teachers in their school who also had SEN/disabilities. This was evidenced in the case of Niamh who felt that she had a network of friends and that no one was different. Eamonn also felt that having others like him around him was helpful; he felt that it was important that so many others were also receiving learning support. It normalised learning issues very much and he had no sense of isolation or being different. Accessing support was normal. For James who was HEAR DARE eligible, and who went to a DEIS school, there was again little sense of isolation in school. This also seems to have been strongly impacted by the presence of many students in the school who received additional support. Tracey who was also HEAR and DARE eligible also identified how she did not feel alone because there was a strong culture in her secondary school of helping all students:

"Yeah, I think there really good with just, I mean there it wasn't just me even in my year that had mental health problems so they knew how to deal with it". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

The labelling process did however create a very real negative identity for some SWD. Being constituted or seen as '*different*' was a recurring theme in this study. A number of students describe how they felt different to other students who did not have a disability, often feeling isolated and alone, thinking or believing that there were no other students '*like them*'. Anna describes her sense of personal isolation and negative difference:

"I felt so much on my own in school and I felt as if it was just me and no one else has these issues, and I'm different". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Karen also talks about the isolation in school where she felt that she was the only one experiencing difficulties as she was unaware of any other girls in her school in the same situation who had mental health issues. Rebecca identified how she *"used to hate"* the isolation and always *"used to wonder why I was so different..."* and that she always *"...used to feel so alone".* Niamh who was deaf suggested that a friend of hers who was deaf and went to mainstream school *"…felt like she was a bit left out or she was the odd one".* Attending a special school, which could be perceived as being a negative issue, was powerfully positive from the point of view of helping students to see that their issue was experienced by many others and there was a real comfort in that. Niamh who attended a special school suggested that not being different was a really important part of her positive education experience:

"I didn't feel like I was the odd one out. I felt like I was the same as everyone else so I didn't feel like I was deaf. I felt I was normal". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

Niamh contrasted that to her experience at (name of HEI deleted) where *"…when I came in I felt a little bit different, I felt a little bit out of place",* because she was identifiable as different with an army of helpers that accompanied her around her college.

This study suggests that negative feelings of being different are endemic and that this constitutes a negative and often defining aspect of the identities of many of the students with disabilities in the study.

Within the disciplinary domain, students were often accepting of their negative positioning internalising the low academic expectations, and had little or even fragile confidence in their academic ability. Students internalised the assumptions implicit in the disability label and equated disability with the suggested lack of ability. Many of the students in the study suggested that they underachieved academically in the Leaving Certificate in secondary school but few connected this to a lack of support. Conor received few supports in school but suggested that not achieving academically in his Leaving Certificate was due to the fact *"that maybe I just kind of overestimated my abilities…"* Karen had very significant mental health issues and prolonged periods of absence from school and yet she assigns the blame for not doing better in her Leaving Certificate to the fact that she did not work hard enough. James describes how he was disappointed with his examination results as he had worked so hard but does not connect this to the refusal to grant him a scribe even though his handwriting was very poor. Anna describes how it was only when she got to HE that she believed that she had academic strengths because *"...it wasn't until I was here, until I am where I am at now, that I realised that you know I am just as talented as anyone else, you know that took me a very long time to say confidently, yeah I am good at this"*. Eamonn thinks that dyslexia suggests a lack of academic ability, even though *"...I like to think that I'm sort of bright"*. Rebecca was offered a place at level 8 in HE, or level 7 in an Institute of Technology. Rebecca's confidence was so fragile that she was worried that she would not be able for HE although she eventually opted for the level 8 programme. Rebecca suggested that HE was an opportunity to achieve because:

"…I don't feel like people are going to look down on me because I have achieved like to this level...I thought I wasn't as good as everyone else, that they're going to do better than me or whatever...But I feel like now, that even if I can't read as well as somebody, I still am doing well in life like". [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

This confidence is fragile though and easily shattered and so when Rebecca received a negative comment early in HE from a lecturer, she strongly considered leaving college because *"…Yeah I was like well maybe I am actually bad, that I shouldn't be in college like".* [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

The students' experiences suggest that the negative assumptions about disability and academic ability are embedded and that many students internalise them suggesting that they achieve academically *despite* having a disability.

"…I have often felt that I need to prove myself and others around me that like you know that despite having a hearing impairment that I could still get through college and get good grades and stuff like that". [Conor, Hearing Impaired, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"…As for myself, I knew that I was the same as the average student in a hearing school and I wanted to prove to the people that being deaf does not hinder your academic level". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

The student stories suggest that students have an embedded and pervasive sense of a negative identity as a student with a disability. They know that the word, and all its embedded assumptions, are implicitly negative. Although they are publically labelled, they hide and deny their own identity because it does not trigger pride, the opposite in fact. This negative identity, the lack of confidence, the sense of inferiority and difference, is pervasive and embedded. This is an especially striking finding because all of these students had achieved academically and progressed to HE.

7.8.2 School Expectations

Most of the schools had high academic expectations generally although teacher expectations varied considerably within schools and there were nuanced experiences for most students in the study. Six students identified that their schools generally had high expectations (although these varied) for them. Four students, all of whom had dyslexia, identified low or very low expectations. One of these students attended a DEIS school.

Tracey, who was eligible for HEAR and DARE, and lived in a deprived urban area, did not attend her local DEIS school as she felt that there were no academic expectations for students in that school. Tracey chose to attend a school outside of her local area and was very encouraged by the higher expectations in her chosen school which were set for her by the school even though she had missed extended periods of time due to the impact of her disability. It was critical for Tracey that the school believed that she could achieve. It was a similar case for Grace, who was also eligible for both DARE and HEAR, and who had developed an illness late in secondary school. Although the school had high academic expectations of Grace, this may have been based on her previous time and record in the school. Grace suggests that her school was generally more supportive of more academic students suggesting that *"they were very like that with, especially with their, like higher end students, they would have done everything to help them kind of thing"*. [Grace, Significant Ongoing Illness, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Gary's sight started to deteriorate when he was in primary school and he experienced varying academic expectations. Gary describes how he attended a school in the United States for a period of time but had a very negative experience there where there were minimal expectations of his ability:

"Education was terrible and I got no help. But I was sitting there, and the sub gave us crosswords and said 'just do them for this class because your teacher isn't in'. I said 'I can't do this'. She goes 'why'? I said 'I'm legally blind' and she goes 'why aren't you in the School for the Deaf and Blind?'" [Gary, Blind, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Gary knew that there were no real academic expectations for him there and so the family returned to Ireland and he attended a private fee-paying secondary school. The school initially had low academic expectations of him although these changed over time because *"…it took them a while to kind of understand what my capabilities were. I ended up exceeding their expectations".* Gary was helped by the fact that there were people around him that had higher expectations for him including his Special Needs Assistant who *"…always said I was going to do well in secondary school, or in college… 'you're good at exams so you're going to do well'."* Gary also identified a number of individual teachers who pushed him to do better, to achieve more and aim higher:

"I always remember my (subject deleted) teacher for some reason that was just very helpful. She's always like, 'you can do better than you're doing', because I didn't do any reading. She always said 'you're more intelligent than what you're achieving' " [Gary, Blind, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Conor, who was hearing impaired, had the same experience of the school refusing to allow him to use his hearing impairment as an excuse for not working hard enough. He recognised himself that he 'coasted' a bit and was not working hard enough. The school however had high expectations for him generally and he outlines how he was not able to pass off poorer grades as being as the result of his hearing impairment:

"…I mean sometimes I'd get disappointing grades and my teacher would come up and say 'what's wrong; did you not study for it' as opposed to saying 'is it the hearing problem'. With the exception of maybe one or two teachers, the vast majority of them were under the impression that I hadn't been working hard enough to kind of get that grade so…" [Conor, Hearing Impaired, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Niamh who was profoundly deaf and attended a special school identified varying academic expectations where most of the students in her special school did not go on to HE. Niamh however describes how she had high expectations of herself, reinforced by her parents, who believed strongly in the value of education. Niamh was conscious herself of the low expectations that society can have for young people who are deaf:

"I especially put a lot of focus on English as a subject because it was usually the subject a lot of Deaf people were weak on. There were a lot of judgements hearing people made on the link of being Deaf and the level of literacy they have". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

There were quite nuanced experiences for students in the study who had dyslexia. James who was DARE and HEAR eligible, and was diagnosed with dyslexia attended a DEIS school and generally had a very positive school experience. James did feel that with a diagnosis of dyslexia, that there can be an assumption that you can't do certain things, that you are not academic:

"I think there was, because I was offered an exemption from Irish and from any other language, like it was in primary school. That was the option that was given to me and I said no because I thought it was important for people to try because if people are told 'oh you don't have to do something' a lot of the time they won't do it and I know a lot of people that didn't, they took the exemption, that would have better at Irish than I was". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Two other students with dyslexia both had very negative school experiences overall and low school expectations was a critical part of that negative experience. Anna who was diagnosed in early primary school, had very negative interactions with her secondary school. She reports again how the school did not have high academic expectations for her and how she struggled against these low expectations:

"They just didn't think I would go anywhere to be honest" [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"Yeah they have a very negative attitude towards you doing anything in the future. When I was doing my Leaving Cert, they told me to apply to PLC courses, that I wouldn't be able for anything other than a PLC course. They said that there was no way that I'd be able to get into university". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

The lack of expectations and steering students determinedly towards inferior options with restricted choices is revealed starkly through Rebecca's school experiences. Rebecca, who has dyslexia, always felt that little was expected of her in secondary school and that there were assumptions made about her ability (lack of ability), and that as a result she did not get the guidance that she needed to go to college. Rebecca describes in brutal detail how she was not given appropriate advice about pass or honours subjects and how there were low expectations by individual teachers that were very impactful:

"Just once I got into first year I didn't know the difference between pass or honours and nobody really explained it very well so I was like oh yeah I'll just do pass or whatever and then once I got to fifth year I realised wow I should be really doing honours and so it was difficult then to get transferred over". [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"That really annoyed me like my (subject deleted) teacher ... I did honours the whole way through and in my mocks I got a B1 and she sat down and told me that I needed to drop ...and she told me 'I don't think it will work for you on the day, I think you should drop to pass' and the girl who sits beside me got a D1 in honours and she told her 'it's okay you'll do better in the real thing'". [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

Rebecca's experiences suggest that her trajectory, based on assumptions about dyslexia/lack of ability, had been determined early in her education and that resisting that trajectory was challenging. Rebecca experienced low expectations even with teachers that should have been pushing her to achieve more in resource support. The expectations also seemed to really vary by teacher. Rebecca talks about a teacher who encouraged her to do a subject at pass level for her Leaving Certificate even though Rebecca had achieved an A in her Junior Certificate. This was in total contrast to another subject teacher who gave her extra academic help. Rebecca felt that the school did not expect her to achieve academically and had a very powerful example of this. Rebecca found out about DARE herself and when she went to her Guidance Counsellor to get more information about the scheme, she was told that she could not apply for university because she did not have the six Leaving Certificate subjects needed to matriculate, an issue that she was totally unaware of. Rebecca was not offered any choices about possibly meeting this requirement. Rebecca (based on advice from a teacher from another school) took up a sixth subject in April of 6th year to try to meet the matriculation requirements, a decision that was not supported by her school. Rebecca did pass that subject with help from her family and academic tuition outside the school, and matriculated successfully. Rebecca felt strongly that her eventual success was as a result of the efforts of herself and her family *despite* the systemic lack of support and ingrained assumptions about her ability in her school.

Overall, school climate varied and individual schools and/or teachers seemed to set high or low expectations for students on an individual basis and these expectations were very impactful for students. There is some evidence that low expectations seemed to be linked to a diagnosis of dyslexia. A significant finding in this study is that schools with higher expectations for students seemed to be more influential in supporting achievement and that a culture of high academic expectations for all students was more important than social background or disability, even where the disability was significant.

7.8.3 Familial Expectations

All ten students in this study identified the critical importance of family support. In relation to expectations however, many of the families had quite modest expectations of their children. This is consistent with the literature outlined in earlier chapters. Students spoke repeatedly about being motivated and having high ambitions but no real ‘pressure’ or ‘push’ from home, that whatever made them happy was fine with their families. This may be connected to parental anxiety around students coping with a significant disability in the school environment. Another factor might be that perhaps parents felt that their children had enough to deal with already without unnecessary pressure from home as well.

Conor, who is hearing impaired, was one of the few students where the expectations seemed to be the same for him as for his siblings. All of his family were high achievers academically. He does not think that his parents had any lower or higher expectations for him. Niamh, who was profoundly deaf, explained how her parents were always anxious for her to do well academically as *“My parents had high expectations for me as they believed that I can push myself to the limit to achieve what I want to”*. They were not really concerned about her leaving a small special school to go to a large university. They were more concerned about the quality of that college education. Going to college seems to have been expected of her from an early age.

Most of the students reported very supportive families, but no academic pressure. Most students spoke repeatedly about doing whatever they wanted to do, not being pushed, whatever made them happy:

“They’ve never been like ‘you have to get an A, just do your best, and if that means you get an F then that means you get an F. You can't help it if you’re thick!’ (laughs). Do you know what I mean? They’re very easy going”. [Karen, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

“…he knew (her Dad) that I needed school and that’s that what I wanted to do. But if I hadn’t been driven myself, he wouldn’t have over pushed me either”. [Grace, Significant Ongoing Illness, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"My parents did have a big impact because they always wanted me to do well and they always wanted me to work but they were never people who wanted me to do better than I could. Like they always said 'do your best, that's all we ever ask'". [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"… my Mam and Dad were really for education, not pushy for it…" [Eamonn, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

For Tracey who was from a very disadvantaged area, and was DARE and HEAR eligible, the expectations of her family and school were paramount. Her mother's experience of her own education seems to have impacted on her desire for her children to have different opportunities:

"She left school in 1st year in secondary school because she got very ill. I think she had pneumonia and she was out of school for months and just didn't go back so she went into [name of trade deleted] then and took up that trade until she couldn't work anymore". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Tracey's mother had high ambitions and believed in the opportunities that would be presented by education. Tracey's brother had already completed a Degree and this seems to have been of pivotal importance in the context of setting Tracey's aspirations even in the face of very challenging circumstances. These aspirations were then reinforced by her chosen secondary school. Tracey's mother identified how education could create opportunities to improve life chances as *"I think my Mam from when we were very young always told us that education is your passport to freedom...Yeah so she told us that for our entire lives"*. [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

The modest academic expectations of parents in this study for their children was for me an unexpected outcome. I had assumed that because all of these students had progressed to higher education, and because all of the families were described as supportive, that high expectations was implicit in their background. Both James and Tracey who were both DARE and HEAR eligible mentioned how their parents had missed out on an education and wanted better opportunities for them. Tracey's mother was particularly influential and may be the primary reason why Tracey had a better academic outcome regardless of her background and her significant disability. This finding was previously made by Cosgrove et al. (2014) in a study to explore the outcomes of children with special educational needs using data collected from nine-year-old children and their parents, teachers and school principals as part of Wave I of the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI). The authors identified that the issue of low parental expectations for children with SEN was so significant that it warranted a *"global policy"*. This study suggests that having high expectations can be influential in supporting better outcomes for SWD regardless of background or SEN/disability and that supporting parents to have high expectations of children with SEN/disabilities is crucial in this regard.

7.8.4 Relationships with Teachers/Lecturers

A key finding from this study is that where students identified that they had a negative school experience they all mentioned not having good relationships with teachers as a major factor. Conversely when students had a positive school experience they mentioned strong supportive respectful relationships with teachers as being important.

Grace and James, who were both HEAR and DARE eligible, reported strong relationships with teachers. Tracey who was also DARE and HEAR eligible talks about the great relationships that she had with some individual teachers but also that all of the teachers were supportive. Tracey was clear that without their support that the outcome would have been very different for her:

"…they were really encouraging and really supportive and really like they gave me confidence in myself to be able to do it whereas after being in a psychiatric hospital for

like six months I didn't think I was capable of doing something like this". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Karen, Anna and Rebecca, who all had negative school experiences, did not feel that they developed relationships with their teachers that were supportive. Karen only remembered one teacher that seems to have connected with her for a time as *"She was just brilliant. She was lovely… She definitely was there for me for the start of it, as it went on, there wouldn't have really been anyone in the school that I connected with".* Most students reported how there were some individually supportive teachers who had a major impact on them:

"…there was one teacher that used to, my (subject deleted) teacher, she used to have notes typed up and she put them on the projector but for me. What she used to do was she used to print them off but with words missing so I would just follow it and fill in the words so it just meant that I was still paying attention, still following but I was still able to keep at the same pace as everyone else". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"Oh I wouldn't have been here. Especially with some of the teachers if they hadn't have done the work they done, I wouldn't be here. Like some, for our English class we would have went in and we would have, he used to dictate notes to us and we used to handwrite them out. He used to actually dictate and write out the notes for me, if we needed it like so he was great". [Grace, Significant Ongoing Illness, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"…I was in hospital and when I, they supported me then because they would send me information and emails about things like if I wanted to do this or needed help with this and then when I went back to school the Vice Principal set up different like personal classes with teachers so I could catch up, so I would have like extra tuition and extra time to catch up like with the resource teacher". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Students also reported many instances of a lack of support and awareness from individual teachers that was very damaging:

"…it took a lot of convincing to the German teacher to get someone to read it to me rather than listen from a tape. The Irish teacher was much more understanding". [Conor, Hearing Impaired, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"Some (teachers) of them were more understanding than others. My Irish teacher for example was great. She'd say 'just come up to me at the end of class and I'll give you a summary of the work we did' and stuff like that. Other teachers would be saying, 'just ask the lads sitting beside you; they'll fill you in'." [Conor, Hearing Impaired, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"No I think that was really the main issue, that they didn't really understand it at all and so therefore couldn't help in the slightest". [Karen, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Anna describes how *"the system is just so I think messed up for students with difficulties"* while Rebecca suggested that teachers should *"…be more, what's the word, helpful or supportive of students, like don't knock them when they're down".* [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

The interactions with supportive individual teachers and lecturers were very positive and profoundly impactful for students in this study and often influenced the trajectories of individual student's lives in a positive way. The variability of support and the hostile interactions with many teachers/lecturers were also profoundly and negatively impactful for students.

7.8.5 Resistance and Agency

Intersectionality sees a connection between oppression and activism and the matrix of domination framework recognises that these four interconnected domains of power are responsive to resistance and human agency (Connor 2006). These are the ways that the people who are *"at the bottom of the barrel"* assert themselves (Connor 2006, 162). SWD experience systemic structural barriers and challenges in each of the four domains.

In this study students and their families asserted themselves by making positive decisions to seek more supportive educational environments for their children by choosing schools or HEI's that seemed more supportive and welcoming. Some students, particularly as they matured, challenged dominant negative disability ideology claiming that disability was neither fixed or natural or negative. Students also challenged teachers and lecturers refusal to support them as they matured particularly in senior cycle and HE. Students also pushed for better opportunities and different positioning demanding educational trajectories that would support better outcomes.

Students demonstrated incredible and powerful individual resistance maintaining a determination to achieve academically, to progress to HE and to confound those that had low expectations of them. Many of the students in this study, however, paid a high personal price throughout their educational journey sharing personal stories of sadness, isolation, and loneliness, in the face of a system that seems caring but that seems to be working to damage them. Early in their education students felt more powerless and relied on their parents, or in one case the SNA, to advocate for them or to challenge the refusal to provide reasonable support. As students matured, they increasingly showed how they could challenge the processes and assumptions about disability and literally and figuratively find their own voices becoming more autonomous in the process:

"He wrote on my assignment saying that I shouldn't be in third level and all this stuff... But I went up to him and like told him I was dyslexic and I was like I don't think you should be talking to anybody the way he wrote on my thing, even if I was dyslexic or not and he was like 'sorry'". [Rebecca, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

"... I didn't, I wasn't, I didn't like talking about it at one stage but now I think I am more almost kind of learning about it. I am kind of like, it's not anything to be ashamed of..." [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

"…I have learnt to fight for myself. I have learnt to not be as silent as I would have been in the past because I have realised that there are very few people who think the way I think, who think the way my family thinks, who actually see potential in people and to be honest if I don't say anything, I can't see anyone else saying anything". [Anna, Dyslexia, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

These experiences suggest that students gain confidence over time, particularly in HE, where they become more demanding of fairness and equal treatment and more critical of the embedded unfairness and barriers in the system.

7.8.6 Power of a Supportive Family

The key to resisting the control and influence of all four domains appeared to be the positive impact of a supportive family. Every student mentioned it as being important. This is a key finding bearing in mind that these ten students offer us the opportunity to identify what factors support success in the context of progression to HE. It is also a key finding because the ten students represent different backgrounds, different disabilities, and different school sectors. One of the key roles for parents in this study seemed to be to provide constant support for their child. All of the parents, with just one exception, had a key supportive role as they acted as advocates for their children with the school when it came to school supports. Parents were all making sacrifices for their children, progressing assessments when they could not be provided through the public system, and making financial sacrifices to pay for private assessments or to pay for extra classes and supports. They acted as a powerful support for their children's aspirations and ambitions challenging the negative assumptions embedded in the education system. Many of the students reported that without their family support that they would have been lost in the system and would never have progressed through the education sectors. Gary describes it well when he suggests that *"...if it wasn't for them I probably would have been left behind in school"*. Strong family support in this study seemed to outweigh the potentially negative impacts of a range of other factors including SEN/disability, school climate and family background.

In relation to the four working-class students who were later eligible for the SUSI student grant, three of whom were also eligible for both HEAR and DARE, and therefore of crucial interest in this study, family support was crucial. One of these students had a very negative school experience. The other three HEAR and DARE eligible students had very positive school experiences. Karen had applied for but was not eligible for HEAR. Both of Karen's parents were on social welfare and Karen describes the financial sacrifices that her mother made to support her education. Grace was also eligible for both DARE and HEAR, and reported that the most positive influence for her were her parents *"…they were there through everything; they would do anything for me no matter what I asked"*. Grace is clear that without her parents' support that she would not have made it to college because *"…my parents pushed so hard to make sure everything was going my way"*. James was also eligible for HEAR and DARE and felt that family support is really important as well as school support:

"...I suppose like family I think is the most important thing as well like say if you're getting into trouble at school they will, like family will always kind of push you forward, and say you know like 'cop on and do your work' or whatever, so if there isn't the support at home you're then you're not going to get too far I suppose like". [James, Dyslexia, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Tracey was also eligible for DARE and HEAR. In some respects Tracey was one of the most vulnerable students and might have had a more negative outcome. Tracey's mother in particular seems to have been a very strong influence and a motivation:

"Yeah because I mean she was there constantly for me even when it was really, really bad and she was always, it wasn't that she was saying you will get to college, because her ethos was you do what you want to do with your life and if you don't get there then

that's ok but she supported me through absolutely everything and she was really inspiring as a person so that was what gave me strength". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 1]

Tracey talks here about how her mother acted as a protective factor, negotiating supports and advocating for her:

"I think they really changed over time like moving from Primary to Secondary School was definitely my Mam like I think my sense of myself and my confidence didn't exist so if I hadn't had her push me and to get me into certain things in Secondary School, I probably wouldn't have done it myself". [Tracey, Mental Health, Lower SEG, Interview 2]

There were two students, both of whom had dyslexia, who had very negative school experiences. Rebecca's mother seems to have been very important in trying to advocate for her in school, supporting a better outcome and building her confidence and Anna reports how her parents also constantly mediated with the school as they tried to negotiate the support that they felt that she needed. Gary outlines how his family were very supportive of him and very strong when negotiating the supports that he needed. He mentions how supportive his primary school were but later outlines how his mother also battled for support as:

"My Mam's determination was just, I think I said that the last time, just her determination even fighting with my Primary School Principal to be able to get specific equipment that I needed and by the end she was even my Principal was on my side". [Gary, Blind, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

Niamh identified that her parents were also the most important influence for her as *"Having supportive parents. I cannot emphasise how important it is for me to have supportive parents. They helped me immensely in getting to college".* Nine of the students spoke about how their parents advocated for them. Even Niamh who attended the School for the Deaf found that she needed her parents to advocate for her there as:

"… it was my parents who pushed me, even in the Deaf School you are supposed to be protected, there were issues like you are not able for this you're not able for that… but my parents got involved strongly and said 'no this is what we need' and then the school had to accept my parents opinion…". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 2]

It is interesting that there was one student who did not mention that his parents advocated for him. Eamonn attended a very inclusive school and had a very positive experience. It may be that the nature of the school environment meant that the need for parental intervention was not there.

