LOCAL STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION COLD SPOTS: PLACED POSSIBLE SELVES AND COLLEGE-BASED HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This thesis explores experiences of college-based higher education (CBHE) in England, positioning this type of provision within the national and local geographies of English higher education. Focusing on institutions located in higher education 'cold spots', the thesis situates these institutions within local and policy narratives of both lack of and need for educational opportunity. The case study research design examines two case institutions, and involves documentary analysis and interviews with higher education directors, tutors and final year students on two degree courses in each college, as well as interviews with key figures in national Further Education policy. Data analysis deploys the concept of possible selves in an original, sociologically-oriented dialogue with de Certeau's 'spatial story' to produce accounts of placed possible selves. The key contributions of the thesis are, firstly, that shared and homogenous societal narratives of university higher education dominate even in places and for educational subjects without university education. Secondly, the thesis challenges reductive binary understandings of student mobilities, in which mobility and privilege are diametrically opposed to immobility and disadvantage. Finally, the concept of local capital offers a way of understanding social, cultural and economic commitments to place that moves beyond a language of deficit.

Dedication

For my grandmother, Shirley, because she would have liked to read this.

And for my nephew, Sebastian, who will always have walked with me through these pages.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Within a stratified national Higher Education (HE) system, and in the context of raised undergraduate tuition fees and a well-established Widening Participation agenda, the figure of the 'local', 'commuter' student represents a rejection of the traditional English mode of degree level study (Christie, 2007). This student saves the money that would have been spent on exorbitant university accommodation fees, and instead continues living in their established home and locality, studying at the nearest HE institution to this locality, and often sustaining their previous employment while doing so. The marking of these students as 'local' or 'commuter' signifies their difference from the unmarked normative undergraduate 'student' who has left the familial home and moved into university residence to begin their degree. The 'local' student can therefore be understood according to the paradoxes of widening participation, in which the 'non-traditional' student participates in undergraduate study but is marked as other by the very discourses of inclusion that allow them to participate (Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003). The local student both offers a counter narrative to the traditional mode of degree study in England, and reinforces that mode as traditional. Given the weight of meaning attached to the descriptor 'local' where it is applied to HE students, this study asks what happens when the local student's HE *institution* is also described as 'local'? How are particular educational subjectivities enabled and delimited within a matrix of narratives of place, institutional status and student im/mobilities?

In order to respond to these questions, this thesis takes College Based Higher Education in England (CBHE) as its site of study. Degree-level courses taught at Further Education (FE) colleges are already caught between contrasting definitions of the local. The historical connection between the college and its local area is a point of pride in narratives of FE (see, for example, Hodgson, Bailey and Lucas, 2015). However, the 'local' HE institution is positioned at the bottom of a hierarchy of HE in which the 'global' is most highly prized (Marginson, 2006), and connections between institutions and surrounding localities are often fraught (Chatterton, 2000). Additionally, largely because of their position as responsive to the specificities of their local area, there are huge disparities between FE colleges with regard to the subjects and types of HE study offered (Parry, Callendar and Temple, 2012; Parry and Thompson, 2002; Saraswat, Hudson and Thompson, 2014). Therefore, to describe CBHE students and the HE institutions they attend as 'local' is not only to position them in relation to traditional understandings of HE study. The description also highlights both the students' and the institution's relationship to a specific geographical area, as well as the relationship between that geographical area and histories of HE participation. This study focuses on one example of these relationships, exploring local student experiences in local colleges in areas of England which have little or no local history of HE – geographical HE 'cold spots'.

The HE 'cold spot'

In 2015, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, now part of the Office for Students and Research England) published a set of maps relating to the distribution of HE provision in England (HEFCE, 2015). One of these maps uses the metaphor of temperature to highlight areas of the country which have high levels of

HE provision as 'hot spots'. These areas are coloured in red and orange on the national map. The areas of the country in which there are fewer universities or other HE providers are coloured blue, and described as 'cold spots'. In 2017, a further set of maps was published, this time showing student mobility both for and following undergraduate study (HEFCE, 2017). The maps are interactive, so that it is possible to click on one county and read statistical evidence of the proportion of students that travel from this county to each of the other counties in the country. What is clear from both sets of geographical data is that there are stark inequalities in the geographies of HE in England. Though published separately, these two geographical inquiries, of HE provider distribution and of student mobility, are closely intertwined. Areas of the country with a higher proportion of HE provision are also areas from which more students travel for degree study (Donnelly and Evans, 2015; Donnelly and Gamsu, 2018). Correspondingly, a cold spot, already an area without much or any HE provision, is also an area from which people are less likely to travel in order to study. If student mobility is understood as a marker of privilege or capital (Corbett, 2007), then this kind of privilege is also reinforcing and reinforced by the privilege of local investment in HE.

While these maps demonstrate ways to understand geographies according to HE provision and undergraduate mobility, they cannot capture the multiple and very specific narratives of place that constitute each particular 'cold' and 'hot' spot. These narratives are connected with the ways that HE is positioned in each locality, and are difficult to capture and uncomfortable to address. For example, in large towns without HE provision, there is also often a legacy of industrial loss and economic deprivation. Where university buildings are absent from the town's architecture, employment

opportunities are also often absent from recent history. These places are easy to imagine without visiting, so that the term 'cold spot' can be used almost euphemistically to describe not only a place without HE provision, but a place whose economic and social 'climate' might be best avoided. In this kind of local context, the decision to both remain in place and study for a degree is a complex one, which requires a negotiation of placed discourses of education, employment and opportunity, as well as national narratives of what it means to be an undergraduate student. Ambivalent relationships to locality are therefore important to consider as part of a 'local' degree student subjectivity in HE cold spots.

Where CBHE offers the only local HE provision in a cold spot locality, the confused roles already assigned to CBHE (Bathmaker, 2018) are further exaggerated. On one hand, the college fulfills a Widening Participation mission by offering access to HE to those who might not be able to travel further to the nearest university and are 'underserved' (Bathmaker, 2016, p. 20) by the geographies of HE, as well as by increasing participation in HE in 'low participation neighbourhoods' (Avis and Orr, 2016, p. 55). On the other hand, it is in precisely these areas that the loss of industry during the twentieth century prompts discussions of new forms of technical education which meet the changing demands of local and global industries (BIS and DfE, 2016). As a result of this confusion in the purpose of CBHE in these areas, despite the stated emphasis in policy upon short-cycle and technically-oriented qualifications as a priority for CBHE colleges (Dearing, 1997), colleges continue to offer a wide range of subjects and levels of HE (Bathmaker, 2016; Parry, Callendar and Temple, 2012). In cold spot areas, this provision is particularly varied given the relative lack of competition with universities in the local marketplace. Therefore, despite both the

traditional and the currently increasing focus on FE as technical education and on FE colleges as redressing a national skills shortage (BIS, 2015a; BIS, 2016a), some colleges offer humanities and social science degree courses alongside more technically-oriented degree and sub-degree options.

As these discourses demonstrate, CBHE provision is understood at a national level through competing claims for the meaning and purpose of local HE in areas with both low participation in HE and low levels of skills and employment. This competition is further complicated by CBHE's position within the FE sector, which means that it is subject to, but often largely ignored by, policy shifts across this sector. The area review process, announced in 2015 (BIS, 2015b; BIS, 2016b) as a response to huge financial deficits across the sector (Smith, 2017a), has evaluated FE provision within nationally-determined 'areas', with the intentions of reducing replication and driving efficiency. The process reinforces understandings of FE colleges as economically situated within local geographies, with review reports focusing on levels of literacy, skills, and HE participation in local populations (see, for example, DfE, 2016). Colleges are, through this process, positioned as responding to local educational need, and required to do so in the most financially efficient way possible. Technical Levels, part of a national policy of improvements to technical and skills education (BIS and DfE, 2016) are new qualifications for the 16-19 age group, imagined as an alternative pathway to the academic A Level route to HE. FE colleges are designated in this policy as the preferred providers of Technical Levels. Crucially, within these competing policy discourses that see the FE college as a solution to both national skills shortages and local educational need, the role of CBHE as part of FE provision is unclear (Bathmaker, 2018).

This study's focus on CBHE provision in cold spot areas therefore brings together a range of educational concerns. The colleges in the study are seen in the context of their relationship to national geographies of HE and local perceptions of education, as well as situated in an FE sector that is split between competing demands and shifting policies. The section below explores how the figure of the local student departs from national understandings of undergraduate education, and how CBHE in cold spot areas works to offer a complex alternative to the traditional university.

The local student

Historically, the spatial language of 'going to' university in England has signified a geographical journey from the familial home to university accommodation (Holton, 2016; Silver, 2004). The geographical journey and its association with degree level study combine to create a narrative of 'going to' university as a rite-of-passage, a progression from the spaces of childhood and adolescence to those of early adulthood and independence. This understanding of what it means to study in HE remains a powerful shared societal narrative, with the figure of the 'student' often representing a homogenised category of people with privilege, youth and social and economic freedom (Holdsworth, 2009a). Studies of 'studentification' in university towns and cities show how geographical areas in these places have become dominated by this student figure, so that housing and social spaces are shaped around a generic student lifestyle (Hubbard, 2009; Sage, Smith and Hubbard, 2012b; Smith, 2008; Smith and Holt, 2007). As these studies highlight, there is an irony to the fact that the national narrative of student experience is both characterised by spatial and social mobility *and* reproductive of homogenised spatial experiences that limit encounters with different localities.

As argued by Holdsworth (2009b) and Christie (2007), the massification of HE in England, combined with two decades of Widening Participation policies, has led to an increase in the numbers of students who do not follow the traditional pattern of undergraduate mobility. While the 'local' or 'commuter' student is seen as non-traditional because they study at a local institution, this and other scholarship has argued against deficit perceptions of these students. Holton and Finn (2018), for example, highlight the multiple everyday mobilities of commuter students, who often travel daily between home, university and employment. This challenges the idea that remaining within a locality is the same as being immobile. Holdsworth (2006) and Holton (2015) similarly contest the associations between the traditional narrative of undergraduate mobility and the achievement of independence and broadened geographical horizons. Holdsworth shows that local students often manage far more complex home, employment and educational commitments than their traditionally mobile peers. Local students can therefore be seen to be more, rather than less, independent or adult, and more, rather than less, mobile. Holton's exploration of local knowledge further shows how remaining in place for undergraduate study represents an opportunity to deepen existing commitments to the locality, in contrast to the more superficial relationships to place developed by traditionally mobile undergraduates.

This study's focus on CBHE contributes to this different perspective on local students in two ways. Firstly, although local students are seen as non-traditional in the national context of HE, they form the majority of the student population in a CBHE provision (ETF, 2016). Therefore, the 'non-traditional' student is also 'traditional' in the institutions in this study. The traditional, or expected, nature of this mode of undergraduate study in CBHE means that students are surrounded by other students

studying in a similar way, and at the same time are aware of their divergence from the national narrative of undergraduate mobility. The local students majority in CBHE also has implications for the ways that educational spaces are built and experienced in these institutions. The 'studentified' spaces of university towns and cities are constructed according to the expectation that students live, eat and socialise within or around the spaces of the university. By contrast, spaces used by a student majority whose commitments take them away from the HE institution have a more complex role to fill. These spaces must be understood as both offering HE student experiences, and at the same time occupying only a transient or temporary position both in the everyday mobilities of the local student, and in their long-term relationship to the wider locality.

Secondly, the local students at the local colleges in this study occupy student subjectivities in places without histories of HE provision. As discussed in the section above, placed narratives of education, opportunity and mobility combine in the construction of student subjectivities in these particular geographical areas. Therefore, although the position of local student can be seen to offer a counter-narrative to dominant understandings of the undergraduate experience at a national level, this must be considered alongside dominant local narratives, from which undergraduate experience is often absent altogether. Where the non-traditional local student is traditional in CBHE, the expectation of undergraduate education that might be traditional in some localities is non-traditional in a geographical cold spot.

A study of local students at local colleges

Bringing together the concerns of the spatial and the temporal with the contemporary contexts of CBHE in cold spot areas, the study responds to the following research questions:

1. Can a theorisation of educational subjectivities that takes into account the spatial and temporal conditions of HE provide new insight into educational inequalities?

2. How are understandings of the 'local' CBHE institution and the 'local' student represented by FE College Group Chairs, HE leads and course tutors, and institutional marketing materials at their institutions?

3. How do 'local' students of academic and vocational CBHE qualifications understand their educational subjectivities?

4. How do students in their final year of academic and vocational CBHE qualifications represent their imagined possible future selves?

5. What implications can be taken from this study for theorising educational subjectivities and understanding inequalities in HE?

The study uses a multiple case study design (Thomas, 2011b), with the case boundaries drawn around HE provision at two case study institutions. The institutions are similar in the size and variety of their HE provision, and are both located in cold spot areas of the country. Both are in large post-industrial towns without universities, and both offer a range of degree courses in humanities and social science subjects, as well as technical degrees and short cycle HE qualifications. Two degree courses at each case institution were chosen as examples of the HE provision, one academic

subject and one technical. These are chosen in order to take into account the contrasting roles of CBHE as both widening local access to traditional undergraduate education and redressing local skills and employment gaps. Within each degree course, the focus is on final year undergraduate students, in order to conceptualise their anticipated transitions towards graduate futures, and to understand how these anticipated futures intersect with local narratives of HE. Because the study aimed to explore these placed futures, student participants in the study were interviewed at the beginning and end of their final year of study, capturing shifts in the ways that futures were discussed as the end of the course became more imminent. The case study data consist of:

- Documentary analysis of institutional HE marketing materials
- Semi-structured interviews with HE directors in each institution
- Semi-structured interviews with course tutors on each of the two chosen degree courses in each institution
- Two semi-structured interviews with twenty students, five on each of the two chosen degree courses in each institution. The first interview was conducted in the first term of the students' final year of study, and included a mobile interview around the spaces of the college's HE site. For the second interview, I had produced a concept map for each participant based on the places they had spoken about in the first interview, and discussed this with them.
- Ethnographic observations of the college HE sites, and of final year classes on each of the two chosen degree courses in each institution

In choosing and writing about each case institution, I have also worked to situate them within the national context of CBHE in England. The study therefore also includes

interviews with four figures in national FE lobbying groups, who position these current instances of CBHE within a historical and national policy context. A separate small study of marketing materials used by CBHE providers in England (Henderson, 2018c) argues that these materials both reflect and shape a homogenised view of the typical CBHE student. This smaller study provided the wider context for the documentary analysis of the marketing materials in the case study institutions. The deliberate extension of the study beyond the explicit boundaries of each particular case articulates the tension between the specific and the generalisable in case study research design (Thomas, 2011a). The multiple methods and 'thick description' that characterise case study research (Corcoran, Walker and Wals, 2004) enable an in-depth focus on what is unique about each case. This focus is important to this study's exploration of the local, which draws out the narratives that constitute each locality and its specific relationship to HE. On the other hand, case studies are also defined by their relationship to the more general phenomenon of which they are an example. The case institutions in this study could be seen as 'outlier' (Thomas, 2011b) or 'extreme' (Yin, 2014) cases of CBHE, in that the colleges are unusual in the breadth and scale of their HE provision (though, in this hugely heterogeneous sector, any CBHE provider might be described as unusual). The institutions are also 'outlier' instances of HE, in that CBHE is positioned 'on the margins' (Scott, 2009) of HE provision in England.

The function of the outlier case is to make the familiar strange; as an 'extreme' example, what is found in these cases exaggerates the common conditions of English CBHE, and highlights what is often unquestioningly accepted about university-based HE. Using a multiple case study design made up of these 'extreme' examples allows

for an analysis of how the specificities of each unusual case emerge from questions that can be applied in more than one instance. The questions make up the generalisable element of the study. The focus on the intricacies and nuances of locality and how the local college and the local student are produced through these nuanced narratives argues for attention to specificity. At the same time, the study also argues that this attention to local specificity can and should be extended to research in other educational contexts, sectors and institutions. Throughout the study, the conceptual approach to understanding student subjectivities is developed with this generalisability in mind.

Conceptualising student subjectivities

While the context for the study as explained thus far has focused on the spatial, and in particular the unequal geographies of HE in England, student subjectivities are understood as temporal as well as spatial throughout the study. In particular, the study uses the concept of possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Dunkel and Kerpelman, 2006) as a way of theorising future temporalities in the context of HE. Both the inherently progression-focused educational system in general, and neoliberal developments such as the employability discourse in HE in particular (Boden and Nedeva, 2010; Christie, 2017; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005), demonstrate that a coherent account of the future is required of all educational subjects (see also Bennett and Burke, 2017; Clegg, 2010). The possible selves concept, which originates in the research discipline of social psychology, suggests that present behaviour is influenced by how individuals imagine their futures, and particularly by personalised imagined versions of themselves enacting those futures. The concept is useful partly because it offers an opportunity to disrupt linear temporalities, showing how the imagined future

is *experienced in* the present, rather than simply following on from it. Multiple future temporalities are also acknowledged in the possible selves concept, so that contrasting or conflicting imagined futures can be thought through in all their complexity.

Much of the existing research using the possible selves concept in education focuses on the connection between imagined future and present motivation (Khajavy and Ghonsooly, 2017; Oyserman, Bybee and Terry, 2006), and in the US context it has been used as a basis for intervention with high school students at risk of failure (Oyserman, Terry and Bybee, 2002). This approach risks locating a deficit of imagination or motivation within the individual, at the expense of a more structural analysis of systemic barriers. In this study, I build on sociological uses of the concept in HE contexts (Stevenson, 2012; Stevenson and Clegg, 2011) to develop a theorisation of possible selves that can account for processes of subjectivation and structures of inequality in education. This theorisation uses Ricoeur's conceptualisation of narrative time and subjectivity (1992; 2000) and Butler's analysis of implicit censorship (1997). The theorisation sees the subject's production of a narrative of the future as essential for their repeated entry into educational discourses (Henderson, 2018a). At the same time, this narrative often requires the bringing together of often contradictory past and future events into a seemingly coherent and naturalised whole account. Drawing attention to narrative process in this way leads to an analysis of the structural circumstances which make some accounts and some futures more 'speakable' (Butler, 1997) than others.

Following Prince's (2014) argument that place should be taken into account when possible selves are discussed, the study locates the educational subject within the

nuances of placed narratives and the inequalities of HE geographies in England. This act of location draws upon de Certeau's (1984) theorisation of the spatial as discursive, which suggests that the subject's first moment of self-recognition is also a moment of self-location. This theorisation means that the narratives of educational experience in this study are inherently spatial, located within the particular constellations of place and space that constitute a locality. If narratives of imagined futures are understood to be shaped by what is im/possible or un/speakable in particular circumstances, then these circumstances are, at least in part, spatial circumstances. Seen in this way, broad categories of inequality are experienced in different ways in different localities. Inequalities of, for instance, class and race, both of which are important to the study's contexts, are mediated by and narrated from these localities (see, for example, Cahill, 2007; Pahl, 2008). The study therefore also uses Massey's theorisation of place as a power-geometry (1993; 2005), in which some movements and some narratives are privileged over others, and some limited by others.

Bringing together the temporal and the spatial in the theorisation of the educational subject takes into account the demands of the current neoliberal HE context while allowing for the particularities of the ways that this context is lived at a local level. While focusing in on individual accounts of educational experience, the conceptual framework also seeks to situate these within the local and national geographical and ideological structures at work in the English HE system. The study's focus on HE 'at the margins' (Scott, 2009) of this system allows for an analysis of the ways in which the boundary between degree study as possible and impossible is negotiated where

this boundary is at its most fragile. In the section below, I outline the structure of the thesis, giving an overview of each chapter.

Thesis structure

Chapter 2 sets out the conceptual framework for the study in more detail, arguing that research into educational inequalities requires a theorisation of educational subjectivities that can take into account the spatial and temporal conditions of educational contexts. Beginning with a fuller account of the possible selves concept, the chapter shows how this concept can be useful in understanding the future-oriented focus of HE. The concept also lends itself to a narrative approach, which is developed in this chapter using the work of Ricoeur (1992; 2000) and Butler (1997). These theorisations of narrative temporality and its relationship to subjectivity de-naturalise the narrative process, showing narratives of educational subjectivity to be both required by educational systems and paradoxical in their representation of coherence. Having set out the broader temporal conditions in which educational subjectivities are narrated, the chapter then turns to consider the role of space and place in determining the specific circumstances of educational inequalities. Drawing on de Certeau (1984) and Massey (2005), the chapter argues that place and space are defined according to structures of power and narratives of ownership and belonging. The educational subject's location in place is therefore also a location amongst these structures and narratives. The chapter considers the implications of these theorisations of the spatial for the use of the possible selves concept, and concludes by summarising the 'spatial story' of the local as the original conceptual framework for the study.

Chapter 3 sets out the methodology used in this study. The chapter examines case study research as a process of drawing spatial and temporal boundaries, while also highlighting how these boundaries remain permeable throughout the research process. In this study, the boundaries are permeable partly in order that the case institutions can be seen in the wider context of the shifting national policy contexts of HE and FE in England. Therefore, although the majority of the data in the study is collected within the case institutions, I have also conducted interviews with national figures involved in FE policy lobbying groups. The boundaries are also permeable in that the study situates the institutions within their localities, exploring the ways that students and staff see the places and spaces around and within the institution. The chapter moves through the multiple methods used in the study, explaining how each aspect of the research was conducted, and how each established and tested its own spatial and temporal boundaries. The final part of the chapter focuses on ethical considerations and researcher reflexivity, seeing these concerns as part of a process of questioning the boundaries between the researcher and the research context and participants.

Chapter 4 uses the conceptual framework of the 'spatial story' to structure a literature review of social and educational geographies research. The chapter divides this literature into three sections according to Brooks, Byford and Sela's (2016) categorization of growing areas of educational geographies scholarship – place and locality, mobilities, and built environments. In each section, the chapter draws on studies from the wider field of social and human geographies, before exploring educational geographies more specifically. These shifts in focus highlight the difficulty of dividing educational contexts from broader issues of place, mobility and built environments, and show how educational geographies research is informed and

enhanced by engagement with wider geographical issues. The literature discussed in this chapter allows a discussion of the interaction between the spatial, the temporal and subjectivities, and because it demonstrates the ways that inequalities of class, race, gender and age structure these subjectivities. In the final section of the chapter, these wider geographical concerns are applied to literature on the context of CBHE, drawing out the connections between locality, student im/mobilities and the particular material environments of the CBHE institution.

Chapter 5 addresses the national context of CBHE, and locates each case college within this national context. In order to do so, the chapter uses the concept of the spatial story to analyse data from the elite interviews in the study, which were conducted with national figures in FE policy lobbying groups and research projects. The analysis focuses on the ways in which CBHE is narratively represented as 'local' provision for 'local' students, and the ways in which its fragile position as local HE provision between national HE and FE policy contexts results in complex claims for its local purpose. The chapter then moves on to analyse data from documentary analysis and staff interviews at each of the case colleges in turn. These data show how the colleges' HE provision is positioned as responding to particular local histories in each place. Across the chapter as a whole, the data from interviews at national and case college level demonstrate a homogenised construction of the 'local' CBHE student. This construction presents the student as fixed in place by disadvantage, and as spatially occupying the built environment of HE in ways that contrast with the imagined figure of the traditional, perceived-as mobile student. The 'typical' CBHE student is understood in this chapter as a necessary figure in sustaining the fragile national and local economic position of the CBHE provider, while also risking

minimizing the complexity and diversity of the multiple possible CBHE student subjectivities. This vital complexity provides the focus of the subsequent data chapters.

Chapter 6 is the first of four data analysis chapters to use data from student interviews and observations. This chapter uses the concept of the spatial story to show how students' narratives of educational subjectivity locate them within a definition of what their locality is and is not, and what is im/possible within it. The analysis explores these narratives in the context of the locality as cold spot in the national geographies of HE. In these local contexts, whereas CBHE was seen as necessary in the staff data analysed in the previous chapter, students now occupy complex subject positions as they imagine graduate futures that at times seem incongruous with placed histories. Using the possible selves concept along with the spatial story allows an analysis of these complexities, bringing out experiences of race and social class that are particular to place. The chapter also uses data from my observations during fieldwork visits to articulate the places from the perspective of a visitor. The analysis in this chapter draws out the multiple ways in which each place can be seen to 'be', drawing out common definitional threads as well as disparities between the narratives.

Chapter 7 shifts the focus of analysis to student mobilities, establishing how the narratives of place and locality drawn out in the Chapter 6 are implicated in students' spatial stories of their lived and imagined educational mobility. This analysis explores students' accounts of past or imagined future decisions to remain 'local' for their degree education and in their graduate futures. These accounts are shown to be shaped by the kinds of mobility that are enabled, expected and valued in the local and

national HE context, as well as by the futures that are imaginable in the locality. Through this analysis, inequalities of social class, race and age can be seen to structure perceptions of past and future educational mobility. The chapter also explores how the dominant societal narrative of the perceived-as mobile undergraduate student pervades in the form of the once-possible future, even where students have not followed this pattern. The chapter therefore seeks to complicate two common binary distinctions. The first is the association of mobility with privilege, and immobility with disadvantage. The second is the understanding of the traditional student as mobile, and the local student as immobile. As the analysis in this chapter shows, local capital and the 'everyday' mobility of local students are crucial to complicating these assumptions.

Chapter 8 builds on the analysis of locality and mobility in the previous chapters, looking at the material experiences of CBHE institutional spaces and seeing these as shaped by and shaping of possible educational subjectivities. The data in this chapter are taken from observations of social spaces in each case college, as well as from mobile interviews with students. These data are analysed using de Certeau's spatial conceptualisation of synecdoche (1984, pp. 101-102) to further develop the framework of the spatial story. This conceptualisation allows for analysis of the ways that CBHE spaces are experienced and narrated as 'part' of an illusory 'whole' of HE. Within this analysis, understandings of the spatial needs and practices of the 'local' student, as well as of the visibility of HE spaces in HE cold spots, are brought together with perceptions of the traditional university. The chapter highlights the complexities and contradictions of social spaces for local students in these local contexts, where visible HE space is seen as necessary but often remains unused.

Chapter 9 combines the analytical lenses of, respectively, place, mobilities and institutional spaces from Chapters 6-8, to look at four student narratives in detail. These student narratives are presented in order to show how the three spatial factors intertwine to create possible and impossible futures structured along lines of social class, race and age *as these are experienced in each locality*. The chapter highlights the complex position of CBHE in each of the student narratives. At times CBHE offers a chance to maintain an investment in local capital and realise an undergraduate imagined future, where this would not be possible without the provision. At other times, the dominance of traditional university-based HE in societal narratives and in the stratified HE system means that CBHE is experienced as a form of exclusion from university-based HE. While these narratives argue for the importance of the conceptual framework of the spatial story, where this takes into account the multiple temporalities of educational possibility and impossibility, they also resist individualizing or deficit discourses, instead detailing the structural inequalities through which educational subjectivities are constructed, made available and lived.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis, returning to the research questions to show how these have been addressed. The chapter summarises the development and application of the conceptual framework, which enables the temporal and spatial factors in HE contexts to be explored as part of an interrogation of the inequalities that structure the system. Three key contributions from the study are set out in detail in the final section of this chapter, which closes the thesis by considering the overall implications of the project in the light of these findings.

CHAPTER 2

THE POSSIBILITIES OF POSSIBLE SELVES:

THEORISING THE TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL CONDITIONS OF

EDUCATIONAL SUBJECTIVITY

Introduction

> Possible selves are the ideal selves that we would very much like to
> become. They are also the selves we could become, and the selves
> we are afraid of becoming (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954).

This study requires a conceptualisation of educational subjectivity that can take into account the temporal conditions of contemporary HE in England, and the specificity of the spatial circumstances in which these temporal conditions are lived. The conceptualisation, set out in this chapter, begins with Markus and Nurius' concept of 'possible selves'. As the above quotation suggests, the concept is one way of understanding how the future is imagined in the present. This understanding is particularly important in educational contexts, in which present educational activities and assessments are structured around progression towards and preparation for the next step of further study or employment. In HE, the discourse of employability explicitly and increasingly connects present course of undergraduate study to anticipated graduate future (Christie, 2017; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Tomlinson, 2008). For subjects participating in these educational systems, being able to imagine and to describe futures that accord with what is valued in their educational contexts (Duggan, 2017; Lumb, 2018) can be seen as a kind of currency or Bourdieusian capital (Papafilippou and Bathmaker, 2018).

While the possible selves concept clearly addresses temporality, Prince (2014) argues that futures are imagined in particular locations, and that the particularity of the location is often not taken into account when imagined futures are researched. She highlights how a study of the negative possible selves of young people in juvenile detention centres (Abrams and Aguilar, 2005 cited in Prince, 2014) does not explore the location of the detention centre as contributing to what is possible for the participants in the study to imagine. In educational contexts, both the material environments of educational institutions and surrounding localities, and the narratives of educational possibility that are specific to the place are important to consider in exploring how educational subjectivities are constructed in each context (Henderson, 2018a). The colleges in this study are located in geographical 'cold spots' of HE provision, with accompanying placed histories of little or no investment in HE. For educational subjects participating in HE in these locations, this placed history intertwines with the imperative to imagine educational and employment futures in complex ways. The possible selves concept therefore requires a further theorisation of place and the spatial in order to be applied to the contexts in this study.

This chapter begins by exploring the ways in which the concept of possible selves has been used in research literature. I then explain how the concept is theorised in this study using the work of Ricoeur (1992; 2000) and Butler (1997). This theorisation highlights both the normalised presence of the future in HE (Bennett and Burke, 2017; Clegg, 2010), and the narrative work this temporal imperative requires of educational subjects. In order to position the educational subject within the unequal geographies of HE and the specific circumstances of the local, the chapter moves on

to theorisations of space (Massey, 2005) and the 'spatial story' (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 115-130). The chapter progressively builds a framework that allows for a conceptualisation of the educational subject within the temporal conditions of HE, and within the particular localities of the colleges in the study.

Possible Selves

The possible selves concept is one of several ways in which future temporalities in HE have been theorised in recent research literature. Clegg (2010) looks at academics' experiences of the academy in terms of 'time future', arguing that the future dominates the present in the neoliberal university. In studies of students' temporal experiences, both Duggan (2017) and Woodman (2011) see students' choice-making at key educational transition points as determined by their orientations towards particular kinds of future. These student-focused studies, and Hodkinson and Sparkes' (1997) theorisation of 'careership' highlight the workings of structure and agency in students' plans for the future; the plans are articulated and understood by students as individualised exercises in choice-making, but particular futures are enabled and constrained by the structural effects of social class, race and gender. Although not focused exclusively on the future, Bennett and Burke's (2017) study of students' temporal experiences of HE similarly shows how students are exhorted to 'use' their time effectively, despite the structures that determine the unequal ways in which time is understood and accessed (p. 6). As these studies demonstrate, temporality is an important consideration in studying inequalities in HE, but it is also open to multiple possible theorisations.

