Title of Research Project: "Our Voices, Our Images, Our Story" A Narrative Inquiry Study of Children’s Lived Experience in DEIS Primary Schools in Ireland

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Relevant key words: Social Class; Educational Disadvantage; Pupil Voice; Affective Engagement

Summary:

My thesis sets out to tell the DEIS primary school story from the pupil perspective with a deep-rooted belief in the importance of pupil voice to inform policy and practice. This is of added significance in the DEIS context whereby the voices of working-class pupils needs to be considered in order to democratically review the very policies that are designed to serve them. The data was collected from 41 sixth class pupils in three Urban Band 1 DEIS schools in a provincial city in Ireland, using one on one interviews, pair interviews and pupils' drawings. My research questions were as follows:

• How do DEIS primary school pupils describe and perceive their educational experience?
• How, and in what ways, do in-school processes impact affective pupil engagement?
• What could educational disadvantage policies, and in particular the DEIS initiative, learn from the pupil perspective?

My findings suggest affective engagement is coherently linked to wellbeing and relationships. The study explores how pupils navigate school whilst trying to keep a sense of self and the implications of this on their identity, wellbeing and engagement. The study highlights the power of the school as the dominant culture in producing acts of symbolic violence that inculcate feelings of inferiority and self-doubt in working class pupils. This study presents a more nuanced understanding of how class is experienced and internalized in DEIS primary schools, and by doing so, shines a light on the affective dimension of schooling.

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