Family support was the most important factor in this study supporting positive outcomes in this study. It has a more influential impact than family background, school sector, school climate or SEN/disability. It also mediates the impact for students where family background might suggest a more negative outcome. It is also clear however that the vulnerability of student access to appropriate support has forced many parents to take up the role of mediator and negotiator with schools. Students, particularly from more disadvantaged backgrounds, where parents do not have the confidence or the skills to undertake this role, could leave their children vulnerable to a system which seems to respond to individual agency and conflict rather than national policy. Previous studies have indicated the importance of parents who use their social, cultural and economic capital to secure better outcomes for children with SEN (Gillborn 2015, Fordyce et al. 2015). This study confirms that but also suggests that parents, even from very disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, will fight and battle to create opportunities for their children in education, even in the face of endemic barriers.

7.8.7 Summary Interpersonal Domain

Six themes emerged from the student experience relevant to this domain including (1) student identity, (2) school expectations, (3) familial expectations, (4) relationships with teachers/lecturers, (5) personal resistance and agency and (6) the power of a supportive family. The interpersonal domain reveals some startling insights about the real lives and interactions of students with disabilities. Many feel powerless with no voice or influence in their lives or in the decisions that are made about them. School expectations vary with many students experiencing endemically low expectations. This is compounded by the modest expectations of most families. Relationships with teachers/lecturers are not consistent and all students experience individual experiences of negativity or refusal to provide supports. Lack of awareness of the academic impact of disability is endemic. Disability is very much experienced and lived as an individually negative issue. It is in this landscape that SWD navigate an educational terrain that is littered with visible and invisible barriers. Niamh describes it well:

"…there are some barriers and that's what being a person with a disability is about. They have barriers and they have to try to break through that barrier and I don't know; it's hard to break". [Niamh, Deaf, Higher SEG, Interview 1]

In this study, students and their families asserted themselves by negotiating access to assessments to demand support if necessary. They rejected the dominant negative disability ideology, challenging assumptions about low academic expectations and limited progression opportunities and routes. Over time, students themselves also challenged the dominant understanding of disability in education as incorrect suggesting that these understandings were unjust. Some students refused to accept the meaning implicit in the labelling process and suggested that they were not well served by a system which seems benevolent but often feels like it is harming rather than helping. All students negotiated relationships with teachers/lecturers that were supportive and challenged teachers and schools/ HEI's who did not support them appropriately, demanding that they be treated fairly. Students pushed continuously for better opportunities in education.

Family support was critical in ensuring that students accessed support and in making them believe that they could break through the barriers and limitations in their way

7.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter represents the qualitative analysis of student interviews using Collins (1990; 2000) matrix of domination analytical framework illustrating how broad macro level social and societal structures are connected to the micro level of individual experience and how students in different social situations live their lives. The matrix of domination framework is used as an analytical tool to enhance our understanding of the lives of young people with disabilities, and more specifically at times, the lives of young working-class people with disabilities. This matrix suggests that oppression is organised through four domains of power; the structural domain which organises oppression, the disciplinary domain which enforces and manages oppression, the hegemonic domain which justifies and legitimises oppression and the interpersonal domain where individuals live their everyday lives. The chapter uses these four domains to explore the central themes that emerged from the student life stories revealing the student experience of disability and, at times, the intersection of disability and social class, to better understand the student experience at these intersections. The four domains in the matrix of domination framework function together and work together, intersecting, and interlocking, to discipline and regulate students with disabilities. Using an intersectional lens, the student stories reveal how students and their families negotiate their way through the special education terrain using their social, cultural, and economic resources, to create opportunities in education.

The analyses illustrate how disability and social class intersect powerfully to direct and shape the social identities, educational experiences, outcomes and opportunities for all students with disabilities. In this study students and their identities as disabled or classed, do not simply exist, and are not experienced in isolation. These student stories identify how all students with disabilities are created as different, positioned as inferior, and placed in a hierarchy with a clear distinction between those that are valued and those that are not. They are in this structure, as Connor (2006) suggested, both invisible (in that they are of little value) and hypervisible (in that they must be identified and contained).

Each student in this study is both advantaged and disadvantaged in unique ways. The richness of their testimony reveals what it means in reality to be labelled with a disability in education and how students understand and experience disability in their daily lives. There were four overarching themes analysed in the structural domain, including (1) the individualisation of disability and social class, (2) the segregation/separation of students on the basis of disability and/or social class, (3) the embedding of obstacles in social institutions to impede or restrict educational opportunities for SWD, and (4) restricted access to the economy/labour market. In the structural domain, at the macro level, an individualised pathologised model or conceptualisation of disability is dominant identifying the '*problem*' as an individual deficit rather than a systemic failing of the education system. Students with disabilities as a result experience varying levels of support and understanding at all levels of the education system where segregated schools and classrooms are presented as reasonable and benevolent options. Students face embedded structural barriers. Access to assessments, particularly for non-normative categories of disability, is a structural barrier and advantages or disadvantages families/students who are situated differently in the context of socio-economic background. Students experience multiple financial barriers that are embedded in the education system intersecting with other structural barriers to constrict the opportunities and constrain the options for SWD. These barriers represent a web of oppression structured to steer students with disabilities, particularly working-class students with disabilities, out of education and into inferior options. Finally, in the structural domain, negative assumptions about disability created in education, persist long after education, even after HE, confining even graduates with disabilities to uncertain support and low status opportunities with little chances of career progression. The structural domain thereby directs and influences the lives of people with disabilities throughout and after education ensuring that people with disabilities are confined to inferior trajectories.

Analysis of the interview data revealed three themes that relate specifically to the disciplinary domain including (1) assessment and categorisation processes, (2) attending the ‘right’ school, and (3) power (lessness) and the student voice. In the disciplinary domain, the negative individualised conceptualisation of disability is enforced with students effectively ‘*sorted*’ and placed in a hierarchy through the special education bureaucracy. The negative assumptions about disability, and social class, conceptualised at a macro level, and iterated in national policy and legislation, are underpinned by this hierarchy privileging the superior able and middle-class students in comparison to the inferior disabled working-class students. In this domain, students are steered towards more disadvantaged school contexts and students, and their parents, are rendered powerless and marginalised, in a system that seems more likely to harm than to help.

Three themes emerged from the student experience relevant to the hegemonic domain including (1) negative language and images of disability, (2) stigma and shame and (3) invisible role models. In the hegemonic domain, the dominant ideology ensures that disability is equated with the ‘abnormal’, with stigma, inferiority, dependence, inability, and weakness. This domain reinforces this ideology through mainstream curricula, negative images, deficit language, invisible role models and inaccurate stereotypical representations of disability.

Students are, in these interconnected domains, which reinforce and sustain each other, relegated to *"certain inferiority"* (Weber 1998, 27). Students simultaneously experience disability and social class, moving between the macro and micro dimensions, through the different domains, influencing every aspect of their everyday interactions and experiences. In their complex lives it is impossible to identify where the oppression linked to disability ends and the disadvantage connected to social class begins. In the interpersonal domain, we see at the level of personal interactions how oppression impacts people in their everyday lives. The six themes that relate to the interpersonal domain included (1) student identity, (2) school expectations, (3) familial expectations, (4) relationships with teachers/lecturers, (5) personal resistance and agency and (6) the power of a supportive family. The identity of students with disabilities, and working-class students with disabilities, are characterised by isolation and difference, low expectations, and negative interactions with teachers and lecturers. Students also however describe individual acts of resistance and resilience. All of the students share a determination to succeed and an awareness of the perceptions of misrecognition of their positioning. Their stories show their extraordinary resilience and resistance even in the face of adversity and multiple barriers. It also highlights the interaction between these barriers and the facilitating factors within their lives, like family support, good teachers and personal resilience.

Intersectionality, as a framework, reveals both oppression and privilege in the lives of the students in this study. Their stories challenge the concept of meritocracy in education. In this study, the participants are living their lives at the intersection of disability and social class, two major axes of societal systems of oppression and power. The student experiences identify how these axes, as systems of power, work together to systematically produce, reproduce, maintain, and justify social inequalities (Collins 1990; 2000). As systems like disability and social class are socially constructed, not fixed traits of individuals, group membership does not guarantee or even suggest a shared experience. Working-class students with disabilities, who are positioned at the intersection of disability and social class, are uniquely vulnerable in this study as they are less able to access the material and cultural resources to challenge their positioning. Their survival to a large degree depends on the power of supportive families, the influence of individual schools or teachers/lecturers, and their own personal resilience and determination. All students with disabilities are however simultaneously advantaged and oppressed in all areas of their lives. It is human agency and personal power that supports students/families to resist their designated positioning and seek out opportunities, challenging assumptions, and resisting their assigned inferior positioning.

In this chapter, I have revealed the complex lived intersectional experiences of SWD in education. In the final chapter all the elements of enquiry in this research are brought together, connected, and considered, in relation to the theoretical framework of IS.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This research set out to explore how disability and social class intersect in the lives of young adults in higher education (HE) in Ireland. The research adopted a descriptive approach to the analysis of secondary quantitative data from the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) and the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR), national access initiatives, and new qualitative data collection from interviews with ten student participants, to analyse how disability and social class, as social identities, intersect to influence progression, retention, and the experience of students with disabilities in HE in Ireland. The research aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of how disability and social class are constructed and enacted in education in Ireland, how they intersect to produce, reproduce, maintain and justify inequality and privilege, and how they are shaped through individual agency.

The study aims were broken down into three specific research questions. These three questions sought to identify how the intersection of disability and social class influences applications by students with disabilities (SWD) to HE, the retention of DARE eligible students within the 11 HEI's who participated in the scheme, and how disability and social class in Ireland are constructed, and resisted, as social identities in the lives of individual students and their families in education in Ireland. I explored the questions through a descriptive quantitative analysis at a macro social structural level (national patterns of application by students to the DARE scheme and the retention of SWD in HE in Ireland) and a qualitative analysis at the micro level of the individual (how students with disabilities differentially experience inequality in education in one HE institution in Ireland).

Intersectionality (IS), as a theoretical framework, has guided and shaped the inquiry supporting the analysis of how disability and social class, as social identities, intersect to create unique disadvantage in education. Although there were challenges to adapting an intersectional framework, developed initially to understand and explain the marginalisation of Black women in the US, to understand and explain disability as a social identity and the experiences of students in education in Ireland, I believe that IS offered an analytical lens to examine the way that disability is lived in, through, and alongside, social class. I argue that IS as a theoretical framework, is not just useful, but essential, if we are to really understand complex disadvantage and to support better outcomes for all marginalised groups in education. The approach in this study is unique in an Irish context and offers a significant contribution to scholarship and knowledge in this domain.

Using IS as a theoretical framework, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data in a mixed methods approach provides the most useful, credible, and compelling way of answering my complex research questions, despite concerns about my own subjectivity and the centrality of the student voice. My defence for this approach is my belief that a mixed methods IS informed approach supported both a macro-level analysis (national patterns of applications and eligibility for the DARE scheme and the retention of SWD in HE) and a micro level analysis (lived experience of students with disabilities in education), to identify patterns of oppression and privilege that reveal complex inequality.

The findings from a descriptive analysis of the quantitative data are consistent across the three sources of data analysed. The central themes identified through the participants' narratives are also remarkably consistent across all sectors and resonated across all participant accounts. The ten young people who participated in the study were a diverse group of students and the diversity of their backgrounds and individual locations supported both an intracategorical analysis (examining how multiple axes of inequality shape individual experiences) and an intercategorical analysis (comparing the experiences of students with disabilities with different socio-economic characteristics). These young people are at the centre of this inquiry and provide the context for the inequitable patterns identified in the study. It is in listening to their voices that we get an understanding of the depth and scale of inequality in education for students with disabilities in Ireland. The diversity of their backgrounds and the commonalities of their experiences tell us a great deal about how students with disabilities, in different social locations, experience the education system in Ireland.

Their stories reveal how disability and social class intersect to direct and shape the social identities, educational experiences, outcomes, and opportunities, for all students and identifies how each student in this study is both advantaged and disadvantaged in unique ways. Their stories also reveal the consequences of how difference is conceptualised and enacted in the education system and the impact, intended and unintended, of national policy and measures introduced to address social inequality. Their narratives challenge the concept of meritocracy in education and illustrate that what it means to have a disability depends on each individual’s simultaneous location in various social hierarchies; disability and social class, as illustrated in this study, or indeed others like gender, ethnicity, sexuality or race.

In this final chapter, I seek to pull together the disparate threads of a complex story to address a national gap in knowledge and explore the implications of the findings drawing on the quantitative findings in Chapters 5 and 6 and the qualitative data gathered in

Chapter 7. As these findings are both complex and detailed, I firstly summarise the main findings for the reader. I then explore the main study findings with reference to previous empirical research and theory/scholarship clarifying the study's contribution to current knowledge. I consider these findings using IS as a framework, but also guided by my own thoughts, reflections, and professional experience in HE. Reflexivity has been core to my approach to this research and has pushed me to challenge my own assumptions and beliefs and to interrogate my own professional role. My aim, as outlined in chapter 4, was to complete a study that would be useful, that could be transformative, personally, institutionally, and nationally, and that could advance equality in education. I therefore focus particularly on the study's implications in the context of my own professional role and the implications for national and institutional policy and practice.

In the next section, I firstly highlight the main study findings for the reader. These can be broadly summarised as (1) inequitable outcomes in multiple domains for working-class students with disabilities, (2) processes of power and subordination that create inequality for all students with disabilities in the education system, (3) resistance and agency and how students with disabilities challenge the inferiority of their position and (4) the limitations of current categorical approaches to complex social identities.

8.2 Summary of Main Study Findings

The unique intersectional approach used in this study identified that working-class students with disabilities experience education differently and have profoundly inequitable outcomes in the context of progression to HE, retention within HE, and the student experience of education. Working-class students with disabilities, multiply marginalised, are falling through the cracks of existing policy and practice in the education system in Ireland.

The study findings also highlight how all students with disabilities are disadvantaged in an education system where processes of power, domination, and subordination create hierarchies of superiority and inferiority, between the ‘able’ and the ‘disabled’, the ‘middle class’ and the working class’, relegating all students, particularly working-class students with disabilities, to “*certain inferiority*” (Weber 1998, 27). The study findings suggest that the education system in Ireland is structured to systematically produce, reproduce, justify and sustain inequality in education for all students with disabilities. Students navigate an educational environment where an individualised model of support is endemic, a focus on ‘fixing’ students rather than the education system, and where the suggested reality of an inclusive system of education is an illusion. In this environment, a negative student identity is created and sustained, characterised by feelings of difference, deficit, a lack of confidence and entitlement, stigma and shame.

The study identified that students with disabilities can challenge the inferiority of their positioning and that the resilience and tenacity of individual students was important in supporting positive academic outcomes. A culture of high academic expectations for all students and more inclusive teachers and schools/HEIs also supported positive outcomes. A major determinant of student outcomes was the determination of individual parents to secure better opportunities for their children and the social, economic, and cultural capital that they had at their disposal to negotiate these opportunities.

The study findings identify that disability and social class are complex interlinked mutually constitutive social identities that cannot be reduced to singular unidimensional quantitative categorisations. Students experience these identities simultaneously, not separately, influencing all aspects of their lives and experiences. Disability is experienced in different ways by each individual, foregrounded in different contexts, depending on their location in various hierarchies including disability and social class.

In the next section, I discuss the main study findings in more detail linking these findings to previous empirical research, theory and scholarship, and considering and exploring the new learning in this study.

8.3 Cracks in Policy and Practice

The descriptive analysis of quantitative data identifies how working-class students with disabilities in Ireland have different and profoundly inequitable outcomes in education in multiple domains in comparison to the more favourable outcomes and opportunities available to students in more advantaged locations. These include inequalities in relation to application and eligibility for the DARE scheme, in relation to retention within HE, and the student experience of HE. In the next three sections, I discuss the more negative outcomes for working-class students in each of these three domains in more detail.

8.3.1 Working-Class Students with Disabilities and DARE and HEAR

The quantitative data identifies profoundly inequitable outcomes for working-class students with disabilities in relation to application and eligibility for the DARE scheme using three measures to suggest social class; area/home address, school type, and application to both the DARE and HEAR schemes. A descriptive analysis of the data showed that working-class students were significantly less likely to apply to the DARE scheme, to make a complete application, to be eligible for DARE and ultimately to access HE in comparison to students living in more affluent locations and attending fee-paying schools. Working-class students were increasingly marginalised at each stage of the DARE process. This inequality is striking and is the opposite of what might be expected bearing in mind that children with disabilities are more likely to live in more disadvantaged areas and to attend DEIS schools (Cosgrove et al. 2014).

One of the unique features of this study is that it offers the opportunity to examine the intersection of disability and social class and the nuances within these intersections. The intersection of disability *with* school type and *with* home address/area is key and is crucial as it reveals the true extent of the complex inequity experienced by working-class students. For example, although 2,161 applicants applied to DARE in 2010 there were just 18 (1.9 per cent) students eligible for DARE that previously attended a DEIS school *and* lived in an area identified as Disadvantaged. The identification of the complex inequity at these intersections of disability and social class are new and important national findings.

Working-class students (defined as students who applied to both DARE and HEAR) are a particular focus of this study as this is one of the only opportunities for students with disabilities to request consideration in the context of admission to HE based on social class. The total number of applicants eligible for both DARE *and* HEAR nationally is very low with just 35 out of the initial 2,161 applicants to DARE eligible for both schemes, representing just 1.6 per cent of the total national pool of DARE applicants in 2010. The analysis of dual applicants is the most compelling evidence of the complex and hidden intersection of disability and disadvantage in the lives of students with disabilities in Ireland. Students are eligible for both schemes in very small numbers and even those that are eligible are less likely to be living in a disadvantaged area and attending a DEIS school.

The intersectional inequalities experienced by working-class students in relation to application to the DARE and HEAR schemes in comparison to their peers in more affluent locations is a significant contribution to knowledge in an Irish context. Questions of bias in the DARE scheme had been raised in a national evaluation of the DARE and HEAR schemes identifying that there were a disproportionate number of applicants to the DARE scheme from fee-paying schools and more affluent areas (Byrne et al. 2013). This study, however, analysed applications to the DARE and HEAR schemes as separate cohorts. The intersectional analysis in this study both supports, and adds to the findings from this study, by analysing patterns of application by students who applied to DARE, including those who applied to both DARE and HEAR, to provide a unique and new analysis of the intersection of disability and social class and HE. It is at these intersections, as described in detail earlier in this study, that the real depth of inequality experienced by working-class students is revealed and this is a major contribution of this study.

These findings identify a fundamental weakness of national policy and reveal the unintended consequences of a weak approach to equality that is focussed on ‘fixing’ individuals rather than fixing the education system or addressing societal inequalities. The DARE and HEAR schemes were developed as national schemes to support greater access by students to HE in Ireland based on the premise that school leavers experience barriers related to disability or socio-economic background that have a negative impact on their second level education and thus their chances of progression to HE. Both schemes address inequality at the point of entry to HE by offering students who are eligible for the schemes a place in HE without reaching the points that are required of other students. The fundamental challenge to these schemes is that while inequality in education is often most clearly visible at the point of entry to HE, this is not where educational inequality begins. Poverty, unemployment, parental education, and occupational attainment, are inextricably linked to educational inequality, and the cycle of educational disadvantage that is obvious at the point of entry to HE, actually begins from the earliest ages and widens as children progress through the education system (Kellaghan et al. 1995). The experiences of the participants in the study gives voice to this reality.

The HE sector has positioned the development of ‘affirmative action’ policies through the development of the DARE and HEAR schemes as ‘positive discrimination’, strategically engineering and supporting a more diverse student population. These schemes are clearly contributing to the quantitative targets identified in national access plans. The weakness of these schemes, however, is that they do not challenge or address systemic structural inequality. The schemes can be seen to consolidate rather than address current inequities, and to reproduce inequality in education, as it is those that are the most advantaged of the disadvantaged who are best positioned to access these improved opportunities (Lynch 1999, Byrne et al. 2013).

The value of the IS approach in this study, has been the opportunity to identify both oppression and privilege, to see disadvantage and advantage together, as ‘*those with superior access to valued resources and culture are inevitably positioned to be major beneficiaries of educational investme*nt’ (Lynch 1999, 179). The marginalisation of working-class students within the DARE scheme identified in this study suggests that the schemes are reproducing the same inequalities that are already in existence across a deeply stratified education system. The inequitable outcomes in this study can be explained by the fact that some families have more economic, cultural, and social capital, those “*aces in a game of cards*”, and as a result have the upper hand in the struggle to access these new educational opportunities (Bourdieu 1987, 3). These students already enjoy majority access to an education system that they know to be a valuable commodity, a scarce resource, and an essential credential in the race for social and career advancement. In this study, families used their capital to maximise their opportunities to apply to the schemes, to complete the detailed and documentation driven application process, to access the evidence of disability necessary to be eligible, to negotiate a pathway to HE and within HE, and to ensure preferential positioning in an inequitable system. Working-class students have few of these resources and in fact can be seen to be structurally pushed to the margins, marginalised in a scheme that does not acknowledge or even understand their complex intersectional disadvantage.

The DARE and HEAR schemes hide the structural inequity of a society that is polarised in terms of wealth, resources, and opportunities that manifest as inequality across the education system, and can be seen to maintain the status quo across the education system. These schemes meet the needs of the HE sector and national policy in that they can claim to be addressing inequality and broadening access to HE and contributing to national targets. However, this is an illusion as the schemes are structurally configured to support those who already enjoy majority access to education. I argue in this study that as the schemes are geared to meet the needs of the most advantaged of the disadvantaged, rather than addressing systemic weaknesses in policy and provision, they are as a result supporting the privileged few to access these new opportunities, ‘a *trickle of social mobility between social classes’,* that has no real impact on class structures (Lynch 1999, 296).

In the next section, I explore the study findings in relation to the retention of students with disabilities in HE at the intersection of disability and social class.

8.3.2 Working-Class Students with Disabilities and Retention in Higher Education

The study through a descriptive analysis of the quantitative data also identifies profoundly inequitable outcomes for working-class students with disabilities in relation to retention within HE in Ireland using the same three measures to suggest social class; area/home address, school type, and application to both the DARE and HEAR schemes. At a macro level, a positive finding is that working-class students (as defined by home address/area identified as Disadvantaged by Pobal HP Deprivation Index) had the lowest non-progression rate by area. In this study, working-class students previously attending DEIS schools, however, are significantly less likely than students with disabilities from other school sectors to progress to their second year of study and be retained in HE. DARE eligible new entrants from public and fee-paying schools had almost identical non-progression rates (13.5 per cent to 13.7 per cent) compared to students from DEIS schools who had the highest non-progression rates (43.2 per cent). The study also crucially identified that students who apply to DARE only (middle-class students) are more likely to be retained in HE than students who apply to both DARE and HEAR (working-class students), even if they are ineligible for HEAR. The small cohort of students nationally that were eligible for both DARE and HEAR had the highest rates of non-progression across all three cohorts (28.6 per cent), an important finding in this study, confirming the close link between retention, disability and disadvantage.