The possible selves concept is unusual amongst these theorisations for four key reasons. The first is the concept's emphasis on the plurality of imagined futures, which suggests that several different and potentially contradictory versions of the future might co-exist in the present. The second is the concept's partial collapsing of linear temporality, seeing the imagined future as shaping present experience. The future is imagined as following on from the present, but this linear imagining of the future is also *experienced in* the present, determining present behaviour and justifying present choices. The concept can also be used to show how the multiple imagined versions of the future persist *long after* the future becomes present; the institution not chosen for undergraduate study, for example, can remain crucial to the ways that the chosen institution is understood. The third key aspect of the possible selves concept is its focus on the personalised, embodied nature of the imagined future:

> The assistant professor who fears he or she will not become an
>
> associate professor carries with him or her much more than a
>
> shadowy, undifferentiated fear of not getting tenure. Instead the fear
>
> is personalized (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954).

Here, Markus and Nurius create a contrast between the 'shadowy' nature of an imagined future that is not attached to an embodied subjectivity, and the 'much more' of the 'personalized' future. The extent to which the future is imagined in detail and individualised to a particular subject is referred to in possible selves literature as 'elaboration', with much of the literature arguing that more strongly elaborated possible selves are more likely to affect behaviour. This effect of elaboration is implied in the above example, where the 'personalized' fear of the assistant professor

is more powerful than a 'shadowy, undifferentiated' fear might be. As shown in the section below, many studies using the possible selves concept have focused on this aspect of the concept, exploring how the elaboration of positive possible selves might be enhanced in order to increase the likelihood of their being realised. Finally, the fourth way in which the possible selves concept is unusual is that it allows analysis of how the individualised future both conforms to and makes visible some of the conditions of educational subjectivity (Henderson, 2017). This understanding of the concept is not set out in the original definition of possible selves, in part because this original definition is situated in the discipline of cognitive psychology, and relies upon the language of self-efficacy, self-concept and self-regulation. Adapting the concept in a sociological exploration of educational subjectivity therefore requires further theorisation.

Possible selves and sociological research

Because the possible selves concept works to explore the connection between imagined future and present behaviour, many studies using the concept in diverse fields have focused particularly on motivation. For example, Dark-Freudeman and West's (2016) research on possible selves in the field of healthcare looks at the effect of imagined selves on patients with long term chronic health conditions. The study argues that the development of elaborate and strongly-imagined healthy possible selves gives the patient more motivation to continue with their care plan, and to establish positive health-related behaviours. In the psychotherapeutic context, Bak (2015) similarly found that the extent to which a client was able to imagine a desired future self had a direct impact on their ability to make behavioural changes towards that desired future. In the field of professional education, the possible selves concept

has been used in both teacher education (Hamman *et al.*, 2013; Hamman *et al.*, 2010) and nursing education (Eaton and Donaldson, 2016). These studies argue for the importance of imagined future selves in determining present behaviours, suggesting that the most successful trainee professionals are able to clearly connect the desired future self with the behaviours that will allow them access to that self.

In the field of educational research, the concept has been used in similar ways. Much US-based research has focused on school-aged adolescents, and has established clear connections between the well-imagined academic possible self and motivation to study (Hock, Deshler and Schumaker, 2006; Oyserman, Bybee and Terry, 2006; Pizzolato, 2007; Strahan and Wilson, 2006). Some educational research, in both US and UK contexts, has also explored the ways in which student motivation towards positive academic possible selves differs according to racialised (Oyserman, Gant and Ager, 1995; Stevenson, 2012) and gendered identities (Knox, 2006; Marshall, Young and Domene, 2006). In HE research, studies have focused on how detailed undergraduates' imagined futures are (Segal, 2006), and on how particular possible selves are or are not realised through students' behavioural strategies (Anders, Olmstead and Johnson, 2017). More sociologically oriented uses of the concept in HE research have sought to trouble the focus of possible selves research on behaviour and motivation, arguing for attention to structural inequalities in access to both imagined futures and the possibility of realising them (Henderson, Bathmaker and Stevenson, 2018). For example, Stevenson and Clegg's (2013) study of mature students in HE shows how possible selves research risks minimising past experience and its effects on current educational possibilities. Similarly, Stevenson (2012) uses the concept to show how White and BME students have access to differently elaborated futures as

successful university students. Papafilippou and Bentley (2017) and Papafilippou and Bathmaker (2018) explore graduate experiences, highlighting where transitions from HE are enabled or limited by unequal access not only to imagined futures and to the processes through which elite employment futures are realised. The focus of this research on systemic inequality rather than individual behaviour demonstrates the potential of the possible selves concept to articulate the dialectic between structure and agency in educational trajectories.

The sociological use of the possible selves concept in the present study relies upon the relationships between subjectivity, narrative, and temporality. This approach sees narrative as fundamental to the ways that subjectivity is understood and expressed (see, for example, Clandinin, 2006; Josselson, 2004; Phoenix, 2009). At the same time, narratives of subjectivity are complex. Butler's psychoanalytic theorisation of narrative and subjectivity (2005), for example, indicates how a coherent account of the self belies the very disruption that allows the subject to recognise itself. While narrative structures shape and condition subjective experience and are therefore largely naturalised, they also require often-unnoticed negotiations of conflicting temporalities, as Ricoeur's (1992; 2000) theorisations of narrative temporality and subjectivity demonstrate. Seeing the possible selves concept as highlighting the ways that temporality works in HE contexts for educational subjects, this study also constructs the concept as inherently narrative, implying sequential and causal connections between events. As both Erikson (2007) and Whitty (2002) note, the potential of the possible selves concept in narrative research has yet to be realised. The section below sets out a narrative conceptualisation of possible selves that can support exploration of the structural conditions in which educational subjectivities are

constructed. First, I briefly address the slippage between the terminology of subjectivity and educational subjectivity.

I use the term 'educational subjectivity' to draw attention to the specific qualities of educational experience that construct the subject in an exaggeratedly linear way. However, this is not to suggest that a distinct model or mode of subjectivity operates within the times and places of educational institutions. Particularly because the linearity of the educational subject exaggerates, but also reinforces, the linearity with which subjective experience is already understood and accounted for, the two are not easily distinguishable. Discussions of subjectivity in educational contexts are likely to encompass processes through which narratives of subjectivity are constructed before, during and after, within and without, the subject's occupation of those contexts. I therefore continue to refer to 'educational subjectivity' with an understanding that accounts of such subjectivity are neither easily divided from, nor simply aligned with, accounts of subjectivity not specific to education.

Possible selves, narrative temporality and educational subjectivity
Ricoeur's writing on narrative temporality foregrounds the work done by the narrator to make the narrative comprehensible, and highlights the temporal impossibilities and dissonances on which, paradoxically, narrative coherence relies. Ricoeur's later work (1992) shows how the causal relationships between events upon which a narrative relies must be drawn retrospectively, even while they must then be represented as precipitating the events. In his earlier work, Ricoeur (2000, first published 1980) highlights the ways in which temporalities clash in the telling of a narrative, suggesting that there are two contradictory but co-existing narrative temporalities. He

argues that a narrative is represented and understood in a linear way, with one event preceding the other, leading to a conclusion. At the same time, he argues, the events of the narrative are weighed against one another in a retrospective way, to ensure that the causal connections are strong enough to sustain the narrative's coherence. Ricoeur's focus here is on the work done by the receiver of the narrative, who follows the narrative as it progresses, anticipating the conclusion while also weighing each progression against what has come before. For the purposes of this study, I instead highlight the work done by the narrator in accounting for these competing temporal understandings. In particular, I show how the recourse to narrate a coherent educational subjectivity requires the narrator to create strong causal connections that both anticipate a conclusion and retrospectively justify that conclusion. In highlighting the temporal impossibilities of the narrating position, while arguing for the fundamental place of narrative in understandings of subjectivity, Ricoeur's work shows the fragility and unknowability of the narrating self. He highlights that the subject is inevitably bound to function narratively, but must occupy two contradictory temporalities in order to do so.

Much of Ricoeur's theorisation assumes a narration of *past* events; his discussion of contingency, for example, suggests that causality will be retrospectively applied to events that have already happened, in order to configure these events within a construction of 'retrograde necessity' (1992, p. 142). In contrast, in using Ricoeur's theorisation to think about possible selves, I explore the ways in which current educational subjectivities are narrated towards imagined conclusions. I focus particularly on the recourse to create causal connections between the ongoing present and the imagined future which mean that a conclusion can be understood as

inevitable. This approach will also use the non-linear temporalities (discussed earlier as an advantage of the possible selves concept) to explore the ways in which futures imagined in the past, or 'lost' futures (Stevenson, 2018) are sustained in narratives of present subjectivity. These 'lost' futures show the present and future to be caused by what has *and has not* happened. The imagined future conclusion is therefore narrated as inevitable because of what could never have been, as well as because of what is and was. The possible selves concept can therefore be used to show how powerful narratives of what might have been are retained as a necessary part of the way that the subject narrates their present and imagined future.

Like the possible selves concept, a focus on narrative can risk individualising accounts of educational experience, at the expense of attention to structural inequality. It is therefore important to stress that narratives of educational subjectivity are produced as a condition of participating in education systems, and are therefore constructed according to systemic inequalities. In order to think through the relationship between an individualised version of selfhood produced through narrative, and the structural constraints that work to produce and underpin that narrative, I now turn to Butler's *Excitable Speech* (1997), which theorises the subject's entry into discourse. Butler provides a performative theorisation of subjectivity that builds on the Foucauldian concept of subjectivation. According to this theorisation, the subject's desire for recognition drives their submission to the discursive and material conditions that make them intelligible as a subject (see also Butler, 2004). The term 'subjectivation' describes a simultaneous process through which the subject is recognised *as a subject*, and is also therefore *subjected to* the conditions that structure recognition. In educational contexts, the successful

educational subject performs and narrates themselves according to educational norms (Youdell, 2006), and is therefore recognisable within the terms of the educational system.

In *Excitable Speech,* Butler focuses on the discursive conditions of subjectivity, showing how the subject's entry into discourse relies upon obedience to the norms 'that govern speakability' (p. 133). In her chapter on censorship ('Implicit censorship and discursive agency' pp. 129-164), Butler differentiates between explicit and implicit censorship in speech. She argues that explicit censorship is externally imposed and consciously understood as defining words or concepts that are forbidden from utterance. By contrast, implicit censorship is rarely seen as such, and instead describes the process through which a subject obeys the rules that will make their speech comprehensible and which 'consummate one's status as a subject of speech' (ibid.). This theorisation of subjectivity highlights the repetitive, perpetual self-constitution of the subject, showing subjectivity to be performed and negotiated through multiple discursive acts. Much of Butler's analysis in this volume focuses on specific speech acts, exploring, for example, the impetus for the subject to respond to an injurious name despite its negative properties. Here, I align her theorisation of subjectivity with an understanding of narrative. I argue that, if a subject enters subjecthood through each entry into discourse, an educational subject is repetitively formed through the construction of educational narrative. Not only this, but the narrative formed by each subject is governed by the 'norms' that might make that subject intelligible, and that determine what is 'speakable'. Therefore, the educational subject's repeated participation in discourse relies upon a double compliance with the norms of educational speech. First, the subject must understand and speak their

educational subjectivity narratively. Second, the narrative itself is formed through a negotiation with the norms of what is speakable in their educational context.

The importance of using the possible selves concept within this understanding of the narrative act is that it shows the imagined future as both *a requirement for entry into speakable educational subjectivity*, and as *specifically shaped and limited by the imagined futures that are speakable* in particular educational contexts. Markus and Nurius' (1986) original definition of the possible selves concept describes possible selves that 'we are afraid of becoming' (p. 954). According to a Butlerian theorisation of subjectivity, this suggests that the narration of an imagined future negotiates the boundaries of recognisability, risking and working against the threat of unintelligibility if the boundary is crossed. The original definition also implies the shared positive and negative values attached to one particular future over another (Lumb, 2018), where some are 'ideal', while others are feared (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954). It is important to this study to show how these shared values differ according to context. For example, there are some contexts within which applying to university is dismissed as an unthinkable future (Archer, Hollingworth and Halsall, 2007), and there are some contexts within which a vocational educational future is the most readily available educational subjectivity (Bates, 1984; Brockmann, 2012; Willis, 1977).

This study focuses particularly on how the unequal geographies of HE play a part in shaping what is possible to articulate as an educational future in specific localities. Within these geographies, inequalities such as those of social class, age and race can be understood as placed inequalities (Pahl, 2008), having effects on educational

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subjectivity that are nuanced according to shared histories of place, education and mobility, and the subject's narration of themselves from within these histories. The following section sets out how the problematic terminology of 'space' and 'place' is used in this study, before theorising the placed possible self according to the conceptualisation of educational subjectivity that has now been established.

Space and place

The language of space and place

It is impossible to present a conclusive definition that easily or neatly divides the terms 'space' and 'place'. There are multiple discussions of the definitional struggle between these two terms, seen differently according to different epistemological or methodological leanings (Agnew, 2005; Gulson and Symes, 2007). The terms cannot be used as synonyms, but neither are they often used separately. This discussion explores some differences in the ways that the terms are defined, particularly drawing on the writings of de Certeau (1894) and Massey (1993; 2005) before clarifying how the terms are used in this study.

As Leach (2005, p. 299) argues, there is a common understanding of place as the lived, local 'contextualisation' of space. In this understanding, space is general and abstract. Place takes on the more material specificity of lived experience, produced within or from the generality of space. This definition is reinforced by Carter *et al*. (1993, p. xii, cited in Massey 2005, p. 183), who suggest that 'place is space to which meaning has been ascribed'. Again, space is abstract here, and meaningless without place. It is the stuff upon which place confers its meaning. De Certeau's representation of space and place is different, and is imbued with an analysis of social

structures and power. De Certeau conceptualises place as externally named, defined and enforced. For example, he argues that representations of place, such as maps and architectural drawings, are constructed by people in positions of power. Similarly, he suggests, the positioning and designing of buildings, and the organisation of public areas, (either within or outside of buildings) are determined by those in power. Space, in this theorisation, becomes the lived experience or practice of negotiating around and amongst these externally prescribed places. In contrast to the first definitions discussed above, neither space nor place is abstract or general in the way de Certeau defines the terms. Instead, space, and the spatial, become a way of describing a subject's interaction with the fixity of place. Taken together, the terms depict the relationship between the subject and processes of subjectivation.

Massey (2005) discusses the tendency in each of the above definitions to represent place as fixed. This is clearest in de Certeau's definition, where place is fixed by those in power. Massey questions the division that de Certeau makes between place as defined through the practice of map-making and building, and space as the entirely separate experience of moving through these pre-existing structures. Massey argues that seeing place in this way denies the interactional quality of relationships between subjects and place. Through these interactions, she argues, even the externally determined organisation and representations of place are fluid and constantly shifting. De Certeau's definition does not account for the many and varied meanings made from built places and the uses they are put to by those who did not build them, but who do interact with them. These interactions blur de Certeau's definitional distinction; the spatial movements he describes are intertwined with, rather than separate from, the places in which these movements are made.

Massey similarly interrogates the definitions which conceptualise place as space made more specific, or more meaningful. The risk of these definitions, she suggests, is in their suggestion of completion. For example, Carter *et al.*'s phrasing, 'to which meaning *has been* assigned' (emphasis added) quoted above, could be read as though the assignation of meaning is a single and finite process. In contrast to such fixity, Massey understands place as 'open', 'woven together out of ongoing stories, as a moment within power-geometries, as a particular constellation within the wider topographies of space, and as in process, as unfinished business' (p. 131). In her formulation, the difference between space and place is one of both temporality and scale. Place is a small, temporally specific 'moment' within a larger ongoing temporality that is spatial. This definition has some similarity to those first discussed above, in that place is 'within' the 'wid[th]' of space. In contrast to these definitions, though, the specificity of a place in Massey's definition does not fix or complete its meaning. Instead, the stories through which the meaning of a place is made are never finished, and the meaning of a place is therefore perpetually re-made. Seen in this way, it is only possible to grasp a meaning of a place by fixing it temporally in a 'moment'. This fixing, in turn, can only be done with the acknowledgement that in any other temporal moment, the woven stories of a place would say something different. Like de Certeau, Massey firmly positions discussions of space and place within the concerns of power and societal structure. However, rather than reinforce de Certeau's division between the powerful, who define place, and the powerless, who enact space, Massey argues that varied, messy and unequal relationships of power structure *all* spatial *and* placed experiences. Massey's attention to power dynamics highlights how places are often defined through competing claims to ownership. It is

in the context of these claims that she argues for a definition of place that refuses

fixity, and therefore resists tendencies towards absolute belonging and control.

Despite their differences, the definitions outlined above suggest commonality in terms

of the functions of the language of space and place. In references to lived experiences

and to everyday practice, the definitions show that the terminology of the spatial

signifies materiality, and the practical. De Certeau's and (1984) Massey's (2005)

attention to structures of power suggests that the terminology of space and place must

also be able to depict the subject in their relationship to society, and in relation to

processes of subjectivation. In both the first definition and Massey's definition, place

is associated with specificity, where space signifies width and breadth. This

distinction demonstrates that an important function of the language of space and place

is in the distinguishing of the particular from the general. These multiple signifying

functions of space and place in the definitions above show how heavily loaded the

terms are. In turn, recent non-representational theorisations in geography highlight the

incompleteness and limitations of the ability of language to capture the multiplicity of

lived experience, and of materiality in particular (Anderson and Harrison, 2016a;

Middleton, 2010; Nelson, 1999; Somdahl-Sands, 2013). Despite these persuasive

accounts of what is lost from space and place in its linguistic representation, this study

nonetheless requires the development and definition of the terms of space and place.

Drawing on the definitions explored above, I therefore need a vocabulary for space

and place that distinguishes between the specific and the general, and which accounts

for movement, materiality and practice, and allows for analyses of processes of

subjectivity. I use 'place' to refer to a single location in a way that signals attention to

the specific, rather than the generic, qualities of that location. Necessarily, this use of 'place' confirms de Certeau's conceptualisation, in which place is produced through naming and mapping processes. However, my definition also brings together Massey's, Carter's and Leach's definitions, all of which represent place as operating within space, as a smaller and contextually particular product of it. In thinking about place, I keep in mind Massey's attention to the temporal fixing of a 'moment' that is necessary in creating a coherent account of a place. I therefore see 'place' as specifying time as well as location. As I will go on to show, discussions of place in research literature often demonstrate the relationship between geographical location and unequal distribution of resources. As such, sustaining Massey's and de Certeau's conceptualisations of place in relation to power is achieved through attention to issues of social class, race, gender, age and (dis)abilities. Working with this definition of place, 'space' is therefore understood as the wider context within which place is specified. Following Massey, I see this context as constructed through relationships of power. In order to de-naturalise the power dynamics that structure subjective experience, 'space(s)' also refers to built environments, whose role in shaping subjectivities might otherwise go unnoticed. In order to describe movement through places and spaces, with the material experiences that accompany this movement, I use the adjective 'spatial'. This adjective takes into account de Certeau's conceptualisation of the spatial as the negotiated practice of place.

Spatial possible selves

Having established a spatial vocabulary for the study, this section looks at the relationship between the spatial and narrative subjectivity, showing how, as Prince (2014) argues, the spatial should be an integral part of research on possible selves as

the temporal is. This discussion begins with de Certeau's theorisation of the spatial as part of the formation of subjectivity (1984, pp. 109-110). De Certeau draws upon the Lacanian moment of the splitting that forms the subject, in which the subject's recognition of the self is also their recognition of themselves as other. de Certeau suggests that this moment is implicitly a recognition of the self as occupying space, and as in located in a distinct place. To express this in terms of Butler's theorisation of the subject's entry into discourse through narrative, the narrative understanding and self-expression of the subject are also expressions of the subject *in place and space*. According to Massey's (2005) theorisation of place as set out above, the place occupied by the subject is already structured, at the moment of their self-recognition, by the power-geometries that allow and delimit the possibilities of certain kinds of spatial practices for certain subjects.

Building on the argument that the subject's first moment of self-recognition is spatial, de Certeau's concept of 'spatial stories' (1984, pp. 115-130) insists upon an inevitable connection between the subject and space, seeing space as always occupied in narrative ways. He argues that places are marked and divided narratively, and that this practice stems from a history of 'founding' (p. 123). He uses the example of colonial history to show how divisions or boundaries made around space, drawn in order to create place, are products of narratives of ownership and belonging. While the original 'primary role' (p. 125) of the story as founding, or laying claim and name to space, can no longer be seen so simply, de Certeau argues that this function still operates. He suggests that the founding function is now: 'fragmented (not unique and whole), miniaturized (not on a national scale), and polyvalent (not specialized)' (ibid.). His explanation of these differences draws upon the multiplicity of narratives

that describe and delimit spaces, ranging from inherited familial or cultural narratives, to media representations and official documentation. He sees this narrative practice as echoed and reproduced in the way buildings and streets are named and negotiated, as well as in the ways that places are understood to be occupied by particular populations at different times. Despite the absence of single or dominant founding narratives, de Certeau argues, places are defined and therefore produced narratively, just as movement through space follows a narrative sequential logic. According to this theorisation, if a narrative of subjectivity locates the subject in a place, then that process of self-location requires the subject to narrate their relationship of belonging to and ownership of that place, as part of the 'spatial story' of their subjectivity. And, as Massey (2005) points out, relationships of belonging to place are fraught with collective and individual struggles for and against power structures.

In the second section of this theorisation, de Certeau focuses on the boundary as a spatial and narrative concept (1984, pp. 126-129). He suggests that, if boundaries around space are drawn narratively, boundaries represent both 'frontiers and bridges' (p. 126). He sees the boundary, drawn by a narrative act of 'founding', as marking an interaction between included and excluded space. It acts as a frontier because it marks the edge of what can be narratively understood as 'this space', and space beyond the boundary is signified as alien to that space. The boundary also functions as a bridge, or a point of transition between what is and is not contained by the boundary, and a boundary can only exist if there is space that is both contained and not contained. In this way, the boundary produces inclusion and exclusion, and at the same time relies upon these for its own definition. This, he argues, is the 'paradox of the frontier: created by contacts, the points of differentiation between bodies are also their

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common points. Conjunction and disjunction are inseparable in them' (p. 127). In this theorisation, the founding narrative that underpins the ways that spaces are designated and produced as such is a contradictory space of its own. In this contradictory space, difference and sameness constitute, dispute and reconstitute each other, and the function of the boundary relies upon this cyclical and dynamic process. Narratives of where a place begins and ends are also therefore narratives of what a place is and is not, and an understanding of what is possible within the boundaries of a place is also an understanding of what might be possible outside those boundaries. Just as unrealised futures from the past are important to the narration of the subject in the present, so the possibilities of *another place* are an integral part of the way that each place is understood.

The implications of this theorisation of the spatial for the possible selves concept are that futures, imagined and narrated as part of the conditions of educational subjectivity, are also imagined in *particular places*. Those places, in turn, are defined by the subject through the ways that they narrate belonging to the place, and movement from and within place. Integral to ownership of and belonging to place are narratives of where a place begins and ends, which establish what the place, and the spaces within it, are and are not. Narratives of possible selves therefore do not only set out what the subject understands as temporally imaginable or unimaginable in their educational future, but they also define the geographical boundaries within which the future is imagined. These boundaries are established through a narrative in which the bounded place and the subject's relationship to place intertwine to produce the possibilities and impossibilities for the future.

The HE cold spot is a clear example of the ways in which the spatial and possible selves can be understood together according to this conceptualisation. The unequal distribution of HE across England, along with the historical tradition of leaving the familial home to begin undergraduate study, mean that a subject's imagined future of undergraduate education is always also a spatial story of the possibility or necessity of mobility. This spatial story is also inflected by the subject's narrative of belonging to place, and their drawing of boundaries around their location in place by establishing the educational possibilities within it. The ways that these educational possibilities are understood, as well as the distribution of HE within the boundaries of a place, are themselves affected by the layered historical and collective narratives of the association between location and HE provision.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that researching inequalities in HE requires a theorisation of the temporal and spatial conditions in which educational subjectivities are constructed and narrated. Beginning with the concept of possible selves, the chapter has built a conceptual framework for this theorisation of educational subjectivity. The framework conceptualises the subject as operating within contemporary HE conditions that prioritise linear progression towards an imagined future. This kind of future is both described and analysed using the possible selves concept, which can show the narrative work required of the subject in order to produce coherent narratives of educational subjectivity. Coherent narratives, in which causal, individualised connections are established between the choices made and the conclusions reached by those choices, are seen in this chapter as conditional to intelligibility as an educational subject. At the same time, the possible selves concept

shows how unrealised futures, imagined in the past, serve to establish these causal connections. The individualised focus of the causally linked self-narrative can, however, be resisted by showing how the imagined future is inflected by what is implicitly understood as possible and impossible in particular educational contexts. These educational contexts are theorised as spatial contexts, places which gain their definition from narratives of what is and is not possible within their boundaries. As the subject locates themselves in place, their narratives of possible and lost futures intertwine with these shared narratives of place. As well as articulating the temporal imperatives of subjectivity in HE, narratives of possible selves therefore also highlight the spatial inequalities that make some educational futures only imaginable or speakable in another, unrealised, time and place.

Over the course of this thesis, this framework prompts questions of the 'spatial stor[ies]' of CBHE in the places and spaces of the case institutions. Fundamental to these spatial stories is the concept of the 'local', where this applies to both institution and student. Using the conceptualisation established in this chapter, I construct the local as defining the characteristics of a geographical area and its associations with HE, as delimiting the boundaries within which students narrate a sense of belonging and beyond which mobility is impossible, and as shaping the ways that spaces are understood as typical of or produced by the characteristics of the locality. I also see students' narratives of themselves and the 'local' areas they live in as temporal narratives in which possible futures are imagined, dismissed or remembered in complex relationships to their present educational subjectivities, and always according to the spatial logic of their locality. This framework also allows the causally coherent narrative of educational subjectivity to be questioned and de-

naturalised in order to acknowledge and resist the individualising temporal conditions of contemporary English HE, and to assert the impact of the structural inequalities that shape and are masked by those conditions.

CHAPTER 3

POSSIBLE SELVES AND SPATIAL STORIES: EXPLORING EDUCATIONAL SUBJECTIVITIES IN SOCIAL GEOGRAPHIES RESEARCH LITERATURE

Introduction

> Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice.
>
> (de Certeau, 1984, p. 115)

The concept of the 'spatial story' set out in Chapter 2 argues for a combining of the spatial and the temporal, so that the temporalities of HE are understood to underpin the narration of placed educational subjectivities. This chapter sustains that conceptual work by looking at the 'spatial stories' told through geographies research literature. The chapter responds to the above quotation from de Certeau's (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life* by using the study's temporal theorisation of narrative subjectivity to ask what these spatial stories say about spatial practice, and how this can be applied to the context of CBHE. In order to narrow the field of enquiry and navigate the intersection between social geographies research and educational geographies more specifically, the chapter is organised according to the three categories of contemporary educational geographies research set out by Brooks, Byford and Sela (2016) (see also Taylor, 2009). The chapter takes each of these categories – place and localities, mobilities, and built spaces – in turn, first engaging with literature in the field of social and cultural geographies, and then focusing specifically on educational literature. These shifts in focus facilitate an exploration of

how spatial concerns that are addressed in educational research literature are not limited to that literature, but extend into and can be used in dialogue with wider research on subjectivities and the spatial. In each section, the studies addressed are selected because they allow for an interrogation of how spatial stories are constructed and how the language of place, mobilities and space is performed and produced in existing research. These studies also either implicitly or explicitly engage with the ways that the spatial constructs and is constructed by power-geometries (Massey, 1993) which enable and limit available subjectivities according to inequalities of, for example, social class, race, age and gender.

The final section of the chapter shifts from away from purely geographical research literature, and shows how the considerations of the spatial outlined thus far are related to the CBHE context. In the light of issues of class, race, gender and age that are addressed in research literature on space and place, this section shows how these issues are particularly relevant to the spaced and placed inequalities specific to CBHE.

Place and locality

Massey's definition of place as 'woven together of ongoing stories' (2005, p. 131) is borne out in studies that focus on issues of locality and its relationship to subjectivity. These studies conceptualise place as understood and experienced narratively, as a negotiation of the multiple shared, inherited, or individual narratives, alongside or against which subjects position themselves. Many of these studies highlight the ways in which social class, gender and race are implicated in subjects' self-positioning in narratives of place. They show place to be highly complex in refracting experiences

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of inequality according to the specificities and particularities of geographical location. Dorling (2012), for example, analyses the social and economic context of the 2011 London riots by seeing the place of London in that temporal moment as a particular constellation of stark economic inequalities. Dorling's argument reinforces Massey's conceptualisation of place as a temporal, and temporary, fixing of spatial narrative, but he also draws attention to the enduring nature of economic inequality. In this argument, an analysis of the riots must bring together the factors of economic disparities between rich and poor, the economic policies that engendered these disparities, and the experiences of these inequalities in the place and the moment of the London riots. Read through the conceptualisation of narrative set out in the previous chapter, Dorling's study highlights the complexity of temporal and narrative positions that come together to form an understanding of a moment of place. At once, this moment is informed by enduring narratives that shape past experience and imagined future, whilst also representing the temporally specific constellation of these narratives in a single moment.

It is also important to think through the shared, collected, and often inherited nature of narratives of place, particularly in relation to national, historical trends in industrialisation and its aftermath. For example, Taylor's (2012) project focuses on classed and gendered experiences in the post-mining places of the north-east of England. As in Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody's (2001) analysis of shame in post-industrial Wales, this context is premised upon the definition of place, and experiences of place, through histories of industry and its loss (see also Massey, 2013). Like Dorling's work, this study can similarly be read through a conceptualisation of narrative, temporalities and place. Taylor finds that working

class experiences of the loss of the mining industry became inherited family narratives. For many of her younger participants, the narratives are a part of their relationship to place, despite their never having lived through the loss of the mining industry themselves. She also explores classed relationships to policy-driven narratives of 'regeneration', finding that many of her participants experience this as a silencing of their local history. Highlighting the contradictions of the term 'regeneration', Taylor argues that the term creates a narrative of prosperity and growth. This prosperity is defined by its relationship to difficulty, deprivation and loss, without which regeneration would not be necessary. At the same time as it relies upon these factors, the narrative places them in the past, defining itself against them. Taylor refuses to divide prescribed, public narratives of place from individual narratives (see also Jones (2013), for a similar refusal to divide narratives of public policy from those of local enactment). Instead her account can be read as showing the temporal complexity involved in narratives of subjectivity that negotiate across multiple shared narratives. Similarly, her discussion of the enduring nature of post-mining narratives reinforces the connection between temporality and place, showing how the place-specific past blurs into the present. In exploring the future-oriented narrative of regeneration, Taylor shows this prescribed narrative as both relying on and denying the possibility of particular pasts to be carried into the future. Throughout her analysis, she argues that narrative experiences of place differ distinctly across lines of gender and of class.

Social class as both a shared and individually defined category is closely related to, and often told through narratives of place. Benson and Jackson's (2013) research on middle class narratives of place again argues for the intertwining of social classed and

placed identities. This research uses the concept of performativity to argue that the relationship to place is discursively enacted, through both narratives and actions that link subjectivity to place. Benson and Jackson focus on middle class participants living in, and participating in the gentrification of, the London 'neighbourhood' (p. 793) of Peckham. They show their participants recounting narratives of Peckham as a deprived and dangerous area to live, in order to position themselves against these narratives and offer more positive alternatives. In this narrative self-positioning, Benson and Jackson argue, the participants need to performatively re-narrate Peckham so that it can be seen as coherent with their narrations of themselves as middle class subjects. Although Benson and Jackson's analysis is focused on the performativity in the present, their participants' narratives of participation in local events and on local committees for the purpose of improving and contributing to the area can be seen in relation to possible selves and imagined futures. Their individual participation therefore creates an imagined future self whose narrative of subjectivity firmly embeds them in their contribution to their locality. For Benson and Jackson, this relationship to place, and particularly the performativity of improvement to place, is heavily marked by social class.

