Analyse two factors outside of schools that contribute to working-class underachievement (10 marks)

Sociologists have come up with different reasons of class based differences in educational achievement. One reason of working class underachievement is because of working class identity and educational success. Although some working class people succeed, Archer found a relationship with working class identity and educational achievement. Ingram spotted that having a working class identity meant being a part of a working class locality. The neighbourhood of a working class student, which they belong to is a major part of their life and habitus. Archer found that it is more common for working class people to wear branded sportswear and to endure a street culture. This means that if these boys attended a grammar school they would find it harder to fit in as they feel the need to fit in with their community but don’t wish to be an outcast at their school. An example of this is a boy going to school in a tracksuit and being bullied for the type of clothes he wears, but if he wore something different, his home community would reject him as ‘one of them’. This is a case of symbolic violence and causes stress and underachievement to a working class boy.

Another contribution to working class underachievement is class identity and self exclusion. Evans found that working class girls from south London were reluctant to apply to elite universities like Cambridge or Oxford because they felt it is ‘not for the likes of [them]’ according to Bourdieu. They see a division between themselves and higher education, which blocks them from a key route to success. This division is because they feel that they would be an outcast and would not fit in at a ‘posh’ university. Due to a thought process of the working class girls, these beliefs become their identity as part of a self fulfilling prophecy. The girls are self-excluding themselves from opportunities and elite universities. This self-exclusion further extends to them, not wanting to move away from home as Evans found that only 4/21 girls he interviewed had intended to study away. As a result, working class pupils have to make a tough decision whether they want to maintain their working class identities or if they wish to abandon them and take on a middle class habitus in order to succeed.

However, there are working class people who do succeed and not all working class people feel that they are a part of a society with their neighbourhood.