National studies on retention in Ireland do not report on the retention of students with disabilities (Mooney et al. 2010, Liston et al. 2016, Frawley et al. 2017) suggesting that the retention of students with disabilities in HE is not a national priority. The inequitable outcomes in relation to retention identified in this study challenges the outcome of previous research completed in Ireland that suggested that students with disabilities, once appropriately supported, are successful in HE (UCC/CIT 2010, 7). This research, however, did not consider the intersection of disability and social class and also identified that category of disability (mental health) is a most significant contributor to non-progression (UCC/CIT 2010). These approaches position the locus of the 'problem' as residing within the individual rather than the education system, an approach that I challenge in this study.

The literature on the retention of working-class students in HE also tends to focus on the deficits of individuals suggesting that these students experience '*academic culture shock'* (Quinn et al. 2005, 21) and that they have a fragile support system impacted by financial pressure and caring responsibilities (Fleming and Finnegan 2011). These studies, while valuable, continue largely to focus on the impact of disability and social class separately in the context of retention. An international study did identify that a low socio-economic background was the most significant factor leading to students leaving HE and that it is how socio-economic status "*interacts*" (though not intersects) "*…with other factors such as ethnicity and disability*" that lead to students leaving HE (Quinn 2013, 64). The findings in this study both support and add to the findings of this international study identifying that retention in HE, disability, and social class are interlinked. A key contribution of this study has been, for the first time in an Irish context, to identify these more negative outcomes within HE for working-class students with disabilities. This is a major contribution and addresses a significant gap in knowledge.

The inequitable outcomes for working-class students with disabilities in relation to retention in HE, in comparison to their more advantaged peers, suggests that the inequalities experienced by working-class students with disabilities does not end at the point of entry to HE. This study suggests that these inequalities continue and are compounded by the myriad of barriers experienced by students within HE. In this study, there were ten participants, four students identified as lower socio-economic status and six students identified as higher socio-economic status. Two of the study participants withdrew from their programmes of study in HE and both of these were working-class students. The experiences of the working-class students in the study suggest that disability and social class interlink and intertwine within HE influencing decision making, restricting and narrowing choices, and ultimately influencing and even directing trajectories.

The working-class students who withdrew in this study were impacted academically and socially by their disabilities in different ways. However, it was this disability related impact intersecting with other factors, particularly financial pressures, the social and financial risks inherent in investing in education, social isolation, a lack of academic confidence, as well as the rigidities of the HE system itself that ultimately conspired to influence the very individual decisions to withdraw. The middle-class students in the study were impacted academically by their individual disabilities but appear to have been more insulated in relation to the other factors due to their social and economic capital.

Financial barriers, as has been suggested in the literature, contributed greatly to the pressures felt by these students and had a major impact on the decision ultimately to withdraw. I argue that the lack of academic confidence experienced by working-class students (Keane 2009, Keane 2011b) also plays a role when linked to the lack of academic confidence already experienced by students in relation to disability. Keane (2011a) identified that working-class students in Ireland also distance themselves from other students and the social realm and that in doing so they effectively '*self-sabotage'* their opportunities to connect to important social and cultural networks in HE (Keane 2011a, 461). Forging strong connections to peers and the academic institution have been identified as important levers in supporting student retention in HE (Quinn et al. 2005, Thomas 2002) whereas middle-class students are more adept at building social capital in HE (Keane 2011a, 461). The findings in this study suggest that disability and social class interlink to isolate working-class students from the social realm leaving them less connected to peers and the institution and more vulnerable to withdrawal. The study findings identify that disability and social class, individually and when they intersect, have a significant impact on retention, creating additional difficulties for working-class students with disabilities restricting and narrowing their opportunities to be retained within HE.

In the next section, I explore the experience of students with disabilities in HE at the intersection of disability and social class.

8.3.3 Working-Class Students with Disabilities and the Experience of Higher Education

The study findings, in relation to the student experiences of education, highlight how an individualised pathologised stigmatised conceptualisation of disability is dominant in the education system in Ireland identifying the '*problem*' as an individual deficit rather than a systemic failing of the education system. Students with disabilities as a result experience varying levels of support and understanding within a segregated education system. The findings point to the fact that there are, across the education system, embedded barriers at multiple levels that interact and intersect to limit choice, to restrict opportunities, to limit aspirations, and to steer or nudge students, particularly those in less advantaged locations, towards inferior contexts and trajectories.

Much of the research on the student experience of disability has identified tensions between the medical and social models of disability and identified that the experiences of many students with disabilities are characterised by individualisation, medicalisation, and inferiority (Shevlin et al. 2008, Rose et al. 2016). The focus of these studies has highlighted the experience of students with specific disabilities (Duggan and Byrne 2013), the struggle for parents to access supports (Rose et al. 2010) and low expectations by parents (Armstrong et al. 2010, Cosgrove et al. 2014) and by teachers (Shevlin et al. 2002, Rose and Shevlin 2004). These studies are useful and tell us much about the experiences of students with disabilities in the education system but they continue to focus on disability as the locus of inequality and fail to consider the impact of social class and different socio-economic backgrounds of students (Duggan and Byrne 2013). Indeed, a recent national study in Ireland examining the experiences of post-primary students with disabilities did not consider socio-economic background in that study (Squires et al. 2016).

Empirical research on the experiences of working-class students in HE has identified that social class influences academic and social integration as working-class students have more financial pressures, less confidence academically and are less connected to their peers and the institution (Walpole 2003 and Aries and Seider in the US, Lehmann 2009 in Canada, Reay et al. 2010, Reay 2012, Christie et al. 2005 in UK, Keane 2015 in Ireland). A number of studies have identified that middle-class students also have more cultural capital and a greater sense of educational entitlement than working-class students (Bathmaker et al. 2013, Crozier et al. 2008, Christie et al. 2008). While these studies are valuable, they also continue to suggest that the experiences of working-class students are the same, hiding within group differences and the complexity of disadvantage at the intersections of different social identities. A key contribution of this study has been to identify the more negative student experiences in HE for working-class students with disabilities. This is a key contribution and addresses a significant gap in knowledge.

The working-class students with disabilities in the study experienced the education system differently to their more advantaged peers. In the study, each working-class student experienced lower social class differently although class was often foregrounded in their lives either as an experience of inferiority, marginalisation or embedded barriers. There was one student in the study who is most relevant as she was one of the few students nationally eligible for both DARE and HEAR that also lived in a an area identified as Very Disadvantaged. Lower social class was most important in her life and intersected and interacted with her disability in almost every aspect of her experiences so that it was impossible to identify where the inequality related to disability ended and the inequality related to lower social class began.

The working-class students in the study all experienced lower social class as barriers, particularly financial barriers, that influenced all of their lives to varying degrees. In this study, all families used their financial resources to improve the positioning of their children but the parents of working-class students were prepared to make enormous financial sacrifices to secure better outcomes for their children in the school system. These decisions were driven by the fact that students who cannot access assessments or academic supports/resources, often for financial reasons, have access to academic and examination support, as well as progression through DARE to HE, effectively blocked, limiting their opportunities and choices. A number of working-class students also identified that SUSI, the national student grant, was insufficient, that they struggled with some of the basic costs of college, and took on too much part-time work to pay college costs. As a result, they had less time for their studies and this affected their academic outcomes and progression as well as their social connection to the university. Students who relied on state support were in a very vulnerable position suggesting that the intersection of disability and social class is particularly impactful in this domain.

The experiences of students from middle-class backgrounds in this study was of greater choice and less risk using their social, cultural, and economic capital to create opportunities whether a more inclusive school, access to up to date assessments, additional academic support or relevant extra-curricular activities, using these capitals to create opportunities and improve their inferior positioning. Previous studies have identified that middle-class families are better able to access supports and to negotiate better outcomes to mediate the academic impact of disability (Banks et al. 2016, 48) and that middle-class families are better able to advocate for support in comparison to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Quinn 2013). The findings of this study add to this literature identifying that the social capital of middle-class parents is important in mitigating the impact of disability and that working-class students with disabilities experience education differently in Ireland experiencing compelling additional challenges that are shaping their educational outcomes in HE.

In summary, the study findings outlined above in relation to progression to HE, retention within HE, and in relation to the student experience of education in Ireland identify profoundly inequitable educational outcomes for working-class students. These analyses challenge the dominant assumption of the homogeneity of students with disabilities and the concept of meritocracy in education and illustrate that what it means to have a disability depends on each individual’s simultaneous location in the social hierarchies of disability and social class. The analyses provide a compelling picture of how working-class students with disabilities are marginalised in a system that is predominantly only genuinely available to those that are positioned in more advantaged locations. Working-class students are increasingly marginalised in multiple domains across the education system experiencing inequities that have real consequences narrowing, restricting, or denying them opportunities in education.

The next section considers the second key study finding exploring how all students with disabilities are disadvantaged in an education system where processes of power, domination, and subordination positions all students with disabilities as inferior.

8.4 Processes of Power, Domination, and Subordination

The findings of the study suggest that all students with disabilities are disadvantaged in an education system where processes of power, domination, and subordination create hierarchies of superiority and inferiority, between the ‘able’ and the ‘disabled’, the ‘middle class’ and the working class’, relegating all students, particularly working-class students with disabilities, to “*certain inferiority*” (Weber 1998, 27).

Collins (2000) argued that embracing a paradigm of intersecting oppressions would foster a fundamental shift in how we think about unjust power relations and that the value of the matrix of domination was in identifying how oppressed groups “*grapple with the effects of domination*” in everyday day life (Collins 2000, 274). In this study, the qualitative aspect of the study identified how disability and social class, as socially constructed deficit-based identities, work together, as axes of power, intersecting to influence, define, and direct their experiences. The experiences of all the study participants across all sectors of education were characterised by difference, deficits, inferiority, ad hoc variable support, low expectations, and a deficit medicalised pathologised understanding of disability that was impactful for all the participants. In this system, social hierarchies are produced and reproduced, consolidated and maintained, legitimising existing inequitable relations of power. In this environment, there are limited opportunities for anyone to escape the '*interlocking prison'* created for students with disabilities, particularly the most marginalised (Hancock 2007). This is the '*matrix of domination'* described by Collins (1990, 225) in practice in Irish education.

The student narratives explain how disability and social class, as social hierarchies, operate together to create and restrict opportunities and experiences for all students in education and society. These social hierarchies operate to reproduce inequality in the education system and to ensure that students with disabilities who are created as inferior, are positioned at the '*bottom of the barrel'*, lacking worth or value, marginalised and disempowered. The matrix of domination conceptual framework used in the study illuminates how all students struggle to resist their positioning, how they experience embedded structural barriers, and how the inferiority of their positioning is both enforced and maintained.

In this study, disability and social class are revealed as identities that are socially constructed, linked to personal and individual characteristics, rather than wider social structures, and used to create boundaries about who is valued and who is not. The participant accounts of their lives reveal that these are not benign categories and that they operate effectively and simultaneously as "*systems of power that produce social inequalities*" (Andersen and Collins 2004, 3). The hierarchies created by these social constructions are fundamentally about power, various forms of capital, and the different ways that power is used by the most advantaged to access scarce resources (Bourdieu 1986, Ball 2003).

In this study, disability and social class were maintained, as social identities, through relationships of power at the macro level (the power of professionals/experts, weak legislation, inadequate policy), and at the micro level (through the everyday lives of individuals who experience powerlessness and subordinate positions). It is the gap between the macro and micro level of experience that provides some explanation for the patterns and experiences outlined in the study. It reveals the disjuncture that exists between the inclusive model of education that is suggested in legislation and policy at a national level and the reality of the subordinate and inferior lives and experiences in education of all of the students in this study.

The participant narratives highlighted how the education system in Ireland seems to be structurally organised to isolate, to segregate, to stigmatise, and to create, enforce, and reproduce the subordination of all students with disabilities. The findings of the study suggest that students with disabilities do not simply exist as a natural phenomenon. They are created within the education system, individually positioned as inferior, constrained through inadequate support, inferior options, and restricted choices, and disadvantaged in a system that seems to be structurally configured to marginalise and disempower them. The findings suggest that students with disabilities succeed in this environment, *despite* rather than *because* of the education system. Those with greater resources can, and do, improve their position because they have the economic, social, and cultural capital to do so.

The findings point to the fact that there are, across the education system, barriers embedded at multiple levels that interact and intersect to limit choice, to restrict opportunities, to limit aspirations, and to steer or nudge students, particularly those in less advantaged locations, towards inferior contexts and trajectories. In national policy, the decisions made by students are framed as individual choices and indeed this was internalised by the students within the study. These decisions, from an IS perspective, need to be seen as framed by the powerful processes of power and subordination that position students with disabilities across the education system as inferior and of little value.

The marginalisation and inferiority of students with disabilities created in the structural domain, is maintained, enforced and policed across all sectors of the education system. In this study, young people with disabilities were disciplined and controlled through the ways that powerful organisations and institutions are run (Collins 2000, Foucault 1977). Bureaucracy was key to this control, as a mode of discipline, and was in this study highly efficient in both "*reproducing intersecting oppressions and in masking their effects*" (Collins 2000, 281). The student narratives revealed how this mode of discipline works in practice identifying how special education, as a bureaucracy, sifts and sorts individuals into hierarchies of difference. Once students entered special education, the system is so bureaucratic, so efficient, and so accepted as natural and justified, that there is no way out. Disability is presented in multiple domains as an individual negative medicalised deficit, a failing of the individual in comparison to their more able peers. The medicalised assessment processes were revealed in this study to be primarily about surveillance, a key feature of the disciplinary domain of power, for purposes of identification and containment rather than care or support.

There are powerful forces of power, domination, subordination and inferiority enforced at all levels to ensure that children and young people with disabilities submit to a process that labels them as 'failing'. Students implicitly do not want to be labelled as they know that is a negative status that confines them to an inferior location. Labelling, however, is critical to the maintenance of inequality in the education system as it clearly identifies those that are 'lessor' assuring and justifying an inferiority of position and opportunity.

Labelling a group as deficient in the education system has to be seen as an effective exercise in power because it effectively legitimises exclusion and shifts responsibility away from policy and educators and onto individuals.

In this study, the power of hegemony, the dominance of the ideas and values of those that are most powerful, was key both to maintaining and hiding inequality (Gramsci 1971). Collins (2000) also identified the power of ideology, culture, and consciousness, as critical levers linking the structural, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains ensuring the subordination and inferiority of marginalised groups (Collins 2000, 284). These levers, although invisible are incredibly powerful, and are essential to maintain the power of the most privileged as new ways must continuously be found to maintain boundaries, to justify exclusionary practices, and to involve those who are oppressed, in supporting "*the very system that fosters their own subordination*" (Collins 2000, 283).

Foucault (2006) argued that although leprosy had begun to disappear in the Middle Ages that the structures and stigma that facilitated the exclusion of the leper, these "*formulas of exclusion*", would be repeatedly played out over and over again in different cultures and contexts where the forms of social division would remain essentially the same (Foucault 2006, 7). This was the case for the students in this study who internalised the pervasive negative ableist ideologies understanding themselves to be implicitly different and inferior. The student participants experienced negative ableist ideologies across all sectors of education that justify the inequality and inferiority of marginalised students. Disability in the lives of the students in this study was inextricably associated with stigma and shame as well as with difference and isolation. All participants were impacted by the negative ableist ideologies that shaped their identities and these fundamentally influenced their experiences in education. Students hide disability as best they can even though they are routinely publically ‘outed’ as different. Even those with strong material resources struggled to resist these ideologies and the impact seemed not to have diminished over time or despite their successes in education. This is the educational leprosy suggested by Foucault (2006) and a state of being from which others retreat (Connor 2006).

Foucault (1973) identified that the disabled identity is a social construction where those identified as inferior are then ostracised, devalued, or ignored, a process that inherently justifies their marginalisation. In this context, power is exercised both through the process of categorisation and through how that categorisation has social and material consequences (Crenshaw 1991, 1297). Stigma, as an expression of power, has been a feature of disability through the ages both positioning disability as shameful and undesirable and justifying the inferiority of that positioning (Goffman 1961; 1963). These ideas of ‘othering’, marginalising, stigmatising, and negative individualised differences, are central to the participant experiences in this study. In this domain, the central features of the disabled identity are difference, deficit, isolation, negativity, shame, stigma, powerlessness, inferiority, and failure. The individual nature of the disabled identity was also notable with little sense of any collective or group identity or awareness of shared barriers.

Students saw HE as an opportunity to make a new identity, to start afresh, to have control and autonomy and to prove their worth. I struggled to think of any aspect of the disabled identity that triggered pride. Perhaps if there was one part of the disabled identity that was shared and that was positive was a grim determination to succeed despite the barriers. Studies of working-class experiences in HE identified the same central themes of social class as experiences of inferiority, a lack of respect, of a perceived failure, of power and powerlessness (Finnegan 2012; Lynch and O'Riordan 1998; Keane 2011a).

The value of IS is in how it provides an analytical lens to consider how social identities and wider social structures and institutions work together, at a macro level, to produce and reproduce inequality in education. The unique value of the matrix of domination conceptual framework used in the study was not just what it could reveal about the oppression of students with disabilities but also what it could reveal about "*the more universal process of domination*" (Collins 1990, 227). I argue that the complex inequality in this study can be explained by 'social reproduction' theory, introduced earlier in this study, which contends that schools and HEI's, as powerful organisations, limit educational opportunities and contribute to social reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, Bowles and Gintis 1976, Young 1971). I argue that these theories provide some considerable explanatory power for the inequitable outcomes for students with disabilities, particularly working-class students with disabilities, in education in this study.

The study findings suggest that the education system in Ireland is structurally configured and organised to support and reflect the cultural norms and practices of the most elite (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). The education system is structurally configured to support those constructed as 'able' (and therefore of great value) and individualises those constructed as disabled or working-class (and therefore of little value). Within the mainstream school classroom, fundamentally ableist practices and philosophies remained embedded, reifying children deemed to be 'normal' and constructing children with SEN as different and inferior. The study findings suggest that one of the greatest barriers to an equitable education system is the adherence to a discourse of individual need underpinned by a weak commitment to equity and the absence of a human rights approach to equality. Such an approach continues to individualise and pathologise children deflecting attention away from the systemic inequalities that exist across the education system and society. The current focus is on enabling students to overcome barriers through specialist support or pathways into HE rather than addressing the barriers to learning and participation embedded across the education system. This approach also ensures that although some changes are introduced to ostensibly support greater equality (whether greater investment in special education or pathways into HE), they are never so fundamental that they interrupt the capacity of the education system to continually produce, reproduce, and maintain inequality.

In this study, the power that accrues from occupying a position of dominance in the disability and class hierarchies enables students that are more advantaged to have privileges over those that are marginalised leading to profoundly inequitable outcomes for poorer students with disabilities. However, the study also identifies how all students with disabilities are disadvantaged as they are created as inferior and marginalised in an education system that is structurally configured to support their inferiority.

The next section considers the third key study finding exploring how students with disabilities challenge the inferiority of their positioning.

8.5 Resistance and Agency

The study findings described above highlight how students with disabilities, particularly working-class students, experience a myriad of barriers in accessing and participating in HE. Intersectionality recognises that power is also responsive to resistance and agency (Collins 2000, Connor 2006) although while individual empowerment is possible "*only collective action*" can generate lasting social transformation (Collins 1990, 237). There is much learning for us in this study as to how the participants accessed and succeeded in HE and how they navigated the systemic structural barriers, negative ideologies, and challenges that exist across the education system.

This study identified how individual personal power can be achieved in spite of a lack of socially sanctioned power (Weber 1998, Foucault 1973). Student resilience has been identified as key in previous studies in relation to the experience of working-class students in HE (Reay et al. 2009, Leathwood and O'Connell 2003, Keane 2015). Resilience also emerged in the study as a key factor in supporting more positive student outcomes for all the students with disabilities in the study. Indeed, where social class might have suggested more negative outcomes resilience was one of the key factors supporting academic success. The students in the study displayed incredible individual resilience and tenacity challenging the inferiority of their positioning, demanding and fighting for better opportunities and trajectories.

Previous studies have identified the negative impact for students with disabilities of '*merciful teachers'* and educational environments imbued with a culture of low expectations (Connor 2006). A significant finding in this study is that schools with higher expectations for students seemed to be more influential in supporting academic achievement and that a culture of high academic expectations for all students was more important than social background or disability in the context of supporting aspirations and achievement.

The findings in this study also point to the crucial role of a supportive family in supporting the aspirations and outcomes for all students with disabilities and was more important in supporting academic achievement in this study than disability category, social class, or gender. Previous studies have suggested that parents of students with disabilities are often engaged in a struggle and that they are an important lever in negotiating access to supports for their children (Shevlin et al. 2008, Rose et al. 2015). The findings of this study both support and add to these studies. The major determinant in relation to student outcomes in this study was the determination of individual parents to secure better opportunities for their children and crucially the social, economic, and cultural capital that they had at their disposal to negotiate these opportunities. This is a key finding bearing in mind that these participants represent different backgrounds, different disabilities, and different school sectors.

All of the parents in the study acted as a powerful support for their children, challenging the inferiority of their positioning, the assumed negative trajectories, constantly believing in and affirming their children's academic ability and aspirations. In relation to the four working-class students, three of whom were also eligible for both HEAR and DARE, and therefore of crucial interest in this study, family support was crucial. Parents supported their children's ambitions and acted as a powerful counter narrative to the dominant negative stigmatised deficit-based ideologies prevalent in the education system. Strong family support in this study seemed to outweigh the potentially negative impacts of a range of other factors including disability, school climate and family background. Having strong advocates who could negotiate for children and young adults with disabilities was critical in securing appropriate supports although in some cases, even very proactive parents, could not entirely protect young people from the impact of the individual deficit model of disability that is endemic in all sectors of education. This study confirms that parents use their social, cultural and economic capital to secure better outcomes for children with disabilities (Gillborn 2015, Fordyce et al. 2015) but also identifies that parents, even from very disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, will fight to create opportunities for their children in education.

It is clear that many parents, particularly from more disadvantaged backgrounds, might not have the skills to undertake this role leaving children vulnerable in a system that seems to respond best to those that demand, negotiate, battle for and refuse to accept poorer outcomes. I argue in this study that the real problem in this context is not parents refusing to accept the limitations of their children but rather an education system that cannot or will not respond to the needs of all children. In this context, the system is particularly failing the most socially disadvantaged children whose parents lack the resources or skills to advocate, negotiate, and battle for them. This fundamental disjuncture leads to the profoundly unequal outcomes that I have outlined in this study.

I argue that this exploration of resistance and agency tells us more than anything else about the inequitable outcomes analysed in previous chapters. It is individuals who navigate the system, individuals who negotiate and battle for improved opportunities, individuals who resist the inferiority of their locations, and who challenge the system to do better. These individuals are not supported by an inclusive education system and must rely on family support, on individual resilience, and on supportive or sympathetic teachers/lecturers, to succeed. This is how inequality for students with disabilities is produced, reproduced, maintained, justified, and resisted in intersecting and interlocking domains.

The next section considers the fourth key study finding identifying the limitations of current categorical approaches to complex social identities.

8.6 The Limitations of Categories

The primary understanding of SEN/disability within the Irish education system is located in the medical model of provision, with a focus on individual deficits and categorisations of disability (Shevlin et al. 2008, Rose et al. 2016). This understanding of disability is rooted in the medical model of disability that has been the dominant way of understanding disability throughout most of the twentieth century (Hosking 2008, Oliver 1996). The medical model is rooted in the assumption that the disadvantage experienced by people with disabilities is their medical condition and that disability can, and indeed must be identified, diagnosed and categorised. There is a similar reliance on quantitative SEG categorisations that it is suggested provides a complete picture of access to HE and that is used to inform national policy and indeed quantitative categorical approaches have dominated the way that we understand social class in education (Bernard 2006). There is, within these quantitative targets, a focus on parental occupation as the only way to measure social class/socio-economic group. These approaches to measuring disability and social class are underpinned by assumptions of homogeneity and an implicit acceptance that these approaches can fully measure and explain complex identities.