The variety of ways that places are defined and described in the above studies demonstrates how complex the process of determining place is; in some research, a place is a housing estate, an area of a city, while in others, it is a whole town or city. Important to each of these implicit definitional practices is an understanding that, as de Certeau argues (1984), the naming of places is a narrative practice. Accordingly, the study of places works to narratively produce a relationship between place and the

study's subjects. The next section explores how educational institutions and systems are also inextricably bound up in this relationship.

Place, locality and education

In the context of schooling in England, the geographical logic of the school catchment area creates a clear connection between locality and education. Reay and Lucey's (2000) study of 'two inner city schools' (p. 412) found that the schools cannot be divided from the local areas they served. Their analysis of the role that their participants' homes on council estates played in their study of educational experiences shows how the council estate and educational experience are cyclically intertwined (see also Hanley, 2016). They outline how the geographical logic of catchment areas for schools in the UK has meant that, as in their study, two inner-city schools within the same education authority cannot claim to serve the same 'place'. 'Place', instead, where it links to the experience of school, becomes a product of the area, or 'micro-geograph[y]' (p. 413), from which a school population is drawn. The study's analysis of schoolchildren's narratives of living on inner-city council estates has similarities to the research discussed above; the participants are shown to be aware of collectively understood negative narratives of council estates, and narrate their identities according to positions of rejection or endorsement of these larger narratives. However, these are also shown to be narratives of educational subjectivity and possibility.

The effects of these micro-geographies endure beyond compulsory schooling. Both Ball, Maguire and Macrae's (2000) and Bauder's (2001) studies detail how divisions between and within places affect educational futures in post-compulsory education.

Bauder's (2001) research in the US shows how 'neighborhood effect' has an impact on career futures that is hard to understand even with analysis of 'local sociodemographic context' (p. 593). His argument could be seen to support that of Reay and Lucey (2000), in that he explores the arbitrary divisions between institutional catchment area, and the differentiated access to educational experiences in each area. Seen in this way, institutions create placed, temporal effects that correspond to the area they serve. Ball, Maguire and Macrae's (1998) study of FE colleges in England shows how the arbitrariness of catchment area intersects with the pressure for institutions to create coherent market narratives of their prospective populations. Focusing particularly on race, the article discusses different institutional responses to increased numbers of ethnic minority students in their population, and therefore in their local market of prospective students. The marketing narratives that connected race identity to place in order to establish institutional belonging work alongside other multiple narratives of place, distance and imagined career futures to structure students' choice of future institution.

Because they are positioned in local, national and global systems, and because English students traditionally move explicitly to live on or near the institutional site, HE institutions' relationships to place are still more complex than those of colleges and schools. Comparing the experiences of student parents across England and Denmark, Brooks (2015) shows how HE institutions must be understood as operating at the level of national policy and international policy as well as within their immediate local area. The comparative focus of this study highlights the interaction between institutional place and subjectivity, by showing how a homogenised student category such as 'student parent' is understood and experienced differently in

different national contexts. Chatterton's (2000) paper on the history of place and the university focuses particularly on English universities within these local, national and global contexts. He argues that the drive towards internationalisation has meant both that universities are place-less, and that English universities rely upon a national, and therefore place-specific, reputation. Alongside these international and national considerations, Chatterton argues, are further complexities in understandings of the university as contributing to its immediate locality. In particular, Chatterton identifies the shift to 'mass' HE in the UK as bringing with it changes to understandings of the university as drawing students from its local area, and establishing graduate employment links within that local area.

Although Chatterton does not explore this directly, the stratification, as well as massification, of UK HE is crucial here. As Bathmaker *et al.* (2016) note in their discussion of two universities which are in the city of Bristol, the hierarchies of HE have particularly placed relationships. Members of the elite Russell Group of universities are never located in the same city, and tend to compete nationally and internationally with other elite institutions for their student intake. On the other hand post-1992 institutions in the same city as Russell Group institutions are likely to draw far more students from their immediate or regional locality (see Stich (2014) for a similar analysis of locality and institutional reputation in the US context). An HE institution's engagement with local students and employers is therefore both a result of, and constitutive of, its reputation and standing in national and international hierarchies of HE. What these studies show is that the specificity of any one university's integration with its local area is determined through national and international educational structures. As such, wider narratives that define the purposes

and nature of education become part of the multiple narratives of any one moment of place (Massey 2005). The studies also demonstrate that narratives of educational subjectivities must be negotiated through that institution's multiple narratives of interaction with its locality, and its locality understood within a national and international context.

For individual students within a stratified HE system, narratives of institution and place coalesce. Chatterton's (1999) study focuses on traditionally 'mobile' students, exploring their relationships to the cities in which they are studying HE. Along with other research on 'studentification' (see, for example, Hubbard, 2008; 2009; Smith and Holt, 2007), this article suggests that HE students have a particular impact on and understanding of their place of study. Much of this research is based on understandings of the traditional student, whose occupation of the city in which they are studying is transient, seasonal, and privileged in access to disposable income and flexible schedule. These characteristics lead to particular practices of place-making, in which the generic social practices of the student override the possibility of specifically local engagements with the place and population (Smith and Hubbard, 2014). The contrast created in this literature is between this type of student and the non-student inhabitants of the same city. Chatterton, however, also identifies a contrast between the traditional and the non-traditional student, and the ways in which these students occupy their places of study. Like Bathmaker *et al*. (2016), who show how students of a Russell Group and post-1992 institution occupy different areas of the same city, he concludes that student areas of the city are divided along lines of social class, age, and mode of study. Chatterton's participants position themselves as particular types of student according to the parts of the city that they are, and are not,

prepared to spend time in. In both of these examples, the larger 'place' of a city is divided into many smaller places, each with its own narrative construction, and students narrate themselves as recognisable educational subjects in relation to these smaller places.

The studies discussed in this section have drawn attention to both the endurance and instability of associations between education and place. The experience of a place can be narrated differently by different subjects, showing its fragile relationship to time and subject position. At the same time, these differences are articulated through longstanding common narratives of inclusion and exclusion, of which kinds of subject can and cannot occupy them. The section below addresses the first of these categories, exploring the ways in which a subject's relationship to place is often also a relationship to narratives of leaving, staying in or moving within place.

Mobility

This section argues that a key element in the relationship between subjectivities and place is spatial movement, the possibility of which is inflected by inequalities of class, race and gender. The section demonstrates a close connection between mobility and imagined futures, even in research literature that does not use the possible selves concept as such. For example, in Cahill's (2007) study on working class and African American housing within a city, the narratives of place that her participants found most contradictory were those in which they imagined futures of leaving or staying in the housing estate. Choosing to stay where they had grown up would demonstrate an investment and belief in the area. Leaving, on the other hand, would be a performance of success, of having achieved the resources required to move away. In showing her

participants' struggle to create coherent narratives of subjectivity that negotiated these contradictory positions, Cahill highlights that dominant, shared narratives of place can also be narratives of movement from that place. For Cahill's participants, imagining the future also means creating an imagined subject position in relation to mobility or fixity. Leyshon and Bull's (2011) narrative analysis of young people's relationships to their rural towns similarly demonstrates their participants as positioning themselves against or alongside shared narratives of place. Here, however, claims of belonging relate to collective narratives of these smaller villages as befitting a particular kind of placed subject. For the young people in their study, they argue, the 'coherence of a sense of self' (p. 165) relies upon identification with narratives of their towns as being for retired people, for example, or as repressive. In focusing on these particular negative qualities, the young people in the study show themselves to be different from or in opposition to them, and use these oppositions to narrate an imagined future of mobility.

The relationship between social class and mobility is also drawn out in Allen and Hollingworth's (2013) study of educational and employment aspirations in de-industrialised urban places in England. Their study makes an explicit connection between social and geographical mobility, arguing that access to geographically mobile employment futures is determined by privilege and limited by socio-economic disadvantage. Here, place and mobility must be understood together, in that access to careers such as those in the 'creative industries' is limited in the de-industrialised places of the study. For the working class participants in this study, family and employment histories go back for generations, and become a part of the inherited

narratives of place, making movement from place of birth less likely and therefore access to these particular careers impossible.

However, although there is a clear connection between social privilege and the experience or possibility of mobility, Jackson's (2012) research warns against a simple understanding of this connection. The title of Jackson's paper describes her participants, homeless young people in London, as 'fixed in mobility'. This phrasing brings together the opposing concepts of fixity and mobility in a seeming contradiction that describes her participants' daily movements from one place of temporary accommodation to another. The study shows that fixity to a place of residence can be seen to represent privilege when compared to the alternative of fixity to no place, and therefore to mobility. Jackson's phrasing destabilises the relationship between fixity and place, showing that a tendency to read the two words together risks ignoring the least privileged narratives of mobility. The phrase 'fixed in mobility' also demonstrates the role of temporality in discussions of mobility. Often, the concept of fixity describes a lasting lack of movement from place that extends from the past to imagined movement in the future. In Jackson's research, the association between privilege and mobility is undermined by the fact that her participants are perpetually moving, and are therefore denied permanence of anything other than further movement.

Education and mobilities

The complex relationship between place, mobility and temporality outlined above is also explored in educational literature, particularly in research addressing choice of HE institution. Bright's (2011) ethnography of working class school students in

English former coal mining towns reinforces Taylor's (2012) findings of inherited industrial narratives. His participants describe the idea of moving away from home to attend university as a betrayal of mining values, and therefore as impossible for them. Their future fixity in place is therefore reinforced by remembered and inherited past narratives of place. Bright's own description of the research site as a 'former coal-mining community' (p. 63) shows that the present of the place can only be understood through a narrative of industry and its loss. Bright describes his participants as 'resistant' (p. 75) to their interpellation into a linear educational narrative that ends with leaving home. They could just as easily be seen, like Cahill's (2007) participants, as narratively positioning themselves as recognisable subjects according to available narrative subject positions of leaving (success) or staying (loyalty). Like Cahill (2007), Bright connects a narrative of loyalty to place with a characterisation of the place as economically deprived, and his participants as working class, reinforcing the above association between mobility and privilege.

The strong connection between social class and mobile educational subjectivities has also been conceptualised more theoretically, by adapting existing sociological tools to spatial contexts. Corbett's (2007) study of high school students in rural Canada uses the concept of mobility in conjunction with a Bourdieusian understanding of capital (Bourdieu, 2011). In the rural Canadian context, pursuing post-compulsory education requires mobility, and the study finds that school students with previous mobile experiences or social knowledge of others with that experience are more able to imagine this kind of educational mobility. Corbett's Bourdieusian analysis therefore makes strong connections between social and cultural capital and mobility capital. Just as Bright argues that a fixity to place is narrated through inherited social

narratives of that place, so Corbett sees mobility capital as gained through the inherited narrative of family members and social groups for whom educational mobility is expected and important. In turn, he argues, a lack of mobility capital is strongly linked to the lack of social and cultural capital associated with the working class participants in his study.

Like Bright, Corbett argues that the 'rooted' (p. 783) participants in his study represent an opposition to a universal educational narrative that associates success with spatial movement between places. As the study points out, mobility capital works in two ways. First, the experiences of mobility accrued in early life determine the likelihood of future educational mobility. Secondly, within educational institutions and educational research, past and current mobility is valued because it is associated with educational success. Corbett's study is useful in that it calls for an understanding of educational mobility trajectories that take into account the nuances of relationships to place. However, his concept of mobility capital risks reinforcing existing associations between mobility and privilege by representing mobile educational subjects as *having* this capital, and 'rooted' educational subjects as *lacking* it. Although not in quite these terms, Corbett describes a counter-narrative of attachment to place, with which his 'rooted' participants align themselves. The same participants are also shown to be less successful in school education, and disinterested in studying at HE level. In Corbett's description, a narrative of recognisable educational subjectivity is incompatible with a narrative of attachment to place.

In the UK in particular, there is a strong narrative association between attending HE and moving from one place to another. Holdsworth (2009b) situates this association in

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the historical context of elite collegiate universities. She argues that the assumption

that attending university means moving out of the familial home is outdated, in the

current context of massified UK HE that sees increasing numbers of students

recruited to their nearest education provider. As studies of the HE living choices made

by South Asian female students by Bhopal (2016) and Ahmad (2001) show, the

undergraduate mobility imperative is more complex when refracted through minority

experiences of race and religion. 'Going away' to university (Holdsworth, 2009a;

2009b) as a narrative, however, is still powerfully associated with shared societal

narratives of undergraduate education as a rite of passage on the linear progression to

adulthood and independence (Holdsworth, 2006). Such is the strength of these

narrative associations that, as Holdsworth finds in her study of local students in

Liverpool, popular culture classifies residents as either students or locals, but never as

both (Holdsworth, 2009a, p. 225). These narratives, once the only possible description

of participation in HE, now depict elite participation in HE. As such, the connection

between privilege and mobility made outside of educational contexts (Jackson, 2012)

is reinforced within the HE context. More privileged students of HE are both more

likely to move away to study, and, as Holdsworth finds, to have their privilege

reinforced by easy access to the 'student experience' (Holdsworth, 2006).

While acknowledging the strong associations between 'local' students and markers of

disadvantage such as lower social class (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Christie, 2007),

both Christie (2007) and Holton (2015) highlight the advantages of local knowledge.

They explore local students' attachment to place as positive, showing how remaining

'local' when studying HE allows for the long-term maintenance of friendships,

familial relationships and employment connections. As Holton (2015) demonstrates,

the multiple places within a single city locality mean that 'local' students explore their city in a new way as students. Their experience of place, as long-term resident and short-term student, is ultimately more lasting and more diverse than the students in Chatterton's (1999) study of 'studentification'. The longstanding assumptions behind perceptions of student mobilities are also the focus of Holton and Finn's (2018) research with commuter students attending Lancaster University in England. This study highlights the multiple 'everyday' mobilities of students who commute daily to university, rather than living in university accommodation. These findings challenge binary understanding in which students who do not leave home to study are assumed to be immobile, and students who have moved to live within minutes of their social spaces and lecture halls are assumed to be mobile. Instead, the commuter students in this study are highly mobile, often in contrast to their perceived-as-mobile peers.

As literature on mobility demonstrates, narratives of subjectivity are constructed not only in relation to shared narratives of place, but also to shared narratives of movement from or attachment to place. Educational subjectivities, particularly in HE, are constructed according to this movement, as well as according to the specificities of any one given place. The section below looks at how these narratives of place and mobility are inextricable from the 'being-in' (Kraftl and Adey, 2008) of educational spaces, first outlining research on materiality and the spatial.

Built spaces

Literature on the relationship between the body and the built environment affirms the importance and complexity of researching spatial experience. Middleton (2010) addresses this directly in her study of walking in the city, exploring the capacity of the

language of the spatial to capture the embodied and sensory experience of walking. She argues that, although much theoretical attention has been given to the significance of walking as a practice that represents the body's interaction with space, there is relatively little research on daily habits, routines and processes of walking. For Middleton, the recording of repeated, mundane movement through space is an important material addition to what is already understood about the symbolism of the practice of walking. She situates spatial practice in the material interaction between the body and its immediate environment. Beyes and Steyaert (2012) similarly focus on the minutiae of material experience in their study of spatial practice in organisations. This study uses non-representational theory, which sees space as enacted, rather than given (see also Anderson and Harrison, 2016b), and which explores affect and materiality as part of the 'mutiple forces' through which space is constituted (Beyes and Steyaert 2012, p.48). Also conceptualising the interaction between bodies and space, Gregson and Rose (2000) adopt Butler's theorisation of performativity (see also Nelson, 1999). Their discussion of car boot sales uses these temporary spaces to show how the citationality of bodies performing given roles within a given space works to define that space. The space of the car boot sale, minus the bodies driving cars to it, and selling from cars within it, is read as a playing field or a local park. With a space whose function is fluid, Gregson and Rose convey how spaces are defined through their use, and how bodies and spaces both define and are defined by each other.

These studies conceptualise subjectivity as spatial, so that a subject's understanding and narration of themselves is negotiated through the material interactions that make and are made by space. They also show the definitional, narrative work done by

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spaces and bodies, through which a space can be momentarily one kind of space, and the next moment another. The temporal focus of these theorisations is often on the transitory present as it represents the habitual present. For example, Middleton (2010) uses the terminology of 'time-space' and 'spatio-temporal' to signify that her participants' experiences of walking are specific not only to the urban inner city, but to their temporal moment. This sense of the specificity of the moment is then combined with a representation of walking as a habitual, repeated practice. Similarly, the temporary present of the car boot sale space is seen as possible only through its repetition, and therefore its citation and shared definitional practices. Unwritten in these accounts is a sense of whether such repeated, habitual present moments work to construct imagined futures, and to establish the available or recognisable spatial subject positions within those futures.

Educational Spaces

In educational terms, the language of 'going to' an educational institution (Gulson and Symes, 2007) encompasses a range of meanings. These meanings range from the material, felt movement from one place to another, to the body's interaction with institutional space, to the narrative significance attached to progression onto, through and beyond a course of study, and, particularly in HE, to associations with leaving home and gaining independence. This signifying complexity is shown in Crimmins' (2016) study, which looks at women working in casual academic roles in HE. Crimmins shows how spaces such as offices, which are often not made available to casual workers, come to represent the spaces of academia that are closed off to women (see also Charteris *et al.*, 2016). Habel and Whitman (2016) demonstrate the metaphorical and material language of the spatial as they discuss 'doors of

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perception' in academic culture. Like some discussions of widening undergraduate access (see, for example, Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009), Habel and Whitman use the spatial ideas of inside and outside, doors and openings to conceptualise their participants' feelings of belonging to the academy. As they point out, these ideas are neither purely metaphorical nor purely material, but both at once. A closed door creates both a material experience of being external to a built environment, and a powerful metaphorical representation of exclusion. Kenyon's (1999) research on the changing significance of 'home' for students over the course of their undergraduate studies reverses the spatial gaze of these studies. For her, the space of the familial home, and shifting attachments to it, is used to reflect the transitional experience of studying in HE. As in the previous studies, the space she researches is heavily weighted with both material and metaphorical significance. Her participants' discussions of what differentiates the material conditions of university residences from their familial homes are also discussions of the definitional, symbolic distinctions between housing and homes.

Holton's (2016) research into the exclusionary properties of HE spaces focuses on university halls of residence. Here the homogenous, repetitive spaces of university halls reinforce the social capital of students who conform to normative social identities. For these students, their participation in university sport or social societies is echoed by the participatory, shared nature of the halls of residence space. As Holton argues, the homogeneity of these spaces also works to highlight and single out differences in identity such as sexual orientation or religion, particularly where religion prohibits drinking alcohol. Holton find that in spaces defined by their identical room size and layout, complex hierarchies and power dynamics are created

through engagement with the kind of socialising encouraged by the space itself, and by shared societal narratives of student life. Without referring to future temporalities, this study nonetheless demonstrates that complex temporalities of past understandings and social positionings are part of present negotiation with space. If educational institutions are understood as transitional spaces (Kenyon 1999), they must also be understood to shape imagined future subjectivities through the present material and metaphorical understandings of subjects in spaces.

While these studies discuss institutional educational spaces as generic, it is also important to think through the significances of different kinds of academic space. Literature on learning environments, (see, for example, Strange and Banning, 2001; 2015; Temple, 2018) suggests a strong relationship between the organisation of a learning environment, and the learning that is possible within it. In a paper that highlights how buildings actively perform functions according to their design, Gieryn (2002) follows the stages of architectural design of a research institute at Cornell University. The study argues that the building performs a desired identity for biotechnical research, and for the university, and at the same time shapes the ways that academic work takes place within it through its organising of social and working spaces. The experience of 'being-in' educational buildings is explicitly related to affect in Kraftl and Adey's (2008) study of an ecological kindergarten, which shows how the materiality of the spaces is shaped by and shaping of an idealisation of childhood. Future temporalities and possible selves are implicit in these analyses. For Gieryn, the new building offers and closes down possible future spatial interactions throughout the design process, while Kraftl and Adey's interviews with kindergarten

teachers highlights how adult visitors experience the space as a lost, once-possible, childhood space of their own (p. 219).

The capacity of institutional spaces to shape imagined futures is addressed directly by Turner and Manderson's (2007) study of the 'Coffee House' at McGill University Law Faculty in Canada. The 'Coffee House', like the car boot sales researched by Gregson and Rose (2000), is a temporary space in the law faculty. It is a weekly, evening event with cocktails and jazz music, sponsored by different law firms each week, to which the law firms 'send their youngest and best dressed lawyers to mingle with the crowd and convince those to whom they speak that their firm is the most successful, the most prestigious and the highest paid' (p. 761). Part of the researchers' interest in the 'Coffee House' is in the temporary nature of the space. For the duration of the event, the institutional space of the law faculty is transformed into a space with different norms, which operate despite the fact that the event bears no resemblance to the cultural norms of a coffee house. Turner and Manderson's analysis of interviews with law students who attend this event shows how the space works as more than a recruitment opportunity. In attending the event, and participating in the way the space is structured, they argue, the law students learn to perform their future identities as lawyers. The temporary space works as a transition between their present as students and their future as professionals, particularly as they interact with young successful lawyers throughout the event. Turner and Manderson use Butler's theory of performativity to show how behavioural practices that are citational of professional legal practice are also spatial practices, specific to this temporary and transitional space. This theorisation brings together embodied spatial practice, the temporal

fragility of the present, and the force of the imagined future, showing how institutional spaces become heavy with material and metaphorical significance.

Taken together, these studies show that material interactions with spaces are always also interactions with shared narratives of the function and purpose of those spaces, which structure how bodies are permitted or encouraged to use the spaces. These collective narratives are intertwined with individual narratives of subjectivity, and shape the ways in which futures are imagined and told. The studies discussed above are also ultimately indivisible from the previous discussions of place and mobilities. Just as the narratives that constitute a place at any given moment are also narratives of the possibility or desirability of movement from that place, so institutional spaces cannot be seen as removed from their geographical location. The narrative of educational subjectivity that is shaped by an interaction with institutional space is therefore shaped by shared perceptions of institutional narrative and norms, and mediated by the narratives of place within which the institution positions itself.

In the section below, I show how each of the above discussions of place and space is relevant to the context of this study of CBHE in England. In order to do so, I draw on recent research into CBHE, and pay particular attention to the role of place, space and the spatial within this research.

Space, place, and CBHE

Place and locality

Gallacher *et al.*'s (2002) study of the spatial structures of FE colleges highlights how heavily embedded FE colleges are in their geographical place, often recruiting

students from their immediate localities (Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 1998). Research by Hodgson and Spours (2015) and Feather (2013) argues that this embeddedness in locality is in fact what makes FE distinctive as a type of educational provision. These studies highlight the connections between FE colleges and local employers, showing that FE colleges interact with local businesses and communities in ways that, as Chatterton's (2000) article debates, would be unusual in the university sector. Both Hodgson and Spours (2015) and Feather (2013) suggest that this distinctive relationship to locality is traditional for FE. This research suggests that in order to understand any FE college, the narratives that intertwine to create both shared and individual understandings of its particular geographical location must be understood.

FE colleges that provide HE are especially linked to complex narratives of place that work at national and local levels. As research by Avis and Orr (2016) points out, larger providers of CBHE are situated in 'cold spots' of HE provision in England (see also statistics from the Education and Training Foundation, 2016). The patterns of CBHE provision in England are therefore relational; where there is more university provision, undergraduate courses in FE colleges are limited in range of subjects offered. Where university provision is relatively scarce, FE colleges offer a greater range of subjects. These patterns work in congruence with a national logic of HE provision that suggests, despite the traditional narrative of leaving the familial home to attend HE (Christie, 2007; Holdsworth, 2009b), that institutions of HE should be within easy reach of any home location. As Bathmaker (2016) notes in her discussion of whether CBHE offers distinctive HE provision, the resulting perception of CBHE is that it provides for 'underserved' local populations (p. 28) (see also Parry and Thompson, 2002). What is important about this understanding of CBHE is that, as

both Reay and Lucey's (2000) and Stich's (2014) studies of institutions and places show, an educational institution comes to be associated with the place in which it is located. In turn, that place is associated with the people who live there, as Cahill's (2007) aforementioned study of working class African Americans on the Lower-East Side of Manhattan demonstrates. Because the historical development of HE in England means that an area with less university provision is likely to have been less prosperous, or to have been heavily affected by industrial loss, it is more likely to be constituted through narratives of deprivation and lack. Colleges, which are implicated in these narratives through the viability of the area's HE provision – more viable in areas less served by universities – are then part of, and productive of, further narratives of place and prosperity. As Stich's definition of reputational affect shows, shared narratives of social class and race associated with economically poor areas become 'deeply felt, socially constructed components of everyday life' (Stich, 2014, p. 30) in which institutional and placed reputations are combined and compounded.

As the above research demonstrates, place works in a causal relationship with the provision of CBHE. In a national logic of place and HE, colleges offer more HE in places that are underserved by universities. To put it so simply, however, is to ignore the shared, inherited narratives that accompany the perception of a place as 'underserved' by university provision. That a place is underserved already suggests a historical lack of all that is represented by the presence of university spaces in any location (Chatterton, 2000). There is an immediate connection between an area that is underserved by universities, and its population. A college therefore represents a particular constellation of narratives of place, an intertwining of narratives of provision that remedies a lack, histories of associated lack and deprivation, and

populations that are positioned within and as indivisible from these deficit narratives. As Stich highlights, these narratives are likely to create a shared understanding of institutional populations as underprivileged, whether or not this is statistically or relationally the case. The cyclical relationship between place, population and institution means that students' narratives of educational subjectivity in CBHE are particular, both to the provision's national placed patterns, and to the specific narratives that constitute each college's locality. The imagined futures that are implicated in beginning, progressing through or completing an educational course must therefore be understood as shaped by complex connections to the temporal intricacies of place.

Mobilities

The above understanding of CBHE provision as particularly serving national HE 'cold spots' (Avis and Orr, 2016) is also a narrative of im/mobilities. It is important to identify geographical areas with little or no HE provision (cold spots) if it is understood that not all HE students move their place of residence in order to attend a course. As discussed above, the designation of an area as a 'cold spot' is far from a neutral statement, but instead participates in the narratives of place that already constitute that area as lacking or deprived of investment. To follow the logic set out in the section on mobilities above, there is a further narrative association between deprivation and immobility. This means that colleges with large HE provision are likely to be positioned within double spatial narratives of disadvantage. Firstly, they are able to provide a range of HE options because they are located in a place that lacks other HE provision. Secondly, it is important that they do provide this range of HE options, because the population in this area is less likely to move away in order to

attend HE. This double narrative is borne out in studies of CBHE which describe the typical CBHE student as 'local' to the college. Research by McTaggart (2016) and Stoten (2016), for example, argues that the proximity of a college to students' homes is consistently shown to be a key factor in their decisions to attend the college (see also Parry, Callendar and Temple, 2012). Statistics from the Education and Training Foundation sustain the connection between CBHE and the 'local' student. The statistics show that 78% of CBHE students were defined as 'local' in the academic year 2013-2014, where this figure was 37% in the HEI population as a whole. As shown by studies of the 'local' student (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Christie, 2007; Holdsworth, 2006; 2009a; 2009b), the 'local' student is likely to meet other criteria of the 'non-traditional' in HE. These criteria often describe precisely the economic and social disadvantages that are associated with both lack of mobility and with particular geographical locations, so that the narrative cyclically reinforces itself. If, as explored above, mobility is understood to be in part a product of imagined futures of either investment in place or movement through it, then this spatial narrative is also a temporal narrative. In the context of my study of larger providers of CBHE, these spatial and temporal narratives of non-mobility become typical, rather than non-traditional, accounts of student subjectivity.

Hubbard's (2008; 2009) analyses of the 'studentification' of city centres are based on mobile students. These students conform to the traditional assocation between beginning an undergraduate course and leaving home, and Hubbard's research suggests a particular relationship between students and place that is a direct result of this mobility. In the context of CBHE, this mobility is less likely, and therefore the student's relationship to the place of the institution, and the institution's relationship

to its location (Chatterton, 2000) are also different. Christie (2007) explored the ways in which 'local' students experienced their student identities as different from traditional, mobile students. These students positioned themselves narratively in opposition to traditional students, as well as in relation to competing spatial subjectivities as student and as long-term resident. In a CBHE setting, where the negotiation of these identities is not unusual, and where the traditional, mobile student is also non-traditional, these narrative positions might be different. Similarly, because the institution's student population is drawn from its immediate area, the 'reputational affect' (Stich, 2014) is also drawn from the shared narratives that describe the area's population. Remaining in place is inherent in these narratives of place, and of the institution within that place. It is therefore especially important in the present study to take forward the concepts of 'everyday' mobilities (Holton and Finn, 2018) and local capital discussed in the above section on student mobilities, and to problematise the perception that only students who have moved to live in an HE institution are in fact mobile students. While continuing to regard mobility as structured through inequalities such as those of class, race and gender, these concepts resist a deficit approach that reinforces the traditional narrative of the demonstrably mobile undergraduate.

Educational spaces

This section begins by discussing FE spaces, because CBHE provision is, necessarily, part of the built environment of an FE college. The section will then look more specifically at CBHE spaces. The section as a whole shows how these educational spaces are structured around imagined student subjectivities that are specific to the associations of CBHE with locality and the non-traditional student. Gallacher *et al*.

(2002), for example, use the concept of institutional habitus (defined by Reay (1998) as the interaction between organisational structures and individual and collective dispositions) to analyse the spaces of FE colleges. They argue that, for some learners, experience of similar institutional spaces such as community resource centres or local family centres means that 'coming in the door' (p. 501) feels more possible. The spatial phrasing of 'coming in the door' signifies a material journey from the outside to the inside of an institution. It also uses the metaphorical significance of the door, as discussed above in relation to Habel and Whitman's 'doors of perception' (2016), to show how entering an educational institution for the first time also comes to represent a metaphorical movement towards an imagined future. Gallacher *et al.*'s use of the concept of institutional habitus shows how the individual interaction with college space is further facilitated by the visual availability of support services (see also Brooks, Byford and Sela, (2016) on the spaces of student union services). For students with families, for example, the door is easier to move through if crèche services are immediately discernible just inside. Using the concept of possible selves, the imagined future as a student is particularly fragile for mature learners beginning to return to education. The physical structuring of the FE institution means that a future narrative of a subjectivity as, for example, both parent and student, is made imaginable by the presence of a crèche within the space of a college building. However, Smith's (2017b) study of the Building Colleges for the Future (BCF) governmental funding initiative in England highlights how the increased trends towards architectural representations of transparency and collaboration have led to the trope of unusable glazed lobbies that dominate contemporary FE buildings. In this case, just as in Gieryn's (2002) tracking of Cornell's biotechnical research institute,

the imagined future use implied by architectural plans also works to close down some of the possible future spatial practices.