The findings of this study suggest that these categorical quantitative approaches, while useful, use minimal definitions of disability and social class, reifying quantitative data, and are not adequate to explain what disability or social class is, how these identities are experienced, how they intersect, and how people feel it in their lives. These approaches assume that the student target groups in the access plans represent a homogenous group foregrounding a single characteristic and assuming that this characteristic, (disability, social class, age, ethnicity etc.) defines each student’s identity. The findings in this study suggest that such an approach is inadequate for a number of reasons.

Firstly, this approach fails to recognise the complex and messy nature of students' lives and how their identities, which are not fixed and immutable but fluid and dynamic, intersect and splash together in numerous domains and contexts. Secondly, this approach hides the more positive outcomes for some students and the limited opportunities for those from poorer backgrounds and makes invisible the strong connections between disability and poverty. Thirdly, this approach continues the negative deficit-based labelling of students that begins in the schools system and that is reinforced in HE, an approach that in this study was damaging to students. This approach is also reinforced within HEI's where their institutional success or otherwise in relation to widening participation is determined by reference to quantitative targets. Finally, this approach continues to situate the locus of the '*problem*' within individuals, rather than within the structure of institutions and the education system.

In this study, the boundaries between social class and disability were neither fixed nor certain but were fluid and dynamic (Bourdieu 1987, Archer et al. 2003). Students experienced disability and social class in different ways in different contexts, often experiencing them simultaneously, with different aspects of their identity foregrounded at different times. The individual nature of disability and social class was also notable with little sense of any collective or group identity. The students largely did not identify as a student with a disability or as any socio-economic group categorisation. Social class and disability in their lives was not about parental occupation or category of disability but more connected to shared feelings of inferiority, inequitable opportunities, a lack of understanding and a common experience of embedded barriers. The study findings suggest that the categorisations of disability and social class used to inform national and institutional policy and practice are inadequate and reinforce deficit notions of difference. The complex messy lives of students in this study defied these dominant unidimensional categorisations and the participants were all disadvantaged and advantaged in unique, complex and intersecting ways.

In the next section, I consider the overall study findings with a particular focus on the study implications in the context of my own professional role and the implications for national and institutional policy and practice.

8.7 Conclusions and Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings in this study suggest that the structural and inequitable configuration of the education system, the embedded barriers, the stigmatised individualised approach to disability and social class that creates, sustains, and justifies negative student identities create a powerful regime that reinforce and sustain each other, reproducing inequality in education. All students with disabilities in this regime are disadvantaged. The consequences of weak and limited approaches to addressing inequality in HE can be seen in pathways like the DARE and HEAR schemes that create opportunities for some students, but primarily for the most advantaged of the disadvantaged while working-class students with disabilities are confined to the margins, locked into '*an interlocking prison from which there is little escape*' (Hancock 2007, 65). Students in this study did not experience disability and social class as separate identities. Rather, they experience disability *and* social class simultaneously, moving between the macro and micro dimensions, through the different domains, influencing every aspect of their everyday interactions and experiences.

Participants made a series of recommendations that had much in common, although some participants were so disillusioned that they could offer no suggestions as to how a system that is so broken could ever be fixed. I outlined earlier how the research questions in this study were complex. The recommendations from the participants were, however, quite simple. Above all else, students with disabilities did not want to be constructed or positioned as ‘different’ to their peers. The participants stressed the importance of an inclusive education system where support would be provided to all students. Participants wanted teachers and lecturers to be better trained to support disability, to be aware not only about disability, but also about the impact of disability in education. They recommended that teaching students with disabilities not be constructed as something different, or something extra. They valued teaching that included rather than differentiated.

Participants asked for more help in schools and HEI’s, more technology, and greater clarity on pathways and higher expectations. Students valued schools and HEI’s that were proactive and welcoming, they valued individual support and high expectations, they valued a sense of personal care and encouragement, they valued pathways including DARE and HEAR, and particularly valued the support of individual teachers and lecturers. Negative experiences were overwhelmingly associated with unresponsive schools, negative teachers, assumptions of inability, separation and segregation. Mostly participants just wanted teachers and lecturers, and the education system, to care for them and about them as individuals, to value them, to create opportunities for them, and to support their aspirations.

All participants viewed the opportunities presented by HE as incredibly positive. They were excited about the possibilities of creating a new identity, to acquire valuable credentials, to challenge assumptions of inability, to prove themselves, and in doing so to secure social mobility. Students viewed access routes to HE, like DARE and HEAR, as critical in their journey suggesting that these routes created opportunities for them to access HE, an opportunity that might otherwise have been denied. Students valued the proactive nature of support in HE, and the inclusive and welcoming ethos that was in existence across the HEI that they were attending.

The students that I met as part of this study experienced enormous, sometimes unimaginable challenges, in their journey towards and within HE. They were all individuals and yet their courage, determination, tenacity and resilience were the characteristics that I felt defined them. In the main, they were incredibly determined to succeed and all valued the importance of their families in supporting that determination. The findings in this study point to the crucial role of a supportive family in supporting the aspirations and outcomes for all students with disabilities. It is more important than disability category, social class, or gender, and it will be important to build this learning into the policy and practices of schools and HEI's.

All of the participants in the study relied on academic supports both at school and in HE and students were greatly impacted by variable and inconsistent support. The current education system for students with disabilities is primarily driven by individual agency and underpinned by powerlessness and conflict. In schools and HEI's, all students should have access to an IEP and to an appropriate plan of support that would be informed by all the stakeholders, driven by the student, and should include routine review and refinement. We need to ensure that these supports are the norm rather than the exception and that they are underpinned by a human rights approach. Working-class students with disabilities in this study were massively impacted by financial hardship. As a sector, we must consider the needs of students with disabilities experiencing financial hardship recognising how disability and social class intersect to limit progression to HE and retention within HE.

National policy, and targets in national access plans, positions and understands students with disabilities to be essentially homogenous, hiding the more advantaged outcomes for some students and the inequitable outcomes for those different in other aspects of their identity. National and institutional policy in Ireland should adopt an intersectionality informed approach to understanding complex educational disadvantage and represent this approach in national targets, policy, and practice. Data should be disaggregated to allow for intersectional analyses. At a minimum, there should be targets for entry to HE and a focus on retention within HE for students who attended DEIS schools, students on the special rate of grant, students living in the most disadvantaged areas, and targets that reflect the complexity of these intersections.

At a more fundamental level, I would challenge the necessity for the categorisation of students and the quantitative targets articulated in national access plans to broaden access to higher education. I also challenge the structural configuration of Access Offices in the HE sector where there are Disability Officers/Advisors and a range of ‘specialist’ supports for students with disabilities and working-class students. How much more impactful would policy be if indicators of equality were related not to individual student characteristics but to the inclusive nature of the institution and the sector. These indicators could include for example the inclusive nature of the built environment and the teaching and learning environment, the availability of inclusive proactive academic and personal supports for all students, the affordability of education, and the diversity of staff. I argue that we should stop counting students and that we must focus instead on holding the education system and individual institutions accountable if we are to challenge the production and reproduction of systemic inequality in education.

DARE and HEAR have created opportunities for more students to access HE in greater numbers than ever before although I argue that in the case of DARE that it has not broadened access to the most disadvantaged. The participants greatly valued these pathways and we should remain committed to them. However, this IS analysis suggest that these schemes are not meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged at the intersection of disability and social class. At a policy level, there should be further consideration of the significance of school type and/or area as indicators of deep disadvantage. These indicators suggest social class perhaps in the most powerful way and may be more impactful than income or socio-economic group or occupational classifications. In particular consideration might be given to students attending a DEIS school as this was a particularly powerful indicator of inequality. The HEAR scheme should consider the usefulness of current indicators and consider whether all HEAR eligible students must have attended either a DEIS school or live in an area of disadvantage. I would suggest that students who meet either or both of these indicators should be prioritised both for access to HE and retention within HE.

The DARE scheme currently does not consider social class as an indicator for eligibility. I challenge the assumption that disability is the primary and indeed only cause of educational disadvantage arguing that when disability intersects with social class the result is complex and deep disadvantage. Again, I would recommend that the DARE scheme consider an intersectional approach to disadvantage adding social, cultural, and economic indicators. In theory, consideration could be given to merging the DARE and HEAR schemes.

These pathways are to some degree a distraction from the reality of an education system that has embedded structural inequalities and where only systemic reform and collective action "*can effectively generate lasting social transformation of political and economic* *institutions*" (Collins 1990, 237). The depth of educational inequality revealed by the students in this study suggest a necessity to move away from the individual pathology perspective to focus on systemic changes to addressing social disadvantage, a focus on the causes of poverty and social exclusion, and the systemic barriers to educational inequality. At a most fundamental level, the IS analysis in this study, identifies that there is a need to shift responsibility away from individuals, and to challenge policy makers, educators, and society, to accept responsibility to address these endemic inequalities.

As a university, we have a central role to play in consolidating or challenging dominant understandings of disability and social class. This study fundamentally identifies how the special education system, the identification and categorisation of difference, the labelling of disability that is systemically embedded across the education system, is implicitly damaging for individual students. As policy makers and educators, we must ask why we focus so much on perceived individual deficits instead of the deficits of an education system that refuses to fully recognise that diversity is a part of the human condition. We must also consider how we enforce these negative processes in multiple domains across the education system and how damaging the processes are for individual students. The findings in this study suggest that the education system, including higher education, has a key role in maintaining and enforcing the negative conceptualisation of disability conceived at a structural level. In doing so, schools and HEIs limit opportunities, reproduce inequalities, begrudgingly granting the rights of those with the resources to demand them while limiting the rights of those who are powerless and have no voice.

Most students saw the barriers that they experienced as an individual problem rather than system issues. Most students saw disability, as a negative identity, as embedded in society and their fears for the future in relation to employment were clear. There was a desire to be valued, to be appreciated, not to be isolated and stigmatised that was moving and compelling. Students navigate an educational terrain that is littered with covert and overt barriers. The deficit understandings of disability, so prominent in student narratives, are reflected in national policy and society and validated in inequitable structures and opportunities. The participant negativity about disability, the shame and stigma, reflect the way that we talk and think about disability in society and the way that we enforce this thinking in education. We must all challenge these assumptions and discourses. I argue, like Lynch (1999), that one of the great concerns about current widening participation policy is that 'the trickle' of students accessing HE will never become a steady flow and that current policy will support the hardening of social divisions rather than their reduction or elimination. A better understanding of disability and social class and where they intersect, a recognition of structural barriers, and an acknowledgement of the structures of power that are reproducing inequality in education, would be a good place to start.

This study aimed to explore our gaps in knowledge, our assumptions about disability and social class, the nature of intersectional disadvantage, and the impact of policy on experiences and outcomes. The study has raised questions of alternative notions of disadvantage and the tensions between policy and practice that play out in the often fractured and damaging lives of children and young adults with disabilities in the education system. I do believe that these accounts tell us a great deal about why working-class students are not applying/eligible for the DARE scheme, why they are leaving HE, and indeed, why there are not more students with disabilities in HE. Perhaps the most depressing learning is that the potential for students who do not have the same resilience, the same supportive families, the same determination to succeed in the face of embedded barriers, is unlikely to be realised unless there is fundamental systemic sectoral change.

Yet relying on individual student resilience is an inappropriate way to progress the widening participation agenda and we must as HEI's consider how much more could be achieved by supporting the development of an inclusive education system rather than positioning difference as an individual deficit. The categorisations that drive national policy hide the causes of class inequality, the joy and potential of the diversity of all people, and their value in society. We need to move away from conversations about socio-economic disadvantage and talk about the impact of poverty, of oppression, and of embedded barriers. We need to consider who is being marginalised, consider the intersecting nature of disadvantage and privilege, and acknowledge that these issues are embedded rather than accidental. Challenging the inequality of our current systems offer the best hope for equality in the future.

I have dedicated my professional career to supporting greater equality in education and society. In this study, I argue that inequality for students with disabilities in education is structured and systemic and is only possible because of inequality in society. In this inquiry, the opportunities for a student with a disability to attend HE was primarily dependent on their social, economic, and cultural capital, on personal resilience and individual determination, and on the support of individual teachers and families. Students in this study succeeded, often at great personal cost, *despite* rather than because of the education system. If we want to change this narrative, then national and institutional policy must change. We must reimagine our education system, not by accentuating difference as deficit, but by acknowledging the value of diversity, creating equal opportunities for all in education and society.

8.8 Further Research

This thesis offers a new perspective on disadvantage and the complexity of disadvantage that exists at the intersection of disability and social class in education in Ireland. There are limits to the inquiry and I think that it would be useful to gain a greater understanding of this issue through some other lines of inquiry. The substantial nature of the national large-scale quantitative data together with the participant narratives in this study provide a compelling picture of inequality in education in Ireland. The intensive nature of the qualitative element of the study means that some of the broader claims about disability, social class, and society, would need to be explored further. There have been some changes in the supports for students with disabilities in primary and second level education over the last number of years. Further qualitative and longitudinal studies could be undertaken to identify whether there has been any change in how students experience disability in education in Ireland. The continued examination of the intersection of disability and social class in a larger study would also be useful as there are undoubtedly further complexities in the data that I have missed.

A limitation of the quantitative data used in the study is that the analyses begin at the point of student application to HE. There are no national data sets that can be used to compare these analyses to the characteristics of second level students, an issue previously raised in the national evaluation of the DARE and HEAR schemes (Byrne et al. 2013, 129). The development of a national data infrastructure proposed under the Data Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (Haase and Pratschke 2018) could address this issue and would provide considerable scope for further research that could better inform policy and practice.

The qualitative data in this study provides a powerful context for national patterns of inequitable progression to HE. The participants in this study could be seen as an elite group, however, as they had all progressed to HE. There are many students with disabilities who do not progress to HE and a qualitative study to include students currently in the second level system and/or the further education sector exploring the intersection of disability and social class would be a substantial contribution to the literature.

The analyses of DARE applications and patterns of eligibility relate to one year only. It would be useful if the same intersectional analysis was completed for a number of other years to consider and confirm the findings from this study. This would also act as a stimulus to further action in this area in policy and practice.

The quantitative data on student retention relates to new entrants to HE in Ireland in 2010 only. The analysis also considers presence or non-presence in HE at the commencement of the second year of study. I recommend that national studies include an analysis of the retention all students with disabilities in HE in Ireland as a minimum. Further studies should continue the nuanced intersectional approach to the intersection of disability and social class in this study to identity retention by student characteristics. It would be valuable to identify patterns of retention over subsequent years of study in HE. This would also contribute to institutional learning and policy.

This study examined the intersection of disability and social class. The study would benefit from exploring how disability intersects with other social identities. Gender emerged as a key theme in this study and would be a particularly fruitful area of further study. It would also be useful to consider the intersection of disability, ethnicity, sexuality, and other identities.

The study indicated that there were some variations in student experiences and outcomes linked to Leaving Certificate attainment and category of disability. Students from DEIS schools are likely to have lower educational attainment and lower entry rates to university because of their social class position/level of deprivation. There is also the question of whether student outcomes vary by category of disability. It would be useful to examine these intersections further.

References

Abberley, Paul. "The concept of oppression and the development of a social theory of disability." *Disability, Handicap & Society* 2, no. 1 (1987): 5-19.

AHEAD. "Numbers of Students with Disabilities studying in Higher Education in Ireland 2016/17" 2018. Retrieved 13 January 2019 from https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files/shop/free/Rates%202016-17%20-%20ONLINE.pdf

Andersen, Margaret L., and Patricia Hill Collins. "Conceptualizing race, class, and gender." *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology* 5 (2004): 75-98.

Anthias, Floya, and Nira Yuval-Davis. "Contextualizing feminism-gender, ethnic and class divisions." *Feminist Review* 15, no. 1 (1983): 62-75.

Anthias, Floya. "Intersectional what? Social divisions, intersectionality and levels of analysis." *Ethnicities* 13, no. 1 (2013): 3-19.

Anthias, Floya. "Social stratification and social inequality: Models of intersectionality and identity." in Devine, Fiona. *Rethinking class: Culture, identities and lifestyle.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (2005): 24-45.

Archer, Louise, and Merryn Hutchings and Alistair Ross, eds. 2003. Higher education and social class: Issues of exclusion and inclusion. RoutledgeFalmer, London. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from epdf.pub/higher-education-and-social-class-issues-of-inclusion-and-exclusion.html

Archer, Louise, Merryn Hutchings, and Alistair Ross. *Higher Education and Social Class: Issues of Exclusion and Inclusion*. London:Routledge, 2003.

Aries, Elizabeth, and Maynard Seider. "The interactive relationship between class identity and the college experience: The case of lower income students." Qualitative Sociology 28, no. 4 (2005): 419-443. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11133-005-8366-1.pdf

Armstrong, David, Gillian Kane, Gillian O'Sullivan, and Maura Kelly. "National survey of parental attitudes to and experiences of local and national special education services." *National Council for Special Education* (2010). Retrieved 30 December 2018 from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/6__NCSE_ParentalAttitude.pdf

Artiles, Alfredo J. "Untangling the racialization of disabilities: An intersectionality critique across disability models." Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race 10, no. 2 (2013): 329-347.

Ball, Stephen J. "Education markets, choice and social class: the market as a class strategy in the UK and the USA." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 14, no. 1 (1993): 3-19.

Ball, Stephen J. *Class strategies and the education market: The middle classes and social advantage*. Routledge, 2003.

Banks, Joanne, and Selina McCoy. "A study on the prevalence of special educational needs" Research Report No. 9. *National Council for Special Education*. (2011). Retrieved 30 December 2018 from www.esri.ie/pubs/BKMNEXT198.pdf

Banks, Joanne, Bertrand Maître, and Selina McCoy. "Insights into the lives of children with disabilities: findings from the 2006 National Disability Survey." *Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Research Series* (2015). Retrieved 30 December 2018 from www.esri.ie/pubs/BKMNEXT274.pdf

Banks, Joanne, Bertrand Maître, Selina McCoy, and Dorothy Watson. "Parental Educational Expectations of Children with Disabilities." *Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Research Series* (2016). Retrieved 30 December 2018 from www.esri.ie/pubs/RS50.pdf

Banks, Joanne, Raffaele Grotti, Éamonn Fahey, and Dorothy Watson. "Disability and Discrimination in Ireland. Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules 2004, 2010, 2014" Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission for Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Research Series (2018). Retrieved 14 May 2019 from esri.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2018-09/IHREC4-Disability-and-Discrimination-FINAL-ONLINE-VERSION.pdf

Barnes, Colin, and Geof Mercer. *Disability: Key Concepts*. Cambridge: Polity. 2003.

Barnes, Colin, and Geof Mercer. Exploring Disability. Cambridge: Polity. 2010.

Barnes, Colin. *Disabled people in Britain and discrimination: A case for anti-discrimination legislation*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers. 1991.

Barnes-Holmes, Yvonne, Geraldine Scanlon, Deirdre Desmond, Michael Shevlin, and Nigel Vahey. "A study of transition from primary to post-primary school for pupils with special educational needs." *County Meath: National Council for Special Education* (2013). Retrieved 30 December 2018 from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Transitions_23_03_13.pdf

Bathmaker, Ann-Marie, Nicola Ingram, and Richard Waller. "Higher education, social class and the mobilisation of capitals: Recognising and playing the game." British Journal of Sociology of Education 34, no. 5-6 (2013): 723-743. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2013.816041

Becker, Howard. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1998.

BERA (British Educational Research Association). "Ethical guidelines for educational research." London: British Education Research Association (2011). Retrieved 30 December 2018 from www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2011

Bernard, Julie. "Promoting access to higher education and identifying access students: how useful is research on participation by socio-economic group?" *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 16, no. 1 (2006): 19-35.

Björnsdóttir, Kristín, and Rannveig Traustadóttir. "Stuck in the land of disability? The intersection of learning difficulties, class, gender and religion." *Disability & Society* 25, no. 1 (2010): 49-62.

Blaxter, Loraine, Christina Hughes, and Malcolm Tight. *How to Research*. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education. 2006.

Bogdan, Robert and Sari Knopp Biklen. *Introduction to Qualitative Research in Education*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 1998.

Borland, John, and Sue James. "The learning experience of students with disabilities in higher education. A case study of a UK university." *Disability & Society* 14, no. 1 (1999): 85-101.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. "Reproduction in society, education and culture." London: Sage (1977).

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture. London: Sage. 1990.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "Social space and symbolic power." Sociological Theory 7, no. 1 (1989): 14-25.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The forms of capital." in Richardson, John G., (ed.). *Handbook of Theory and* Research *for the Sociology of Education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1986.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The social space and the genesis of groups." *Information (International Social Science Council)* 24, no. 2 (1985): 195-220.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "What makes a social class? On the theoretical and practical existence of groups." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32 (1987): 1-17.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press. 1984

Bourdieu, Pierre. The Logic of Practice. Stanford University Press, 1990. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from academia.edu/download/40955153/Pierre_Bourdieu_-_The_Logic_of_Practice__1992.pdf

Bowes, Lindsey, Stephen Jones, Liz Thomas, Rachel Moreton, Guy Birkin, and Tej Nathwani. "The uses and impact of HEFCE funding for widening participation: report to HEFCE by CFE and Edge Hill." (2013). Retrieved 30 December 2018 from https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/17385/.

Bowleg, Lisa. "The problem with the phrase women and minorities: intersectionality—an important theoretical framework for public health." American Journal of Public Health 102, no. 7 (2012): 1267-1273.

Bowleg, Lisa. "When Black + lesbian + woman ≠ Black lesbian woman: The methodological challenges of qualitative and quantitative intersectionality research." *Sex Roles* 59, no. 5-6 (2008): 312-325.

Bowles, Samuel, and Herbert Gintis. *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life.* New York: Basic Books. 1976

Boyatzis, Richard E. T*ransforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. London: Sage, 1998.

Braddock, David Lawrence, and Susan L. Parish. "An Institutional History of Disability" in Albrecht, Gary L., Katherine D. Seelman, and Michael Bury (eds.). *Handbook of Disability Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. 2001.

Brah, Avtar, and Ann Phoenix. "Ain't I a woman? Revisiting intersectionality." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5, no. 3 (2004): 75-86.

Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora*. London and New York: Routledge. 1996.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. "Using thematic analysis in psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77-101.

Breen, Richard (ed.). *Social Mobility in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2004.

Breen, Richard, Damian F. Hannan, David B. Rottman, and Christopher T. Whelan. *Understanding contemporary Ireland: state, class and development in the Republic of Ireland*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 1990

Bucharest Communiqué, Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area, EHEA Ministerial Conference 2012. (2012). Retrieved 4 February 2019 from www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2012_Bucharest/67/3/Bucharest_Communique_2012_610673.pdf

Byrne, Clodagh. "'Improving the Retention of Students with Disabilities in Third Level: Final Summary Report to the National Access Office" Dublin: Trinity College Dublin and IT Tallaght. 2006.

Byrne, Delma, Aedín Doris, Olive Sweetman, Ruth Casey, and David Raffe. "An evaluation of the HEAR and DARE supplementary admission routes to higher education." (2013). Retrieved 30 December 2018 from www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/HEAR-DARE-Evaluation-Report.pdf

Byrne, Delma. “Inclusion or diversion in higher education in the Republic of Ireland?” ESRI working paper no. 304 (2009) Retrieved 14 January 2019 from www.esri.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2015-07/WP304.pdf

Campbell, Tomás, Sighle de Barra, Ryan Duffy, Frank Newman, and David Reilly. “Disability and Special Education Related Expenditure Spending Review 2017”. Dublin: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform/ Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service. (2017). Retrieved 31 January 2019 from www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2018/Documents/5.Disability%20and%20Special%20Education%20Related%20Expenditure%20-%20Part%20of%20the%20Spending%20Review%202017.pdf

Carbado, Devon W. "Colorblind intersectionality." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 38, no. 4 (2013): 811-845.

Carbado, Devon W., Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Vickie M. Mays, and Barbara Tomlinson. "Intersectionality: Mapping the movements of a theory." *Du Bois review: social science research on race* 10, no. 2 (2013): 303-312.

Carrig, Mary. "Changing role of the special needs assistant: Perspectives of a special school staff." *REACH Journal of Special Needs Education in Ireland* 17, no. 2 (2004): 119-126.

Cho, Sumi, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall. "Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (2013): 785-810.

Choo, Hae Yeon, and Myra Marx Ferree. "Practicing intersectionality in sociological research: A critical analysis of inclusions, interactions, and institutions in the study of inequalities." *Sociological Theory* 28, no. 2 (2010): 129-149.

Christie, Hazel, Lyn Tett, Vivienne E. Cree, Jenny Hounsell, and Velda McCune. "‘A real rollercoaster of confidence and emotions’: Learning to be a university student." Studies in Higher Education 33, no. 5 (2008): 567-581. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/03075070802373040

Christie, Hazel, Moira Munro, and Fiona Wager. "‘Day students’ in higher education: Widening access students and successful transitions to university life." International Studies in Sociology of Education 15, no. 1 (2005): 3-30. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/09620210500200129

Clancy, Patrick, and Joy Wall. *Social background of higher education entrants*. Dublin: Higher Education Authority. 2000.

Clancy, Patrick. *Access to college: patterns of continuity and change*. Dublin: Higher Education Authority. 1995.

Clancy, Patrick. *College Entry in Focus: a fourth national survey of participation in higher education*. Dublin: Higher Education Authority. 2001.

Clancy, Patrick. *Participation in higher education: a national survey*. Dublin: Higher Education Authority. 1982.

Clancy, Patrick. *Who goes to college?: A Second National Survey of Participation in Higher Education*. Dublin: Higher Education Authority. 1988.

Cohen, Louis, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison. "Action research." *Research Methods in Education* 5 (2000): 226-244.

Cohen, Louis, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison. *Research Methods in Education*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer. 2005

Cohen, Louis, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison. *Research methods in education*. New York: Routledge. 2007.

Collins, Patricia Hill, and Sirma Bilge. *Intersectionality*. NY: John Wiley & Sons. 2016.

Collins, Patricia Hill. "Black Feminism, Knowledge and Power" in Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman (1990):221-238

Collins, Patricia Hill. "Intersectionality's definitional dilemmas." *Annual Review of Sociology* 41 (2015): 1-20.

Collins, Patricia Hill. "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation." *Hypatia* 13, no. 3 (1998): 62-82.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, New York, NY: Routledge." (2000): 274-301

Combahee River Collective. "A Black Feminist Statement" in Guy-Sheftall, Beverly. *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*. New York: The New Press, (1995): 232–40.

Combahee River Collective. "A Black Feminist Statement" in Hull, Gloria T., Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (eds.). *But Some of Us Are Brave. Black Women's Studies*. Old Westbury NY: The Feminist Press, (1982): 13–22.

Connor, David J. "Michael's story: 'I get into so much trouble just by walking': Narrative knowing and life at the intersections of learning disability, race, and class." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 39, no. 2 (2006): 154-165.

Cosgrove, Jude, Caroline McKeown, Joseph Travers, Zita Lysaght, Órla Ní Bhroin, and Peter Archer. "Educational Experiences and Outcomes for Children with Special Educational Needs, A Secondary Analysis of Data from the Growing Up in Ireland Study." *Dublin: National Council for Special Education (NCSE)* Research Report no. 17 (2014). Retrieved 30 December 2018 from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Report-17-Educational-Outcomes-Children-with-SEN-final.pdf

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum Article 8*. 1989

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 1241-99.

Creswell, John W. "Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design. Choosing among five approaches" (2nd ed.) (2007) Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from academia.edu/download/53798327/creswell_2007_qualitative_inquiry_and_research_design__choosing_among_five_approaches__2nd_edition.pdf

Creswell, John W., and Vicki L. Plano Clark. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage. 2007.

Crotty, Michael. *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. London: Sage Publications. 1998.

Crozier, Gill, Diane Reay, John Clayton, Lori Colliander, and Jan Grinstead. "Different strokes for different folks: diverse students in diverse institutions–experiences of higher education." Research papers in education 23, no. 2 (2008): 167-177. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/02671520802048703

CSO (Central Statistics Office). Census of Population 2016, Profile 9 Health, Disability and Carers. Dublin: Stationery Office. 2016. Retrieved 8 February 2019 from www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp9hdc/p8hdc/

Davis, Angela Yvonne. Women, Race, and Class. New York: Random House. 1981.

Davis, Kathy. "Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful." *Feminist Theory* 9, no. 1 (2008): 67-85.

de los Reyes, Paulina and Diana Mulinari. *Intersektionalitet: kritiska reflektioner över (o)jämlikhetens landskap [Intersectionality: Critical reflections on the landscape of (in)equality]*. Malmö: Liber. 2005

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. 1994.

DES. Charting Our Education Future White Paper On Education (Launch Copy 1995). Department of Education. Dublin: Government of Ireland. (1995) Retrieved 14 May 2019 from www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Charting-Our-Education-Future-White-Paper-On-Education-Launch-Copy-1995-.pdf

DES. Report of the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education. Department of Education and Skills. Dublin: Government of Ireland. (2001). Retrieved 14 May 2019 from www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Report-of-the-Action-Group-on-Access-to-Third-Level-Education.pdf

DES. *DEIS Plan 2017. Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools*. Department of Education and Skills Social Inclusion Section. Dublin: Government of Ireland. (2017). Retrieved 31 January 2019 from www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/DEIS-Plan-2017.pdf

DES. *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. Report of the Strategy Group*. Department of Education and Skills. Dublin: Government of Ireland. (2011). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf

DES. *Supporting a better transition from second level to higher education: Key directions and next steps*. Department of Education and Skills. Dublin: Government of Ireland. (2013). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Supporting-A-Better-Transition-From-Second-Level-To-Higher-Education-.pdf

DES/ Government of Ireland. *Report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC)*. Dublin: Department of Education and Science. (1993). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Report-of-the-Special-Education-Review-Committee-1993.pdf

Dhamoon, Rita Kaur. "Considerations on mainstreaming intersectionality." *Political Research Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (2011): 230-243.

Disability Act 2005. *Acts of the Oireachtas*. Government of Ireland. Dublin: Stationery Office. (2005) Retrieved 30 June 2016 from irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/14/enacted/en/html

Doyle, Brian John. *Disability Discrimination: Law and Practice*. Bristol: Jordans. 2003

Drudy, Sheelagh, and William Kinsella. "Developing an inclusive system in a rapidly changing European society." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 13, no. 6 (2009): 647-663.

Duggan, Carmel, and Michael Byrne. "What works in the provision of higher, further and continuing education, training and rehabilitation for adults with disabilities." *A Review of the Literature. Trim, IRL: National Council for Special Education.* (2013). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Report_15_Adult_Ed_09_04_14.pdf

Education Act 1998. *Acts of the Oireachtas*. Government of Ireland. Dublin: Stationery Office. (1998) Retrieved 23 December 2018 from irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51/enacted/en/html

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004. *Acts of the Oireachtas*. Government of Ireland. Dublin: Stationery Office. (2004) Retrieved 30 June 2016 from irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/act/30/enacted/en/html

Erevelles, Nirmala, and Andrea Minear. "Unspeakable offenses: Untangling race and disability in discourses of intersectionality." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 4, no. 2 (2010): 127-145.

Erikson, Robert, and John H. Goldthorpe. *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992.

ESAI 2013: Educational Policy in Changing Times: Consultation, Implementation and Impact. *We got them but can we keep them? An analysis of the progression of supplementary entry students who entered 5 Irish universities in 2007,* Educational Studies Association of Ireland Conference. 2013

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Access, Retention and Employability 2014. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. 2014. Retrieved 4 February 2019 from https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/59560dcc-a3c3-11e5-b528-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. 2015. Retrieved 4 February 2019 from https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/european_higher_education_area_bologna_process_implementation_report.pdf

Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. "Tomorrow's Skills Towards a National Skills Strategy 5th Report." *Dublin, Stationery Office* (2007). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from www.skillsireland.ie/media/egfsn070306b_national_skils_strategy.pdf

Ferri, Beth A., and David J. Connor. "Talking (and not talking) about race, social class and dis/ability: working margin to margin." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 17, no. 4 (2014): 471-493.

Finkelstein, Victor. *Attitudes and disabled people: Issues for discussion*. No. 5. World Rehabilitation Fund, Inc., 1980.

Finnegan, Fergal, and Barbara Merrill. "'We're as good as anybody else': a comparative study of working-class university students' experiences in England and Ireland." British Journal of Sociology of Education 38, no. 3 (2017): 307-324. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2015.1081054

Finnegan, Fergal. "Welcome to the knowledge factory? A study of working class experience, identity and learning in Irish Higher Education." PhD Thesis. National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2012.

Flatman-Watson, Sheelah. "Barriers to inclusive education in Ireland: The case for pupils with a diagnosis of intellectual and/or pervasive developmental disabilities." *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 37, no. 4 (2009): 277-284.

Fleming, Ted, and Fergal Finnegan. "Non-traditional students in Irish higher education: A research report." from *RANLHE Access and Retention: Experiences of Non-Traditional Students in Higher Education* (2011). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from www.tedfleming.net/doc/Final_Copy_July_20_2011.pdf

Fleming, Ted, Andrew Loxley, and Fergal Finnegan. *Access and Participation in Irish Higher Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2017.

Fordyce, Mariela, Sheila Riddell, Rachel O'Neill, and Elisabet Weedon. "Educational outcomes of young people in Scotland who are deaf or hard of hearing: intersections of deafness and social class." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 19, no. 3 (2015): 285-302.

Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. New York: Pantheon Books. 1973.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage/Random House, 1977.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Madness*. London: Routledge. 2006.

Frawley, Denise Victor Pigott, and Dawn Carroll. "A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education 2013/14 to 2014/15". Report prepared for the HEA. (2017). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/a-study-of-progression-in-irish-higher-education.pdf

Gillborn, David. "Intersectionality, critical race theory, and the primacy of racism: Race, class, gender, and disability in education." *Qualitative Inquiry* 21, no. 3 (2015): 277-287.

Goffman, Erving. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates.* Anchor Books 1961.

Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identities.* London: Penguin. 1963.

Goldthorpe, John H. "Class analysis and the reorientation of class theory: the case of persisting differentials in educational attainment." *British Journal of Sociology* (1996): 481-505.

Goode, Jackie. "'Managing' disability: Early experiences of university students with disabilities." *Disability & Society* 22, no. 1 (2007): 35-48.

Gopaldas, Ahir, and Glenna DeRoy. "An intersectional approach to diversity research." *Consumption Markets & Culture* 18, no. 4 (2015): 333-364.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*: Ed. and Transl. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London: International Publishers. 1971.

Griffin, Seán, and Michael Shevlin. *Responding to special educational needs: An Irish perspective.* Dublin: Gill and MacMillan. 2011

Guba, Egon G., and Yvonna S. Lincoln. "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences." in Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd, (2005): 191-215.

Haase, Trutz, and Jonathan Pratschke. "The 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index for small areas (SA): Introduction and reference tables." Dublin: Pobal. (2012). Retrieved 15 January 2019 from http://trutzhaase.eu/wp/wp-content/uploads/HP-Index-2011-SA-An-Introduction-02.pdf

Haase, Trutz and Jonathan Pratschke. "A Data Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education". Higher Education Authority. (2018) Retrieved 15 May 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2018/05/HEA-Data-Plan-Report-2017-V16-Haase-PratschkeFinal.pdf

Hancock, Ange-Marie. "When multiplication doesn't equal quick addition: Examining intersectionality as a research paradigm." *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 1 (2007): 63-79.

HEA (Higher Education Authority). "Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education: Action Plan 2005-2007." Dublin: National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education, HEA. (2004). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Action-Plan-2005-2007.pdf

HEA (Higher Education Authority). "National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013". Dublin: National Office of Equity to Higher Education. HEA. (2008). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Plan-for-Equity-of-Access-to-Higher-Education.pdf

HEA (Higher Education Authority). "Mission-based Performance Compact between National University of Ireland, Maynooth and The Higher Education Authority. (2014) Retrieved 4 February 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/MU-Compact.pdf

HEA (Higher Education Authority). "National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019". Dublin: HEA. (2015). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Plan-for-Equity-of-Access-to-Higher-Education-2015-2019.pdf

HEA (Higher Education Authority). "Review of the Student Assistance Fund" Dublin: HEA. (2016) Retrieved 4 February 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/Review-of-the-Student-Assistance-Fund.pdf

HEA (Higher Education Authority). "Review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities." Dublin: HEA. (2017). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/10/HEA-Review-of-the-Fund-for-Students-with-Disabilities.pdf

HEA (Higher Education Authority). “Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018-2020”. (2018a). Retrieved 15 January 2019 from www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/higher-education-system-performance-framework-2018-2020.pdf

HEA (Higher Education Authority). Key Facts and Figures: Higher Education 2016/17 (2018b) Retrieved 29 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2018/02/HEA-Key-Facts-And-Figures-2016-17-FINAL.pdf

HEA (Higher Education Authority). Progress Review of the National Access Plan and priorities to 2021. (2018c) Retrieved 29 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2018/12/HEA-Progress-Review-NAP-2021.pdf

Healey, Mick, Andrew Bradley, Mary Fuller, and Tim Hall. "Listening to students: the experiences of disabled students of learning at university" in Adams, Mike, and Sally Brown (eds.). *Towards inclusive learning in higher education: Developing curricula for disabled student*s. London: Routledge. (2006): 32-43

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy, (ed.). *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*. Boston, MA: Sage Publications. 2011.

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy, (ed.). *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*. *2nd ed.* Boston, MA: Sage Publications. 2012.

Higher Education Authority Act 1971. Government of Ireland. Dublin: The Stationery Office. 1971. Retrieved 15 January 2019 from www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1971/act/22/enacted/en/html

Holloway, Sarah. "The experience of higher education from the perspective of disabled students." *Disability & Society* 16, no. 4 (2001): 597-615.

hooks, bell. *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989.

Hosking, David L. "Critical Disability Theory: a paper presented at the 4th Biennial Disability Studies Conference at Lancaster University”. 2008. Retrieved 15 January 2019 from www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/events/disabilityconference_archive/2008/papers/hosking2008.pdf

Hull, Gloria T., Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith. *But some of us are brave: all the women are White, all the Blacks are men: Black women's studies.* New York: Feminist. 1982.

Hunt, Paul. "A Critical Condition" in Hunt, Paul. (ed.). *Stigma: The Experience of Disability,* London: Geoffrey Chapman (1966):145-164.

Hunting, Gemma. "Intersectionality-informed qualitative research: A primer." *Criminology* 4, no. 1 (2014): 1-20.

Irish Government, “Investment in Education, Report of the survey team appointed by the Minister for Education in October 1962”. Dublin Stationery Office. (1965) Retrieved 14 May 2019 from www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Investment-in-Education-Report-of-the-Survey-Team-appointed-by-the-Minister-for-Education-in-October-1962-20mb-PDF-.pdf

Irish Independent. Donnelly, Katherine. "College entry at historic high as State-funded schools raise bar" 4th December 2018. Retrieved 29 January 2019 from www.independent.ie/irish-news/education/school-league-tables/college-entry-at-historic-high-as-statefunded-schools-raise-bar-37592494.html

Jones, Robert. "Student retention and success: a synthesis of research." York: Higher Education Academy. (2008). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/wp_retention_synthesis_for_pdf_updated_090310_0.pdf

Keane, Elaine. "‘Frictional’ relationships… tension in the camp: focusing on the relational in under-represented students’ experiences in higher education." Irish Educational Studies 28, no. 1 (2009): 85-102. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/03323310802597358

Keane, Elaine. "Distancing to self-protect: The perpetuation of inequality in higher education through socio-relational dis/engagement." British Journal of Sociology of Education 32, no. 3 (2011a): 449-466. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/ 10.1080/01425692.2011.559343

Keane, Elaine. "Dependence-deconstruction: widening participation and traditional-entry students transitioning from school to higher education in Ireland." Teaching in Higher Education 16, no. 6 (2011b): 707-718. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2011.570437

Keane, Elaine. "Widening participation in Higher Education in the Republic of Ireland. Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA." Leicester: Edge Hill University/ CFE. (2013). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from https://aran.library.nuigalway.ie/handle/10379/6601

Keane, Elaine. "Considering the ‘Impact’ of access and widening participation: the undergraduate, postgraduate and employment experiences of NUI Galway access students." (2015). Galway: i Access Centre, NUI Galway. Available on 23 February 2019 at Retrieved 14 May 2019 from https://aran.library.nuigalway.ie/bitstream/handle/10379/6600/Access_Research_Report_Final_EK_September_2015.pdf

Kellaghan, Thomas, Susan Weir, Séamus Ó nUallachain, and Mark Morgan. Educational disadvantage in Ireland. No. 20. *Dublin. Educational Research Centre to Combat Poverty and Department of Education and Science*. Combat Poverty Agency, 1995.

Kellaghan, Thomas. "Towards a definition of educational disadvantage." *The Irish Journal of Education/Iris Eireannach an Oideachais* (2001): 3-22.

Kemmis, Stephen, and Mervyn Wilkinson. "Participatory action research and the study of practice." In Atweh, Bill Stephen Kemmis, and Patricia Weeks. (eds.). *Action Research in Practice: Partnerships for Social Justice in Education* (1998): 21-36.

Kenny, Mairin, Eileen McNeela, and Michael Shevlin. "Living and learning: The school experience of some young people with disabilities." in Shevlin, Michael, and Richard Rose (eds.). Encouraging Voices– Respecting the Insights of Young People who have been Marginalized. Dublin: National Disability Authority (2003): 138-158. Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://nda.ie/nda-files/Encouraging-Voices.pdf

Kenny, Mairin, Eileen McNeela, Michael Shevlin, and Tom Daly. Hidden voices: Young people with disabilities speak about their second level schooling. South Western Regional Authority. 2000.

Kenny, Mairin, Michael Shevlin, Patricia Noonan Walsh, and Eileen McNeela. "Accessing mainstream: examining the struggle for parents of children who have learning difficulties." Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs 5, no. 1 (2005): 11-19.

Kitchin, Rob, and Frank Mulcahy. *Disability, Access to Education and Future Opportunities.* Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency. 1999.

Knapp, Gudrun-Axeli. "Fragile Foundations, Strong Traditions, Situated Questioning: Critical Theory in German-Speaking Feminism", in O'Neill, Maggie (ed.). *Adorno, Culture and Feminism*. London: Sage Publications (1999): 119-141

Knapp, Gudrun-Axeli. "Race, class, gender: Reclaiming baggage in fast travelling theories." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 12, no. 3 (2005): 249-265.

Knudsen, Susanne V. "Intersectionality - A theoretical inspiration in the analysis of minority cultures and identities in textbooks." *Caught in the Web or Lost in the Textbook* 53 (2006): 61-76.

Leathwood, Carole, and Paul O'Connell. "'It's a struggle': the construction of the 'new student' in higher education." Journal of Education Policy 18, no. 6 (2003): 597-615. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/0268093032000145863

Lehmann, Wolfgang. "Becoming middle class: How working-class university students draw and transgress moral class boundaries." Sociology 43, no. 4 (2009): 631-647. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1177/0038038509105412

Liasidou, Anastasia. "Critical disability studies and socially just change in higher education." *British Journal of Special Education* 41, no. 2 (2014): 120-135.

Lincoln, Yvonna S., and Egon G. Guba. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Vol. 75. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc. 1985.

Lindsay, Geoff and Martin Desforges. "Procedures used to diagnose a disability and to assess special educational needs: An international review". *National Council for Special Education (NCSE)* (2010). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/5_NCSE_Diag_Ass.pdf

Liston, Miriam, Denise Frawley, and Vivienne Patterson. "A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education 2012/13 to 2013/2014: A Report by the Higher Education Authority". HEA. (2016). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/A-Study-Of-Progression-in-Irish-Higher-Education-201213-201314.pdf

Logan, Anna. "The role of the special needs assistant supporting pupils with special educational needs in Irish mainstream primary schools." *Support for Learning* 21, no. 2 (2006): 92-99.

Logie, Carmen H., Llana James, Wangari Tharao, and Mona R. Loutfy. "HIV, gender, race, sexual orientation, and sex work: a qualitative study of intersectional stigma experienced by HIV-positive women in Ontario, Canada." *PLoS Medicine* 8, no. 11 (2011): 1-12.

Looney, Anne. "Assessment in the Republic of Ireland." Assessment in Education 13, no. 3 (2006): 345-353. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/09695940601035544

Lynch, Kathleen, and Claire O'Riordan. "Inequality in higher education: A study of class barriers." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 19, no. 4 (1998): 445-478.

Lynch, Kathleen. *Equality in Education*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan. 1999.

Lynch, Kathleen, and John Baker. "Equality in education: An equality of condition perspective." *School Field* 3, no. 2 (2005): 131-164.

MacGiolla Phádraig, Brian. "Towards inclusion: The development of provision for children with special educational needs in Ireland from 1991 to 2004." *Irish Educational Studies* 26, no. 3 (2007): 289-300.

Mason, Jennifer. *Qualitative Researching*. London: Sage. 1996.

Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018-2022. Maynooth University Governing Authority. (2018). Retrieved 16 January 2019 from www.maynoothuniversity.ie/about-us/university-strategic-plan

McCall Leslie. "The Complexity of Intersectionality". *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30, no. 3 (2005): 1771–1800

McCall, Leslie. *Complex Inequality: Gender, Class, and Race in the New Economy*. New York: Routledge. 2001.

McCall, Zach, and Thomas Skrtic. "Intersectional needs politics: A policy frame for the wicked problem of disproportionality." *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners* 11, no. 2 (2009): 3-23.

McCoy, Selina, Amanda Quail, and Emer Smyth. "The Effects of School Social Mix: Unpacking the Differences." *Irish Educational Studies* 33, no. 3 (2014b): 307-330.

McCoy, Selina, and Delma Byrne. "Non Progression Among Higher Education New Entrants: A Multivariate Analysis." in Mooney, Oliver, Vivienne Patterson, Muiris O'Connor, and Abigail Chantler. "A study of progression in Irish higher education." Dublin: Higher Education Authority (2010): 40-53. Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/A-Study-of-Progression-in-Higher-Education.pdf

McCoy, Selina, and Delma Byrne. "'The sooner the better I could get out of there': barriers to higher education access in Ireland." *Irish Educational Studies* 30, no. 2 (2011): 141-157.

McCoy, Selina, and Joanne Banks. "Simply academic? Why children with special educational needs don't like school." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 27, no. 1 (2012): 81-97.

McCoy, Selina, Bertrand Maître, Dorothy Watson, and Joanne Banks. "The role of parental expectations in understanding social and academic well-being among children with disabilities in Ireland." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 31, no. 4 (2016): 535-552.

McCoy, Selina, Emma Calvert, Emer Smyth, and Merike Darmody. "Study on the Costs of Participation in Higher Education". Dublin: National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education, HEA (2009). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from www.esri.ie/pubs/BKMNEXT138.pdf

McCoy, Selina, Joanne Banks, and Michael Shevlin. "School matters: How context influences the identification of different types of special educational needs." *Irish Educational Studies* 31, no. 2 (2012): 119-138.

McCoy, Selina, Joanne Banks, Denise Frawley, Dorothy Watson, Michael Shevlin, and Fiona Smyth. "Understanding Special Class Provision in Ireland. Phase 1: Findings from a National Survey of Schools." Dublin: NCSE and Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Research Report no. 16, (2014a). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from www.esri.ie/pubs/BKMNEXT259.pdf

McDonnell, Patrick. "Developments in special education in Ireland: Deep structures and policy making." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 7, no. 3 (2003): 259-269.

McDonnell, Patrick. *Disability and Society: Ideological and Historical Dimensions*. Dublin: Orpen Press, 2007.

McGee, Páid. "Special education in Ireland." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 5, no. 1 (1990): 48-64.