Gallacher *et al.*'s paper touches on the importance of social spaces in educational institutions, arguing that these are part of the institutional habitus. These can also be conceptualised as spaces structured by the gaining and exchanging of social and cultural capital. Both Holton's (2016) and Bennett *et al.*'s (2016) studies of designated social institutional spaces show the complexity of these spaces (see also Andersson, Sadgrove and Valentine, 2012). As Bennett *et al.* argue, the institutional spaces of an FE college are, in part, a particular constellation of the place of the college in its surrounding geographical area and therefore 'fundamentally defined by the urban settings within which they are located' (p. 4). At the same time, as shown by Gregson and Rose's (2000) analysis of car boot sales, spaces are citational of their function, and therefore college institutional spaces are particular to the norms of educational space. Given this interaction between the specificities of urban setting and institutional space, Bennett *et al.* (2016) explore the informal rules that determine behaviour within college social space. They explore the role of ethnicity, showing how divisions between ethnic communities that exist outside of the college make themselves felt in such institutional practices as the tables that are occupied by 'black African women', 'white English boys', and 'male Asian students' (p. 8).

Colleges offering both HE and FE courses are useful for thinking through material and metaphorical understandings of educational institutional space. For example, both Leahy's (2012) and Dhillon and Bentley's (2016) studies of CBHE cite the importance to students of separating FE and HE provision within a single college.

This importance unites the material feeling of entering a different space in order to study at a higher level, and the metaphorical understanding of 'going to' university. These perspectives suggest that the physical space should be distinguishable from the spaces of previous educational experience, particularly if this previous experience was in the same institution. The spatial distinction made by colleges between HE and FE provision therefore demonstrates the capacity of spaces themselves to be narrative, and to be experienced narratively. The separate HE buildings or rooms in FE colleges represent narratives of academic progression and excellence, just as traditional architecture told such stories in Baker and Brown's (2007) research. Leahy's (2012) research also points out the important differences between CBHE spaces and university spaces. She argues that the smaller numbers of students in CBHE classrooms creates a less intimidating institutional space than is possible in a traditional university. For Leahy, it is the distinctive contribution of CBHE to be able to sustain the inclusiveness of the educational spaces offered in FE, while adapting these to represent something of HE. CBHE spaces are therefore part of fragile temporal student narratives of subjectivity, in which the future as an undergraduate must be imaginable in order that they first go 'in the door' (Gallacher *et al.*, 2002). At the same time, the space must be part of a narrative future in which a student has 'been to' university.

The investment of HE spaces with particular, and often indefinable, significance, is also shown by research that is more critical of CBHE. This research asks whether colleges have the capacity to offer the 'ethos' and 'culture' that characterises university spaces (Creasy, 2013; Feather, 2016; Harwood and Harwood, 2004; Lea and Simmons, 2012). These questions interrogate a breadth of factors in institutional

life, from the research activity of staff to student access to library resources. The range of these factors shows the complexity of defining what is particular about universities. The language of 'culture' and 'ethos' has similarities to the concept of 'affect' that Stich (2014) uses to understand institutional reputation, and to the concept of institutional habitus (Gallacher *et al.*, 2002; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). Each of these concepts is used to define the constellations of practices, feelings and structures within an institution that are both powerful and difficult to describe. Each concept, however, refers to institutional effects that are specific to both the material physicality of an institutional environment, and to its metaphorical significance as an educational institution. As the critiques of CBHE demonstrate, the ineffable culture of university space is important to the narratives of spaces of HE in colleges. In CBHE, the institutional space as both materially and metaphorically must narratively position the provision as different enough from, but similar enough to, university-based HE.

Gregson and Rose's (2000) and Turner and Manderson's (2007) studies use Butlerian theories of performativity to show how bodies interact with space to create mutual definitions of the function of space and the role of the body. For the law students at the Coffee House in Turner and Manderson's (2007) project, their performative engagement with the temporary space of the 'coffee shop' is also a performance of their imagined futures as law professionals. In this performance, the particularities of the way the space is marked out to include a drinks bar and jazz band combines with the use of the space as a meeting point for current and future law professionals. Similarly, CBHE spaces are perpetually defined and re-defined through its ongoing use. Its use, in turn, is determined in part by the mobilities and relationships to place of its student population. Hubbard (2008; 2009) finds that 'studentified' spaces are

transformed by the presence of traditional students because these students occupy traditional, resident, student identities. In contrast, the 'local', 'non-traditional' students of CBHE are more likely to occupy the spaces of the institution in different ways. As Christie's (2007) study shows, for example, 'local' students often remain embedded in their pre-existing home lives, so that their use of institutional space is an addition to, rather than a replacement of, their previous occupation of local place. Thomas' (2015) study of mature students' sense of belonging to their institution shows how traditional institutional space is exclusionary of non-traditional modes of engaging with space. For example, her participants find that their evening and weekend hours of teaching coincide with times when campus cafes and computer services are closed. In colleges, mature students are not in the minority as they are in university-based (ETF, 2016), and the college itself is a part of a long-term relationship with local place (Christie 2007). The institutional spaces of CBHE are therefore particular to the spatial practices of their majority 'local' student bodies. This particularity in turn shapes the available educational subjectivities performed and imagined within these spaces.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 has collated and synthesised research literature that argues strongly for the importance of place, mobilities and spaces alongside temporality in thinking about intersections of inequality. This literature conceptualises places as shaping and shaped by narratives of social class and race, mobilities as producing and reproducing privilege, and spaces as constructing or excluding of competing identities such as student/parent. In the later sections of the chapter, the focus on CBHE has also referred to areas of social and economic disadvantage, in which issues of race and

class can be seen through the concepts of social and cultural capital. The majority status of the 'local' student in CBHE is also associated, as discussed above, with other factors that define students as non-traditional (Bennett *et al.*, 2016; Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003). The context of CBHE in many ways reverses the terms of the traditional and non-traditional student, so that a student defined as 'traditional' in another HE institution is unusual in a college setting. The student participants in my study each meet some of these categories that describe them as disadvantaged, or unequal, in relation to traditional students in HE. Almost all are mature students. Some are student parents. All but one are 'local', and local to an area that is underserved by universities, with all of the associated narratives of place and social class discussed above. It is this final category of 'local' that I argue is fundamental to how I think about inequalities in this study. Pahl's (2008) article about his disciplinary shift, during his PhD, from geographical to sociological studies, is useful here. Pahl suggests that his study of social class subjectivities in two Hertfordshire commuter villages lost its nuance when it homogenised categories of social class. Even in two villages in the same area of the same country, Pahl found that middle class identities were articulated differently. Working class populations differed in concentration and distribution between the villages, and the narratives of middle and working class lives were, Pahl argues, refracted relationally through these differences. To narrate oneself as middle class in one village, Pahl found, was different to doing so in another. In thinking about how the participants' narratives in this study are accounts of inequalities, then, I will necessarily be approaching these inequalities as refracted through specific moments of place, mobility and spaces.

THE SPATIAL AND THE TEMPORAL OF RESEARCH DESIGN:

METHODOLOGY OF THE CASE STUDY

Introduction

[W]hat is a case? Comparative social science has a ready-made,

conventionalized answer to this question: Boundaries around

places and time periods define cases.

(Ragin, 1992, p. 5)

I remember some of my most painful times as a geographer have

been spent unwillingly struggling to think how one could draw a

boundary around somewhere like 'the East Midlands'.

(Massey, 1993, p. 64)

The above quotations highlight both the purpose and the problem of this chapter,

which sets out to justify the case study research design for this project. In its focus on

specificity (Corcoran, Walker and Wals, 2004; Simons, 2009) and its multiple-method

approach (Yin, 2014), case study is the most appropriate research design for this

study. At the same time, this research design requires that the spatial and temporal

boundaries of the research site be fixed in place. This fixing is problematic because

the conceptual framework of the study de-naturalises the temporal and spatial

conditions in educational contexts, interrogating these conditions rather than taking

them as given. As Massey (1993) argues, to draw a boundary around a space is to performatively create, rather than simply visually represent, that boundary. The 'painful[ness]' to which she refers comes from her participation in the very discourses of representation with which she disagrees, which suggest a given rather than a performed space. To engage in a process of boundary drawing therefore requires Massey to participate in a discourse that she elsewhere works to critique and complicate. In this chapter, while explaining the fixing of spaces and times for my research, I draw attention to the ways that carrying out this research has involved a process of drawing spatial and temporal boundaries, both around and within the research sites.

The case study operates on spatial and temporal terms in three ways. Firstly, as the above quotation by Ragin (1992) suggests, its definition as a case relies upon on its location within geographically determined boundaries that differentiate it from what is beyond. Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 253) give possible examples of cases as 'a child, a clique, a class, a school, a community'. Stake (1995) argues that a teacher can serve as a case in a case study research design, whereas the teacher's practice lacks the clarity of definition in its boundaries. In each example, it is the physicality of the boundary of the single or multiple body or building that creates the case limits, in contrast to the abstract nature of Stake's example of teaching practice. According to Massey's definition of place as 'a moment within power-geometries' (2005, p. 131) each of these physical boundaries also encloses a temporal moment, transient but fixed by the research focus. Secondly, the case study is categorised according to its relationship, as a single instance, to the general phenomenon being researched. Within categories such as interpretive, intrinsic, or instrumental, the cases are chosen for their

qualities of exaggerating, acting as points of comparison, or demonstrating the phenomena of which they are examples (see also Merriam, 1988; Stenhouse, 1985; Sturman, 1999). In this second consideration of the case study, the specificity of its spatial features and temporal moment are positioned in the context of the general. This positioning is driven by the third concern of case study research, which is its generalisability (see, for example, Flyvbjerg, 2006; Ruddin, 2006; Thomas, 2011a). The question of generalisability interrogates the boundaries around a single context, asking how much of what has been found is applicable in different times and spaces.

The research questions for this study have guided the ways in which the research design responds to the spatial and temporal methodological issues of case study design:

1. Can a theorisation of educational subjectivities that takes into account the spatial and temporal conditions of HE provide new insight into educational inequalities?

2. How are understandings of the 'local' CBHE institution and the 'local' student represented by FE College Group Chairs, HE leads and course tutors, and institutional marketing materials at their institutions?

3. How do 'local' students of academic and vocational CBHE qualifications understand their educational subjectivities?

4. How do students in their final year of academic and vocational CBHE qualifications represent their imagined possible future selves?

5. What implications can be taken from this study for theorising educational subjectivities and understanding inequalities in HE?

Questions 1 and 5 show how the research aims to explore specificity in order to show the importance of paying attention to the particular and nuanced experiences of inequality in education. The study as a whole therefore works on a careful balance between the elaboration of the spatial and temporal detail of each case, and the relationship of this detail to the wider HE context. This balance informed the decision to study two institutions in a multiple case design, exploring variety and continuity across several examples of a similar phenomenon (Thomas, 2011b). Question 2 also directly addresses the wider national context of the study; as I explain below, responding to this question meant extending the boundaries of the case sites to include the perspectives of national figures in Further Education policy groups. Question 3, which highlights the study's focus on both academic and vocational HE courses, has had particular spatial implications. The question was devised in order that the study explore 'outlier' (Thomas, 2011b) or 'extreme' (Yin, 2014) cases of CBHE, which exaggerate issues that might go unseen in more usual cases. As I expected, colleges offering academic HE courses tended to be located in geographical HE cold spots, outliers in the national distribution of HE provision. Question 4 draws attention to the study's focus on temporal conditions in HE, and in particular on future temporalities. Because of this focus, the study drew temporal boundaries around final year students who were anticipating their progression from undergraduate education.

The section below explains how the decisions were made that determined the spatial and temporal boundaries of the two cases in this multiple case design. The subsequent section details the methods used within these boundaries, and the final section

addresses the position I occupied as a researcher within and amongst these boundaries.

Temporal and spatial case boundaries

As explained above, the decision to research providers of both academic and vocational undergraduate courses in the English FE sector meant that I looked towards larger institutions that functioned as the main providers of HE in their locality as potential research sites. It is unsurprising that these localities had already been depicted in HEFCE's cold-spot maps of English HE provision. The colleges I looked at as possibilities for my research project were in coastal or post-industrial areas of the country, narratively constituted in a myriad of ways as deprived, or implicated in an implied future of regeneration (Taylor, 2012). As I wrote emails to those colleges within logistically realistic distance of where I live, I was aware that despite the relative proximity that made them potential research sites, I had never visited them. Indeed I had never even considered doing so. One or two of the sites were located in towns I frequently travel through on the way to somewhere else. There is, therefore, a temporality to my awareness of the spaces and places in which I conducted my research. Temporally speaking, I did not chance upon these places as a stranger with no previous knowledge of them. Instead, I brought with me my previous awareness of them as places that were, at most, *on the way to somewhere else*.

In a further layering of this temporal narrative, the decision about which two institutions would constitute my case studies resulted from a combination of arbitrary conditions, each of which might have resulted in something different were it to have happened at a different time. I created a list of institutions within a manageable

distance of Birmingham. My conditions for manageability were simply that I should be able to travel to and from the institution comfortably within a day, and that the cost of travel should be possible to meet from my monthly studentship stipend. Given changing train routes and costs, even this first, entirely practical, decision, might have looked different at any other time. With this list established, I then investigated which institutions had courses in common of both academic and vocational nature. While I did not intend to explicitly compare the institutions, and while each acts as its own (permeably) bounded case, I nevertheless sought enough commonality between the courses that I might feasibly discuss the institutions feasibly either together or separately. The course lists, too, fix the project in its very specific temporality, in that course offers change annually depending on their financial viability. With a clear list of five institutions within reasonable distance and whose course offer might work alongside those of the other listed institutions, I began by making use of my personal connections in the sector.

Top of the list was a college to which one of my supervisors, through a colleague, had a contact, and I was lucky that this colleague was able to mention me by name when he visited the college, and to give me the email address of the member of staff in charge of research and scholarship in their HE programmes. The ease of this connection was made clear as I attempted to establish links with another college. Here, I was able to obtain an email introduction through an academic at the university through which this college's degrees are awarded. However, several emails later, I was informed that my project intersected too much with another project that the college was involved with for the HE director to approve my contact with them. Having reached the limits of my personal contacts, I used college webpages to find a

contact name. I found that, unlike universities, FE colleges do not list their staff contact details. It was relatively easy to find the name of HE directors from the college websites, but much more difficult to find a way of contacting them. In order to contact the college which became my second case site, I entered the HE director's name to a search engine, and found that they had served on the board of a college group at an earlier point in their career; their email address remained on the college group page.

I have narrated this process in detail to highlight the practical, often somewhat arbitrary, nature of decisions about research sites, and to show how much each stage of this process relies upon a particular temporal moment. At any time, any one of these missed or made connections might have been different. This is particularly true of the colleges that agreed to take part in the study, both of whom work under the influence of HE directors who are positive about academic research and engagement. As it happens, the HE director at the second college I approached had come into post only the month before I wrote to establish contact. It is possible that, had I written a month earlier, an outgoing HE director would have responded less positively or less openly to my request. Similarly, had I written to the college that did not want to take part before they had become involved in another project, they might have responded affirmatively. As I wrote these emails, I was very aware of the somewhat arbitrary nature of the processes that were fixing the future possibilities of my project in fundamental ways. That both case colleges, for example, are in the north of England, reflects both the higher number of HE cold spots in this geographical area of the country, and the arbitrary circumstances which led to the confirmation of the research sites.

Further decisions were required in order to establish the boundaries within each case institution. Due to the research focus on HE, the case boundaries were drawn around the HE provision at these institutions, of which the two courses were examples. Within these course examples, final year students were examples of the future-facing nature of each course. Given the focus on two courses in each institution, the courses themselves could have been seen as cases. However, the courses were implicated in a relationship with their institution, locality and national context that defines their function at every level. This was made particularly clear to me as I visited one institution on the day that redundancies were announced. The staff I interviewed were re-drafting their course outlines so that they could be delivered by fewer tutors. In the other of my case institutions, the HE director could not meet with me as planned on the day of my visit because she was conducting interviews for additional academic staff to be taken on for the following academic year; the financial position of this college on that day could not have been more different from that of the other college. Institutional finances were, in turn, direct results of national policy decisions that affect different localities at different times and in different ways. The difference between the financial situations of the two colleges demonstrates the complexity of creating a study that responds even to a broad national context; this context might be assumed to affect all areas at the same time and in the same way, but in fact is deeply driven by seemingly arbitrary assignments of some externally defined localities before or after others. The study therefore positions the courses within the case study institutions, whose boundaries are seen as permeable to local and national contextual factors.

This process of decision-making and boundary-drawing led to the following overall research design:

- Two case institutions, each in the north of England in large post-industrial towns, Sebford and Tobston (pseudonym place names), without university provision.
- A focus on final year degree students in a humanities subject (English, in both institutions) and a vocational subject (photography in Sebford, and graphic design and animation in Tobston).

The next sections detail the methods used in collecting data in each research site, which fixes the spatial and temporal conditions within the case boundaries.

The spatial and temporal within the case boundaries

Table 1 (overleaf) represents the data collected across the entire research study. The slight difference in number of students interviewed at the first and second stages of student interviews is due to the fact that three students did not complete their final year within the timeframe of my fieldwork. Two of these students were studying English, one at Sebford College and one at Tobston College. Both were pregnant at the time of my first interview, and had elected to take their final term of courses the following academic year. The third student left the graphic design and animation course at Tobston College between my first and second visit, and did not respond to my attempts to contact him. His narrative, as represented to me in my first and only interview with him, is explored in detail in Chapter 9. The first stage of observations and student interviews was longer than the second for two reasons. First, I had allowed time in the first stage to become familiar with the institution and the students, which was not needed in the second stage. Secondly, as the academic year was

coming to an end in the second stage of interviews, students were spending less time in the institution and more time at home preparing for final projects or examinations, which meant that there were fewer classes to observe. In the following sections, I take each element of data collection in turn, explaining and reflecting on the methods used.

Table 1: Data collection

Data collected	Case institution	Number of participants	Length of visit	Observational data collected
Elite interviews	N/A	4	N/A	N/A
HE marketing materials	Sebford	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Tobston	N/A	N/A	N/A
HE director interviews	Sebford	1	1 day	Yes
	Tobston	1	1 day	Yes
Tutor interviews	Sebford	1 x academic 1 x vocational	2 days	Yes
	Tobston	2 x academic 2 x vocational	2 days	Yes
Student interviews term 1	Sebford	6 x academic 5 x vocational	10 days	Yes
	Tobston	5x academic 5x vocational	10 days	Yes
Student interviews term 2	Sebford	5 x academic 5 x vocational	5 days	Yes
	Tobston	5 x academic 3 x vocational	5 days	Yes
Total		**33 participants 51 interviews**	**46 days**	

Elite interviews

The permeable nature of my case study design is permeable precisely because of the contextual factors in the FE sector that directly influence the everyday working of the case institutions. Over the course of this study, the rolling area review process (BIS, 2016b), changes to apprenticeships (BIS, 2015a), and the Post-16 Skills Plan (BIS and DfE, 2016) have resulted in a constantly shifting financial and administrative national context for FE, and therefore for CBHE. Given the influence of the national context, it

has been important for me to understand the perceptions of CBHE at national leadership levels. The elite interviews did not fit easily into the temporal and spatial boundaries of my study. There was no fixed place for them to be conducted in, and they were not reliant on the temporal fixity of the academic year. They were conducted between May and July in my first year of doctoral study. Although I did not reflect upon this at the time, I am aware that my motivation to conduct the elite interviews before undertaking my case institution-based research was based on a linear spatial and temporal understanding of my research project. According to this logic, I saw myself as working from the outside – the national context in overview – towards an inner centre of everyday institutional practice. In temporal terms, it seemed important to establish the outer context before exploring the inner. In some ways, this instinct was useful in that I approached my case institutions with a clearer understanding of the national sector context in which they were working. This context, though, like any other, is temporally specific, and the answers each participant that gave about the effects of national policy shifts would probably have been different were I to have conducted the interviews a month or a year later than I did. Similarly, the temporal positioning of these elite interviews prior to my knowledge of the case institutions means that they shaped my anticipation of what I might find in each institution in ways that I cannot entirely know.

As discussed in literature on elite interviewing (Delaney, 2007; Mikecz, 2012), it is often the case that participants have busy and mobile schedules, and that the researcher must work around these temporal and spatial commitments. This was also the case with my interviews: they took place in a variety of places and at a variety of times. The simplest of these was conducted over Skype, with the participant in his

office, and me at home. In one case, I met the participant when they travelled to a nearby teaching location, and we positioned ourselves in a corner of the common room area of the teaching building so as not to be overheard, or spoken over. In another, I was attending the same conference as the participant, and after an intense day of presentations, including my own, we opened the doors of four different rooms on the same corridor as the presentation we had just left until we found an empty one. In each interview, in contrast to the deliberate elusivenes (Selwyn, 2013; Stephens, 2007) or confrontational style (Thuesen, 2011) of elite participants that is noted in literature on the organisation and conduct of elite interviews, each of the participants in my study made time and found space for me readily and generously. As the interview schedule for these interviews shows (see Appendix 1) , the questions focused on changes to CBHE in recent history, and participants' perceptions of the typical CBHE student.

Documentary analysis

As with the elite interviews for the study, the documentary analysis extends temporally and spatially beyond the case boundaries. This is because the focus and method of the analysis were developed in a separate but related small study conducted during the first term of my doctoral research. The method is informed by other studies which use critical discourse analysis as an approach to analysing the ways that HE is represented in documents such as institutional mission statements (Bowl and Hughes, 2013), access agreements, (McCaig, 2015), educational news supplements (Leathwood, 2013) and marketing campaigns (Farber and Hom, 2005; Graham, 2013; Symes and Drew, 2017). Each of these studies takes the position that public-facing documents such as these both reflect and shape the ways that HE is discursively

understood. In the case of CBHE, which is not featured in popular culture representations of HE in the ways that university-based HE is (Edgerton, 2005; Reynolds, 2014), marketing materials such as HE prospectuses and webpages provide a rare insight into the ways that this provision is publicly represented. In particular, I used these sources in both an initial study and this one to look at how the marketing materials represented the prospective CBHE student. The initial smaller study (Henderson, 2018c) involved an exploratory discourse analysis of the marketing materials used by a sample of twenty CBHE providers in England.

The documentary data set for this study is comprised of hard copies of marketing materials such as prospectuses from each case institution. I also took screen shots of each institution's 'Welcome to HE' webpage at the time of the start of my fieldwork. The initial exploratory study had found that the discourses repeated across the sample drew on a construction of the prospective CBHE student as from the local area, intimidated by the size and reputation of university HE provision, and focused on the practical use of their HE qualification (Henderson, 2018c, pp. 11-16). In using these findings in the present study, I looked for lexical and visual references (Fairclough, 1993) to this imagined prospective student of CBHE. Given the study's focus on issues of place and locality, I also analysed the ways in which the institutions represented their relationship to the local area.

Staff interviews

Interviews with HE directors and tutors on each of the selected courses at each case institution were conducted during the summer term of my first year of doctoral study. These one-day visits were therefore my first introduction to each college. Owing to

the busy schedules of the staff members involved, I made separate visits to each college for interviews with each staff member, though where two tutors working on the same course were interviewed, these were conducted on the same day. The interviews with the HE director in each college focused on the history of HE provision in the institution, and in the locality, as well as how they might describe a typical HE student at their institution (see Appendix 2 for interview schedule). Similar questions were asked in interviews with course tutors, but these were focused on the course in question, rather than the institution as a whole (see Appendix 3 for interview schedule). These three days spent interviewing in each institution had spatial and temporal implications for the rest of the study. This is because my first visits to each HE site were formative of lasting impressions of how easy or difficult the sites were to find or negotiate, and these impressions extended beyond the temporality of the research visits and into the data analysis. The visits were also crucial to establishing the requisite networks for the rest of the study. The tutors I met with and interviewed were those whose classes I was to observe, so I relied upon this first meeting to create a positive rapport with them. The recruitment of student participants also took place in the first classes I observed with each tutor, and again relied upon the tutor allowing me to speak to the class briefly at the end of the session.

Student interviews

Just as I am drawn to participate in spatial boundary drawing in order to define and discuss the local areas that surround my case institutions, I am similarly participating in constructing a temporal narrative for my student participants. In this narrative, I situate their studies in a linear progression, with their final undergraduate year representing the culmination of their studies. The recourse to create a coherent

narrative of educational subjectivity that is fundamental to my conceptual framework is therefore reproduced in the ways in which I position my participants. This is true as I justify drawing temporal boundaries around their final year, and similarly true in the interview context as I require them to produce the very self-narrative that I critique elsewhere. Some studies such as Riach, Rumens and Tyler's (2016) seek to address this reproduction of narrative norms in the research process by asking participants to 'undo' (p. 9) the coherence of their organisational identities by focusing on dissonant aspect of their working lives. However, their study overlooks the powerful nature of narrative expression and structuring, failing to acknowledge that an anti-narrative conforms paradoxically to the terms of narrative even as it rejects them. The anti-narrative becomes a narrative restructuring that coherently represents incoherence, and thereby signals to but does not transcend the limits of narrative representation in research. I can therefore only acknowledge the ways that the interview process has exaggerated the meta-processes of research; in order to explore the narrative educational subjectivities of my participants, I reproduce the circumstances of their production. It is therefore important to me to see the interview as a site of co-constructed meanings (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004) and performed identities (Youdell, 2010) that are temporally complex. I have used a narrative interviewing technique that works from prompts rather than questions, and that uses the participants' own words for follow-up questions (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013).

In order to research the case study sites, I drew further temporal boundaries, this time around the amount of time I would spend in each place, and at which points in the academic year. In line with the focus on temporality in research question 3, I decided that my extended visits, which included my interviews with students, would take

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place at the beginning and end of the academic year. I reasoned that this would capture their most future-oriented year of study at its most transitional points. Correspondingly, the first interview schedule (see Appendix 4) included prompts aimed at capturing the participants' relationships to the institution and course. Here, I also incorporated the spatial questions of the study into its methodology, using a mobile interview technique. This meant that my participants walked around the space of the college with me, pointing out the places and spaces that were significant to them (Evans and Jones, 2011; Finlay and Bowman, 2017; Garcia *et al.*, 2012; Jones *et al.*, 2008; Macpherson, 2016; Merriman, 2014). The second interview schedule (see Appendix 5) contained prompts which asked participants to focus more on their future plans.

In practice, my initial assumption that the future would be more relevant to the second interview than the first proved to be a false distinction. The future, as it had once been imagined, as it was presently imagined, as refusal or resistance to imagining, was present throughout both rounds of interviews. The second interview became a continuation of the first conversation, rather than having the distinctly different focus I had anticipated. However, some participants' plans for the future had changed in the time between the first and second interview, and the two stages of interviewing were important in capturing these shifts. The time between the first and second rounds of interviews also allowed time for me to reflect upon and begin to analyse the data I had collected in the earlier visits. It was during this time that I realised the importance of exploring participants' descriptions of their relationships to place in further detail. As a result, I added a further data collection method to my second interview. From the transcriptions of the first student interviews, I used a 'concept-map' approach to

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visually represent participants' descriptions of places that were important to them (see Appendix 6). The concept map is a form of diagrammatic data representation which involves placing key words or concepts in circles on the page, and joining these with lines which show the connections between the concepts. The below section on data analysis explains more about how the maps in this study were drawn up. The strength of the method is in its relatively simple representation not only of key aspects of the data, but of the connections between these key aspects (Umoquit *et al.*, 2013). The maps provided a useful representation of the places mentioned by participants in the first interview, and I was able to show this to participants in the second interview in order to check with them that the representation was accurate.

Observations

In each case institution, the observations took two forms. The first was classroom observations of final year classes in the two example courses in each college. These explored the ways that formal learning spaces were set up and used (Strange and Banning, 2015) in each subject and each institution. The second form of observation was of the informal, social spaces of the college, recording the ways that the materiality of these spaces shaped available subjectivities (Kraftl and Adey, 2008). When not observing classes or conducting interviews, I therefore sat in different social spaces around each institution, recording my own responses to and descriptions of the spaces, and the ways that I saw them being used, in field notes. I also took photographs of the spaces (Loughlin, 2013), which cannot be shown here because of considerations of data protection and anonymity, but which served to remind me of the spaces and supplement my written notes. As with the ways that the case institutions were chosen for the study, there is an element to these observations that is

an arbitrary but quite specific representation of what I saw during particular days and weeks, that may have been different at another time. However, the time I spent in each institution meant that I was able to see both momentary and habitual occupations of space, and this observation was supplemented by the mobile interviews which asked participants directly about their uses of space.

 The commonly distinguished styles of participant and non-participant observation (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Robson, 2002) are divided in methodological literature according to the researcher's presence and involvement in the scenario they are observing. Further definitions include 'unobtrusive' observation (Angrosino, 2007), in which the researcher is present but passive to the observed situation. Highlighting the fluidity of the observation process, and the resultant difficulty in categorising the style of observation, Brockmann (2011) uses the terms 'active', 'peripheral' and 'ambiguous' (p. 231). She argues that her own observational role oscillated between these categories as her experiences developed in different ways over the course of her research process. Brockmann's descriptions of the observer role are useful both in their acknowledgement of fluidity and changeability, and in their rejection of the possibility of non-participation or unobtrusiveness as an observing researcher. I also see observing as participation in itself, in that I am, through observational practices of note-taking and photographing (Latham, 2003; Loughlin, 2013) more consciously present and participatory in these situations than I might be in other more familiar and less research-related ones.

I planned for my classroom observations by creating structured headings that accorded with my research questions, particularly focusing on the possible selves that

are performatively created and drawn upon in institutional spatial narratives. This meant sketching out the uses of space in the classroom, and adapting these sketches as the space was negotiated by students and tutors. Outside the classroom, my observations became less easy to plan for. From my first visit to each institution, I found myself photographing the areas outside the college, as well as hoping that I might be able to walk around the institutions themselves in order to photograph them. Without a clear idea of exactly what I was looking for from this way of documenting time and space (Voela, 2014), I found myself recording things that surprised or interested me, such as the ways in which each institution welcomed visitors. At one institution, the grounds were easy to enter as a stranger, as were each of the buildings. I had been told to introduce myself at Reception, but entered and left several different buildings before finding it, without being asked about my reasons for being there. Having signed myself in, I left the Reception building without a having been given a visitor's badge or pass, and continued to explore the grounds by myself. At the other institution, I arrived at the building I had been directed to by email, and tapped a touch screen, which questioned me about the nature of my visit and the member of staff I had come to see, before printing out a sticker with a bar code and date for me to wear. Behind the touch screen, the administrative staff at the Reception desk looked on, making my touch-screen tapping feel all the clumsier.

My field notes from each day outline these interactions, or absences of interaction, in detail, because I felt myself shaped by the spaces, implicated in their narratives of openness or efficiency, in ways that I knew I would want to think more about. Beyond the institutions, I wrote copious notes about how it felt to visit the places I had never previously chosen to visit. I recorded the abandoned industrial architecture that

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appeared to go along with expectations I hadn't known were already formed, and the cathedral square and Edwardian library buildings that seemed to confound them. My field notes can therefore be read according to the competing temporalities and spatial narratives of past expectation, informing future imagining, cyclically affirmed and challenged by present accounts, themselves written for future analysis.