McGuckin, Conor, Michael Shevlin, Sheena Bell, and Cristina Devecchi. "Moving to Further and Higher Education: An exploration of the experiences of students with special educational needs." *Dublin: National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Research Report no. 14*, (2013). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Report_14_Higher_Ed_09_04_14.pdf

Meegan, Sarah, and Ann MacPhail. "Inclusive education: Ireland's education provision for children with special educational needs." *Irish Educational Studies* 25, no. 1 (2006): 53-62.

Meekosha, Helen, and Russell Shuttleworth. "What's so 'critical' about critical disability studies?" *Australian Journal of Human Rights* 15, no. 1 (2009): 47-75.

Merrill, Barbara, and Linden West. Using Biographical Methods in Social Research. Sage, London 2009.

Mertens, Donna M. "Transformative mixed methods: Addressing inequities." *American Behavioral Scientist* 56, no. 6 (2012): 802-813.

Mertens, Donna M. *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. California: Sage Publications. 2005.

Mooney, Oliver, Vivienne Patterson, Muiris O'Connor, and Abigail Chantler. "A study of progression in Irish higher education." Dublin: HEA (2010). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/A-Study-of-Progression-in-Higher-Education.pdf

Murphy, Phyllis. "Higher Education Access/Foundation Courses: A Research Report." Irish Universities Quality Board, Dublin: HEA, IOTI & IUA (2009). Retrieved 14 May 2019 from tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/79887/Murphy%202009%20Access%20Courses%20Report.pdf

Museus, Samuel D., and Kimberly A. Griffin. "Mapping the margins in higher education: On the promise of intersectionality frameworks in research and discourse." *New Directions for Institutional Research* 2011, no. 151 (2011): 5-13.

Nash, Jennifer C. "Re-thinking Intersectionality." *Feminist Review* 89, no. 1 (2008): 1-15.

National Audit Office (NAO). "Staying the course: the retention of students in higher education." Ordered by the House of Commons. London: The Stationery Office. (2007). Retrieved 16 January 2019 from www.nao.org.uk/report/staying-the-course-the-retention-of-students-in-higher-education

National Disability Authority (NDA). "Ethical Guidance for Research with People with Disabilities." Disability Research Series 13. Dublin: NDA. 2009. Retrieved 16 January 2019 from http://nda.ie/nda-files/Ethical-Guidance-for-Research-with-People-with-Disabilities.pdf

National Disability Authority (NDA). "Guidelines for Including People with Disabilities in Research." Dublin: NDA. 2002. Retrieved 16 January 2019 from http://nda.ie/nda-files/Guidelines-for-Including-People-with-Disabilities-in-Research.pdf

National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, "Why Students Leave: Findings from Qualitative Research into Student Non-Completion in Higher Education in Ireland" (2015). Retrieved February 8, 2019 from www.teachingandlearning.ie/publication/why-students-leave-findings-from-qualitative-research-into-student-non-completion-in-higher-education-in-ireland

NCSE (National Council for Special Education). "National Council for Special Education Annual Report 2017". Trim: NCSE. (2017) Retrieved 4 February 2019 from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/NCSE-Annual-Report-2017-English.pdf

NCSE (National Council for Special Education). "Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools", *NCSE Policy Advice Paper No. 4*." Trim: NCSE (2013). Retrieved 1 January 2019 from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Supporting_14_05_13_web.pdf

Nic Fhlannchadha, Siobhán. "DARE HEAR Facts and Figures Report 2017". Report prepared by DARE HEAR Shared Services Unit, Irish Universities Association, on behalf of the participating HEIs. (2017). Retrieved 16 January 2019 from www.iua.ie/publication/view/dare-hear-facts-figures-summary-report-201718/

O’Connell, Philip J., David Clancy, and Selina McCoy. "Who went to college in 2004? A national survey of new entrants to higher education". Dublin: HEA/ ESRI. (2006). Retrieved 2 January 2019 from http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/Who-Went-to-College-in-2004-A-National-Survey-of-New-Entrants-to-Higher-Education.pdf

O’Connor, Carla, and Sonia de Luca Fernandez. "Race, class, and disproportionality: Reevaluating the relationship between poverty and special education placement." *Educational Researcher 35*, no. 6 (2006): 6-11.

O’Donnell, Margaret. "Transfer from special to mainstream: The voice of the pupil." in Shevlin, Michael, and Richard Rose (eds.). *Encouraging Voices– Respecting the Insights of Young People who have been Marginalized*. Dublin: National Disability Authority (2003): 228-253. Retrieved 2 January 2019 from http://nda.ie/nda-files/Encouraging-Voices.pdf

O’Keefe, Pat. "The special school in an age of inclusion." *REACH Journal of Special Needs Education in Ireland* 18, no. 1 (2004): 3-15.

OECD. "Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators", Paris: OECD Publishing. (2013). Retrieved 2 January 2019 from https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2013_eag-2013-en

OECD. "Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators", Paris: OECD Publishing. (2015). Retrieved 2 January 2019 from https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2015_eag-2015-en

Oliver, Michael. "If I had a hammer: The social model in action. Disabling barriers–Enabling environments". in Swain, John, Sally French, Colin Barnes, and Carol Thomas, (eds.). *Disabling barriers-enabling environments*. 2nd edition. London: Sage, (2004): 7-12

Oliver, Michael. *Politics of Disablement*. London: Macmillan International Higher Education, 1990.

Oliver, Michael. *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice.* London: MacMillan Education UK. 1996.

Phillips, Siobhan, and Ann Clarke. "Pathways for disabled students to tertiary education and employment: case studies from Ireland." Dublin: NOEAHE and HEA (2010). Retrieved 23 December 2018 from www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/47469308.pdf

Phoenix, Ann. "Interrogating intersectionality: Productive ways of theorising multiple positioning." in Christiansen, Connie Carøe, Stine Thidemann Faber, and Marlene Spanger. *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* 2-3: *Intersektionalitet* (2006): 21-30.

Prunty, Anita, Maeve Dupont, and Rory McDaid. "Voices of students with special educational needs (SEN): views on schooling." *Support for Learning* 27, no. 1 (2012): 29-36.

Quinn, Jocey, Liz Thomas, Kim Slack, Lorraine Casey, Wayne Thexton, and John Noble. *From Life Crisis to Lifelong Learning: Rethinking Working-class "Drop Out" from Higher Education*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. 2005.

Quinn, Jocey. "Drop-out and completion in Higher Education in Europe among students from under-represented groups." An independent report authored for the European Commission. European Union (2013). Retrieved 16 January 2019 from http://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2013-Drop-out-and-Completion-in-Higher-Education-in-Europe-among-students-from-under-represented-groups.pdf

Reay, Diane, Gill Crozier, and John Clayton. "'Fitting in' or 'standing out': Working-class students in UK higher education." British educational research journal 36, no. 1 (2010): 107-124. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/01411920902878925

Reay, Diane, Gill Crozier, and John Clayton. "'Strangers in Paradise'? Working-class students in elite universities." *Sociology* 43, no. 6 (2009): 1103-1121.

Reay, Diane, Jacqueline Davies, Miriam David, and Stephen J. Ball. "Choices of degree or degrees of choice? Class, 'race' and the higher education choice process." Sociology 35, no. 4 (2001): 855-874. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/48143A935039410F61EAA037DD81CF54/S0038038501008550a.pdf

Reay, Diane. "'We never get a fair chance': Working-Class Experiences of Education in the Twenty-First Century." In Class inequality in austerity Britain, pp. 33-50. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137016386_3

Reay, Diane. "A risky business? Mature working-class women students and access to higher education correspondence: *Gender and Education* 15, no. 3 (2003): 301-317. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/09540250303860

Reay, Diane. "Beyond consciousness? The psychic landscape of social class." Sociology 39, no. 5 (2005): 911-928. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1177/0038038505058372

Reay, Diane. "Researching class in higher education." British Educational Research Association online resource (2012). Retrieved 14 May 2019 from www.bera.ac.uk/publication/researching-class-in-higher-education

Reay, Diane. "Rethinking social class: Qualitative perspectives on class and gender." *Sociology* 32, no. 2 (1998b): 259-275.

Reay, Diane. *Class work: Mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling*. London: Routledge Falmer. 1998a.

Reid, D. Kim, and Michelle G. Knight. "Disability justifies exclusion of minority students: A critical history grounded in disability studies." *Educational Researcher* 35, no. 6 (2006): 18-23.

Report of the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education. "Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education - 'The Cassells Report'". Department of Education and Skills. (2016). Retrieved 16 January 2019 from www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Investing-in-National-Ambition-A-Strategy-for-Funding-Higher-Education.pdf

Riddell, Sheila, Joan Stead, Elisabet Weedon, and Kevin Wright. "Additional Support Needs Reforms and Social Justice in Scotland." *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 20, no. 3 (2010): 179-199.

Riddell, Sheila, Teresa Tinklin, and Alastair Wilson. "New Labour, social justice and disabled students in higher education." *British Educational Research Journal* 31, no. 5 (2005): 623-643.

Riddell, Sheila. "Chipping away at the mountain: Disabled students' experience of higher education." *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 8, no. 2 (1998): 203-222.

Riddell, Sheila. "Social Justice, Equality and Inclusion in Scottish Education." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 30, no. 3 (2009): 283-296.

Rix, Jonathan, Kieron Sheehy, Felicity Fletcher-Campbell, Martin Crisp, and Amanda Harper. "Continuum of education provision for children with special educational needs: Review of international policies and practices." NCSE Research Report No 13 (2013). Open University: A Report commissioned by the National Council for Special Education. Retrieved 8 February 2019 from http://oro.open.ac.uk/35012/1/Continuum%20review%20-%20Part%201%20-%20NCSE%202013.pdf

Rose, Richard, and Áine O'Neill. "Classroom support for inclusion in England and Ireland: An evaluation of contrasting models." *Research in Comparative and International Education* 4, no. 3 (2009): 250-261.

Rose, Richard, and Michael Shevlin. "Encouraging voices: listening to young people who have been marginalised." *Support for Learning* 19, no. 4 (2004): 155-161.

Rose, Richard, Michael Shevlin, Eileen Winter, and Paul O’Raw. "Special and inclusive education in the Republic of Ireland: reviewing the literature from 2000 to 2009." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 25, no. 4 (2010): 359-373.

Rose, Richard, Michael Shevlin, Eileen Winter, and Paul O'Raw. "Project IRIS - Inclusive Research in Irish Schools. A Longitudinal Study of the Experiences of and Outcomes for Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Irish Schools." (2015). Retrieved 23 December 2018 from https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/NCSE-IRIS-Report-No20.pdf

Rose, Richard, Michael Shevlin, Eileen Winter, and Paul O'Raw. "Project IRIS – Inclusive Research in Irish Schools: A longitudinal study of the experiences of and outcomes for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in Irish Schools". (2016). Retrieved 16 January 2019 from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/02383-NCSE-Research-Report-19-Project-IRIS.pdf

Rouhani, Setareh. "Intersectionality-informed quantitative research: A primer." *American Journal of Public Health* 103, no. 6. (2014): 1082-1089.

Savage, Michael. *Class Analysis and Social Transformation*. Open University Press, 2000.

Savage, Mike, Elizabeth Silva, and Alan Warde. "Dis-identification and Class Identity." in Silva, Elizabeth, and Alan Warde, eds. *Cultural Analysis and Bourdieu’s Legacy: Settling Accounts and Developing Alternatives*. Routledge (2010): 60-74.

Savage, Mike, Fiona Devine, Niall Cunningham, Sam Friedman, Daniel Laurison, Andrew Miles, Helene Snee, and Mark Taylor. "On social class, anno 2014." Sociology 49, no. 6 (2015): 1011-1030. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1177/0038038514536635

Scott, Nicholas A., and Janet Siltanen. "Intersectionality and quantitative methods: assessing regression from a feminist perspective." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 20, no. 4 (2017): 373-385.

Scott, Nicholas A., and Janet Siltanen. *Gender and Intersectionality– a quantitative toolkit for analyzing complex inequalities*. Employment and Social Development Canada. 2012.

Shakespeare, Tom, and Nicholas Watson. "The Social Model of Disability: an outdated ideology?" *Research in Social Science and Disability*. 2 (2002): 9-28.

Shavit, Yossi, and Hans-Peter Blossfeld. *Persistent Inequality: Changing Educational Attainment in Thirteen Countries. Social Inequality Series*. Boulder: Westview Press. 1993.

Shevlin, Michael, Mairin Kenny, and Andrew Loxley. "A time of transition: Exploring special educational provision in the Republic of Ireland." *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 8, no. 3 (2008): 141-152.

Shevlin, Michael, Mairin Kenny, and Eileen McNeela. "Curriculum access for pupils with disabilities: An Irish experience." *Disability & Society* 17, no. 2 (2002): 159-169.

Shevlin, Michael, Mairin Kenny, and Eileen McNeela. "Participation in higher education for students with disabilities: an Irish perspective." *Disability & Society* 19, no. 1 (2004a): 15-30.

Shevlin, Michael, Mairin Kenny, and Eileen Me Neela. "Access routes to higher education for young people with disabilities: A question of chance?" *Irish Educational Studies* 23, no. 2 (2004): 37-53.

Shevlin, Michael. "Moving Towards Schools for All: Examining the Concept of Educational Inclusion for Disabled Children and Young People" in De Beco, Gauthier, Janet E. Lord, and Shivaun Quinlivan, eds. The Right to Inclusive Education in International Human Rights Law. Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp97-121.

Silverman, David. *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. London: SAGE Publications Limited. 2000.

Skeggs, Beverley. *Class, Self, Culture*. London: Routledge. 2004.

Skeggs, Beverley. *Formations of class & gender: Becoming respectable. Vol. 51*. London: Sage Publications. 1997.

Skilbeck, Malcolm, and H. Connell. "Access and equity in higher education: An international perspective on issues and strategies." A Report Prepared for the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Dublin: HEA (2000).

Smyth, Emer, and Selina McCoy. Investing in education: Combating educational disadvantage. *Research Series No. 6*. Dublin: ESRI/ Barnardos. 2009.

Smyth, Emer, Joanne Banks, and Emma Calvert. "From Leaving Certificate to leaving school: A longitudinal study of sixth year students." Economic and Social Research Institute Research Series. Dublin: The Liffey Press in association with ESRI, NCCA and DES. (2011). Retrieved 2 January 2019 from www.esri.ie/pubs/BKMNEXT195.pdf

Smyth, Emer, Selina McCoy, and Gillian Kingston. "Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS." Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute (2015). Retrieved 2 January 2019 from www.esri.ie/pubs/RS39.pdf

Söder, Mårten. "Tensions, perspectives and themes in disability studies." *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 11, no. 2 (2009): 67-81.

Sofroniou, Nick, Peter Archer, and Susan Weir. "An analysis of the association between socioeconomic context, gender, and achievement." *The Irish Journal of Education 35* (2004): 58-72.

Spierings, Niels. "The inclusion of quantitative techniques and diversity in the mainstream of feminist research." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19, no. 3 (2012): 331-347.

Squires, Garry, Afroditi Kalambouka, and Joanna Bragg. "A Study of the Experiences of Post-Primary Students with Special Educational Needs." *NCSE Research Report No. 23*. Trim: National Council for Special Education. (2016). Retrieved 23 December 2018 from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/NCSE-A-Study-of-the-Experiences-of-Post-Primary-Students-with-Special-Ed-Needs.pdf

Symington, Alison. "Intersectionality: a tool for gender and economic justice." *Women's Rights and Economic Change* 9, (2004): 1-8

Tashakkori, Abbas, and Charles Teddlie (eds.). *Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 2003.

Tashakkori, Abbas, and Charles Teddlie (eds.). Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research. 2nd Edition: Los Angeles: Sage Publications Inc. 2010.

Thomas, Carol. *Female forms: Experiencing and understanding disability*. Buckingham: Open University Press. 1999.

Thomas, Liz, and Jocey Quinn. First generation entry into higher education. McGraw-Hill Education (UK), 2006. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from eprints.glos.ac.uk/3855/

Thomas, Liz. "Do pre-entry interventions such as ‘Aimhigher’ impact on student retention and success? A review of the literature." Higher Education Quarterly 65, no. 3 (2011): 230-250. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2010.00481.x

Thomas, Liz. "Student retention in higher education: the role of institutional habitus." Journal of education policy 17, no. 4 (2002): 423-442. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/02680930210140257

Tomlinson, Barbara. "To tell the truth and not get trapped: Desire, distance, and intersectionality at the scene of argument." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (2013): 993-1017.

Tomlinson, Sally. "The irresistible rise of the SEN industry." *Oxford Review of Education* 38, no. 3 (2012): 267-286.

Travers, Joseph. "Perceptions of learning-support teachers and resource teachers of each other's role in Irish primary schools." *Irish Educational Studies* 25, no. 2 (2006): 155-169.

Tyler, Imogen. "“Chav mum chav scum” Class disgust in contemporary Britain." Feminist Media Studies 8, no. 1 (2008): 17-34. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1080/14680770701824779

UCC/ CIT. "Students with Disabilities Tracking Report - 2005 Intake. An analysis of their progression, retention and success through Higher Education Institutions". Cork: Pathways to Education (2010). Retrieved 16 January 2019 from www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/disabilitysupportservice/publications/StudentswithDisabilityRetentionProgression.pdf

United Nations (UN) General Assembly. *Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD).* New York: United Nations. (2006). Retrieved 23 December 2018 from www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convention_accessible_pdf.pdf

Universities Act 1997. *Acts of the Oireachtas*. Government of Ireland. Dublin: Stationery Office. Retrieved 30 June 2016 from irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1997/act/24/enacted/en/html

Van Stolk, Christian, Jan Tiessen, Jack Clift, and Ruth Levitt. "Student retention in higher education courses. International Comparison." Rand Europe Technical Report prepared for the National Audit Office. (2007). Cambridge: Rand Corporation. Retrieved 17 January 2019 from www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2007/07/0607616_international.pdf

Verloo, Mieke. "Multiple inequalities, intersectionality and the European Union." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13, no. 3 (2006): 211-228.

Vickerman, Philip, and Milly Blundell. "Hearing the voices of disabled students in higher education." *Disability & Society* 25, no. 1 (2010): 21-32.

Walby, Sylvia. "Complexity theory, systems theory, and multiple intersecting social inequalities." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 37, no. 4 (2007): 449-470.

Walpole, MaryBeth. "Socioeconomic status and college: How SES affects college experiences and outcomes." The review of higher education 27, no. 1 (2003): 45-73. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2003.0044

Watson, Dorothy, and Brian Nolan. "A social portrait of people with disabilities in Ireland". Dublin: ESRI/ Department of Social Protection (2011). Retrieved 23 December 2018 from www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/SocialPortraitPeopleWithDisabilities.pdf

Watson, Dorothy, Gillian Kingston, and Frances McGinnity. "Disability in the Irish labour market: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Module 2010". Dublin: ESRI/ The Equality Authority (2013). Retrieved 23 December 2018 from www.esri.ie/pubs/BKMNEXT231.pdf

Watson, Dorothy, Joanne Banks, and Seán Lyons. "Educational and Employment Experiences of People with a Disability in Ireland: An Analysis of the National Disability Survey." Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Research Series, (2015). Retrieved 2 January 2019 from www.esri.ie/pubs/RS41.pdf

Watson, Dorothy, Bertrand Maitre, Christopher T. Whelan, and Helen Russell. "Social Risk and Social Class Patterns in Poverty and Quality of Life in Ireland, 2004-2013". Department of Social Protection. 2016.

Weber, Lynn. "A conceptual framework for understanding race, class, gender, and sexuality." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1998): 13-32.

Weber, Lynn. *Understanding race, class, gender, and sexuality. A Conceptual Framework.* Boston: McGraw-Hill. 2001.

Weber, Lynn. *Understanding race, class, gender; and sexuality: An intersectional framework.* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford. 2009.

Weber, Max. *Economy and society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Vol. 1. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1978.

WHO (World Health Organization)/ World Bank. *World Report on Disability*. Geneva: WHO Press. (2011). Retrieved 23 December 2018 from www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report.pdf

Williams, James, Sheila Greene, Erika Doyle, Elaine Harris, Richard Layte, Selina McCoy, Cathal McCrory, Aisling Murray, Elizabeth Nixon, Tom O'Dowd, Mona O'Moore, Amanda Quail, Emer Smyth, Lorraine Swords, and Maeve Thornton. "Growing Up in Ireland. The Lives of 9-Year-Olds. Report 1." Dublin, Ireland: Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (2009). Retrieved 16 January 2019 from www.esri.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2015-07/BKMNEXT154.pdf

Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods (Applied Social Research Methods) 4th edition*. London and Singapore: Sage. 2009.

Yorke, Mantz, and Bernard Longden. "The First Year Experience of Higher Education in the UK". York: Higher Education Academy. 2008

Young, Michael F.D. (ed.). *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*. London: Collier-Macmillan. 1971.

Yuval-Davis, Nira. "Intersectionality and feminist politics." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13, no. 3 (2006): 193-209.

Appendix A: Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form

INFORMATION SHEET

I am conducting this research as part of my M. Litt in Education with the Department of Education, NUI Maynooth. This research will contribute to my thesis ‘**The educational experience and progression to third level of students with disabilities/specific learning difficulties with an emphasis on students who attended DEIS** (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) **post-primary schools.’**

I would like to invite you to participate in this research. Before deciding whether you would like to participate in this study, I’d like to explain why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take some time to read through this information and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

This study is looking at students with disabilities who applied to the DARE (Disability Access Route to Education)/ HEAR (Higher Education Access Route). The broad goal of this research study is to explore the school experiences and opportunities to progress to third level of students with disabilities nationally. The study seeks to identify a sample of applicants who progressed to third level who were eligible for DARE and to review their school experiences and the factors that contributed to or affected positively or negatively those school experiences. Students will be invited to participate who attended schools designated as disadvantaged under the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme, schools not designated as disadvantaged and private schools.

The study is being undertaken to contribute to a greater understanding of the factors impacting on the educational experiences of young people with disabilities so as to inform national policies and practices that would promote and encourage better outcomes for students with disabilities.

I want to understand this topic from the perspective of the student. I will be using interviews to gain an insight into this topic. This interview will take appropriately 30/40 minutes to complete and will involve a discussion around your own experience at school/college.

If you agree to participate, I will contact you to set up a suitable time to complete the research at a mutually convenient time and place. I will ask you to sign a consent form indicating your approval to participate.

You will receive a copy of your interview transcript and a copy of the completed research prior to submission to ensure accuracy. You can also meet with me to review the completed study.

All information that is collected about you during this research will be kept confidential. All information will be kept under lock and key or in password protected data files, and will be accessed only by the researcher and NUIM University staff involved in the thesis assessment. It will not be distributed to any other individual without your permission.

I would appreciate it if you are willing to take part in this research and share your experiences with me. However, you are under no obligation to take part in this research. If you do decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time (and withdraw any information you've provided prior to this) without giving a reason.

The results of the research will be written up as an M. Litt in Education thesis which will be stored in the library in the Department of Education, NUI Maynooth. The results of the research will also be presented to the DARE/HEAR Strategic Development Group who are responsible nationally for the development of these schemes. In as far as possible, all information used in this thesis will be anonymised to remove any details that might identify you. I will seek your permission to use any data that I feel might identify you.

Following the completion of the study I will also explore other possibilities of presenting a summary of the findings to other practitioners to share the results and learning from this research.

If you have any general questions about this project, feel free to contact me Rosario Ryan by phone at (01) 7086341, by email at rosario.ryan@nuim.ie, or in writing to Rosario Ryan, MAP Programme, MAP Lodge, North Campus, NUI Maynooth.

If you have any comments or concerns about the ethics procedures employed in this study, you can contact my supervisors:

- Dr Bernie Grummell, Lecturer and Research Manager, Depts of Education and Adult and Community Education, Room 2.2.6, Education Dept., Education House, NUI Maynooth, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland, Tel: 01 708 3761, Email: Bernie.Grummell@nuim.ie.
- Dr Delma Byrne, Lecturer, Sociology Department, Room 1.4 Auxilia, NUI Maynooth, Co Kildare, Ireland, Tel: 01 708 3723, Email: Delma.Byrne@nuim.ie.