Transcription and analysis

I have argued elsewhere (Henderson, 2018b), and in line with other research literature on transcription (see, for example, Ashmore and Reed, 2000; Bird, 2005; Della Noce, 2006; Hammersley, 2010), that the transcription of interview data is an analytical process. This is because it involves decisions about how the data are represented and processed, and these decisions are made with the overall research questions in mind. For example, I chose not to use a transcription method that would allow conversation analysis (Davidson, 2010), because this falls outside the enquiry of the research project. Because this project is focused on the ways in which subjectivities are narrated, I transcribed all words that were spoken in order to see them as part of the multiple overlapping narrative structures in the interview. This approach includes spoken hesitation and repetition, but not non-verbal features such as facial expression or gesture. As Ashmore and Reed (2000) argue, the transcript cannot be seen as a faithful or 'true' substitute for the original interaction, or for its recording, but is instead a re-presentation of the data that precedes its further re-presentation in academic writing (Mazzei and Jackson, 2012).

A different transcription method was required to transcribe the mobile interviews. As argued by Jones *et al* (2008), mobile interviews prompt important questions about

how data is represented. The use of mobile methods suggests that material

engagements with space is as much of a priority as spoken accounts, but these

engagements are less easily represented in text (Middleton, 2010). Seeing the mobile

interview as part-interview and part-observation (Carpiano, 2009), I transcribed the

spoken parts of the interview as above, but annotated the transcript using fieldnotes as

a supplementary source, where I had recorded as much as I could remember of what

had struck me about the participant's engagement with space as we walked. At times,

what I recorded was their reluctance or confusion about this aspect of the interview,

or their rejection of the idea that they used college spaces at all. These moments, in

which the mobile interview appeared to have failed, became as important to the

analysis of institutional space as the most seemingly successful mobile interviews

(reminiscent of Jacobsson and Åkerström, (2013) who discuss learning from 'failed'

interviews).

The concept maps of the places that were mentioned by each participant were an

important first step in approaching data analysis. These were compiled by noting the

name of every place in each transcript, along with the words used to describe the

place. These places were then arranged in a diagrammatic relationship to one another,

with lines of connection based on the interview data (see Figure 1). This process, like

the transcription process, also called for analytical decision-making, because at times

a place name was used to refer to an educational institution. At other times, a type of

place, such a city or village, was used instead of a place name. I included of these

markers of place or locality. The town of Sebford, for example, is often represented

on these maps separately from Sebford College, because the participant described

them separately. A particular town or city, similarly, is visually represented as

separate from a generalised impression of towns or cities. Although initially intended to chart spatial relationships, the maps also represent complex temporalities. Often a place is imagined as a possible or impossible future place to live, or used to explain a past decision to move or not move away. While the maps proved useful as prompts for further discussion of place and the future in the second round of interviews, they were most useful as an analytical tool. In choosing where to position each place name on the page, and choosing how the lines of connection were drawn, according to my impression of the spatial relationship the participant described, I began to form a 'spatial story' (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 115-130) for each participant. This spatial story is represented by the concept map, but also extends beyond it and back into the transcripts and fieldnotes.

Figure 1: Gemma's concept map

Gemma

HE Site
Not out for a long time
Can drive there, 15 minutes from home
Can respond to calls from home/ school
Not even out school hours
More mature institute
Good location but don't know why it would appeal to 19 year olds

Home Town
Bought parents' house when they moved
Run down area
If you drove there you'd think it was a bit rough
Like lots of places in the area
Same street as family

Tobston
Only know the town centre
Always gone there with parents shopping
Don't know the little towns around Tobston
Don't have a sense of direction around them

Nearest University
Couldn't move there with two kids at home
Wasn't worth the time getting home
On the train, everyone else going back to their rooms
Out from 6am to 7pm
Singled out
Not nice

The dream
Husband wants to live in Australia
Seems like what everybody does
Will be strange not having family near
Want somewhere with nice living circumstances, a nice area
Have to move away to get that

In Figure 1, which shows Gemma's concept map, the map includes present places such as her home town, Tobston, and Tobston's HE site. It also includes the past place of the university she left in order to study at Tobston College, and the future place of the 'dream' she and her husband negotiate, which for her involves living somewhere 'nice', and for him involves a move abroad. The size of the text bubbles is determined by how much Gemma said about each place, and the text itself is directly quoted from the interview transcripts. Without assuming a direct relationship between the amount said about a place and the importance of that place to each participant, the visual representation has nevertheless allowed me to think through this relationship. The most complex process in creating and using the concept maps was in drawing the lines of connection. Here, I drew out how and why there were points of interaction between the places, based on what the participant had said about the place. For example, in Gemma's map, the HE site is connected to Gemma's home town, because she discussed the convenience of the site's location only fifteen minutes from her home. Gemma compared this convenience with her previous experience at a university, so I represented the HE site and the past university experience as directly linked on the map. The three places, Gemma's home town, Tobston's HE site and the university, are then linked through a spatial story of student mobility (this story is discussed further in Chapter 7). Gemma also contrasted her home town with Tobston in terms of the depth of her familiarity with her home town, and her lack of knowledge of Tobston. I understood this contrast as separate from her discussion of the university and college sites, and separate again from the contrast she created between her current and imagined future home life. As a whole, the diagram allowed me to see Gemma's relationship to her home town as crucial to each aspect of her placed educational subjectivity. The positioning of the 'home town' text bubble in the

top right hand corner of the diagram is important in suggesting that the other places extend downwards and outwards from this pivotal point.

Using the maps in conjunction with interview transcripts and fieldnotes, I analysed these spatial stories using place, space and mobilities as three key areas of educational geographies (Brooks, Byford and Sela, 2016), alongside my conceptual framework that brings together the temporal and spatial in narratives of educational subjectivity. I have demonstrated this approach through engagement with geographical literature in Chapter 3, and the beginning of each analysis chapter explains the ways that it has been used. The account of my research process has focused on the necessity of fixing a research context into place through the drawing of boundaries around space and time. I have shown how my position as a researcher requires me to participate in processes of boundary-making around the spaces and times of the case study. In the following section, I use issues relating to reflexivity and ethics in order to explore the boundaries drawn between researcher and researched.

Drawing boundaries around the researcher

A discussion of the researcher's positioning in their own research process risks performing a 'confession' (Pillow, 2003), which can then absolve the researcher of any personal impact on their research context. In stating what that impact might be, such discussion can reify the validity of the research even while ostensibly challenging it (Youdell, 2010). Analyses and textual performances of researcher positionality (see, for example, Chaudry, 2000; Fox and Allan, 2014; McDonald, 2013) also risk the suggestion that the balance between researcher and research has tipped too far. Plesner (2011), for example, writes that she has resisted the temptation

to 'spend inordinate amounts of time being reflexive about myself' (p. 472). In contrast, Rowe's (2014) analysis of moments of discomfort in her ethnographic study of women's prisons argues that attention to her own discomfort proved vital to understanding her research context. Her writing privileges the embodied experience of conducting research. She discusses moments in which she felt that her body was in the way, or too visible, or misread. In this way, she appears to create a boundary around the researcher that begins and ends with the body. However, each of the incidents in her discussion is an instance of her researcher's body as it interacts with and is read by others in the research context. The blurring of the spatial boundary is further complicated as she uses these incidents to explore her research site, occupying it in more and different ways in her retrospective analysis than she did when bodily present within it. As I go on to discuss, I found engaging in reflexive thinking about my researcher position was both important and inescapable.

Like Rowe (2014), Scott *et al*. (2012) foreground the social awkwardness of conducting research, focusing on the problem of shyness on the part of the researcher. They argue that, where much reflexive methodological writing draws attention to the vulnerable social position of the research participant (Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2007; Kvale, 2006; Tanggaard, 2009), there is relatively little discussion of the researcher other than to highlight their impact upon the vulnerability of the participant. Similarly, Thuesen's (2011) article on elite interviews and emotions deliberately privileges moments of embarrassment and hesitancy on the part of the researcher, and Brockmann's (2011) article on short-term ethnographic fieldwork highlights her embarrassment at getting in the way as she observed apprentices at work. These studies deal with the social intricacies of research encounters that are similar to, but

necessarily distinct from, other social encounters. They focus on the embodied strangeness of conducting in-depth conversations with strangers, of the relationship between researcher and participant that is both personal and necessarily transactional, and of the awkward misunderstandings that come from occupying a space as someone whose role is often less than clear. While this social strangeness pervades the whole research experience, I see it as thrown into greatest relief by the role of observer. It is when occupying this role that I was most acutely aware of a dual sense that everything around me was important and impossible to fully record, and that I was exaggeratedly present in and affecting what is around me. I was conscious of my body's presence in spaces that might otherwise be empty, and of its extension beyond its bodily boundaries to impact upon those spaces. I was conscious of the ways in which my observational practice is, in turn, observable by those around me. I was aware, too, of the complex power dynamics that come from my lack of familiarity with a space that was familiar to others, while my notes would be taken from that space and used by me, for purposes determined by me, in other spaces.

The strangeness of the research encounter was also made very clear in moments of misunderstanding and mis-recognition when conducting my fieldwork. Both Loughlin (2013) and Rowe (2014) cite instances in which they were misread in their research contexts. In Rowe's example, the structures of intelligibility in the prisons she is researching are such that she was frequently read, by both prisoners and other staff, as a staff member. As such, she becomes implicated in the deeply embedded power dynamics between staff and prisoners. Though her analysis does not use Butler's theorisation of intelligible subjects, her account could be read as an example of exceeding the bounds of intelligible subjectivity; in an environment in which the

only available subjectivities are those of staff member or prisoner, she is assumed and subsumed into the most fitting one. Loughlin (2013) highlights moments in which, on research visits to schools, she was given marketing literature promoting the school. This moment, she argues, both mistakenly and rightfully positioned her as 'educational tourist' (p. 543). Both researchers highlight the complexity of recognition in environments in which there is no available researcher subjectivity. In place of this, as they show, the researcher is often implicated in the nearest available narrative.

My experiences of recognition are similar to these accounts. Under my desk at home is a branded canvas bag from one of my case institutions. It holds a branded pen and branded foam finger, along with the promotional and careers-focused literature I have collected from both case institutions. I was given the bag and its branded contents on my first visit to the institution, when I was taken on a tour of the college that included, confusingly, both its wedding reception facilities and its wall of graduation photographs. My field notes record feelings of bewilderment, and my uncertainty about how to respond to the tour, that show the complexity of being subsumed into the institution's habitual reading of its visitors. Although I often smile at my memory of my attempts to seem appropriately impressed by the ceremony space and accompanying golf course – 'good for stag nights' – the moments of mis-reading bring important ethical issues with them. Ethical codes of practice (BERA, 2018) require that steps be taken to inform participants of the research aims and impacts. In my case, such steps included producing an information sheet summarising the premise of the research, speaking one-to-one with each participant to ensure they had read and understood the information and the nature of their participation in the

project. These discussions appear to set clear boundaries around what the project is and is not, and explain the purpose of my physical presence as well as the temporal length of my engagement with the site as a research site.

However, these steps cannot account for the ways in which the position of the researcher is variously understood, mis-read or contested in the interaction between participant and researcher. In the context of this mis-recognition, informed consent becomes irrelevant, and the only available ethical code is one that recognises the limiting boundaries around shared knowledge and reciprocal understandings (Butler, 2005). As Culbertson's (2013) and Applebaum's (2012) conceptual discussions of Butler's ethical writing suggest, however, the enacted practice of such an approach is difficult to pin down. This difficulty is summarised by a moment at the end my fieldwork at Sebford College. As I thanked the tutor of the photography course at Sebford College on my way out after the final research visit, he responded, 'You're welcome any time. I've no idea what you're doing, but you're most welcome.' This interaction, which captures the well-meaning approach from both researcher and participant, and has to be seen in the context of my several written and verbal explanations of the project to him, is an important reminder of the ways that academic research is often inexplicable even to those most closely involved.

I have ensured anonymity by referring to the institutions and participants in the study using pseudonyms which are attached to any reference to them in my transcribed interviews or fieldnotes. Although I am aware of Malone's (2003) arguments that complete anonymity is almost impossible to achieve, and that this is particularly true when researching HE from within an HE context, I do not think that anonymity is the

most problematic ethical issue in my research. Rather, I recall Taylor's (2012) account of the conflict and dissonance she experienced through community events that sought to relate her research findings to key stakeholders and participants in her project. In their disagreement with and dismissal of her findings, Taylor draws attention to the problematic ways in which social research is often positioned from within as being of benefit to its participants. With this in mind, I was all too aware of my imposition upon the institutions that have agreed to participate in my study. I accounted for this in my ethical review process and in my research design by allowing participants to choose the place and, where possible, the time of their interview. I checked repeatedly for their consent throughout the process, and offered them the possibility of withdrawing from the study within certain timeframes. However, although these allowances demonstrate ethical awareness for the purposes of institutional review boards set up to ensure that research does not harm participants (Sikes, 2006), the review board process offers little mitigation for the minutiae of experiences in the lived practice of research (Berbary, 2014; Moosa, 2013).

As such, the process cannot ultimately account for the power imbalance in which the ability to choose where an interview is conducted is secondary to the inability to choose how the interview is transcribed, analysed and disseminated. In this lived experience, my perceptions of myself as outsider, narrator and imposer operate in complex conjunction with participants' ability to provide or withhold research data (Adler and Adler, 2002) on the one hand, and their partial knowledge of the position of the researcher on the other. In turn, the impossibility of defining the temporal and spatial boundaries of the researcher intersects sharply with the clear distinction

between visiting, revisiting and leaving the research site and participants' ongoing temporal and spatial occupation of the colleges.

Conclusion

This methodology chapter has explored the ways in which research design requires the drawing of boundaries around the spaces and times of the research, and around the occupation of spaces and times by the researcher. This exploration extends the conceptualisation of subjectivities as narratively, spatially and temporally constructed that I set out in the previous chapters, showing how such narratives are implicated in the practice of research. I asked questions of the boundary-drawing that is inherent to case study research design. I argued for a case study whose spatial boundaries are permeable, in order that the intertwining of national and local contexts, institutional and discipline-specific environments, not be artificially divided. I have nevertheless shown that all research design engages in the very discourses it seeks to critique, making the 'painful' processes of boundary drawing all the more critical to highlight (Massey 1993, p. 64). Risking too much of a focus on the 'painful', awkward and embarrassing elements of conducting social research, and of writing about it, I also wanted to show how the researcher is constantly engaged in processes of boundary drawing around the researcher subjectivity. While methodological writing constitutes one of those boundary-drawing processes, other processes are more embodied experiences of mis-recognition and self-explanation in the research field. These experiences both undermine the possibilities for, and reinforce the importance of, taking care with processes of information, consent and anonymity. The following chapter is the first of the data analysis chapters, and situates the case colleges within

the national context of CBHE, drawing upon data from elite and staff interviews, and

from documentary analysis of marketing materials.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT DOES 'LOCAL' MEAN? CBHE AS 'LOCAL' HE PROVISION IN

ENGLAND

Introduction

> Although part of a long tradition of locally provided higher
>
> education […] much of this activity has been hidden from the
>
> recent history of higher education, being eclipsed by the rise of the
>
> polytechnics and other large HE providers as national institutions
>
> during the 1980s.
>
> (Parry and Thompson, 2002, p. 3, emphasis added)

As this quotation suggests, the study's research context of CBHE is often narratively

positioned as 'local' HE provision within a nationally stratified marketplace; it is also

frequently positioned as providing for '(very) local' students within a nationally

normative model of student mobility (Parry, Callendar and Temple, 2012, p. 18). This

chapter explores the complex and sometimes competing discourses within which

CBHE as local HE is narrated. The chapter draws attention to the ways that

understandings of CBHE as 'local' signify placed social and economic inequalities,

narratives of student mobilities and immobilities, and the materialities of 'local'

student experiences (Holton and Finn, 2018). Often, the simplicity of the descriptor

'local' belies the complexity of the role CBHE occupies, and the needs it is

understood as meeting. It is this complexity that the chapter sets out to explore.

Section 1 will present data from interviews with national figures in FE associations, to

provide an overview of the multiple ways in which CBHE is understood as local, and

the complexities within these understandings. In Section 2, the analysis moves to focus on the two case colleges in this research project. The section argues that if CBHE is understood as 'local' provision, the relationship of each college to its locality is both particular to that college and an instance of CBHE as a more general phenomenon (Yin, 2014). For each case college the analysis begins at a documentary level, with the marketing materials that each college uses for its CBHE provision. As well as providing a crucial 'first impression' of the colleges, these materials show how the discourse of the 'local' is mobilised by CBHE providers to position themselves in the national HE marketplace (Fairclough, 1993). Data from interviews with tutors and HE directors in each case college are then analysed to develop the 'first impression' further. These interviews took place on brief, single-day trips to the colleges in the term before my extended fieldwork visits began. As such, my perceptions of the college as 'local' providers for 'local' students were formed through these interviews, and they make an important introduction to CBHE and to each case college's locality.

Each section uses de Certeau's (1984) concept of the 'spatial story' (pp. 115-130) to destabilise the concept of the 'local' as a given or easily understood marker of place. Where 'local' is associated with FE and CBHE, for example, this association is never neutral or simple. Instead, 'local' can signify FE's historical associations with community and employers, as a point of pride (Hodgson and Spours, 2015). On the other hand, when positioned in relation to global institutions (Marginson, 2006), CBHE's connections to the 'local' are also markers of its subordinate position in the stratified HE system. The analysis in this chapter therefore explores the ways that 'local' is used to define a multiplicity of factors associated with CBHE provision,

asking in each instance how 'local' is used to signify CBHE provision or CBHE students. These patterns of signification include geographical area (though the boundaries around a locality are never specified, and are always subjective), industrial and educational histories within geographical areas, a mode of HE study that is not the traditionally 'mobile' and can also be described as 'commuter' (Holton and Finn, 2018), and combinations of these and other narratives. Through an analysis of CBHE and the local as a spatial story, the chapter draws out the discourses that define CBHE as a particular type of HE provision, and then presents each of the case colleges in the study as specific examples of this kind of provision. In each section, the data are chosen because it represents a common or recurring spatial story of local HE provision or local students; taken together, the discourses and definitions of localism and CBHE in these multiple narrative forms emerged as the most prevalent discourse in the data set as a whole.

The construction of the 'local' college at national level

The data in this section are taken from interviews with the following people:

1. FE College principal and member of national FE lobbying group

2. HE policy manager, national FE lobbying group

3. CBHE research project director

These interviews focused on the history, current moment and possible futures of CBHE provision in England, particularly with regard to national policy agendas of skills and technical education, widening participation, and the area review process. The interviews therefore invited definitions of CBHE as a generalisable type of HE provision, and these were often given in terms of its distinctive purpose or its

particular challenges, either in opposition to university HE, or in accordance with the traditions of FE.

Local employers and local people: CBHE and local need

In response to a question about what makes CBHE a distinctive type of HE provision, the CBHE research project director described the provision in the following way:

> It [CBHE] clearly does want to support local people. It clearly does
> want to support local employers. And it clearly does want to enrich
> the local community. Now some of these things are quite sort of
> clichéd comments, but the typical university doesn't do that. Why?
> Because it doesn't recruit local students. Most of those students
> don't go on and get jobs in the local area, and actually they have
> very little connection with the local community.

In listing the connections between CBHE and local people, employers, and community, this excerpt described key strengths of CBHE provision, while at the same time indicating the complexity of the role played by the 'local' college. In this relationship, and in contrast to university practices (Chatterton, 2000) students are recruited from the local area, are supported through their HE, and their completed HE courses allow them to contribute more to the area than they might otherwise have done. The relationship therefore relies upon a definition of the local as both a place that can be invested in and enriched, and as a narrative of undergraduate immobility. Here the understanding of the local student as 'missing out' on the traditional

undergraduate experience (Holdsworth, 2006) is re-cast, so that CBHE as 'local' provision also offers an alternative to a historically elite and exclusionary narrative. However, this strong relationship between college and locality is also complicated for several reasons. First, a locality is always specific, rather than general. If CBHE is generally understood as 'local' HE provision, then it must also always be different in each locality. Secondly, although in the description above, the needs of local people and local employers can be met simultaneously through providing HE in the local area, this is not always the case. The HE policy manager of a national FE lobbying group described a split in CBHE provision between the response to localised educational needs according to a national Widening Participation (WP) agenda, and the response to local labour markets according to a national skills agenda (see also Bathmaker, 2018):

> Some colleges have got an exclusive WP mission. They will tend to
> be colleges with smaller numbers but give an opportunity
> particularly to those who have childcare responsibilities, those who
> are poor and can't afford transport costs to go to a local university.
> There are other colleges who relate to a very localised labour
> market […] The way that they work is that they're very strongly
> engaged with their local employers. There's a history in those local
> manufacturing, engineering and construction industries.

In this description, CBHE serves a different purpose in different localities, and according to narratives of the local that rely first upon the local as signifying immobility, and then upon the local as signifying a geographical area with a historical

narrative of industry. Where access to HE in itself is a concern, the local college stands in for the less local university. Here, in contrast to the construction in the first data excerpt, undergraduate immobility is seen much more in accordance with deficits that tie 'local' students to place (Corbett, 2007). CBHE is local provision where it provides for those tied in these ways to their locality. On the other hand, the narrative relationship between place and industry is evoked to describe provision is instrumental in contributing to and furthering local industry. Although both could be seen to 'enrich' the local area, each can also be seen to do so according to a different understanding of the 'local' where this meets policy agendas and the traditions of FE. HE itself is required to do something different in each case, whether to redress social inequalities (Avis and Orr, 2016) through being available, affordable or accessible where university HE is not, or to create opportunities to gain the skills required for specific industries. In this way, the purpose of CBHE becomes defined by the ways that local need is understood, narrated and provided for.

Local students and local possibilities

As discussed above, CBHE as 'local' HE provision can offer a counter-narrative to the dominant understanding of the perceived-as-mobile undergraduate in English HE. However, the typical CBHE student was also described in these interviews as bound or fixed in place by disadvantage. This section brings together data on the typical CBHE student, in which narratives of immobility feature strongly, with data on the HE subjects and course types offered in particular colleges or in CBHE in general. The purpose of bringing these seemingly distinct data together is to demonstrate that if CBHE students are seen to be attending CBHE as the only possible HE option for

them, the breadth of subjects and course types offered in CBHE determines what HE futures are possible for those students.

The HE policy manager suggested that:

> The reality is, because they [CBHE students] are unable to move,
> or because they've got worse grades than they thought, they're at
> college higher education.

Here, mobility is constrained either alongside or as a result of low achievement in previous education, and CBHE is the only possible option. The College Principal and lobbying group chair characterised CBHE students as similarly fixed in place, though with different accompanying reasons for attending CBHE:

> I think there's quite a large category [of CBHE students] who -
> kind of - are there because of the transport, or the costs, or the lack
> of confidence.

Again here, spatial immobility works alongside financial impossibility or academic confidence to construct a type of CBHE student who could not attend HE at any other institution than their local college. This therefore works to further the construction of the local college as serving a Widening Participation agenda, primarily addressing inequalities of access to HE through its HE provision (Jephcote and Raby, 2012). Another similar narrative of the CBHE student was given by the CBHE research project director:

Some of these students might be intimidated by the university, or

the university is quite a long way away, and some of these students

need to live at home and they need to access part time.

This list of possible reasons to attend CBHE includes some of the defining

characteristics of the non-traditional or widening participation student (Baker and

Brown, 2007; Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003), so that CBHE is therefore again

constructed as meeting this national agenda. Importantly, CBHE is also described as

uniquely able to meet the needs of these students, discursively positioned in the above

narrative in contrast to a homogenous definition of the exclusionary university (see

also Leahy, 2012). Echoing this definition, the FE College Principal described how

his college's HE provision contrasts to nearby university-based HE:

Colleges tend to do things that universities find difficult, like part-

time, like flexible provision. So the university closest to me doesn't

do part time undergraduate at all, really. It's not part of what they

do.

The strengths of CBHE emerge through these narratives, which emphasise the

multiple ways in which the provision is positioned to redress educational inequalities

that might otherwise bar students from accessing HE at all. However, these

constructions of the role of CBHE and the typical characteristics of the CBHE student

must also be seen in the context of the complexities of locality discussed above. If HE

is being made uniquely accessible in an FE college, which types of HE are made

accessible there? If the locality has, for example, a strong industrial heritage and links

with local employers which create an emphasis on technical and skills education, are

students who 'need' to attend CBHE therefore offered technical and skills education

as *the* single HE possibility? These questions are further complicated by waves of

policy initiatives which, without removing the imperative to widen participation, also

structure the available options within CBHE:

> Clearly, the government's pressure to increase the number of
>
> apprenticeships is a big driver. Being very mercenary about it,
>
> that's where the money is. That's where the funding is, and it would
>
> be foolish not to do that. It's also the first time, I think, where
>
> we've had an initiative from central government which pretty
>
> overtly says colleges can and should do this. The minister's speech
>
> at the AoC [Association of Colleges] conference last year [2015]
>
> was about colleges doubling their 30% share in apprenticeships
>
> within 4 years. […] I think it's early days yet, but we're certainly
>
> beginning to see in my own institution evidence of substitution
>
> effect, so what we've lost in part time HE through the traditional
>
> route, we might be picking up through Higher Level
>
> apprenticeships. (College Principal and National Lobbying Group
>
> Chair)

Two effects of national policy were discussed here. The first was a decline in part-

time HE students as a result of tuition fee increases of 27% between 2007/8 and

2010/11, combined with reduced funding available to students for sub-degree and

post-graduate qualifications (Avis and Orr, 2016, p. 54). The second was a national programme of investment in Higher Level apprenticeships, which in the above narrative act to 'substitute' the lost numbers of part-time students. This highlights the particular financial difficulties of FE colleges, for whom loss of part-time student numbers means an immediate economic loss that must be just as immediately filled. Just as CBHE was described above as particularly suited to the needs of non-traditional students, so the provision is also narrated here as being especially suited to offering apprenticeships. Although these discourses of suitability are constructed separately, bringing them together highlights that the non-traditional student, for whom CBHE, and specifically the CBHE offered in their immediate locality, is the best or the only option, is therefore subject to a further narrative. In this narrative, the HE on offer to that student is that to which CBHE itself is seen to be most suited. This narrative of suitability is further complicated by contradictions in the ways that national policy is enacted; as Bathmaker (2017) points out, despite the positioning of FE colleges as the logical providers of Higher Level apprenticeships, in practice colleges are not always chosen as providers.

It is within the intertwined logic of the marketplace and of local need that the range of subjects offered at HE level in some colleges is far greater than others. As the HE policy director explained:

> There are colleges, particularly but not exclusively in reasonably
> sized towns, which do not have a university. Examples would be
> Grimsby, Blackpool, Blackburn, where the colleges are effectively
> providing a mini university service for local people.

Here the discourse of the local signals a widening participation agenda, in which CBHE provides access to HE for people who are unlikely or unable to move away from home for HE. This local access agenda intersects with the local-national HE marketplace, so that those less likely to attend a university in these particular localities have access to a 'mini university', where this implies a breadth of subjects offered, and a significant, if small, population of HE students. The typical CBHE student in most descriptions is tied to or embedded in their locality, and these ties are one of a range of reasons that a college is more accessible than a university. The subjects and types of HE offered by their local college are then subject to a further range of place-specific responses to national policy imperatives. Taken together, the structures that define the local student and the local college combine to delimit the HE possibilities available, or imaginable, within a particular locality.

As the above data excerpt also demonstrates, while CBHE can be understood as a distinct form of HE provision, it is also defined alongside and against university-based HE. In describing some types of CBHE provision as 'mini universities', the above speaker assumes a collective understanding of what a 'university service' is, showing the dominance and the homogeneity of constructions of the university in discourses of HE in England. Like CBHE, the local student is defined against the dominant narrative of traditional undergraduate mobility in England. The local student in CBHE therefore offers a possible counter-narrative to accepted understandings of undergraduate study. The next section examines this counter-narrative in more detail, particularly focusing on the ways that descriptions of students as local also imply particular uses of educational spaces and buildings.

Local students, not 'boarding school' students

The HE policy manager described the historical patterns of mobility and spatial practice associated with traditional university students as the 'boarding school model,' arguing that:

> The problem is when you've established something, when you've constructed something, and when you've supported that model as English governments have successively in the post-war period, you've supported that particular form of HE. You've expanded that, and it's become part of the ritual culture, particularly of the middle class kids in England, and it's very difficult to change. So I think we will probably have that model for a long time.

Seen in this way, the imperative to live and study within the same institution has its roots in the elite modes of schooling in England, available to a privileged minority of students. His use of the term 'ritual culture' goes some way towards explaining how, despite shifts in recent years in the proportion of students who do not leave home in order to study for a degree (Christie, 2007; Holdsworth, 2009b; Holton and Finn, 2018), the narrative remains strong. In this narrative, the university as an all-encompassing space, a 'bubble' (Bathmaker *et al.*, 2016, p. 102) containing living, socialising and learning spaces together, is central to the lived experience of undergraduate study. As Holton's (2015) study of 'local' university students shows, this central position is destablised in the experiences of students who have enduring relationships, employment and family commitments that extend beyond the spaces and the temporality of their degree courses. In CBHE institutions, where the majority

of students are local, the physical spaces of the college play a different and less central role than those of a university.

Describing the expectations that CBHE students have of educational spaces, the HE policy manager suggested that:

> The mature students, they're not particularly interested, especially if they have childcare responsibilities, and possibly have quite long hours in the form of part-time work. And obviously if they're being seconded or supported by the employer, they kind of see themselves as slightly different. They turn up at the college, they do their sessions, and they leave. It's quite difficult to engage them in what we might call traditional student experience type activities.

Here, students defined as 'mature' are also seen as more embedded in their locality than the 'traditional student', either through employment or childcare, and are seen to have instrumental relationships with the spaces of the college. As discussed above, the provision of local HE as the *only* possible HE for these groups of 'non-traditional' students is part of the definition of CBHE. At the same time, it is the very relationship to their locality that de-centralises the position of HE spaces in the degree experience of these groups of students. CBHE spaces can therefore be seen as both more and less important in the lives of their local student populations than university spaces are in the lives of traditional, perceived-as mobile undergraduate students.

For the FE College Principal and Lobbying Group Chair, there was a similar contrast between elite undergraduates and local students. His description here referred to a study he had been involved in that compared student expectations in a Russell Group and Post-1992 university in the same city. This study led him to differentiate between types of university, positioning CBHE students alongside those at post-1992 universities in terms of spatial practice:

> Student expectations of [Russell group university] were the student union, sports facilities, leisure. Their whole social life revolved around the university. For [post-1992 university] students, they regarded it much more as a job, so that they arrived in the morning, they did their work, and they finished their work and they went back home again. A lot of their social networks were outside the institution. An FE college is much like the second of those things.

Here, institutional status brings with it a set of spatial associations that include students' embeddedness in locality rather than HE institution, connections to employment, and proximity to 'home'. The local student therefore always occupies a position in the reputational hierarchy of HE (Stich 2014), which their use of institutional spaces both reflects and reinforces.

Although the excerpt above suggests similarities between FE colleges as HE providers and the post-1992 university in the study described, there are important differences between the two. Aside from catering for a majority of 'local' students

(ETF, 2016), these HE providers offer HE alongside general FE courses, with FE occupying the bulk of the spaces and resources of the college. Therefore, as well as the challenge of providing spaces that are both vital and insignificant in students' lives, their HE spaces are also required to signify a distinction from FE. As the College Principal reported:

> We had a relatively high drop out rate, which we were very
> concerned about, so we followed up, and basically the students
> were saying, 'Well, we're being taught in the same rooms, by the
> same staff, in much the same way as we were at Level 3, and that's
> just a bit dull actually.'

For the students described here, a significant barrier to continuing with HE was that they did not see the educational space as specific to HE interactions and pedagogies. Educational spaces, de-centred for the local HE student, are also important signifiers of educational status precisely because they are experienced in the local college, and could therefore be read as FE spaces. The college itself is not understood as an HE-specific institution, so the HE spaces within it are required to do so. For the traditional, perceived-as-mobile student, as described above, all spaces are by assumption and by definition associated with the university and therefore with degree study. For a local student at a college, the space is required to work harder in signifying and shaping HE specific identities.

Given the practical ways in which local students are perceived as using institutional spaces, however, as well as the small proportion of each college's population that study HE, CBHE spaces cannot replicate the spatial markers of elite 'ritual'

university culture. Instead, as the CBHE Research Project Director argues, many colleges designate some rooms or buildings as HE specific:

> I have observed a tendency for colleges to think that HE is very different and therefore needs to occupy a different space. But when I go and look in these spaces, because sometimes I go on tours, and somebody very proudly says, 'Here's our HE room,' and I look in the room, and I think, 'That doesn't look any different to any other room.'

Where spaces are simply divided between FE and HE, this division both underlines the importance of that distinction within a dual-sector institution, and reveals the elusiveness and abstraction of HE as a spatial and material entity. It is at once contained by the spaces and places in which it happens, and something less tangible that takes place in those spaces. As is clear from the significance attached to particular rooms in CBHE institutions, however, experiences of HE spaces are inextricable from the complex hierarchies and dominant narratives of what HE should and can be. Within these narratives, the local student in the local college occupies a position that is both an alternative to the ways that HE in England is commonly understood, and a precarious spatial relationship that is always threatened and yet more important because of that threat.

This section has demonstrated the strong discursive connection between CBHE and the 'local'. The section has also shown how complex the construction of the local is in its relationship to CBHE. While colleges' responsiveness to locality can be to

reinforce a labour market, it can also be to redress educational inequalities, and each of these definitions of local response brings with it a different set of educational priorities. While connections to the labour market can be broadly categorised as part of a national skills agenda, and educational inequalities as part of a widening participation agenda, there are further policy drivers which also affect CBHE provision. In particular, the financial concerns associated with a marketised HE system mean that colleges' local responses might also be responses to national imperatives like the increased funding for apprenticeships. If CBHE is the only or the best option for some students, then these shifts in what is offered locally are also changes to the available opportunities. The local is also significant in seeing CBHE as a counter-narrative to the 'boarding school' model of English undergraduate mobilities, which is historically reinforced as an elite mode of study. As perceptions of undergraduate spaces in CBHE institutions show, this counter-narrative is complex and contradictory, de-centering the institution in the lived experience of the undergraduate even as the existence of the institutional spaces are rendered more important in that lived experience.

Tobston College and Sebford College

This section shows how the case colleges in this study can be seen as examples of 'local' CBHE providers. Exploring them from this perspective facilitates an analysis of the colleges as specific to and embedded in the narratives of their particular locality. At the same time, the colleges have in common that they might both be described as offering a 'mini university service' in 'reasonably sized towns that do not have a university', or HE 'cold spots' (HEFCE, 2015). While neither of the case colleges can be said to represent the concerns and characteristics of all CBHE

providers across England, they nevertheless highlight that CBHE at a national level cannot be understood without first seeing the complexity of the local.

To introduce each case college, I draw on two separate data sets for each case. The first data set consists of marketing materials from each college, including their HE prospectus, the HE pages of their institutional website, and any additional documents such as guides to the local area. I have argued elsewhere (Henderson, 2018c) that, although the competitive HE marketplace limits the available discourses for institutions to use in their self-representation, there are particular discourses that are common to CBHE providers' marketing materials. The discourse of the 'local' is one of the most prevalent of these, and this discourse marks CBHE out from university provision that promotes itself as operating within a global market. Without claiming a causal link between the ways that an institution markets its provision and the ways that it is encountered by students, I consider that these materials are important representations of the available discourses through which it is possible to understand HE provision (see also Symes and Drew, 2017), CBHE provision, and these case colleges. These materials are also representative of my first encounters with each case college, and therefore contributed to important first impressions of the research sites.

The second data set in each case college section are interview data from interviews with the HE director and course tutors on two degree courses at each college. This data is taken from parts of the interviews where the HE directors and tutors described the locality of the college, and CBHE's relationship to that locality. The data in these sections combine to serve as a different, or alternative, introduction to the case colleges than those offered by the marketing materials. The HE directors and tutors

are similar to the participants in the first section of the chapter in their experience and knowledge of working in the FE sector. They are different in that they are embedded in their particular college and locality, and therefore offer a view of how the national understandings of CBHE and the CBHE student discussed above are experienced in and shaped by a specific place and institution. In each case, the participants are named using their chosen pseudonym, with a brief description of their spatial relationship to the college and the locality.

Tobston College

CBHE and local history: Tobston College marketing materials

In this section, the data set comprises Tobston College's 'About HE' web-page, (of which I took a screen-shot at the same time as I obtained the other materials), Tobston College's HE prospectus, and a smaller booklet called 'Hello, we're [name of HE site]'. The last of these reflects Tobston College's position, at the time, as having a separate site for their HE provision. This site was on the outskirts of a small village five miles from Tobston town centre. The main FE site of the college was in the town centre. As will be discussed in this and subsequent chapters, Tobston College announced the closure of this separate site in the year in which I conducted my fieldwork, and moved their HE provision to the main town centre site in September 2017. I am focusing on the marketing materials from before this move, because these reflect the College as it was accessed and experienced by the student participants in the study, who completed their undergraduate studies before the changes to the site.

Although, as I will go on to show, the marketing materials often draw upon the discourses of 'local' HE provision set out in the section above, both the prospectus

and the 'Hello' booklet also gave information to introduce Tobston as a town to students from elsewhere:

> Tobston is a thriving region of business and retail growth, making it an exciting time to study here. A former Roman settlement named [name], it is one of the largest and oldest boroughs in the UK, and is ideally situated in [name of region of England].

The photograph on the brochure's opening page positioned the town's medieval church behind a large motorway junction, and amongst industrial and commercial buildings. These visual and textual narrative markers can be read as signifying a movement from a legitimising past to an economically thriving future. This emphasis on the historical legacy of the town, as well as its relationship to future industry, are perhaps all the more important given that the college cannot draw upon a history of HE in the town. As an example of a 'reasonably-sized town that does not have a university', the college situated itself and its HE provision firmly in the history of the town. Similarly, the 'Hello' booklet used a double page timeline to show the shifts in the HE site's use over a millennium, since its mention in the Domesday book. This visual representation of a journey steeped in English history drew upon national associations between historical architecture and educational excellence regularly found in elite universities (Baker and Brown, 2007), despite the fact that the site had been used for educational purposes for only the latter forty years of that history. Again, there is a blurring of the boundaries between the history of the locality and the history of the college itself, with the local lending authority to the educational space.

Despite strong narratives of introduction to Tobston and its HE site, the marketing materials also acknowledged and drew upon the expectation that many of their CBHE students will be 'local' students. The following sentences were at the top of the college's HE webpage, above a map showing the HE site's location, and a more detailed description of the facilities offered there:

> We're a friendly, less intimidating alternative to the larger city universities. And if you're local, more convenient too. And with Tobston's excellent transport links by road, rail and air, even if you're from further afield, we can be pretty local to you too.

The first section of this chapter highlighted the discourse of CBHE and local HE provision as a counter-narrative to traditional models of HE study in England. This web page took this approach, explicitly creating a contrast between university and CBHE. Tobston as a place is closely linked with its identity as a CBHE provider in this example. Where 'city' and 'universities' were understood together as 'intimidating', CBHE in the town was associated with friendliness and convenience. While there were markers of the same discourses of local need, such as students imagined as finding universities 'intimidating', these were also cast as an opportunity to study in a different place and a different way. Similarly, in order to emphasise the ease of transport access to the town, the local was re-defined, signifying proximity to other places rather than specificity. This excerpt demonstrates how concepts of locality and localism were crucial to the way the college marketed its CBHE provision, even as these concepts were re-defined through their use.

The college's marketing materials also focused heavily on the possibility of accessing HE without leaving home. In the 'Hello' booklet, two consecutive double page spreads were dedicated to accommodation choices. The first described the advantages associated with 'staying at home', arguing that this option allowed for the student to 'keep your job', 'keep your friends', and reach the 'same destination, different route'. The implicit comparison to traditional modes of mobile degree study was used to suggest that 'staying at home' was a redefinition of a familiar and outdated mode of study. These documents show how CBHE could be seen as offering a counter-narrative to traditional models of undergraduate study. In this alternative, embeddedness in locality was valid and valued as part of HE student subjectivity. At the same time, in the elision between local and institutional history in these documents, there was an unspoken local history that is without visible HE provision.

'We have had a big part to play': Staff perceptions of CBHE at Tobston College
In interviews with the HE director and tutors, I asked how they felt about Tobston as a place. Inevitably, their answers drew connections between the town of Tobston and the educational needs of its population. Lisa, one of the graphic design degree tutors, had grown up in 'the area', as she described it. She had completed her degree and worked for several years in industry in London, and returned to Tobston to begin her teaching career at the college over twenty years ago. She had been instrumental in setting up the college's graphic design degree just over ten years ago. For Lisa, there were specific challenges associated with teaching in Tobston:

> There's no getting away from the fact that Tobston, well, this area,
>
> has had its problems. In 2004 it had the worst adult literacy and

numeracy rates in the UK, hence a lot of widening participation and

there was a lot of money, European social fund money, so that we

could try to engage a lot of these disenfranchised learners.

Here, the college's position in its locality is portrayed as part of an imperative to redress educational inequalities. Situating the town within the national educational geography suggests that what is particular to this area is an enduring and negative educational legacy. In this description, the low literacy and numeracy rates of the people in the area are characteristic of the place itself, so that, as Stich's (2014) concept of reputational affect highlights, place, institution and students are characterised together. Therefore, to study at this particular local college, as a student from the locality, is to already be implicated in educational narratives that intertwine and define.

The college's HE director similarly portrayed Tobston's CBHE provision as at least in part a response to locally specific educational need. Catherine, like Lisa, had held a teaching or leadership position at Tobston College for over twenty years, having begun teaching after a successful career in the music industry. Taking on different leadership roles over that time, she had moved from combined FE and HE positions to specialising in HE provision over the past decade. She described herself as having lived in Tobston for over thirty years, and saw the college as an important step towards the kind of HE provision the area needs:

> **Catherine:** I think Tobston does need a proper university, and I do
>
> hope that in the next decade it achieves it, because I think it's a big

enough entity, and I think it's shown itself willing to change and be

transformed, and that's been a long time coming. I moved here in

1986, just after the miners' strike, and it was a very sad place then

Holly: Do you think it has changed?

Catherine: Mm [indicates agreement]. And I do think we [Tobston

College's CBHE provision] have had a big part to play in that.

Here, the college is intertwined with the area's history of industrial 'sadness', and

instrumental in redressing it. HE is associated with recognition of the town's capacity

for positive change. This association demonstrates the work done by HE institutions

in not only meeting local need, but in visibly signifying a relationship between HE

and the locality.

The complexity of the relationship between the locality, its history of educational and

industrial disadvantage, and the role of CBHE was also evident in the tutors'

descriptions of their students. These data highlight the tensions between narrating

CBHE and its students as taking the opportunity to study HE in a different or non-

traditional way, and reinforcing the dominance of the traditional university and all its

connotations. For Catherine, the CBHE students at Tobston represent a growing

national trend, in response to tuition fee increases, that moves away from the

traditional HE model:

What I think's happened is more students, particularly from poorer

families, said, 'We can't afford to go away, because we don't want

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more than the student loan to owe back, rather than student loan

and accommodation costs.'

As in the discussion of the 'ritual culture' and 'boarding school model' of traditional undergraduate study in England, this excerpt highlights a challenge to the contemporary relevance of that elite model. The CBHE student in this description is fixed in place, unable to afford undergraduate mobility, and is choosing a different mode of engagement with HE. Catherine goes on to describe Tobston's CBHE students as engaging with HE spaces in non-traditional ways because of their ties to place:

We haven't got the capacity to offer them the razzmatazz of the big

student union or things like that, but this is what our students like.

A lot of our students work, a lot of our students live at home, so

they're not interested in that.

This common construction of the spatial practices of the CBHE student was echoed again by Gavin, a tutor on the English degree course at Tobston. Gavin moved abroad after gaining a doctorate in the UK, and began teaching HE at Tobston when he found it difficult to gain a university position upon his return. He had been at the college for seven years, and imagined staying because he had a young family. Like Catherine, Gavin sees his students as tied to place by employment and family commitments, and as therefore needing something other than a traditional university spatial environment:

> We just don't have that social infrastructure in place like they do at
>
> [nearby universities] and so on, but the type of students we have
>
> tend to be, they live at home and they work, so they don't really
>
> want that life.

Again, the normative traditional student 'life' is present in both of these accounts, as the experience that the local student's engagement with institutional space is defined against. Specifically, the student's status as local is conflated with an explicit rejection of traditional student spatial practice. The accounts are also accounts of non-traditional student mobility, in which the institution is de-centered by the multiple spaces that are comprise a local student's daily movement (Holton and Finn, 2018), in contrast to the more confined daily movements of the perceived-as-mobile student around the university's spaces (Smith and Hubbard, 2014).

 In these accounts, the local HE site is important in that it makes it possible for local students to study HE while working and keeping family commitments. At the same time, these commitments are described as making the site's similarity to traditional HE spaces unimportant. However, the staff also attached a great deal of significance to the spatial separation between HE and FE, and their accounts suggest a connection between the HE site and understandings of the traditional university. When I asked how important the separate site was to students, Gavin responded:

> It gives a sort of an atmosphere of it being a university campus in a
>
> way, and you can see the way they talk about it that they see it as
>
> separate. It's quite important to separate it off, at least in my

opinion, I think it gives a separate identity to them that is really important.

Catherine responded to the same question in a similar vein:

Students have a definite sense of coming to university, rather than being in college. They feel they've gone to university, and I've been really trying to cultivate that.

The 'atmosphere' and the 'sense' that are associated with the separate HE site are constructed here as important because they define the spatial experience as related to university. Despite the rejection of the university 'life' that the local student is seen have made, the spatial practice of 'go[ing] to university' is all the more important to define when there is a risk of elision with 'being in college'. The HE site is vital in its definition against traditional university spaces, and simultaneously vital in its similarity to them. As highlighted by Gavin's description of this similarity as 'really important', and Catherine's suggestion that she 'cultivate[s]' that perception of similarity, the CBHE space must be perpetually reinforced as university space, even while it also offers an alternative to it.

These accounts of Tobston's CBHE provision and its typical students demonstrate how the college must be understood in the context of the narratives of place within which it is embedded and intertwined. The college's CBHE provision is constructed as an important response to local need, both for the visibility of HE in a 'cold spot' and for the policy agendas of widening access to HE and promoting technical and

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skills education in response to local labour market demands. The staff at the college saw the provision as offering an important alternative to traditional university education, but this alternative remains steeped in the definitional power of the traditional university. The negotiation between these two narratives is also a negotiation of the spatial narratives of the area as an HE cold spot, in which a history of HE is a very present absence, and of the 'local' student as enacting particular material educational practices. The following section shows how Sebford, also a cold spot in England's HE geography, is constructed and understood through some similar and some contrasting discourses of locality and HE.

Sebford College

Investment in education: Sebford College's marketing materials

In this section, the data set comprises Sebford College's 'Why choose Sebford College University Centre?' page and the University Centre prospectus for the academic year in which I conducted my fieldwork. Unlike Tobston College (at the time of my fieldwork), Sebford College's HE provision was situated in the town centre and on the same site as its FE provision. The University Centre was located in a separate building on this campus. In contrast to the marketing material for Tobston College, Sebford's prospectus did not have a page dedicated to describing the town, and there were no images of the town at all throughout the prospectus. The prospectus suggested, without stating this, that prospective students would already know the town, and need no introduction to it. The prospectus focused instead on two different spatial topics. The first of these was the University Centre building and its position on the College campus. The second was the College's association with its partner institution, a high-ranked university around thirty miles from the town.

A double-page spread in the prospectus is entitled 'Our £65 million campus'. The pages are largely taken up by a bird's eye view photograph of the whole campus, each building numbered and labeled with a key in the corner of the second page. The photograph framed the campus so the town around its edges cannot be seen. Rather than establishing the town, or the educational spaces of the institution, as historically grounded as in Tobston's materials, this representation of the campus drew attention to recent investment and contemporary architecture. The photograph captured the spread of the campus and emphasises its multiple spaces, situating the HE building within a network of educational structures. On the following page, the second on a list of 'seven key' reasons to 'choose Sebford College' was:

> £14 million dedicated University Centre and £7 million Science,
> Technology and Engineering Centre

The list was accompanied by a photograph of the University Centre, with light from its rows of windows evoking the building being in use. There is a clear narrative in these pages of investment in education, and of studying at the University Centre as an opportunity to participate in a thriving institution. The 'dedicated' University Centre, tagged with its monetary investment, suggest that HE is both a priority in the institution, and allocated a specific, separate place on the campus. Unlike in Tobston's prospectus, these were not narratives that relate the institution to its locality, other than to demonstrate the presence of investment in education in an HE cold spot, where this investment might otherwise be assumed to be absent. The resulting impression of the institution was place-less.

The first on the list of 'key reasons' to study HE at Sebford was that a high percentage of its degrees are awarded by the nearby, highly-ranked university. There is a borrowing of reputation here, so that the college's CBHE provision was associated both with the college and with the more elite reputation of the partner university. At the same time, there was a suggestion that the potential students looking at the prospectus would prefer not to travel as far as the nearby university to gain a degree from there, and therefore that the opportunity to gain a degree at a distance from that university was a clear selling point. The University Centre was reliant upon Sebford and the partner university both as separate place, and as elided in reputation. The college's 'Why Choose Sebford University Centre' webpage made it clear that the anticipated CBHE student is one who was fixed in the local area. In a section entitled, 'A degree on your doorstep', the webpage stated that:

> The vast majority of our students live within 20 miles of Sebford.
> We especially attract students from the areas of [surrounding towns
> and villages]. Although some students travel from further afield,
> and we do have accommodation available, these students have
> chosen us as living at home is the financially sensible option. You
> may be able to keep your job (many students work full/part-time
> while studying), study while looking after children or caring for
> others or fit your study around the commitments you have.

In a similar way to the Tobston prospectus and webpage, this excerpt used the narrative of the 'financially sensible' option, reinforcing the monetary and ethical

value of a non-traditional alternative to HE study. Similarly, the page made clear that students were anticipated to have commitments that keep them in place, and that CBHE at Sebford was unusual in catering for these kinds of students and this kind of study. Although the local area was almost divided from the spaces of the college in its marketing, then, the discourse of the 'local' was present, both in the fact that an introduction to the area was seen as unnecessary, and in that the most 'sensible' option for potential students in Sebford was to study locally.

A local 'mindset': Staff perceptions of CBHE at Sebford College

In interviews with the staff at Sebford College, I asked about how they saw Sebford as a place. Linda, the college's HE director, had been in position at the college for only two months at the time of my interview with her, and had moved to Sebford in order to take up the role. She described herself as having 'travelled and moved around', and had previously always worked in universities. Her perceptions of Sebford were therefore as a relative newcomer to the area and to the college. Linda repeatedly referred throughout our interview to what she called the 'Sebford mindset', which she reported having been warned about by tutors when she first arrived. The mindset is constructed as being specific to the town, and as limiting the people of the town to their immediate locality:

> Sometimes they [the CBHE students] are talking to me, and they
> say, 'But I'd have to go and travel there.' And I kind of think,
> 'Gosh, I've travelled the world, and you're talking about, I don't
> know, [nearby town] as being as far as you're prepared to go!'

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In describing the typical CBHE student as hesitant to travel beyond a particular boundary, Linda constructed a strong relationship between locality and mobility. In this local area, she argued, the ties to the local area are particularly strong, in comparison to her own as an outsider to the area. The contrast she drew was also a classed comparison which made the previously discussed association between mobility and privilege, and immobility and disadvantage (Corbett, 2007). Describing Sebford, Linda highlighted the history of economic poverty in the area, saying that the college and its CBHE provision is 'firmly rooted in its local context':

> When you look at it, it's very deprived, and you don't want to
>
> have generations of people who don't have hope, who don't
>
> have prospects. So I think of the work that we do in terms of
>
> raising aspirations - academically, personally, helping students.

Like Catherine, the HE director at Tobston College, Linda saw the CBHE provision at Sebford as implicated in redressing some of the place-specific legacies of deprivation that have led to a lack of hope. She constructed HE as a positive force in relation to the local lack of 'hope', much as Catherine described Tobston's CBHE as working to change the town's 'sadness'.

For one of the tutors, the importance of access to HE in the town was as much related to the present as to the legacy of the past. Tony was in his seventh year as an English HE tutor at the college at the time of our interview. He described himself as being 'from a council estate in the next town', and had returned to the area to teach at the college after a brief period as an associate lecturer at a university. He saw Sebford's

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CBHE provision as especially crucial given the racial and religious diversity in the town. With just over 30% of the town's population identified as BME in the 2011 census, and the largest group of these identified as Asian or British Asian, Tony described the specific role played by the local college in this context:

> We have a lot of students from the Asian community. We get quite
> a lot of young Muslim females, who I think otherwise may have
> been prevented from going to university. I think for them it's a kind
> of lifeline.

This understanding of Sebford's locality ties together narratives of religion and educational im/mobility (Ahmad, 2001; Bhopal, 2016) along with the town's position as a cold spot. In this narrative, HE offers emancipation to those fixed in place by the racial and religious difference that itself constructs a particular narrative of the town. While Linda described the town's history, and CBHE's intervention in that history, in terms of economic deprivation, Tony saw a different local imperative for CBHE. In his terms, the college redressed religious and racial exclusion from HE that is exacerbated by the lack of university provision in the locality.

The photography degree tutor at Sebford represented local students slightly differently. Lewis had been a photography tutor at the college for 26 years, first in FE and then as the tutor responsible for writing and delivering a Higher National Diploma and then a three year BA programme in photography. Lewis had grown up 'in the area', but had left to go to university. When he returned to the area, after working in London for several years, it was to set up his own company, and he

described an 'accidental' route in to teaching that began when Sebford College advertised for part time FE tutors. Lewis drew on the familiar construction of the 'immobile' local student, and, like Linda, highlighted the crucial role played by CBHE in an HE cold spot:

> They are mainly from around here. The students we get, I would
> say as a majority, are people who cannot or it would be very
> difficult for them to move to another part of the country. So we
> get a lot of students with jobs, with job responsibilities. We get a
> lot of students who have got families. Perhaps they're carers to
> older people, younger people. You know, those sort of students
> choose us because it means that they can study something that,
> that's quite, well, exotic or quite unusual, in a college like this.
> It's a good opportunity for them.

Here, Lewis' account echoes that of the HE policy director in the first section of this chapter, who described the colleges that offer a 'mini university service for local people'. The breadth of courses offered at Sebford, Lewis argued, widens the available options for those students for whom CBHE is the only possible HE option. Where these students are fixed in place, unable to follow traditional patterns of undergraduate mobility, the college's CBHE offer defines the limits of what was possible to imagine as degree study.

Describing typical degree students on his course, Tony offered a counter-narrative to the construction of the local student as fixed in place by circumstance:

It's more viable for them to stay at home, they don't have to pay

for rent, they don't have to make that big leap into the adult

world, so they can stay at home and have all the luxuries of

home.

This narrative positions local students as advantaged by their resistance to traditional

patterns of student mobility. They are comfortable and protected by the opportunity to

study without 'hav[ing] to' take the accompanying steps towards independence

(Holdsworth, 2006). However, the narrative also reinforces the connection between

traditional, perceived-as-mobile student and progression towards adulthood, and did

not allow for the multiple ways in which the 'local' student might have already

achieved other markers of independence. Though Tony's typical local student remains

in place by choice, the student is firmly situated in the 'home', reinforcing the

association between local study and immobility.

Tony's description of the 'big leap into the adult world' that is associated with leaving

home to study highlights the perpetual presence of traditional undergraduate

education as a reference point even in a locality where traditional HE has never been

established. Where the university was drawn on elsewhere in these data, the

comparison was not always so positive. For example, Linda, Sebford's College's HE

director, described one of the key challenges for recruitment to degree courses at the

college. Reporting a typical conversation with FE tutors at the college, she explained

why not all FE students progress to HE at Sebford:

Many of the students that you would think would actually come to

Sebford for HE don't. We're told, 'Oh well, it's because they've

seen the bright lights of [nearby university], and what have you, so

why should we, you know….' [Breaks off] They don't use the

word 'condemn' them to life in Sebford because that's not the way

it is, but at the same time….

Narratives of place intertwine with narratives of mobility here. While Linda saw the

college's CBHE provision as offering opportunity in a locality where it was

previously lacking, the FE tutors promoted the best opportunities as being located

outside of the local area. Sebton is therefore constituted as one that students who have

the freedom to do so should leave behind. By implication, the opportunities offered by

CBHE in Sebford are offered to those who are tied, or as Linda put it, 'condemn[ed]'

to place. In this narrative, the 'bright lights' offered by universities are absent from

CBHE in Sebford, so that the spaces of the institution and the narrative of the town

are defined against the absence of a university.

For Lewis, this absence extends to the social spaces of the town, which he saw as a

fundamental barrier to the recruitment of non-local students:

It's [Sebford is] a bit of a cultural backwater. There isn't a sort of

big union, and there's no gigs, and most of the pubs in the town are

shut down. It's not a great student town, so we can't really attract

students very effectively.

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Lewis highlighted the expected extension of HE spaces beyond those of teaching and accommodation. His references to culture, music, student union and pubs suggest that a historically established HE institution is visible throughout a local area, and that Sebford lacks these markers of degree level study. In both Linda's and Lewis' representations of Sebford, the historical absence of HE in the town is both an important reason for and a possible threat to the existence of CBHE.

Sebford College, according to these accounts, is situated within a complex local past and present that combines narratives of deprivation, industrial loss and immigration with a historical absence of HE. Sometimes cast as a solution to and sometimes as threatened by these combined local factors, the data here show how the college's CBHE provision is both characteristic of a geographical cold spot in English HE, and specific to its particular locality.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored accounts of CBHE provision in England as spatial stories which draw on definitions of locality and the local, and which bring together discourses of place, student mobilities, and institutional spaces in HE. Constructing the 'local' as a spatial story de-naturalises it as a signifier, and enables an analysis of how locality shifts in definition and scale across the data. The stories of the local in this chapter operate cyclically, with CBHE provision defined by its association with the local, and the needs of the locality in turn defining what is required of CBHE in each locality. In the first section of the chapter, data from interviews with national figures in FE associations demonstrated the multiple and complex ways in which the definitional cycle of CBHE and locality works at a national level. Through these

accounts, CBHE can be seen as providing for local employers and bolstering the needs of the community according to an agenda of skills education. At the same time, the needs of local people are seen as defined by placed narratives of 'local' educational deprivation and underachievement, leading to a definition of CBHE according to a Widening Participation agenda. In negotiating between definitions of local need, CBHE is also competing in a stratified national HE marketplace that requires careful investment in types of HE that bring economic return and therefore enable institutions' survival.

In the national-level and case college data, the figure of the 'typical' CBHE student is repeatedly drawn upon as requiring, relying upon and benefiting from this particular type of HE provision. Unable to travel or relocate in order to study, intimidated by the traditional university, restricted by family, employment or previous educational achievement, this construction of the typical CBHE student is both integral to and consistent across the data in this chapter. The typical student therefore does important work in justifying the continued provision of CBHE and in defining its priorities at local levels. However, the striking similarities in the ways that the typical student is imagined across these data suggest a shared and homogenised definition of the student as educational subject. Like the relationship between CBHE and locality, the 'local' CBHE student cyclically defines and is defined by the type of provision they are seen to require. In Chapter 6, interview and observational data from fieldwork visits complicates this homogenised construction. As well as drawing upon the spatial discourses of place, mobilities and institutional spaces, the following chapters use the concept of possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986) to highlight where and how particular student subjectivities are made im/possible.

CHAPTER 6

PLACE, CBHE AND EDUCATIONAL SUBJECTIVITIES

Introduction

> I was born in Sebford, so I've been here all my life. It's alright.
>
> I've never really thought about how I feel about living in Sebford.
>
> It's just never really occurred to me, but it's ok.
>
> (Aisha, Sebford College)

Somewhat paradoxically, it was this moment, from one of the first student interviews I conducted, that sharpened the study's focus on locality and place. I was struck by what I understood to be something of a narrative contradiction – to have always been in a place but to have no readily available account of subjectivity-in-place. As I go on to show, Aisha's is by no means the only or the typical account of Sebford, if there is such an account in the data. The chapter begins with this account because it both highlights and problematises the relationship between subjectivity and place.

This chapter focuses on data from observations and interviews with student participants, building a representation of student positioning in narratives of place. As studies of educational institutions argue, such as those by Pomerantz (2008) and Stich (2014), it is important to understand the institution in the context of its surrounding geographical area, to situate it within its 'spatial stor[ies]' (de Certeau 1984). In both of these cited studies, the account of place given in the study serves to emphasise an important aspect of the institution. For example, Stich discusses the stark contrasts between newly built institutional architecture and the 'abandoned houses and

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dilapidated buildings' that contribute to the 'persistence of an overwhelming sense of "working class-ness"' in the area around the university in her study (2014, p. 20). In order to understand pervasive perceptions of the university's position both in the national hierarchy of the US HE system and in its immediate local area, Stich suggests, both the new university building work and the abandoned houses around it must be seen together. In Pomerantz's ethnography of girls' performance of gender identity in a Vancouver high school, it is similarly important to her that the school is situated in an account of Vancouver as a place. In particular, Pomerantz draws attention to the international diversity of Vancouver, and especially of the 'neighborhood' in which the school is situated (2008, pp. 71-72). The 'reputation' of the school, as catering for 'immigrant, working-class and working-poor populations' (p. 72) therefore stems from understandings of its immediate surroundings.

As these studies demonstrate, accounts of place cannot be divided from accounts of the institution. This chapter argues that educational subjectivities, and possible selves in particular, are narrated as spatial stories, through discourses of what a place is and is not, and what that definition means about what is im/possible within its boundaries. One of the questions I asked in student interviews was about participants' perceptions of 'where you live'. As I go on to discuss, despite my assumption that this was a relatively simple question, the answers revealed it as anything but simple. At times, the complexity was in relation to the specific area I was referring to by the question – did I mean the area, the town, the village, the house? As discussed in my literature review, research on place varies in its definition of what is understood as a place, taking streets (Cahill, 2007), estates (Reay and Lucey, 2000), cities (Middleton, 2010) or counties (Renold and Ivinson, 2014) as discrete places. Another kind of

complexity, however, emerged when participants simply did not understand the question, or did not have a readily available narrative of themselves in relation to place to draw upon. One participant said, with a kind of helplessness, 'It's a small town, I suppose. I don't know what you want me to say'. This response, and Aisha's (quoted at the beginning of the chapter) were both from early interviews, and I gradually adapted my questions over the course of my fieldwork, prompting participants to describe where they lived 'to someone who has never been there'. Some of the resulting descriptions, and my analysis of them, make up the first sections, below, which depict what Sebford and Tobston 'are' in this study. At times, I have chosen excerpts because they are typical of responses across the sample. In order to resist single definitions of either place, I have also included examples of contrasting or conflicting depictions of place.