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

National University of Ireland Maynooth requires that all persons who participate in identified research studies give their written consent to do so. Please read the following and sign it if you agree with what it says.

I freely and voluntarily consent to be a participant in the research project on the topic of '*The educational experience and progression to third level of students with disabilities/specific learning difficulties with an emphasis on students who attended DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) post-primary schools'* to be conducted by Rosario Ryan, who is a postgraduate student with the Education Department, NUI Maynooth. The broad goal of this research study is to explore the school experiences and opportunities to progress to third level of students with disabilities nationally. The study will particularly focus on the experiences of students with disabilities attending schools designated as disadvantaged under the DEIS programme.

Specifically, I have been asked to conduct an interview with the researcher which should take no longer than 30/40 minutes to complete.

I have been told that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I also understand that if at any time during the interview I feel unable or unwilling to continue, I am free to withdraw/leave. That is, my participation in this study is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw from it at any time without negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. My name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in any report subsequently produced by the researcher.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the interview procedure, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I have been told that I will receive a copy of my interview transcript and a copy of the completed research prior to submission to ensure accuracy. I know that I can also meet with the researcher to review the completed study.

I have been informed that if I have any general questions about this project, I should feel free to contact Rosario Ryan by phone at (01) 7086341, by email at rosario.ryan@nuim.ie, or in writing to Rosario Ryan, MAP Programme, MAP Lodge, North Campus, NUI Maynooth.

If I have any comments or concerns about the ethics procedures employed in this study, I can contact the following:

- Dr Bernie Grummell, Lecturer and Research Manager, Depts of Education and Adult and Community Education, Room 2.2.6, Education Dept., Education House, NUI Maynooth, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland, Tel: 01 708 3761, Email: Bernie.Grummell@nuim.ie.
- Dr Delma Byrne, Lecturer, Sociology Department, Room 1.4 Auxilia, NUI Maynooth, Co Kildare, Ireland, Tel: 01 708 3723, Email: Delma.Byrne@nuim.ie.

I have read and understand the above and consent to participate in this study. My signature is not a waiver of any legal rights. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to keep a copy of the informed consent form for my records.

Please read and tick the box if you agree to these points:

☐ **1.** I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this research project and have had an opportunity to ask questions.

☐ **2.** I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time (and withdraw my data).

☐ **3.** I understand that all information will be kept confidential. All information will be kept under lock and key or in password data files and will be accessed only by the researcher and NUIM University staff involved in thesis assessment. It will not be distributed to any other individual without my permission.

☐ **4.** I agree to take part in the above research project.

☐ **5.** I agree to allow the use of my anonymised data in the M.Litt thesis.

______________________________ ______________________

Name of Participant (Block capitals please) Date

______________________________ ______________________

Participant’s Signature Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the respondent has consented to participate. Furthermore, I will retain one copy of the informed consent form for my records.

______________________________ ______________________

Principal Investigator Signature Date

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Appendix B: Revised Longitudinal Study Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form

REVISED INFORMATION SHEET

I am conducting this research as part of my PhD in Education with the Department of Education, NUI Maynooth. This research will contribute to my thesis '**The educational experience and progression to third level of students with disabilities/specific learning difficulties with an emphasis on students who attended DEIS** (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) **post-primary schools.'**

I would like to invite you to participate in a second interview as part of this research. Before deciding whether you would like to continue to participate in this study, I'd like to explain why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take some time to read through this information and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

This study is looking at students with disabilities who applied to the DARE (Disability Access Route to Education)/ HEAR (Higher Education Access Route). The broad goal of this research study is to explore the school experiences and opportunities to progress to third level of students with disabilities nationally. The study seeks to identify a sample of applicants who progressed to third level who were eligible for DARE and to review their school experiences and the factors that contributed to or affected positively or negatively those school experiences. Students will be invited to participate who attended schools designated as disadvantaged under the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme, schools not designated as disadvantaged and private schools.

The study is being undertaken to contribute to a greater understanding of the factors impacting on the educational experiences of young people with disabilities so as to inform national policies and practices that would promote and encourage better outcomes for students with disabilities.

I want to understand this topic from the perspective of the student. I will be using a second interview to gain a further insight into this topic. The second interview will take appropriately 30 minutes to complete and will involve some discussion around issues raised at your previous interview as well as a discussion around your most recent experience at school/college/employment.

If you agree to participate, I will contact you to set up a suitable time to complete the second interview at a mutually convenient time and place. I will ask you to sign a new consent form indicating your approval to participate.

You will receive a copy of your interview transcript from the second interview and a copy of the completed research prior to submission to ensure accuracy. You can also meet with me to review the completed study.

All information that is collected about you during this research will be kept confidential. All information will be kept under lock and key or in password protected data files, and will be accessed only by the researcher and NUIM University staff involved in the thesis assessment. It will not be distributed to any other individual without your permission.

I would appreciate it if you are willing to take part in this research and share your experiences with me. However, you are under no obligation to continue to take part in this research. If you do decide to continue to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time (and withdraw any information you've provided prior to this) without giving a reason.

The results of the research will be written up as a PhD in Education thesis which will be stored in the library in the Department of Education, NUI Maynooth. The results of the research will also be presented to the DARE/HEAR Strategic Development Group who are responsible nationally for the development of these schemes. In as far as possible, all information used in this thesis will be anonymised to remove any details that might identify you. I will seek your permission to use any data that I feel might identify you.

Following the completion of the study I will also explore other possibilities of presenting a summary of the findings to other practitioners to share the results and learning from this research.

If you have any general questions about this project, feel free to contact me Rosario Ryan by phone at (01) 7084519, by email at rosario.ryan@nuim.ie, or in writing to Rosario Ryan, MAP Programme, MAP Lodge, North Campus, NUI Maynooth.

If you have any comments or concerns about the ethics procedures employed in this study, you can contact my supervisors:

- Dr Bernie Grummell, Lecturer and Research Manager, Depts of Education and Adult and Community Education, Room 2.2.6, Education Dept., Education House, NUI Maynooth, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland, Tel: 01 708 3761, Email: Bernie.Grummell@nuim.ie.
- Dr Delma Byrne, Lecturer, Sociology Department, Room 1.4 Auxilia, NUI Maynooth, Co Kildare, Ireland, Tel: 01 708 3723, Email: Delma.Byrne@nuim.ie.

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

REVISED INFORMED CONSENT FORM

National University of Ireland Maynooth requires that all persons who participate in identified research studies give their written consent to do so. Please read the following and sign it if you agree with what it says.

I freely and voluntarily consent to continue to be a participant in the research project on the topic of '*The educational experience and progression to third level of students with disabilities/specific learning difficulties with an emphasis on students who attended DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) post-primary schools'* to be conducted by Rosario Ryan, who is a postgraduate student with the Education Department, NUI Maynooth. The broad goal of this research study is to explore the school experiences and opportunities to progress to third level of students with disabilities nationally. The study will particularly focus on the experiences of students with disabilities attending schools designated as disadvantaged under the DEIS programme.

Specifically, I have been asked to participate in a second interview with the researcher which should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. The second interview is scheduled to take place in Spring 2014.

I have been told that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I also understand that if at any time during the interview I feel unable or unwilling to continue, I am free to withdraw/leave. That is, my participation in this study is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw from it at any time without negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. My name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in any report subsequently produced by the researcher.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the interview procedure, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I have been told that I will receive a copy of my interview transcript and a copy of the completed research prior to submission to ensure accuracy. I know that I can also meet with the researcher to review the completed study.

I have been informed that if I have any general questions about this project, I should feel free to contact Rosario Ryan by phone at (01) 7084519, by email at rosario.ryan@nuim.ie, or in writing to Rosario Ryan, MAP Programme, MAP Lodge, North Campus, NUI Maynooth.

If I have any comments or concerns about the ethics procedures employed in this study, I can contact the following:

- Dr Bernie Grummell, Lecturer and Research Manager, Depts of Education and Adult and Community Education, Room 2.2.6, Education Dept., Education House, NUI Maynooth, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland, Tel: 01 708 3761, Email: Bernie.Grummell@nuim.ie.

- Dr Delma Byrne, Lecturer, Sociology Department, Room 1.4 Auxilia, NUI Maynooth, Co Kildare, Ireland, Tel: 01 708 3723, Email: Delma.Byrne@nuim.ie.

I have read and understand the above and consent to participate in this study. My signature is not a waiver of any legal rights. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to keep a copy of the informed consent form for my records.

Please read and tick the box if you agree to these points:

☐ **1.** I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this research project and have had an opportunity to ask questions.

☐ **2.** I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time (and withdraw my data).

☐ **3.** I understand that all information will be kept confidential. All information will be kept under lock and key or in password data files and will be accessed only by the researcher and NUIM University staff involved in thesis assessment. It will not be distributed to any other individual without my permission.

☐ **4.** I agree to take part in the above research project.

☐ **5.** I agree to allow the use of my anonymised data in the PhD thesis

______________________________	____________________
Name of Participant (Block capitals please)	Date
______________________________	____________________
Participant's Signature	Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the respondent has consented to participate. Furthermore, I will retain one copy of the informed consent form for my records.

______________________________	____________________
Principal Investigator Signature	Date

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Appendix C: Measures used in the Study to Suggest Social Class

Measure of Social Class 1: School Type

The type of school attended has been identified in research in Ireland as having a strong impact on the long-term educational trajectory of second level students (McCoy and Byrne 2011) and on progression to HE with entry varying strongly by social class (Byrne 2009, Lynch and O'Riordan 1998). The author for this study individually identified the schools that DARE applicants attended. Schools are coded as public schools, DEIS schools, private (fee-paying) schools, revision/grind (fee-paying) schools and special schools.

Public Schools - Downloaded from Department of Education and Skills 2013

www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Data-on-Individual-Schools/

There is no public schools sector in Ireland. I use the term public schools in the study to identify second level schools *other* than those identified as DEIS, private schools (fee-paying), revision/grind schools (fee-paying); and special schools (attended by students with disabilities only). These public schools (as a school type) are the largest sector in the study and include approximately 480 secondary schools, vocational, comprehensive, and community schools.

DEIS Schools - Downloaded from Department of Education and Skills 2013

www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Data-on-Individual-Schools/

One of the largest national initiatives developed to address educational inequality is the DEIS School Support Programme, a national initiative of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), introduced in 2005, aimed at lessening educational disadvantage and bringing about social inclusion in primary and second level education. There is a significant national investment in the programme which currently costs in the region of 112 million euros per year (DEIS Plan 2017, DES).

DEIS schools attract a very diverse student body with a higher proportion of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students with disabilities and Irish Travellers, than non-DEIS schools (Smyth and McCoy 2009). Differences in academic achievement and outcomes in DEIS and non-DEIS schools still persist and suggest an increasing ghettoisation of these schools (McCoy et al. 2012, Smyth and McCoy 2009).

At the time of the study, there were 195 schools identified by the Department of Education as Skills (DES) as disadvantaged under the DEIS programme. There were a small number of schools (identified by DES in March 2013) that were either closed or subsequently amalgamated who are no longer on the DES DEIS list. These are included also as the schools had DEIS status when the applicants applied to the DARE scheme.

Private Schools - Downloaded from Department of Education and Skills 2013

www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Data-on-Individual-Schools/

There is a strong fee-paying private post-primary school sector in Ireland which has established a reputation for maximising academic achievement and the opportunities for students attending such schools to access HE. College progression rates from schools in the fee-paying sector have been at a peak for a number of years with about half of the fee-paying private secondary schools showing 100 per cent of pupils progressing to HE and "*the reminder, overwhelmingly, as close as makes no difference*" (Irish Independent, 4th December 2018). It has been suggested that students in fee-paying schools enjoy advantages such as a lower pupil-teacher ratio and better facilities giving them a competitive edge when it comes to achieving the high points required for college courses.

There were a total of 56 fee-paying Post-Primary Schools identified. 36 of these schools are located in the Dublin area. Cork has five schools that are private schools. Limerick, Louth and Kildare have two private schools each. Cavan, Kilkenny, Meath, Monaghan, Sligo, Tipperary, Waterford, Westmeath, and Wicklow have one private school each.

Revision/Grind Schools

Revision/Grind schools are fee-paying and have been established in the private sector. These schools have established a reputation for providing intensive academic tuition and instruction to maximise academic achievement. At the time of the study, there were 11 schools identified for the purposes of this study as revision/grind fee-paying schools. Four of these schools were located in County Cork, two in County Dublin, and one each in Counties Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Limerick and Wexford.

Special Schools

In Ireland, students with a disability/special educational need (SEN) in primary and post-primary education have a range of educational options. These range from full time enrolment in mainstream schools, to full time enrolment in special schools attended by students with SEN only, special classes attached to mainstream schools where students with SEN spend most or all of the school day or withdrawal from mainstream classes for support (NCSE 2013). Ireland has 119 special schools attended by students with SEN only (NCSE 2013). There are over 7,000 students enrolled in these schools (NCSE 2017).

Measure of Social Class 2: Home Address

The HEAR scheme uses '*Area Profile'* as an indicator for eligibility based on research evidence that living in a disadvantaged area can have a negative influence on an individual's future life chances and that there is a direct link between living in a disadvantaged area and educational attainment and progression to higher education. The 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index (SA) is a deprivation index developed by Trutz Haase and Jonathan Pratschke and funded by Pobal as a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area. The HP Index is used by Government Departments and Agencies to more effectively allocate resources and has been used to support the identification of DEIS schools, LEADER and RAPID Programmes, and Local and Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces. HEAR used the Trutz Haase Deprivation Index (http://trutzhaase.eu/wp/wp-content/uploads/HP-Index-2011-SA-An-Introduction-02.pdf) from 2009/10 to 2011/12 which analysed census data from 2006 by looking at electoral divisions which were at that time the smallest spatial units available. This index identifies three dimensions of affluence/disadvantage, Demographic Profile, Social Class Composition and Labour Market Situation. There are ten variables used under the three dimensions that are outlined in Figure 1 below (Haase and Pratschke 2012, 2) http://trutzhaase.eu/deprivation-index/the-2011-pobal-hp-deprivationindex-for-small-areas):

What data from the Census is used in the Pobal HP Index?

The following ten variables were calculated from the Annual Census 2011.

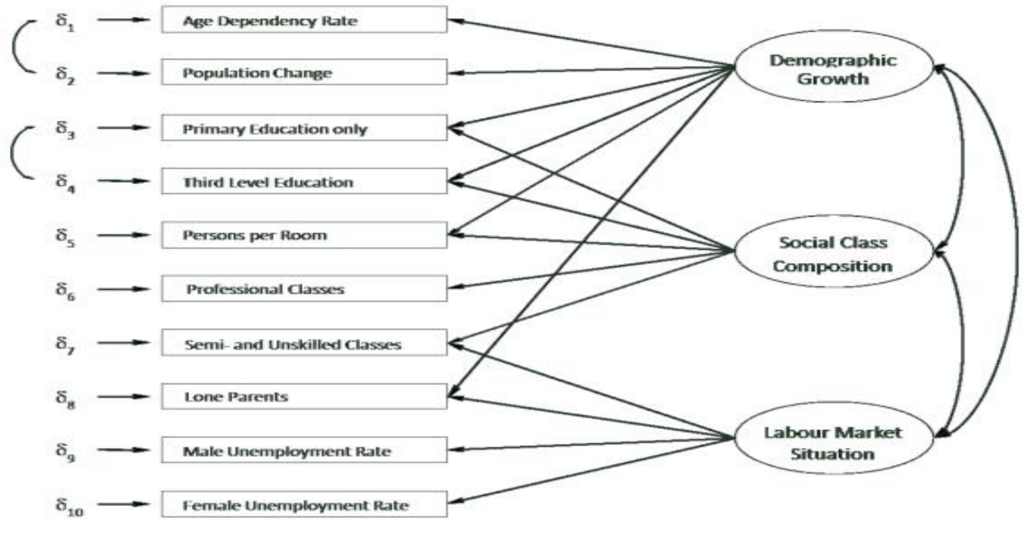


Fig 3. – The Basic Model of the Pobal HP Deprivation Index

The three dimensions of affluence/disadvantage, Demographic Profile, Social Class Composition and Labour Market Situation are outlined below.

Demographic Profile

The 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index for Small Areas (SA) identifies that Demographic Profile is primarily a measure of rural affluence/deprivation. Whilst long-term adverse labour market conditions tend to manifest themselves in urban areas in the form of unemployment blackspots, in rural areas, by contrast, the result is typically agricultural underemployment and/or emigration (Haase and Pratschke 2012, 1). The Demographic Profile is measured by five indicators; the percentage increase in population over the previous five years, the percentage of population aged under 15 or over 64 years of age, the percentage of population with a primary school education only, the percentage of population with a third level education, the percentage of households with children aged under 15 years and headed by a single parent and the mean number of persons per room.

Social Class Composition

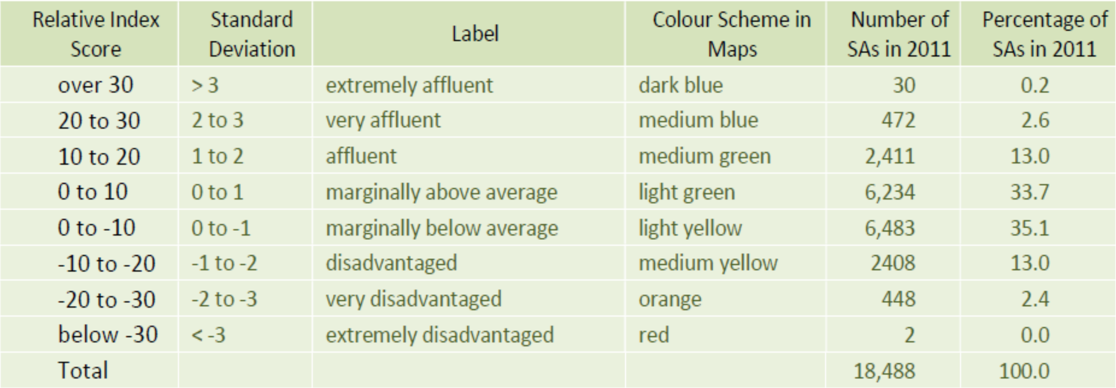
The 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index for Small Areas (SA) identifies that this is of equal relevance to both urban and rural areas and has a considerable impact in many areas of life, including educational achievements, health, housing, crime and economic status. Social class is suggested in this index to be relatively stable over time and constitutes a key factor in the inter-generational transmission of economic, cultural and social assets. Areas with a weak social class profile tend to have higher unemployment rates, are more vulnerable to the effects of economic restructuring and recession and are more likely to experience low pay, poor working conditions as well as poor housing and social environments (Haase and Pratschke 2012, 2). Social Class Composition is measured by five indicators; as the percentage of population with a primary school education only, the percentage of population with a third level education, the percentage of households headed by professionals or managerial and technical employees, including farmers with 100 acres or more, the percentage of households headed by semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers, including farmers with less than 30 acres and the mean number of persons per room.

Labour Market Situation

The 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index for Small Areas (SA) identifies that this is predominantly, but not exclusively, an urban measure. Unemployment and long- term unemployment remain the principal causes of disadvantage at national level and are responsible for the most concentrated forms of multiple disadvantage found in urban areas. In addition to the economic hardship that results from the lack of paid employment, young people living in areas with particularly high unemployment rates frequently lack positive role models. A further expression of social and economic hardship in urban unemployment blackspots is the large proportion of young families headed by a single parent (Haase and Pratschke 2012, 1). Labour Market Situation is measured by four indicators including the percentage of households headed by semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers, including farmers with less than 30 acres, the percentage of households with children aged under 15 years and headed by a single parent, the male unemployment rate and the female unemployment rate.

‘Small areas’ are defined by the Central Statistics Office, and are the smallest available boundary used for planning and targeting in the state. They are an average of 100 households, and are therefore a relatively consistent boundary level. The index looks at each small area and gives a relative index score to each area as Extremely Affluent, Very Affluent, Affluent, Marginally Above Average, Marginally Below Average, Disadvantaged, Very Disadvantaged or Extremely Disadvantaged using the table taken from the Deprivation Index:

Table 1: Distribution and Labels of Relative Index Scores, 2011 (Haase and Pratschke 2012, 4).



Relative Index Score	Standard Deviation	Label	Colour Scheme in Maps	Number of SAs in 2011	Percentage of SAs in 2011
over 30	> 3	extremely affluent	dark blue	30	0.2
20 to 30	2 to 3	very affluent	medium blue	472	2.6
10 to 20	1 to 2	affluent	medium green	2,411	13.0
0 to 10	0 to 1	marginally above average	light green	6,234	33.7
0 to -10	0 to -1	marginally below average	light yellow	6,483	35.1
-10 to -20	-1 to -2	disadvantaged	medium yellow	2408	13.0
-20 to -30	-2 to -3	very disadvantaged	orange	448	2.4
below -30	< -3	extremely disadvantaged	red	2	0.0
Total				18,488	100.0

To meet the area profile indicator for HEAR, the applicant's address must be identified as Disadvantaged, Very Disadvantaged, or Extremely Disadvantaged.

The home addresses of all HEAR and DARE applicants in 2010 were externally and individually coded using this national index. Home address thus provides a strong national comparable triangulated measure to suggest the social class/socio-economic profile of SWD who applied to DARE.

Measure of Social Class 3: Dual Applicants – DARE and HEAR Application and Eligibility

Applicants to the DARE scheme, could also apply to the HEAR scheme as dual applicants. The HEAR scheme uses an intersectional multi-indicator approach to identify socio-economic disadvantage using a range of financial, social and cultural indicators or criteria. Meeting these criteria allows applicants to be considered for the HEAR scheme which offers college places on reduced points and extra college support. There are six HEAR indicators:

1. **Income**: Family income falls on or below the HEAR Income Limit;
2. **Medical/ GP Visit Card**: Family has a Medical Card/ GP Visit Card;
3. **Means Tested Social Welfare**: Family received a means-tested payment from the Department of Social Protection for at least 26 weeks;
4. **Socio-economic Group**: Applicant belongs to a group that is under-represented in higher education based on the occupation and employment status of parent(s) or guardian(s). The under-represented groups are the Non-Manual Workers Group and the Semi and Unskilled Manual Workers Group.
5. **DEIS School Attendance**: Applicant has completed five years in a second level school that takes part in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) scheme run by the Department of Education and Skills.
6. **Area Profile**: Applicant lives in an area where there is concentrated disadvantage, where, for example, there is high unemployment and poverty and where only a small proportion of adults have attained third level education.

Applicants must meet Indicator 1, the HEAR Income Limit, plus a correct combination of two other indicators to be eligible for HEAR. The HEAR indicators that were met by all applicants who applied to DARE and HEAR are available for this study. Previous research suggests that HEAR, because it is focused on the most disadvantaged and is likely to '*select out'* the more advantaged among the target socio-economic groups should support the most marginalised and disadvantaged within these groups to access HE (Byrne et al. 2013, 14). HEAR indicators are largely independently verified and provide a third reliable measure of social class/socio-economic disadvantage.

Appendix D: Student Participant Characteristics and Overview

Participant 1

Pseudonym	**Tracey**
SEN/ Disability category	Mental Health
Gender	Female
Home	Urban
Area Designation	Very Disadvantaged
School Choice	Outside local area
School Sector	Secondary
Evidence	HSE
Family Income	Social Welfare
Eligible	DARE and HEAR
SUSI	Yes
Reduced Points	Yes
Overall School Experience	Very Positive in 2nd level
Retention	Completed
Socio-economic group (SEG) status	Lower SEG

Tracey was eligible for both DARE and HEAR. Tracey met five HEAR indicators as part of her HEAR application. Tracey attended her local DEIS primary school where she had a very negative experience. Tracey chose not to attend her local DEIS secondary school and attended a second level school outside of her local area to access better educational opportunities and a better experience. Tracey lives in an urban area of high social deprivation. The Health Service Executive (HSE), a public and free system, diagnosed Tracey with a number of mental health issues initially when she was still in primary school and with further issues when Tracey was in her early teens. Tracey lives with both of her parents, one of whom has a significant long-term illness. Tracey's family rely on social welfare and experience significant financial hardship. Tracey's parents have no personal experience of higher education but believe that education offers their children a route out of poverty. Tracey felt disconnected from both her local community and her peers because of her desire to access a good education. Tracey credits attending school in a different area as central to her changed life trajectory and her success in education. At the time of the interviews, Tracey was completing the third year of her undergraduate degree at HE. Tracey has had a positive experience in HE and hopes to do a postgraduate qualification in the future.