This chapter introduces participants through their own descriptions of their relationships to place, including where they describe themselves as living, with whom, and for how long. These descriptions of participants emphasise the argument of the chapter, which is that educational subjectivities are produced through and are inseparable from relationships to place. Setting out multiple distinct ways in which participants' spatial relationships to HE work to define and delimit particular possible futures, the chapter highlights complex narrative connections between issues of social class, disadvantage, and the hierarchies and geographies of HE.

Tobston

Strange familiarity

During the time I was conducting my fieldwork, Tobston College's HE site was separate from the main college campus, a five mile bus or car journey from Tobston town centre. This separation, both from the college campus and the town centre, made the site a strange and confusing place to visit. To arrive in Tobston is to be confronted with the urban; the two exits from the train station open onto either a dual carriageway or a large shopping centre. By contrast, the HE site is so embedded in the rural surroundings of Tobston that, no matter how many times I made the journey, I never lost the anxiety that I would miss the bus stop. It is almost impossible to see the site from the road, or to distinguish one rolling hillside from another in the approach. The bus journey therefore represents a disorientating shift from urban to rural that begins in the bus station. The station is accessed through the shopping centre, which means that the distance from train platform to bus stop is covered without seeing daylight. That the bus station is underneath a dual carriageway tunnel only compounds this unnerving lack of natural light – in my fieldnotes, I describe the bus station as 'a terrible place', and 'dark in a timeless way'. At the beginning of each bus journey, before leaving the town centre, the bus would pass the contemporary glass and chrome building of the main FE site, a reminder of how different my study might have been had the sites not been separate.

The feeling of disorientation remained throughout my fieldwork at the HE site. I noted with irritation in my fieldnotes, for example, that I somehow always missed the pedestrian entrance to the site. The entrance is part-concealed behind the surrounding hedge, and I therefore always entered over a patch of damp grass between the

pedestrian and the vehicle entrances. Similarly, despite the maps positioned at various

points around the site, I found it hard to learn its institutional geography, and often

entered the wrong building several times before finding the correct one. This feeling

of strangeness extends to my interviews with students. When asking students how

they felt about Tobston as a place, for example, I was aware that it must seem a

strange question. Although there is an easy implied association between a place and

an HE institution named for that place, in fact the interview was being conducted at a

site some miles out of central Tobston, with students who, more often than not, lived

in a town a similar distance from both Tobston and the HE site. Despite my intention

to familiarise myself with 'Tobston' over the course of my fieldwork, I came up

against the impossibility of finding familiarity with the multiple surrounding places

that my participants narrated as home. At the same time, Tobston as a place was often

narrated by my participants as I had experienced it, as bounded by the edge of the

urban town centre, so that the signifier came to describe a smaller geographical area

than I had anticipated. The simple elision between an educational institution and the

town for which it is named was therefore repeatedly disrupted. What is shown in the

data is therefore an intertwining of participants' relationships to their homes, to the

place of the HE site, and to Tobston as a town. The importance of, and differences

between, each of these three relationships demonstrates the complexity of what is

signified by the term 'local'.

'A love for the area'

The complex relationships the participants have to the Tobston area is shown by

Rebecca, who lived with her husband and children in a village two miles from the

college's HE site, and seven miles from Tobston town centre. When asked how she

feels about Tobston as a place, Rebecca responded:

> In terms of where we are now, this is more your kind of kind of
>
> rural, rural bit, and I'm like in the next, the next village, so it's
>
> nice and quiet, whereas obviously there's a lot more kind of built
>
> up areas that are not as good.

Rebecca emphasised the intricacies of the area, and the impossibility of representing it

as a single area in which the 'nice and quiet' exists alongside the 'built up'. This

account complicates the more homogenised definition of the area as having 'its

problems' by Lisa, the graphic design tutor in the previous chapter. Her

characterisation of the urban areas as 'not as good' is also characteristic of many of

the answers to this question, showing some reticence and hedging in describing the

negative qualities of a place, particularly to me as an outsider to it. Just as in Benson

and Jackson's (2013) study of middle-class place-making in Peckham, these

descriptions were weighted with signifiers of social class, where 'nice and quiet', in

Rebecca's words, signaled an association between a rural area and middle class

identities.

A more detailed account of the multiple places signified by 'Tobston' was given by

Ryan, who described himself as living 'at home with my parents still at the minute' in

the house he grew up in. The house was situated in a town five miles from the HE

site, and ten miles from Tobston town centre. Before speaking to Ryan, I would have

understood each of the three places he described as being within the broader 'local' of

Tobston. For him, however, there were important differences between them. Here, he described the town in which he has always lived:

> I mean, when I was younger, I loved [home town], but it's not the same place it was like 10 years ago. I mean, we went out this weekend, drinking, me and a friend, and we had a couple of drinks in [home town] and it's just, compared to what it was like when I was, like, nineteen, it's like a ghost town. It's lost everything that was any good about it, so at the minute I suppose it's just where my house is.

For Ryan, this narrative of loss and disengagement with place over time was contrasted by his impressions of the area around the college HE site:

> I have built up a love for this area, for [area around HE site] and things like, they've got some stunning houses and things like that. So I mean at one point we did look, a couple of us looked at maybe renting a house, and the first place we looked at was like [area around HE site]. I think that's just because of how pretty it looks and what have you, and it's smaller communities, and it's close to Tobston which is pretty much where the nightlife is now, because all the little towns that used to be really popular seem to have died out now.

In Ryan's account, as in that of many other participants at Tobston College, a relationship to the place of Tobston can only be represented through multiple

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narratives. Ryan's representation of the towns around Tobston as losing business, becoming 'ghost towns' or 'd[ying] out' accords with the understandings I had gained of the area from interviews with college staff. In those interviews, the Tobston area had been described as having a history of sadness, and as having 'its problems'. In Leyshon and Bull's (2011) study of narratives of place in a rural British town, young people drew on shared narratives of place in order to narrate their own subject positions. Here, Ryan drew on narratives of forgotten or dying places in order to position himself as having moved on from them. In a similar way to Rebecca, above, his account of the 'smaller communities' in 'pretty' areas that he has grown to love differentiated between areas along class lines, so that he narrated himself as having greater affinity with more desirable, middle class areas. The strong contrast between these narratives of loss and regression in his current home town and the imagined future in a different area were made coherent in his subject position of knowing and negotiating in intimate detail all the changes to the area.

A sense of Tobston as a place in which participants' educational subjectivities are located, is therefore resistant to homogenised conceptualisation. My own disorientation was compounded by the variety and multiplicity of participants' accounts of relationships to place, and by the place becoming more, rather than less, complex to understand the more time I spent there. Despite the impossibility of familiarity with the area, I knew Tobston and had come to research it initially because it was characterised as a 'cold spot' in the relational geography of UK HE. As difficult as it is to know the area, it is still more difficult to understand it without this characterisation, reinforced by the descriptions given by tutors and the HE director. At two points between the train station and the room I had rented to stay in, the

unlikely walls of the shopping centre and the boards of a building site were covered with art projects designed to focus attention on futures. In the first project, whole-body portrait photographs were accompanied by a one-sentence response to the question, 'what do you wish for?'. In the second, photographs of school-aged children sitting next to an adult were combined with the career choice of the adult and the imagined career of the child. In the one-mile distance between these two projects, the largest job centre I have ever seen stretched almost the entire length of a single street. These descriptions of this HE cold spot coalesce in my memories and in my fieldnotes as evidence of a collective focus on the possible future that is also a shared acknowledgement of past lack. In the following section, I draw out the dissonances, described by participants, between the place of Tobston and educational subjectivities, arguing that these share a similar narrative.

'Uneducated people'

Participants frequently conveyed a relationship between place, people and education that was consistent with the college staff members' narratives of area-based literacy and numeracy problems. The blurring across these factors of place, people and education to create a cohesive characterisation is described by Stich (2014) as 'reputational affect' – a pervasive sense of the places and people associated with an institution that becomes engrained and embodied. In this case, for participants who had lived in the area for a long time, it was important to narrate this relationship between place and lack of education as changing. Jane lived in Tobston with her husband and children. She had lived in Tobston all her life, sometimes in towns on the outskirts, but now 'slap bang in the centre, you know, in the hustle and bustle.' Jane began her HE study at Tobston College with a Higher National Diploma at the age of

eighteen, and had returned to 'top-up' to a BA degree over twenty years later after learning through a friend that it was possible to do so. She depicted changing attitudes to HE in the town:

> It has always been quite closed-minded with regards it being quite a little close-knit community and it not being city status, so there have been negatives in that respect and it has been quite closed-minded too, say, for an art student I'd say. I remember when I used to, I would get, years ago, sort of flack for being a student, an art student, from older, closed-minded, uneducated people, you know, although there is that sense of humour - people do like to have a sense of humour - but they'd say, "Oh, are you at university? Oh, are you brainy?" You know, there used to be that sort of joke going on.

Despite their 'humour', the questions Jane described represent an unanswerable interrogation of her educational subjectivity that she sees as specific to the history of the town. Jane's description brought euphemistic representations of class, such as 'uneducated' and 'closed-minded', together with the history of the town as an HE cold spot, a place unused to student subjectivities. The coherence of her educational subjectivity as 'art student' relied upon a distinction between her and the 'older, uneducated people' from whom her participation in education makes her other. The incomprehension she reported having experienced emphasises the divisions between her and the typical inhabitant of the town. Despite her spatial position 'in the hustle and bustle' of the town centre, she showed that her education had marked her as an outsider to it. The narrative was also temporally inflected, showing the disjuncture

between place and HE to be temporally fixed in the past. In this way, a narration of her difference from other people in Tobston also saw her as representative of the possibility of positive change in the town. Like Benson and Jackson's (2013) analysis of narratives of improvement in Peckham, Jane was invested in imagining a progressive relationship from acknowledgement of past difficulty to a more positive imagined future, twenty years on. The narrative's performative depiction of linear progression away from 'closed-minded[ness]' implied a possible future, in which 'that sort of joke' is consigned to the past.

Although Jane was careful to fix more negative representations of Tobston in the past, other students described ongoing struggles with occupying educational subjectivities in the town. Ben lived at home with his parents around 12 miles from the HE site, in the nearest large town to Tobston, where he had lived for the whole of his life. He frequently described himself as having taken a risk in coming as far as Tobston for HE, and, because of the separate HE site of Tobston College, had almost never been into Tobston town centre. His accounts of place were therefore situated in his home town, and described the complexities of occupying a student subjectivity in an HE cold spot:

> Ever since starting uni, everybody says, "Oh, you're too intelligent for me." It's like I have a slightly, if you've noticed, if you speak to anybody from [home town], my accent's slightly more, less [home town]-ified than most people and vocabulary, in places, does get a bit archaic. I get a bit cocky with my language sometimes.

Scholarship focusing on placed attitudes to HE such as Sage, Smith and Hubbard's (2012a) are often based in university cities, such as Brighton, and address the effects of full time students living away from the family home. They describe 'studentification', or homogenous groups of students whose occupation of particular geographical areas of the city creates divisions in living conditions and social practices between student areas and residential areas, with each area retaining and reinforcing its difference from the other. Where students are understood as privileged, mobile and middle class (Sage, Smith and Hubbard, 2012a; Smith and Hubbard, 2014), often in contrast to pre-existing residents of the city, this literature argues that the homogenised, enclosed nature of student living practices means that students rarely encounter these residents, or 'people not like us' (Sage, Smith and Hubbard 2012a). In contrast, students like Jane and Ben, who were 'local' or 'commuter' students, narrated themselves as lone students amongst non-students, in places unused to HE. They were therefore surrounded not by the universal place-making practices of studentification, but by the place and the 'everybody' they have always known. Whereas, in 'studentification' the differences between students and long-term residences remain as hidden from student perception by the insular nature of student spatial practice, Jane and Ben were only too aware of their divisions from 'everybody' around them. Jane's educational subjectivity is made more recognisable through a narrative of the town's collective progression towards understandings of HE. Ben, on the other hand, depicted a process in which he became more recognisable as an educational subject, and simultaneously less recognisable as belonging to his home town. The geographical distance between the Tobston HE site and his home town was symbolic of the larger distances created by studying HE from a town without HE provision.

Again, in this account, the split subjectivity Ben described left the shifts in social class that accompany HE both signified and unspoken. His narrative instead was one in which attachment to place and effects of learning compete on his tongue, so that vocabulary and accent come to stand for much more. His awareness of the conflict between place and education was first voiced, like Jane's, in the words of others. Towards the end of his account, however, the descriptors became his own – 'I get a bit cocky with my language sometimes'. The conflict became an internalised one, and the possibility of a coherent, placed educational subjectivity seemed further away. While the college's HE director argued that an important part of HE in the college was reminding students 'where they come from', creating a cohesive narrative between past and imagined future through education, Ben experienced this progression in a more complex way; his account suggested a sense of pride in the development of his more academic language, and his difference from others in his locality.

For another participant, Anna, the signifier 'uneducated' was closely linked to her strong negative feelings about Tobston as a place. Anna grew up in Tobston, and returned to live there with her mum in the year before beginning her degree, following a relationship breakdown and financial hardship. She had lived and worked in nearby larger cities since leaving home, and her perceptions of Tobston throughout her interview transcripts were strongly inflected with comparisons to these other places. When asked what she thought of Tobston, Anna responded:

I think Tobston is a bit of a shit hole. There's not many prospects for

anyone, plus the people are uneducated. They're rude, like there's a

lot of hate crime and stuff. Drugs, drugs are rife, like someone got

stabbed in, again on the street this weekend. It's just things are getting

worse. Someone murdered her husband. I've just heard so many

horror stories. I just don't think there's much here for anyone.

Anna's subject position in this narrative relies upon a disengagement from Tobston

and all that she associated with it, even while she lived and completed her

undergraduate education in the town. She engaged with a series of narratives of place,

describing 'horror stories' of crime and violence as connected both with the

'uneducated' people in Tobston, and with the absence of an imaginable future 'for

anyone' in Tobston. While Jane positioned the problem of 'uneducated people' firmly

in the past, it was very much in the present and future for Anna, who saw it as 'getting

worse'. Her depiction of the lack of 'prospects' for people in Tobston in many ways

reinforced the perceptions of the college's HE director and tutors, who described

Tobston as needing a university, and as struggling to emerge from a history of sadness

and loss. However, at the same time, Anna's words highlighted the paradox within

which HE works in such a place. Where the implied narrative of educational

subjectivity is one of progression, of the creation of and movement towards future

possibility, how are educational subjectivities formed in places where futures are also

unimaginable? In cases such as Anna's, does a coherent educational subjectivity

require an imagined move away from the place, in order that the future towards which

educational subjectivity is oriented become more imaginable? If so, this is further

complicated by CBHE's narrative of provision precisely for those who are unable or unlikely to move.

These accounts of Tobston, including my own, highlight the multiplicity of placed narratives across the data. There were differences in these narratives, between the place that was understood as home, or as Tobston, and there were contrasts between expressions of fondness for and rejection of the town as a whole, as well as specific areas within or around it. At times, too, a depiction of the 'people' of the town was intermingled with signifiers of social class that are indivisible from the town's historical absence of HE. As the above three narratives in particular show, an educational subject position that embraces HE works against the historical educational narratives of the town, and the familiar subject position that rejects education.

Sebford

'A very split town'

In contrast to Tobston College's separate HE site, Sebford College's HE building is situated firmly within the FE campus in the town centre. The campus, made up of multiple contemporary institutional buildings, is perhaps two minutes' walk from the main shopping streets, and a further five minutes from the train station. The contrast between the urban centre and rural outskirts that I noted in Tobston is, if anything, more visible in Sebford. The surrounding hills are visible from almost any point in the town centre, and this visible contrast shaped my perception of the town as a whole, as a place of multiple contradictions. A single road divides the recently landscaped central cathedral square and its surroundings of new retail buildings from a shopping

mall of discount stores. The shopping mall opens onto further streets of shops, some located in Victorian public buildings that act as reminders of lost industrial prosperity. Underneath a ramped entrance to the mall's first floor, a mural depicts a timeline that begins with the founding of Sebford, and continues to the present, marked by key moments in the town's history. The sheltered nature of this space means that it is often used by rough sleepers, creating a visual juxtaposition with the public narrative of historical pride. Around the shopping centre, between it and the college buildings, there are large fenced building sites that progressed little over the months between my fieldwork visits. Visually the town is layered with successive narratives, each with its own temporal markers, of industrial success, industrial loss, and regeneration. As in Bright's (2011, p. 67) description of the contrast between 'rural idyll' and the 'scars' of the coalfields in Derbyshire, such visual conflict is both typical of a national post-industrial landscape (see also Nayak, 2006).

The college's central position in the town gives the impression that institution and town blur easily together. This impression is reinforced by the numbers of passers-by in the shopping streets who wear Sebford College's institutional lanyards. Where my sense of place was destabilised by Tobston's separate HE site, here I felt secure in understanding Sebford town and Sebford College together. I was surprised, therefore, when participants in Sebford described relationships to place in a similarly complex way to those in Tobston. Their relationship to Sebford was often set against their relationship to the smaller place that they consider to be home. As in Tobston, then, I was faced with the complexity of knowing or familiarising myself with the place as it was understood by participants. In Sebford, though, this impossibility worked in direct contradiction to the cohesiveness of place and institution as I first understood it.

The sense of conflict and contradiction that I experienced as part of visiting Sebford is echoed in my participants' accounts of place. These accounts often focus on the 'split' nature of the town.

Anne described herself as having 'lived round here' since the age of four, her dad's bankruptcy having necessitated a move from 'a lovely house to a council estate' in her teenage years. As an adult, she lived with her husband and child on the outskirts of Sebford, working for a national company until taking the voluntary redundancy that allowed her to begin her undergraduate study. She depicted Sebford as a town 'split' along both economic and racial grounds:

> A multicultural town, that's how I'd describe it. Quite, quite a lot of poverty in Sebford. There's two extremes, there's a lot of poverty and there's a lot of wealth, especially just on the outskirts of Sebford, and I think there's more – well, I suppose, no, I think it's the same now in London. You can see it, that it's multicultural, and I think this is becoming more and more so as we can see other nationalities in, the Polish in, the Romanians. I see it as a very split town, in terms of the culture.

In Anne's interview, I was aware of her unwillingness to characterise Sebford to me, an outsider to the town, in a negative light. She was careful, for example, to stop short of describing Sebford as distinct from a national context of ongoing change – 'I think it's the same now in London'. Though she was also careful to avoid positioning herself on either side of the town's divisions, her account of the wealth 'on the

outskirts' that surrounds the poverty of the town centre complicates the HE director's description of 'high levels of deprivation' in the larger area. The geographical area was defined, in Anne's description, by stark contrasts in the wealth and poverty levels of its inhabitants, and shifting patterns of migration and race. Anne gave a coherent overview of these contrasts, so that migration was represented in a continuous, building narrative, and there were clear boundaries to areas of poverty and of wealth. Despite the observational distance from which she spoke, her definition of the town through these contrasts suggests that the placed experience of the area, and the future possibilities it offers, are strongly differentiated along racial and economic lines.

For another participant, the racial divisions in the town were experienced in a more embodied way. Stephanie had always lived with her parents and siblings in Sebford, describing her family as having 'always been on the outskirts' of the town. In her interview, Stephanie was careful to distinguish between her positive views of Sebford College, and her more mixed feelings about the town, which she described herself as being 'a bit sick of'. Stephanie described hostility in the town as being caused by racial divisions, and a lack of integration between communities of different races.

> I don't know, it's mixed opinions about Sebford just because I, I
> don't know. You just feel, it's weird, like, I'm not trying to be
> racist, and it's a religion, so you don't see, like, obviously, lots of
> white folks hanging out with that lot. Like they're very split and
> there's just no integration or anything, we're just split and you, it's
> very hostile, you feel a bit hostile.

Like Anne, Stephanie used the term 'split', and similarly struggled to negotiate the discourses of race, religion and difference, which for her defined Sebford as a place. However, Stephanie did not position these discourses within a narrative of ongoing change, and rather represented the 'no integration' as static, present, and permanent. In the phrase, 'we're just split', there is both a sense of finality and of a subject position in which belonging to this place also involves feeling divided within it. As was clear in Anne's narrative, the subject positions made possible in Sebford were described as differentiated along racial lines, with (in Stephanie's view) two racial groups occupying place separately and differently.

While Stephanie's account of Sebford as a place focused immediately and strongly on the problems she saw with race in the area, another participant drew out the economic divisions in more detail. Andrew had lived in a small village ten miles from Sebford all his life, first with his parents and siblings, and now with his girlfriend. He described the village as 'one of the most expensive places to live in the area', and contrasts it to Sebford:

> It's weird, you come to Sebford and it is a very working class town
> and you go immediately out of it and it's, some of like the wealthiest
> people in the country live here. So it's, this sort of area it's, it's
> really strange. It's like you see the flip side of society dead close,
> because you got a very working class population and you've got a lot
> of very, very, very wealthy people who live round here.

Andrew described a segregation between the permanent and static groups of 'very wealthy' and 'working class' that is similar to Stephanie's description of racial division. His narrative positioned him as observing the 'strangeness' of the division, able to 'see the flip side' without being drawn into the distinction himself. Over the course of Andrew's two interviews, Andrew referred to his past experiences of multiple re-locations within his home village, and the financial hardship that had led to these re-locations. These accounts suggest that his own experience of place did not fit easily within the spatial binary he described, in that he lived on the outskirts of Sebford, where the 'very wealthy' live, but differentiated himself from that economic group. Nevertheless, his depiction echoes Anne's and Stephanie's narratives of the town as 'split', again showing that occupying a coherent subject position in relation to the town requires a narration of the town itself as divided, an emphasis upon its inequalities.

Alongside these narratives of Sebford's contradictions runs a related narrative of the town as a cold spot in the national geography of UK HE. As in Tobston, I found clues everywhere to support this narrative. The 'code of conduct' displayed at all the doors into the shopping mall, detailing types of anti-social behaviour that were forbidden, appeared to anticipate precisely the kind of future associated with lack of educational opportunity. According to my own middle class associations between education and reading, it was hard not to see the closure of the town's only bookshop during my first visit as symbolic of a collective lack of investment or interest in education. As the above narratives suggest, however, this view of Sebford simplifies the complexities of unequal experience through which the town is experienced, and through which futures are imagined. The following narratives further draw out some of this complexity,

focusing particularly on contrasting temporal accounts of Sebford. These depictions see the available futures in the town as irreversibly linked to its history, and serve to question the role of CBHE as both required by, and made impossible by, this history.

'Just one of those towns'

Several participants referred to Sebford's history of deprivation, with some accounts extending beyond Sebford and into surrounding towns. Susan described herself as living 'four towns away', with her husband and children, where both she and her husband grew up. Although Susan found it easy to describe the 'lovely countryside' in which the town was situated, and which she saw as 'quite different from Sebford', she struggled more with a depiction of the people she associated with her home town:

> There's certain types of people there, you know, it's not very, um.
> There are people that have not really had the best opportunities, you
> know. But there are people that have, like anywhere really, you
> know. So you do see a lot of that sometimes if you go up town, but
> there are opportunities everywhere for those people, you know. I
> think it is getting better and better for them. It is a nice little town,
> really.

For Susan, the euphemistic description of 'certain types of people' was connected to a past lack of opportunity in her home town, though she was quick to point out that this lack of opportunity is not specific to the town – 'like anywhere really'. Although Susan expressed a clear sense of belonging to the town, stating 'I don't think I'd live anywhere else', this sense of belonging relied upon a separation between her and

'them', the people for whom there has been a lack of opportunity. This separation

represents a departure from the findings of studies such as Leyshon and Bull's (2011),

in which young people use shared negative discourses of their home town in order to

position themselves as having a future away from the town. For Susan, drawing on

common discourses of the town's negative reputation was not incompatible with an

imagined future of further commitment to the town. Just as in the above descriptions

of people in and around Tobston, there were echoes in Susan's separation from 'them'

of the kind of division that is found to exist between homogenous groups of students

and local residents in literature on 'studentification' (Smith and Hubbard, 2014). As

discussed above, however, such a separation is more complex in this case, when as a

local resident herself, Susan had arguably been subject to the same lack of

opportunity as those around her. Important to the coherence of Susan's account of her

commitment to her home town despite a history of negativity is the narrative of

ongoing change. In this narrative, 'it is getting better and better for them'. Through a

discourse of 'opportunity', Susan suggested that what is changing, in the present, is

the availability of the imagined future.

The discourse of improvements to Sebford and the surrounding area is also taken up

by another participant, Richard. Richard had always lived in a nearby town, first with

his parents and at the time of the study with his girlfriend, around five miles from

Sebford. His job with a double-glazing firm in the same town had remained stable

since he left school, and he had continued to work there throughout his undergraduate

study. In his narrative of Sebford, there were important changes taking place:

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I think there's a mindset of people round here that's not a good, a

good thing. But I think it's somewhere that's - they're trying to

make a lot of changes now in Sebford, just like a lot of big, like

new buildings being built and stuff like that. I just think they're

trying to change the image of what it used to be about. Like, it used

to be [dominant local industry], and obviously that's gone. So

there's been a lot of jobs lost there, but I think they're just trying to

make it, make it a lot better.

The town in this narrative emerges as a complex combination of job loss, collective

mindset, image, and architecture. It is marked particularly by the decline and closure

of the cotton mills, which at the beginning of the twentieth century had accounted for

around 50% of the town's employment. This process of industrial loss began in the

first decade of the twentieth century, and continued until the 1970s. In Richard's

account, the present was informed both by past industrial loss, and by a future driven

towards change. This distinction suggested that the racial and economic 'splits' in the

above accounts of the town are accompanied by a temporal split, between a difficult

past and a 'better', perhaps more cohesive, imagined future. As Taylor's (2012) study

of responses to regeneration in post-mining areas of north-east England highlights, the

paradox of regeneration efforts is that they are necessitated by a past they seek to

erase. As discussed in the previous chapter, this paradox is also evident in narratives

of CBHE that position provision as a response to local 'need', and therefore rely upon

that need for self-definition. In both instances of this paradox, the present becomes a

contradictory moment of transition in which past is erased in order to enable a more

positive imagined future. This present moment is exemplified by Richard's position in

the above narrative, as aware of but not implicated in a past that is 'gone', and observing the process of 'mak[ing] it a lot better' without a clear articulation of what 'better' might be. If educational subjectivity in itself requires that the present be seen as a perpetual moment of transition, in Sebford this requirement is exaggerated in narratives of place, in which the past is perpetually divided from the ongoing making of the future.

Both of the above descriptions of Sebford are, at least in part, narratives of hope that endorse the possibility of change. For some participants, however, it was not possible to divide Sebford's past from its present or imagined future. Robert lived with his mum in a town ten miles from Sebford. He had moved to an adjacent town at the age of 'five or six', and had moved house a few times since, always staying, as he puts it, 'in the same sort of fifteen minute area'. Robert's descriptions of place were the liveliest of all the participants in this study, because he knowingly and exaggeratedly engaged with familiar characterisations of place. For example, at one point he described Sebford as 'my Vietnam', in a reference to Hollywood film depictions of war. In making this reference, he depicted himself as both haunted and yet defined by the experience of living in, and attempting to escape from, Sebford as a source of trauma. He was similarly humorous in the description below:

> Sebford's always going to struggle, always going to struggle,
>
> because it's just one of those towns that - there's always that shit
>
> town that you kind of just go to through necessity, not actually
>
> nostalgia. You don't ever really want to go there but it's like, "Oh, I
>
> need to go and pick that up," or, "I need to go and do that." There's

always one of those towns. Everybody has one that you don't ever

really want to go to, but you do, just every so often. And they are

trying to rectify that. They are trying to sort of get away from that

image, because they've opened up a Nando's, a Turtle Bay. They've

opened up that stupid fucking hotel, that nobody's ever going to use,

because nobody's ever said, "Let's have a romantic weekend away

in Sebford." And, you know, the shops are opening and closing

faster than they can make money out of them.

In contrast to Richard, Robert's narrative portrayed Sebford as having an enduring

negative quality that was unchangeable despite all efforts at regeneration. Like

Richard, he was aware of the building work currently underway in the town as an

attempt to change the 'image'. The international restaurant chains that are symbolic of

attempts to shift Sebford's reputation could also be seen to reduce the town's

distinctiveness, and to bring in a feeling of the placeless – these restaurants could be

anywhere, and can also therefore be nowhere-in-particular. That Robert drew on these

examples to demonstrate attempted change in Sebford suggests that, to him, positive

change involved the town becoming easier to align with other places. Although he

recognised these efforts, Robert's characterisation of the town used a shared sense of

'those towns' that resist attempts at re-definition. His argument that the newly built

hotel would remain unused suggests that regenerative initiatives are powerless in the

face of the universal, timeless and inevitable response to the place as a whole. The

success of the hotel, in his view, relied upon fundamental changes to the way the town

is viewed. He could not imagine a future in which visits to the town would be made

through choice, rather than necessity, and in which relationships to the place would

allow for the 'romantic' rather than the functional. The space of the hotel therefore symbolise, in his account, the intractable reputational affect (Stich, 2014) of the place.

The negative characterisation of Sebford in others' narratives was integral to its future as something better or different, and to CBHE's role in the town. For Robert, this future was made impossible precisely by the reasons that it is seen by others as necessary. The description of an ongoing present in which the future-less reputation of the cold spot remains unchanged creates an implied contradiction, therefore, with the future-oriented narrative of HE. While Robert occupied an educational subjectivity structured through understandings of progression, he also positioned himself firmly within discourses that deny the possibility of a positive future in Sebford. In Cahill's (2007) study of long-term residents' responses to regeneration in their local area, her participants were torn between subject positions of investment in or departure from the area. While Robert's residence in the area throughout his life, and including his undergraduate study, suggest a commitment to it, this commitment was contradicted by his vocal disengagement from the area. The incompatibility of these subject positions is once again representative of the complexity of HE where provision is required by and reliant upon a history of need and lack.

Understanding the kinds of futures that are imagined through HE in Sebford requires a recognition of the inequalities that shape the area. It is these inequalities, described above as 'splits', that make it impossible to characterise the place in a single or simple way, and that suggest discrepancies between what is possible to imagine, particularly along lines of social class and race. As these later narratives have shown, however, the area is also split in a temporal way. The narratives above suggest a particular

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temporal moment in which a past 'image' of the place was undergoing a process of re-writing with future hopes. As figures in that process of reinscription, participants evidenced varying degrees of hope for the future. For some, it was possible to imagine changes to the kinds of opportunities that were available. For others, the enduring character of place over-wrote the very possibilities that CBHE sets out to create.