Participant 2

Pseudonym	**James**
SEN/ Disability category	Dyslexia
Gender	Male
Home	Rural
Area Designation	Marginally Below Average
School Choice	Outside local area
School Sector	DEIS
Evidence	Private
Family Income	Social Welfare
Eligible	DARE and HEAR
SUSI	Yes
Reduced Points	No
Overall School Experience	Very Positive
Retention	Withdrew end of 3rd year
Socio-economic group (SEG) status	Lower SEG

James was eligible for both DARE and HEAR. James met three HEAR indicators as part of his HEAR application, low income, medical card, and attending a DEIS school. James lives in a large town, within commuting distance of a large urban area. James lives in an area designated as Marginally Below Average. A psychologist, paid for privately, initially diagnosed James with dyslexia when he was in primary school. James's parents paid privately for updated assessments over the years. James lives with both of his parents and his siblings. James's older sibling has already completed a degree at an Irish University. James's father has a disability and his family rely on social welfare and experience significant financial pressures. James's parents have no personal experience of higher education but believe that education is important for their children to create employment and career opportunities. James attended a DEIS secondary school outside of his local area by choice as he felt that the school was smaller and more welcoming. James had a very positive experience in the school that he felt to be very inclusive. James has struggled academically in HE. James engaged in extensive part-time work to fund HE which has had a detrimental impact on his education and his college experience. James lost his SUSI grant when he repeated a year in HE and has to meet the costs of a loan to stay in college. At the time of the interviews, James was considering leaving college to pursue other interests, a decision influenced by the immense financial pressures that he was experiencing because of the costs of higher education.

Participant 3

Pseudonym	**Grace**
SEN/ Disability category	Significant Ongoing Illness
Gender	Female
Home	Rural
Area Designation	Marginally Above Average
School Choice	Local
School Sector	Secondary
Evidence	HSE
Family Income	Social Welfare
Eligible	DARE and HEAR
SUSI	Yes
Reduced Points	Yes
Overall School Experience	Very Positive
Retention	Completed
Socio-economic group (SEG) status	Lower SEG

Grace was eligible for both DARE and HEAR. Grace met three HEAR indicators as part of her HEAR application, low income, medical card and socio-economic group. Grace lives in a large rural town. Grace lives in an area designated as Marginally Above Average. Grace was diagnosed by the HSE, a public and free system, with a significant illness when she was in Transition Year (TY) in secondary school. Grace lives with her parents. Graces' father has a disability and the family rely on social welfare. Grace's family are very proactive and supportive, particularly her Dad. Grace had a good academic reputation in the school before her illness developed and she stayed in the same school after her illness was diagnosed. Grace's GP suggested that she apply to DARE and her school and her parents supported her with the process. Grace had a very positive experience in secondary school and in HE. In school, she found that most teachers were proactive and provided supports although some did not. Grace has achieved to a high academic standard in HE. Grace found HE to be an inclusive experience. Grace had a part-time job and lived in on campus accommodation in college. Grace is clear that without the supports of home, school, GP, and HEAR and DARE that the outcome would have been very different for her. Grace continues to have high ambitions for herself despite her illness.

Participant 4

Pseudonym	**Karen**
SEN/ Disability category	Mental Health
Gender	Female
Home	Urban
Area Designation	Marginally Above Average
School Choice	Local
School Sector	Secondary
Evidence	HSE
Family Income	Social Welfare
Eligible	DARE, not eligible for HEAR
SUSI	Yes
Reduced Points	Yes
Overall School Experience	Very Negative
Retention	Withdrew start of 2nd year
Socio-economic group (SEG) status	Lower SEG

Karen was eligible for DARE. Karen applied for, but was ineligible for HEAR. Karen met three indicators as part of her HEAR application, income, medical card and welfare payment. Karen lives in an urban area in a large city. Karen lives in an area identified as Marginally Above Average. Karen was diagnosed by the HSE with a mental health issue in her early teens. Karen lives with her parents and sibling. Both of Karen's parents are unemployed and her family were dependent on social welfare. Karen's family are supportive, particularly her Mum. Karen had a very negative experience in her secondary school. Karen had major issues for most of her second level education missing a block of three months in school in 5th year. Karen received no support from her school and most of her academic learning seems to be what she remembered from class. Karen describes herself as lazy. Karen had no real connections with any teacher other than one who was individually supportive. Karen heard about DARE almost in passing when the Guidance Counsellor mentioned it. Karen looked it up herself online and her Mum helped with the application. Karen describes how thrilling it was to get her first choice in HE and she seems genuinely to have found HE a great experience. Karen felt that the orientation programme was wonderful for her but she did not access any other supports, an issue that she puts down to herself. Karen felt powerless throughout most of her experiences as SWD. Karen felt that she had little voice at home, with mental health services, in school and later in college. Karen felt that finances were not an issue in HE because she got her grant. The issues were related to managing her mental health and loneliness. In second year, Karen did not get the subject choice she wanted and this, coupled with her loneliness, as she had no friends, meant that she found that she did not want to continue in HE. Karen describes powerfully how she was alone in college all the time, commuting on her own, in college on her own, commuting home alone. She describes how leaving college was a very positive decision for her because she ended up doing a course outside of HE that she really loved.

Participant 5

Pseudonym	**Rebecca**
SEN/ Disability category	Dyslexia
Gender	Female
Home	Rural
Area Designation	Marginally Above Average
School Choice	Local
School Sector	Secondary
Evidence	Public/ Private
Family Income	No detail
Eligible	DARE
SUSI	No
Reduced Points	Yes
Overall School Experience	Very Negative
Retention	Completed
Socio-economic group (SEG) status	Higher SEG

Rebecca was eligible for DARE. Rebecca lives in a rural town and lives in an area identified as Marginally Above Average. Rebecca was diagnosed with dyslexia when she was in primary school. The initial assessment was undertaken by the school. Thereafter all of her assessments were paid for privately. The last assessment was undertaken specifically for the purposes of DARE. The family asked the school to get that assessment but were refused. Rebecca has a supportive family. Rebecca provided no detail on her parent's income/occupation although she does mention she has a part-time job and that she does not like to put any additional financial pressure on her parents. Rebecca had a very negative experience in primary, secondary and in some respects in HE. She spent two years in primary education attending a special school for children who have dyslexia. She speaks of this as a very positive experience. The school seemed to have very low expectations for her at primary and second level and had little awareness of academic, personal, and social impact. Rebecca describes sitting at the back of Irish classes in second level where she was supposed to be doing her own work as she had an Irish exemption. In this way, she was singled out as different. Teachers would often forget why she was there and try including her in the class highlighting the difference. She received resource support but describes how the teacher had low expectations and would let her do routine repetitive work rather than challenging her to progress. Rebecca was assigned to pass subjects without being told the implications of this from an educational progression point of view. Rebecca wanted to apply for college. She was only told in 6th year that she could not matriculate, as she was not doing six subjects. She took up, and passed, a sixth subject in 6th year so that she could apply for college. Rebecca talks about how the DARE scheme was never promoted in the school, her Guidance Counsellor never mentioned it, and her Mam and Dad helped her to complete the application. Some teachers in her school were a great help and others very much less so. Rebecca picked her HEI because it was in the DARE scheme. She had little confidence and worried that she might not fit in academically. Rebecca also had negative individual experiences in HE with lecturers. Rebecca found the supports in HE to be very good particularly the orientation programme.

Participant 6

Pseudonym	**Anna**
SEN/ Disability category	Dyslexia
Gender	Female
Home	Rural
Area Designation	Affluent
School Choice	Outside local area
School Sector	Secondary
Evidence	Private
Family Income	Employment
Eligible	DARE
SUSI	No
Reduced Points	Yes
Overall School Experience	Very Negative
Retention	Completed
Socio-economic group (SEG) status	Higher SEG

Anna was eligible for DARE. Anna lives in a rural town, on the fringes of a major urban city, in an area categorised as affluent. A psychologist, paid for privately, initially diagnosed Anna with dyslexia when she was in primary school. Anna's parents paid for updated assessments over the years. Anna lives with both of her parents and her siblings. Anna's parents are both working professionals with higher education qualifications. Anna is utterly negative about her school experiences other than the primary school that she moved to for the last two years of her primary education. Anna's experiences were characterised by a lack of support and awareness of the impact of her learning difficulty as well as low expectations. Anna's family had strong social, cultural and economic capital. Anna's parents were relentlessly supportive and constantly navigated a path, with her, through the education system to create better opportunities. Anna had a generally positive experience at the HEI she attended after school where she felt that she benefited from a more proactive and inclusive approach. Anna had a very different experience at another HEI where she challenged the medicalised approach to disability. Anna completed her undergraduate degree and a postgraduate qualification. At the time of writing Anna is completing a further professional postgraduate qualification.

Participant 7

Pseudonym	**Eamonn**
SEN/ Disability category	Dyslexia
Gender	Male
Home	Rural
Area Designation	Affluent
School Choice	Local
School Sector	Vocational
Evidence	Public
Family Income	Employment
Eligible	DARE
SUSI	No
Reduced Points	Yes
Overall School Experience	Very Positive
Retention	Completed
Socio-economic group (SEG) status	Higher SEG

Eamonn was eligible for DARE only. Eamonn lives in a rural town, on the fringes of a major city, in an area categorised as affluent. Eamonn lives with his parents, both of whom are employed, and a sibling. Eamonn attended a mixed vocational school. Eamonn was diagnosed with dyslexia in primary school and again just before the Leaving Certificate. Both assessments were completed by the school. Eamonn has a very supportive family who are very positive about the positive effect of a good education. Eamonn had a very positive school and HE experience. Eamonn was assessed early in primary school, he received ongoing support from his school where a Specific Learning Difficulty was not unusual and was normalised and he received good learning support on a daily basis. This continued in secondary school so that there were no issues with the transition. He attended a small secondary school where there were other students receiving learning support which again was normalised, he had strong daily support again with a good resource teacher who was open about the fact that they had dyslexia. Eamonn's Resource Teacher has been a very strong role model. Eamonn received an updated assessment when he needed it and he got the examination support when he needed it. Eamonn's Guidance Counsellor and Resource Teacher advised him to apply to DARE and supported him with the process. Eamonn always knew that he would go to college. His family and his school had high expectations for him. Eamonn is having a positive experience in college academically although he was the only student in his school to go to HE and he has made few friends. Eamonn feels that supports should focus, not just on 1st years, but on students in later years who often feel disconnected in large classes. Eamonn has high expectations and wants to be a teacher.

Participant 8

Pseudonym	**Gary**
SEN/ Disability category	Blind
Gender	Male
Home	Rural
Area Designation	Marginally Above Average
School Choice	Outside local area
School Sector	Fee-paying Private School
Evidence	Private
Family Income	Employment
Eligible	DARE
SUSI	No
Reduced Points	Yes
Overall School Experience	Very Positive
Retention	Completed
Socio-economic group (SEG) status	Higher SEG

Gary was eligible for DARE. Gary lives in a rural area categorised as Marginally Above Average. Gary lives with both of his parents, one of whom is a student and the other a professional working abroad. Gary attended a private fee-paying school. Gary lost his sight in primary school. Gary had all of his assessments completed privately. Gary has a supportive family, particularly his Mum who advocated with the school for any supports that he needed. Gary had a very positive school and HE experience. Gary's primary school provided him with all of the supports that he needed. Gary describes how it was difficult to get a secondary school place and his parents decided that a private school would give him the best opportunities to succeed in education. In secondary school, Gary describes how the school were very willing to support him although they learned as they went along sometimes making mistakes and assuming that he would not progress academically. Gary describes how he could not do any of the science experiments for Junior Cert because he was considered a health and safety hazard. He then had to take up Biology in 6th year because he had been disillusioned with it from the Junior Certificate. Gary outlined how he wanted to be more independent than his Special Needs Assistant would allow initially. Gary was very influenced by a teacher who demanded that he perform to his academic ability, which encouraged him to work harder. Gary always knew that he would go to college and there were high expectations at home and in school for him. Gary has had a very inclusive experience in HE. Gary feels that this has been in part because he is very sporty and sociable and does not look like he has a disability.

Participant 9

Pseudonym	**Conor**
SEN/ Disability category	Hearing Impaired
Gender	Male
Home	Rural
Area Designation	Marginally Above Average
School Choice	Local
School Sector	Secondary
Evidence	HSE
Family Income	Employment
Eligible	DARE
SUSI	No
Reduced Points	Yes
Overall School Experience	Positive
Retention	Completed
Socio-economic group (SEG) status	Higher SEG

Conor was eligible for DARE. Conor lives in a rural area categorised as Marginally Above Average. Conor lives with both of his parents and his siblings who are very supportive, particularly his Mum who advocated for supports on his behalf as necessary. Conor was diagnosed with a hearing impairment when he was a young child. All of his assessments have been completed by the HSE. Conor has had a positive school and HE experience. Conor's family had high expectations for him. Conor describes how his school also had high expectations for him and suggested that if he did not do well that it was because he was not working hard enough as distinct from his disability. Conor describes how he needed teachers to wear a Radio Aid so that he could hear. Some did wear it and others refused to. Some teachers were very supportive and others provided no support. Conor was disappointed with his Leaving Certificate examination results but suggests that perhaps he overestimated his abilities. Conor's Guidance Counsellor supported him with his DARE application and Conor needed DARE to get the high points course that he wanted to do. Conor describes HE as very inclusive and proactive about his supports. The orientation programme in particular helped him make friends which was important for him. He also has a note taker who is the same age as him so that he does not stand out as different. Conor has progressed very well academically in HE and is having a great college experience.

Participant 10

Pseudonym	**Niamh**
SEN/ Disability category	Deaf
Gender	Female
Home	Rural
Area Designation	Marginally Above Average
School Choice	Outside local area
School Sector	School for the Deaf
Evidence	HSE/ School for the Deaf
Family Income	Employment
Eligible	DARE
SUSI	No
Reduced Points	No
Overall School Experience	Very Positive
Retention	Completed
Socio-economic group (SEG) status	Higher SEG

Niamh was eligible for DARE. Niamh lived in a rural area categorised as Marginally Above Average. Niamh lives with her parents and siblings who are very supportive, particularly her Mum who has advocated for supports on her behalf as necessary. Niamh's parents had high expectations that she could go to college although they were concerned about how she might fit socially into college. Niamh was diagnosed by a HSE audiologist and then after that mostly through an audiologist with her special school. Niamh has had a generally positive school experience. Niamh spent both primary and secondary school in a school for the deaf as a day pupil and as a boarder. She suggests that key factors were supportive parents and a good school where she did not feel different or that she had a disability. Niamh's sister has already completed a degree. She did not need supports in secondary school because whatever she needed was available in school so they did not seem like extra supports. Niamh felt that some teachers in the special school had lower expectations than necessary and that the reduced curriculum impacted her academically. Niamh felt that the school protected her so much in such a segregated setting that it made moving into a mainstream setting challenging. Niamh's family are deaf and have a strong affinity with deaf community and deaf culture. Niamh describes how her parents had different impressions of deaf education from their own more negative experiences of special schools. Niamh has had a positive experience in HE and got all the support that she needed at third level other than proof reading support which she feels that she might have benefitted from. Niamh does note how the first time she felt different was in HE because she needed additional supports including an ISL interpreter and a note taker which was very visible. Niamh had no financial worries in HE as she received a disability allowance. Niamh made a good transition to third level and describes the supports available to her as excellent. She has some concerns about employment but hopes to do a post graduate qualification.

Appendix E: Student Participant Characteristics Summary

Participant	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Pseudonym	Tracey	James	Grace	Karen	Rebecca
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female
Disability Category	Mental Health	Dyslexia	Significant Ongoing Illness	Mental Health	Dyslexia
Area Designation Deprivation Index	Very Disadvantaged	Marginally Below Average	Marginally Above Average	Marginally Above Average	Marginally Above Average
Secondary School Sector	Secondary – DEIS Primary School	DEIS	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary – spent two years in special primary school
DARE/ HEAR Eligibility	Eligible DARE and HEAR	Eligible DARE and HEAR	Eligible DARE and HEAR	Eligible DARE. Applied for HEAR but assessed as ineligible	Eligible DARE
SUSI Grant Eligibility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Socio-Economic Group (SEG) Status	Lower SEG	Lower SEG	Lower SEG	Lower SEG	Higher SEG
Retention in Higher Education	Yes	Withdrew at the end of 3rd year	Yes	Withdrew at the start of 2nd year	Yes

Participant	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
Pseudonym	Anna	Eamonn	Gary	Conor	Niamh
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female
Disability Category	Dyslexia	Dyslexia	Blind	Hearing Impaired	Deaf
Area Designation Deprivation Index	Affluent	Affluent	Marginally Above Average	Marginally Above Average	Marginally Above Average
Secondary School Sector	Secondary	Vocational	Fee-paying Private	Secondary	Special School For the Deaf
DARE/ HEAR Eligibility	Eligible DARE	Eligible DARE	Eligible DARE	Eligible DARE	Eligible DARE
SUSI Grant Eligibility	No	No	No	No	No
Socio-Economic Group (SEG) Status	Higher SEG	Higher SEG	Higher SEG	Higher SEG	Higher SEG
Retention in Higher Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix F: Interview Questions and Schedule

Interview 1: 10 Student Participants, Interview Schedule November/December 2012

1. Can you tell me about yourself and your family?
2. Can you tell me about your disability and how that impacted your primary/second level school experiences – positive and negative experiences?
3. What supports did you access in school as a student with a disability?
4. What were the academic expectations of you as a student with a disability - parents, school, peers, yourself?
5. What/who helped you to progress to third level – DARE, information about supports, family, school, others?
6. What was your experience of the DARE/HEAR process – who supported you with the application process, what worked well, not well, and how important was DARE for you in accessing HE?
7. Did your disability impact your college/course choices?
8. How did your disability impact your HE experiences – positive and negative experiences?
9. Were there financial issues/other barriers that impacted in school/college?
10. Do you see yourself as a student with a disability?
11. Who were your key influences in the context of education/progression to HE and how did they influence you: parents, peers, teachers, Guidance Counsellor, yourself, others?
12. If you could make changes/recommendations to the school/HE system to make it a better experience for students with a disability, what would those changes be?
13. If you could make changes/recommendations at a national level that would support more students with disabilities progressing to HE - what would they be?
14. What are the most important things that helped you to get to and stay in HE?
15. Is there anything that I have not mentioned or that you think is important that we have not covered?

Interview 2: 9 Student Participants, Interview Schedule March/April 2014

1. What were your own reflections on the first interview – were there any issues that you reflected on and that you wanted to discuss?
2. Can you bring me up to date with your college/employment experiences since the last time that we met?
3. Looking back to your school experiences, how supportive/inclusive are schools?
4. Looking back at your HEI experiences, apart from support from the Access Office, how supportive/inclusive is the HEI – supports from all staff, academic and administrative?
5. What factors do you feel support students with disabilities in the education system - teachers/academics, school/college culture, family, parents, peers etc.?
6. What are the barriers for students with disabilities in the education system?
7. Does having a disability impact access to internships/employment?
8. Would you tell an employer about your disability, ask for support?
9. What are the barriers for students from disadvantaged schools/communities with disabilities progressing to HE?
10. What recommendations would you make to support more students with disabilities progressing to HE?
11. Is there anything that I have not mentioned or that you think is important that we have not covered?

Appendix G: Thematic Analysis Sample

Data Extract	**Coded for**
My Mam was just, whatever makes you happy. They've always kind of been like that. 'They've never been like you have to get an A, just do your best, and if that means you get an F then that means you get an F. You can't help it if you're thick!' (laughs). Do you know what I mean? They're very easy going.	Family Support Parental Academic Expectations
(INTERVIEW 2) Oh a 100%, like it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter what the problem is it could be an argument with a student and a teacher, the student is always wrong, it doesn't matter what it is. Oh absolutely, honestly I think students who have no sort of disabilities or problems, I think they have no voice so do you know what I mean I think if you have any extra needs or whatever you definitely have even less of a voice because they don't have any time for the rest of the students as it is. But I mean, even when it came to consulting with whoever I was seeing, they'd be talking to my Mam more than they would be talking to me a lot of the time... and it's... I have an opinion too.	Negative Relationships Teachers Student Voice Powerless Student Voice Powerless
At the time, I think my Mam was claiming the dole for all of us including my dad as a dependent. He wasn't working. So I had the full grant and because they hadn't changed the grant, I got the full non-adjacent rate, so I was flying for the year. (INTERVIEW 2) – (referring to family and financial support) - There was a time actually I did need grinds, em I got grinds in 3rd year and she actually managed to get them for free through some sort of welfare thing they did some sort of free grinds system and I went to them a couple of times but I found them very difficult to go to because there was about 40 people that I didn't know at the time it was to intimidating for me but she went and made a point of enquiring and organising that for me and then when I was in 6th year em for French in particular, she got me private grinds to the house, she said oh it doesn't matter if it's going to pull you up a grade tell me and I can get you 2 a week if you need it, she definitely sacrificed things it could have been family trips out it could have been anything.	Social Class Financial Support Social Class Financial Barriers Family Support Academic Impact Disability
Yes. Because I got 335 in my Leaving Cert, and I think most of them were C's, but I could have gotten B's in most of them if not A's had I been really working hard like. B was definitely my ability level.	Student Academic Expectations Academic Impact of Disability
(Referring to supports in school) There weren't any...They just didn't, they didn't really look at it as being serious. They just thought well she's a teenager, she's a bit down and that's it really...I can't really blame them. I sure there are a lot of girls who are like that and who would milk it, I suppose, maybe I don't know. I don't think she really understood, that I wasn't just sixteen and putting it on, like I did actually have a problem. I wasn't just making myself cry so I could get off school. Do you know what I mean, it was a lot more difficult to deal with…and the fact that there was this blatant, just get over it and get on with it, made me feel an awful lot worse and made it an awful lot harder to come in.	Disability Awareness Excuse/justify lack of support Disability Awareness Disability as an individual issue

Data Extract	**Coded for**
There was actually a teacher that I fell in love with, the minute that I met her. She was my Home Ec. teacher from first to third year and she was just so supportive of everything and if you even looked kind of sad during a class she'd call you back afterwards and ask if you were all right. She was just brilliant. She was lovely.	Positive Relationships Teachers Disability Awareness
No other university is the same as (name of college deleted). It's just vibrant and so full of happiness. Do you know what I mean? It's a brilliant college to go to. I was amazed by how many supports there were here in the first place. I honestly think the only reason that I left is because I personally didn't avail of them.	Choice college College culture Disability supports Individual responsibility
And that's actually why I ended up dropping out in second year because I didn't get (course deleted), I didn't study hard enough. I made quite an effort to talk to people at the start of lectures before we went in and we were sitting down and stuff and they'd be quite chatty, but the minute their friend came in, and that was fine, you were gone. So I found it quite difficult to make friends in second year, and I think that was probably why I ended up dropping out.	Individual responsibility Peer relationships Isolation Withdrawal
(In relation to disclosure to employer) - No. But they've no need to know about it because I'm totally happy.	Disability and Employment
INT 2 referring to the need to change how teachers are being trained) – I think if society is going to change all around you and there is a certain part of society that isn't going to change there is going to be problems and that is exactly what's going on with the schooling system… Definitely, how can they care for students when the kind of students that they are been taught to teach aren't the kind that they have anymore.	Disability Awareness Teacher Training

Appendix H: Thematic Map

Student Experience in the Hegemonic Domain