Conclusion

This chapter has situated the case colleges in this study within wider spatial stories of place, arguing that these narratives are intertwined with ways in which educational subjectivities are imagined and experienced. In particular, the chapter has shown that the CBHE provision in each place cannot be divided from the multiple and enduring perceptions of HE as absent from the towns' histories. While the CBHE provision in Tobston and Sebford can be seen as a response to this absence, the above accounts demonstrate that the provision was also defined through previous absence of HE, and educational subjectivities were complicated by it. Across the accounts in this chapter, participants have shown different levels of investment in the possibilities of positive change in their home towns or local areas. For participants such as Jenny in Tobston, and Richard and Susan in Sebford, a narrative of improvement allowed for the imagining of increased opportunities in the future, set against a past lack of opportunity. For those who saw such change as impossible, such as Anna in Tobston, or Robert in Sebford, the enduring negative character of the place directly limited the availability of imagined futures and opportunities. Such limitation creates a complex position for CBHE provision, which sets out possible progression towards previously unimaginable futures, but which does so from within a geography of impossibility,

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where educational futures are unimaginable. Seen in this way, the futures offered through CBHE are impossible possibilities, the possibilities they offer made all the more important by surrounding narratives of impossibility.

While there are clear connections between the placed narratives of both towns, this chapter has also explored the specificity of place, and the complexities involved in drawing boundaries around or across geographical areas in order to define the 'local'. Participants' accounts of the area around Tobston, for example, demonstrate classed designations between neighbouring or nearby villages, and showing the clear division between the urban town centre and the HE site that carries the name of the town, but is set in rural surroundings some miles away from it. In Sebford, class differences are evoked in the distinction between the poverty of the town centre, and the wealth of its rural surrounds, and these are far from the only divisions between and amongst the plural localities that might easily be designated as a single locale. In the following chapter, I extend the study of the 'local' to where this descriptor is applied to educational subjects, defined as 'local' because they do not follow the 'traditional' English pattern of perceived student mobility.

CHAPTER 7

THE MULTIPLE MOBILITIES OF THE 'LOCAL' EDUCATIONAL

SUBJECT

Introduction

> The ability to think into future scenarios and to construct imaginary
>
> 'project selves' (Giddens, 1990, pp. 32-34) that involve 'realistic'
>
> or what Bourdieu (1990) called 'coherent and convenient' (p. 86)
>
> mobility trajectories is differentially distributed along social class
>
> lines (Corbett, 2007, p. 785).

The connections made in this quotation between geographical mobility, the

temporality of the imagined future, and inequalities are the focus of this data analysis

chapter. The chapter argues that these connections are more complex than Corbett

suggests. Along with, and reinforcing, the inequalities that structure access to

educationally mobile imagined futures are the unequal values placed upon particular

types and patterns of mobility in HE. Each student I interviewed was highly mobile in

'everyday' ways (Holton and Finn, 2018), and often also narrated imagined mobilities

from other temporal moments of their educational experiences, despite not having

'left home' to study at undergraduate level (Holdsworth, 2006). This chapter therefore

sets out to explore the ways in which the spatial stories of students who might be

presumed immobile are in fact narratives of multiple mobilities. The questions I asked

in interviews with students, particularly about their choice of HE institution and their

plans for the future, required them to construct or re-narrate accounts of im/mobile

educational subjectivity. As I go on to show, these accounts are temporally complex,

often retrospectively imagining a future that did not happen, in order to construct a causal relationship between the events that did happen (Ricoeur, 1992; 2000). As well as this temporal layering, the accounts are also produced through and shaped by the shared understandings of Tobston and Sebford explored in the previous chapter, as well as by each participant's particular relationships of investment in or disengagement from place.

None of the students I interviewed followed the traditional pattern of educational mobility, in which undergraduate students leave the familial home to begin study (Holdsworth, 2009b). As discussed in Chapter 3, Tobston's and Sebford's positions as cold spots in UK HE means both that studying at a university requires leaving the area, and that students are less likely to leave the area in order to do so. Narratives of remaining in the area are therefore also accounts of subject positions that are difficult to align – gaining a degree in an area in which there is little history or expectation of doing so, and remaining in that place to study a degree when undergraduates are traditionally expected to be mobile. All participants referred to the college's proximity to home as a primary reason for their decision to study there, and many did so while also acknowledging their awareness that they have therefore not conformed to traditional patterns of student mobility. Their educational subjectivities, both present and in the past in which they imagined the present, are therefore constructed both through their own relationship to place and their understanding of this relationship as other than what is expected.

As discussed in the previous chapter, asking participants about their relationships to place proved more complex than I had expected. A part of my adaptation to the

difficulty - and the importance - of talking about place in interviews for this study was my use of concept maps. Concept maps are an adaptation of diagrammatic mapping which allow concepts and the relationships between them to be represented visually using the mind-mapping technique of bubbles with words in them, linked by lines. In order to draw out participants' relationships to place and mobility, I represented each place they mentioned in the first interview as a single bubble, with notes underneath about their descriptions of each place, in their own words. I then positioned these bubbles on a single page, drawing links to represent connections between them (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed explanation of this method). When I interviewed participants for the second time, I showed them the map and asked them to comment on it, add to it, or correct it if they wished. The data in this chapter is taken both from the parts of the first interviews that I used to construct the maps, and the section of the second interview in which participants responded to them. In analysing these data, I focus on the different kinds of relationships to place and mobility that emerged in the process of making and discussing the maps.

HE in Tobston

'I wanted to stay'

This section complicates perceptions of the 'local' HE student, working against discourses that position these students as disadvantaged, either by the circumstances that prompt them to remain in place for HE, or by the experience of studying HE 'locally' (Holton, 2015; Holton and Finn, 2018). Ben's narrative of his decision to study at Tobston College exemplifies the ways in which participants themselves show awareness of discourses of expected student mobility, and work to resist or reject them. As discussed in the previous chapter, Ben had lived in a large town around 17

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miles from Tobston all his life. He viewed his decision to study at Tobston College, rather than at the college in his home town, as evidence of his seeking 'a new start'. At the same time, he referred several times throughout the interviews to his fear of getting lost in new places, and cited this fear as one of the reasons that he rarely joined the rest of his degree cohort on nights out in Tobston.

> I wanted to commute [from home town]. I didn't want, well, mainly because I'm not ready to be an adult yet, but I wanted to stay. Everything that I do is in [home town]. I work at a theatre, and that's in [home town]. I also used to volunteer at a library, and that's in [home town], so if I were to move away I'd have stopped, and all my family's in [home town]. Nobody's ever moved out.

Ben's narrative of his decision-making process touches on different discourses of student mobilities in contrasting ways. The description of his positive engagements in local culture reinforces findings by Christie (2007) and Holton (2015), which question the over-simplified characterisation of 'local' students as disadvantaged by their 'local' status. On the contrary, these studies argue, such students often have a wealth of place-based knowledge and resources on which to draw. Ben acknowledged the familiar narrative association between leaving home for undergraduate study and gaining 'adult' independence (Holdsworth, 2009b), but continued to narrate himself as invested in place, above all – 'but I wanted to stay'. At the same time, however Ben's account underscores the limitations of a lack of valued mobility capital (Corbett, 2007) in his statement 'nobody's ever moved out'. In this narrative, an imagined future away from Ben's home town was made impossible through an

absence of other examples or experiences of mobility. The imagined future in which long-term investments in place are lost was therefore reinforced by the unimaginable future of distance and difference from family. These two future narratives show the complexity of Ben's relationship to mobility in which Tobston College was both a promising new start and an ongoing source of fear. On one hand, Ben appears to accord with depictions of student immobility that associate mobility with classed privilege; the absence of examples or experience of mobility mean that even a nearby town is represented as unfamiliar and a source of anxiety. On the other hand, Ben's narratives of his 'new start', and the *local capital* signalled by his positive ties to place, are difficult to reduce to a single understanding of lack or impossibility, or to explain using a binary opposition between mobility and immobility.

The complexity of the opposition between student mobility and immobility also stands out in Gemma's account of her decision to transfer from a university in a nearby city to Tobston College. Gemma lives with her husband and children in the house she grew up in, in a town she described as 'run down', fifteen minutes' drive from the HE site and a further five miles from Tobston centre. Gemma initially accepted an offer from one of the universities in the nearest city, in part because 'my brother went there', but transferred to Tobston College after four weeks:

> I felt a lot older [at the university] than everybody else, and I felt
> really, like, on my own, you know, because a lot of young ones, they
> move to university, and obviously I couldn't move there. I'd got two
> kids at home, my husband, and it just, it didn't work. And everyone
> was going out drinking in between lectures, because there was a

couple of hours, and it wasn't worth me going home because I was

going on the train, whereas everyone else was going back to their

rooms or doing whatever they needed to do. So I really was like, I

was just singled out from the word go.

Gemma's narrative captures the contradictions of traditional undergraduate student

mobility. Described by the HE policy advisor in the previous chapter as the 'ritual

culture' of English HE, the student who moves away from the family home in order to

begin undergraduate education is understood to be mobile. However, as Holton and

Finn (2018) point out, the everyday mobilities required of 'commuting' students are

often more intricate and varied than those of traditionally mobile students. In

Gemma's depiction, the 'young' students who have 'move[d] to university' had less

far to travel in order to go home between lectures than she did. Their ease of

movement from the student accommodation spaces to teaching spaces (Smith and

Hubbard, 2014) was contrasted with the more extended mobility required of Gemma

if she were to commute to lectures from her home. Paradoxically the distance Gemma

had to travel in order to attend a day of lectures also fixed her in that place for the

day, whereas her peers' reduced daily mobility requirements allowed them flexibility

of movement. For Gemma, the 'singled out' position of working against these

common flows of student mobility was impossible to sustain. Like Ben, Gemma

described herself as unable to 'move to' university. However, it was not the fact that

she 'couldn't move there' that meant that university 'didn't work'. Instead, what

made for an impossible future subjectivity at university was her confrontation with

the traditional student relationship to mobility from which she was excluded.

Importantly, although HE directors and tutors in the previous chapters depicted their

students as having rejected traditional models of student experience, Gemma's narrative suggests that she was in fact *rejected by* traditional student mobility. She sought out non-traditional HE provision because there was no available or imaginable subjectivity for her in the traditional provision.

'Be[ing] the underdog'

Ben's and Gemma's narratives of past choices show the nuances of student mobilities, and their close relationship to subject positions of investment in and loyalty to place. Similar complexity was evident in participants' imagined futures, which often relied upon a negotiation of career aspiration and associations with place. As discussed in relation to the 'uneducated people' in Anna's and Jenny's accounts of Tobston in Chapter 5, the construction of an educational subjectivity in Tobston can be seen as working in opposition to its history and associations. At the same time, the ties to place that kept participants in place for their degree study persisted in their imagined futures. As a result, many participants' accounts of the future require them to align their educational subjectivity with their ties to a place in which such a subjectivity was unusual or dissonant. In the excerpt below, Jack performed just such a negotiation. Jack moved to a town around twenty miles from the HE site as a child, and returned to live there with his parents after a brief time living with a partner in a neighbouring town. He described himself as a 'home-oriented person', and although he had ambitions to live and work in New Zealand, he still planned to 'move back and set up somewhere here' afterwards. He saw his degree subject of illustration and animation as particularly important to bring to the area precisely because it represents a contrast with the town's reputation:

I think staying round here would be a lot easier, and it'd be cool as

well. Like if, say if we ever made like a really successful animation

for somebody, we could like go and hobnob with people in, what,

like Hollywood or wherever they hang out, and it's like, 'Oh, so

where are you from?' 'Tobston.' 'Where?' That'd be good, yeah. It's

always good to be the underdog.

Jack imagined a future in which Tobston's position as the 'underdog' in reputation

would make success both more important and more remarkable. His deliberately

humorous contrast between Hollywood and Tobston draws upon an implied shared

understanding of their different reputations. Anna's and Jenny's narratives of

'uneducated people' in Tobston in Chapter 6 make it difficult to conceive of available

coherent educational subjectivities. However, Jack created coherence by both

reinforcing a similar narrative, and imagining a possible future that relies upon and

refutes this narrative. This contrasts with the narratives in Bright's (2011) study of

young people in former coal-mining towns, whose self-positioning as loyal to place

relies upon a collective identification with the area's narrative of loss. Jack's

imagined future in place was reliant instead upon his participation in the re-writing of

Tobston's placed narratives, in which he was both globally mobile and acted as a

representative of the place he comes from. While being self-consciously tongue-in-

cheek, Jack's statement, 'it's always good to be the underdog' echoes the logic of

CBHE as response to local need, as set out in the previous chapter. In this logic,

provision in places seen as having particular need for HE is cyclically defined by and

seeking to redress that need.

In contrast to Jack, Anna's imagined future abroad does not include her returning to the area. Anna had lived in cities near to Tobston, and in my first interview with her she stated with certainty, 'I won't be here this time next year'. She imagined that she would return to one of the cities she had lived in previously, or go to London, 'if I'm not in another country.' As discussed in Chapter 5, Anna had strong feelings of disengagement with Tobston, and removed herself from the place in her descriptions of it. By the time of her second interview five months later, however, Anna had reconsidered the urgency of leaving Tobston. Instead, she was considering remaining at the college in order to take a place on their Master's course, explaining, 'I did want to go travelling, but I don't feel like I've finished studying yet.' Despite the alienation from Tobston expressed in her first interview, she had developed further ties to the area:

> Well, my boyfriend's just put a deposit down on a rented place just
> round the corner from my mum's, so he's moving within the next
> month, and I've told him that I'll want to move in once all my uni
> work is done and everything. He's got that basically because he
> knows that's, that's what we wanted to do and stuff. He wants to stay
> in his job for another year, and if we do end up going travelling, it'll
> probably be after a year once we've got some money together and
> got sorted.

In her first interview, Anna's description of Tobston suggested an incompatibility between education and place. This incompatibility was made coherent in her subject position as someone who was in Tobston only temporarily, planning an imminent

move away. From the second interview, it would be easy to suggest that her ambitions for mobility away from Tobston had simply been put off as the time to realise them had grown closer, and as Anna became more, rather than less, invested in place through her relationship with her boyfriend. Even if this explanation holds true, it is complicated by Anna's plans to continue her education to Master's level. In this imagined future, she is both more educated and less mobile, so that, by her own description of Tobston, she is becoming more alienated from place the longer she spends there. Cahill's (2007) study of long-term residents of the lower east side of Manhattan draws out the residents' contradictory relationships to the place, arguing that they struggle to align their loyalty to the area with their understanding that success is represented by leaving the area. Anna's ties to Tobston were through her relationships rather than her loyalty, but she occupied a similarly unresolvable subject position. She associated the possibility of 'prospects' with moving away, and at the same time continued to invest in the education that increased her alienation from place, and also in her commitments to the place itself.

As this section makes apparent, there are similarities across the interview data in the ways in which participants described their educational progression through temporally inflected narratives of place and im/mobility. In imagining a future beyond undergraduate education, participants negotiated complex subject positions between investment in and alienation from place. Embedded in both of these positions is the understanding of Tobston as a place in which both studying at HE level and remaining in place is unusual. An imagined future of remaining in place *having studied* HE, as in Jack's and Anna's interviews, requires a narrative re-imagining either of place or of a subjective relationship to it.

HE in Sebford

'Because I get travel-sick'

In Sebford, as in Tobston, the proximity of the college to home proved to be the most common reason given for studying at Sebford College. Meera lived in what she describes as both an 'Asian-based community' on the outskirts of the town centre. She lived with her extended family of parents, siblings and siblings' partners and children, and stated that, having lived in Sebford all her life, 'I am a town [rather than city] girl':

> Holly: Tell me about how you came to be studying at Sebford College.
>
> Meera: I came here because I get travel-sick.

I still remember the surprise I felt upon receiving this response. I had been expecting that Meera's answer might show the influence of social class and race on HE decision-making processes (see, for example, Baker and Brown, 2007; Bathmaker *et al.*, 2016; Reay, David and Ball, 2005; Shiner and Noden, 2014). When I asked her to say more, Meera explained that the nearest university to Sebford was more than thirty miles away, and that this length of commute would be impossible due to her travel sickness. In both the brevity and nature of her response, Meera refused traditional narratives of undergraduate mobility. Implied in her brief answer was that she would necessarily be commuting from the familial home, rather than moving closer to a university campus. Any HE provision is therefore seen in terms of the length of the journey from home. As the interview continued, Meera maintained a focus on the practicality of transport to and from the college:

I think, over here, I am doing better because I'm not worried about

commuting. So, like, you get, we've got two people in our class

and they're always taking the train. They're either late or they just

don't come because the trains have got delayed and they won't be

on time.

Meera's responses represent a combination of the discussions of mobility that focus

on practicalities of movement such as transport networks and research on mobility

capital that suggests experiences of or associations with mobility as a contributing

factor in being able to imagine moving away from home (Bright, 2011; Corbett,

2007). Her positive descriptions of Sebford focused on the fact that 'everything is

pretty much in walking distance'. These two factors, of transport and mobility capital,

are brought together in her narrative, in which anxieties about travel make mobility

impossible to imagine. Despite the initial surprise of her answer, Meera's account in

many ways represents what I expected to find in my case sites, because she

unconsciously echoes many of the discourses on student immobilities.

Meera was unusual amongst the participants in this study in that she did not refer to

traditional undergraduate mobility, even to position herself against that traditional

narrative. Instead she described the kinds of daily mobility that were possible or

impossible from her family home. In contrast, other participants often knowingly

constructed the (past) imagined future of traditional undergraduate mobility in order

to explain their choice of HE institution. Andrew was an example of a participant who

explicitly resisted the expected discourses of educational subjectivity. He can be seen

as either, or both, fixed in place and perpetually mobile (Jackson, 2012), having

moved multiple times within the same village. Despite this fixity, he cited

contradictory plans to move to Canada or New Zealand, while also referring to

himself as 'established' in place:

> I applied to come here because obviously I've got my house, I've
>
> got my girlfriend, I've already established myself with a life, so it's
>
> not like, I didn't want to be going off like down to [city in south of
>
> England], say. So yeah, I decided to come here. I didn't want to
>
> move away from home, I wanted to, like, because it's ideal for me.
>
> I didn't want to be, I didn't want the university experience. I
>
> wanted to go and be able to get a university education without
>
> having to deal with all the other stuff that comes with it.

Andrew creates a clear distinction between what he did and didn't 'want', suggesting

a decision made between two imagined versions of student subjectivity. In

articulating what he didn't want, the act of 'going off' to university was associated

with 'all the other stuff,' so that undergraduate mobility signified much more than

geographical movement. As in Holdsworth's (2009b) study, there are associations

here between 'going away' and gaining adult independence. While Ben's description

of himself as 'not ready to be an adult yet' suggests one kind of resistance to this

association, Andrew resisted in another way. His narration of himself as having

'already established myself with a life' deliberately divides the 'education' of

university from its associated experiences, which he felt were irrelevant or

unnecessary to him. While actively refusing the common understandings of HE,

however, Andrew also demonstrated their power in popular imagination. This power

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is displayed in the confidence with which he was able to refer to a shared understanding of the singular 'university experience', as well as in the strong subject position he took in opposition to it. Andrew's narrative of staying in place for HE study is therefore also a narrative of not having moved, in which the imagined movement is as important as the realised fixity.

'Who's going to view it?'

For many of the participants from Sebford College, the kinds of ties to place represented above were strong factors in their imagined future after graduation. For some, however, these ties to place conflicted with their narratives of Sebford as a place. Two participants who were planning to go on to teach in secondary schools explained their anxieties about the reputation of schools in Sebford. Kate lived in a village she chose not to name, but that she described as 'not far from here'. She lived in the house she grew up in, now with her husband and children. Kate had always 'stayed within ten miles of where I am now', and could not imagine moving, because she lived in her childhood home mortgage-free. As she imagined her future teaching career, she said:

> I'd like it to be as close to me as possible, but I'd really like a nice
> school. I'm not saying it has to be like a grammar school or
> something, but just, like, one that's not really bad.

In Kate's words, the possibility of a working in school close to her home is opposed to the possibility of working in a 'nice school'. Aisha, who lived with her parents and

siblings in Sebford, and had lived there 'all my life', was considering the possibility

of moving away to render her future as a teacher more imaginable:

> I'd like to have, to work in a more, a better-off school, if that's
>
> what you want to say, where it's not so much of a challenge. A
>
> grammar school or something with more disciplined children. Here,
>
> it's mostly state-funded schools. I think it's harder to find private,
>
> well-disciplined schools in Sebford.

In their descriptions of schools as 'really bad' or 'better-off', Kate and Aisha

demonstrate the 'reputational affect' (Stich, 2014) that cyclically defines perceptions

of educational institutions through perceptions of their localities. Aisha's narrative in

particular is weighted with associations between social class and behavioural

problems; in her understanding, students who attend state-funded schools are less

likely to be disciplined, and the school in turn becomes defined by its students' lack

of discipline. That both Kate and Aisha struggled to imagine a 'nice' school in their

local area reinforces the descriptions in Chapter 6, of the Sebford area as 'not ha[ving]

the best opportunities'. It is precisely this history that was cited by the college's HE

director as important for CBHE in Sebford to redress. However, as identified by

Robert's description, in Chapter 6, of Sebford as 'just one of those towns', it is

difficult to shift a collective and enduring narrative of place. This difficulty is

represented in the ways that Kate's and Aisha's narratives of themselves as future

educated, professional subjects relied upon dividing themselves from the negative

reputation of the area. In contrast to Jack's (above) determination to change

perceptions of Tobston, they reinforced a sense of Sebford as unchanging or

unchangeable. As a consequence of this permanence, both participants saw their ties to place as shifting in order to enable an imagined future that would escape associations with social class and 'bad' schooling. Given that both Kate and Aisha attended schools in the area, the division between their educational subjectivities in the past and their professional subjectivities in the imagined future was all the more pronounced; they were, in the past, part of the educational experience from which they wanted to distance themselves in the future. The role of CBHE provision is complex here, in that while its enabling of undergraduate futures is particularly premised on the needs of its locality, these very needs make a graduate future in the same locality difficult to imagine for these participants.

For participants on the photography degree course at Sebford, an imagined future as a working artist often divides their loyalties to place. Brian lived in a town around fifteen miles from Sebford, where he had taken on the running of his father's photographic supplies shop. Other than a year spent on an art foundation course at Glasgow's School of Art, he had never lived anywhere else, but said he would move 'if I had to'. Discussing his ambition to open a gallery in the future, he said:

> It's quite difficult really, because it's, who's going to view it, you
> know. In [nearby city], if you exhibit in [nearby cities], obviously
> you've got the tourism, people just walking past who've got a bit of
> spare cash and just might want to spend a little bit of money on a
> little keepsake and take it back to wherever they're from. So I am
> aware that if I do set a gallery up it would have to be in [nearby city]
> or, or somewhere viable to get to, if you're going to [nearby city], or

somewhere where there's already a hub, a hub of stuff. There's no

point in going on the Sebford market and just trying to sell a few on

a Saturday afternoon.

Brian's description of other places where 'you've got the tourism' recalls Robert's

statement in the section above, that Sebford's new hotel would never attract trade

because 'no-one's ever said, "Let's have a romantic weekend in Sebford."' Both

descriptions highlight place-related impossibilities of attracting large numbers of

people to the town. As Brian highlighted, this impossibility is cyclical, as artists are

drawn to places 'where there's already a hub', further reinforcing both the existing

hub and its corresponding lack in Sebford. Throughout Brian's interviews, his

expressions of love for the local landscape and the local people clashed with his

building frustration as a photographer whose feared imagined future in the place he

loved was selling his photographs on a local market stall. Just as in Kate and Aisha's

interviews, CBHE provision occupies a contradictory position here, as a response to

the kinds of placed reputations and impossibilities Brian described, and as addressing

them by necessitating movement from, rather than change within, place. This

complexity is further deepened by the relationships to place described by the majority

of these participants. These relationships meant that CBHE was their preferred option

for HE in an area without university provision. Their participation in CBHE makes it

likely that it is not easy to imagine moving away, while their completion of degree

level study also makes it difficult for them to imagine staying in place.

As the above narratives demonstrate, participants' narratives of imagined futures are

often highly complicated and nuanced accounts of negotiations between loyalty and

ambition. The narratives also draw upon shared, collective understandings, of place and of expected student trajectories and experiences. The complexity of these narratives became clearest when I made concept maps of the places each participant had mentioned in their first interview. Because they join past places to current places, and current places to imagined future places, these maps contain multiple temporal and spatial connections, each integral to the participants' narrative of educational subjectivity. In the next section, I explore one of these temporal connections in particular.

Tobston, Sebford and imagined other lives

'A different experience'

The importance of 'other' or 'might-have-been' lives emerged as a common narrative across the data. For many participants in both case colleges, their narratives of undergraduate educational experience were defined relationally, against a narrative of another experience they *might have* had. This other experience is always imagined as a mobile experience, in which would have left home and followed traditional English patterns of undergraduate mobility. The relationship to the traditional patterns of mobility is important because it suggests that students who stay in place cannot be characterised as either having limited knowledge of (Corbett, 2007) or as resistant to (Bright, 2011) collectively expected narratives of educational progression. Instead, these students must be seen as forming educational subjectivities in a dialectical and difficult relationship to the dominant understanding of undergraduate mobility. The dominant understanding is recalled as a causal factor in their narratives of educational subjectivity, and its impossibility for them is important in rendering the conclusion of their narratives 'acceptable after all' (Ricoeur, 2000, p. 259). Through varying

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representations of choice and circumstance, the narratives below echo findings from studies on race, social class, social and cultural capital, and HE decision making; see, for example, Ball, Reay and David (2002). While the focus of this literature is on processes and discourses of choice-making, I use the data below to focus instead upon the enduring presence of HE choices that have *not been made*, but which remain as inimical to present and future educational subjectivities. In this section I combine data from both case colleges, because of the similarities across the two colleges.

Gemma's narrative of an alternative student past was informed by her brother's experience of university:

> If I was 19, and I had no commitments, I think it'd have been a big institute for me. But I think you get a different experience. I think being a mature student you come out knowing a lot more. Like my brother finished with, I think it was, was it a third, or a 2:2? Whatever it is, and he just didn't do anything. But it does his head in that I'm doing my assignments, and I'm getting higher than him. He's like, 'What are you going to finish with?' And I'm like, well, when you're 19, you go to uni just to go to uni. There's a lot of pressure and, or you don't want to go to work yet, and things, and it's just easier to slack off. You're away from your parents, and stuff.

For Gemma, the traditional move 'away from your parents' was associated with a series of factors that she narrates as inherent to attending university at the expected age. Her narrative can be seen as an example of Holdsworth's (2006) findings that

traditional student mobility is more than spatial, coming to signify independence as well as a particular set of social experiences that are understood as related to undergraduate life (see also Chapman and Hockey, 1999; Christie, 2007). These experiences are condensed in Gemma's account into the signifying phrase 'go[ing] to uni', which is both spatial and heavily weighted with the symbolism of a shared societal narrative. The generic 'you' figure in Gemma's narrative lives a parallel but unrecognisable past existence, struggling with the pressures of delaying employment and living away from home at an age when Gemma had in fact been working for several years, and become pregnant for the first time. Although Gemma acknowledged the impossibility of this parallel experience for her, it provided the definitional outline for her current educational subjectivity. She narrated her educational success as produced through a non-traditional undergraduate trajectory, and against the limitations of the traditional experience, of 'just going to' university.

Anna similarly saw the success of her degree education as reliant upon a rejection of another imagined future as an undergraduate in a different place. She saw her previous experiences of living in nearby cities, before returning to Tobston to live with her mum, as having conformed enough to expectations of student life:

> I feel like I did the whole student social, like socialising aspect of it
> when I was living there with them. That's another reason why I
> wanted to come here, because I didn't want that. I didn't want to be
> dragged in to going out every night partying. I wanted to knuckle
> down. That's why I moved back in with my mum, because she keeps
> me on the straight and narrow. I wanted to avoid that, and I thought,

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if I go down to Brighton, or anywhere by myself, as a fresher, it's

just myself. If I stay here, I'm close to home, I've got my friends and

family to support me. I didn't want to be sucked into like the

nightlife culture of it all.

Like Gemma, Anna created a division between the purely educational aspect of

undergraduate life, and the associated social rites of passage. These were temporally

divided in Anna's account, so that she had experienced undergraduate socialising

before beginning her degree, and currently studied without the 'socialising aspect of

it'. Anna's past imagined future at a university away from home is accompanied by

popular understandings of being 'a fresher' (Edgerton, 2005; Reynolds, 2014). She

represents the 'fresher' experience that might have been as an irresistible pull, against

which she would have been powerless without the stability of home. This experience

was therefore both a possible and an impossible past future, its presence in popular

discourse making it always having been possible while its dangers make it important

to have resisted. Important to both Gemma's and Anna's narratives of imagined other

lives was the sense that these had been rejected in favour of a different, more

productive or more serious educational subjectivity. Their accounts therefore accord

with the descriptions given by tutors in both case colleges, which suggest that their

students 'don't want that life'. In this description, just as in the above data excerpts,

'that life' of traditional student mobility and its accompanying experiences is the

powerful counter-narrative against which the CBHE student experience is defined.

'Wish[ing] I'd done it properly'

Richard, like Anna and Gemma, represented the impracticality of the expected undergraduate experience as an important justification for his decision to stay in place:

> I didn't want to be the type of student that just goes away and earns enough money just to get by. I wanted to spend and save at the same time, because I'm 25. I didn't want to just finish my uni and then not have any money at all.

Seen in this way, Richard's decision to stay in the town he had always lived in so that he could continue in his employment can be understood alongside the college's HE director's argument that more students are remaining in place for financial reasons. His focus on the financial risks of HE study also mark him as a 'contingent chooser' for whom 'finance is a key concern and constraint' in the language of Reay, Ball and David (2002, p. 337), and therefore as working from a less privileged position than those for whom finances are not a consideration. Richard saw himself as having rejected a 'type of student' narrative in which studying and saving money were antithetical. Later in the same interview, however, Richard articulated another imagined past student future:

> If I were going to go to uni, if I were going to move somewhere to uni, I'd have gone. I'd have gone somewhere far away, just to, to make the most of it, like, to create a distance and not be somewhere that you can just get home in ten or fifteen minutes. If I had moved

away, I would have moved a distance that you can't just travel too

closely. I would have wanted the space and stuff like that.

There was a stark opposition between this other possible future and Richard's current experience, living 'only a stone's throw' from Sebford College. It is clear from this narrative that, for Richard, 'to go to uni' was to make a break with place that creates 'distance' and 'space' in both their literal and figurative senses. When I asked Richard if this imagined other past is something he felt he had missed out on, he replied that, as a mature student, 'I don't think it would benefit me'. In this understanding of undergraduate mobility, the spatial move is strongly connected to the traditional age at which it is made. Richard saw such a move as impossible because, 'when I was eighteen I didn't move away'. Rather than describing a rejection of the normative mobility trajectory of the traditional undergraduate, Richard instead narrated this possible future as unrealised in the moment at which it could have become possible. In Richard's account, his current educational subjectivity is constructed both in binary opposition to, and as a consequence of, the unrealised mobility of the traditional young undergraduate.

While Richard resisted my suggestion that he might feel that he had missed out on the other future he imagined, Kate made it clear that she saw the expected narrative as the correct one, and that she wished she had followed it. She discussed the decision not to stay on for a second year at sixth form, seeing this as the moment in which the inevitable future of university after A Levels became unrealised:

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I wish I'd have stayed. I wish I'd have done it properly, gone to uni

at the right time, because I wouldn't have come here. I'd have gone

to a different uni probably. Not that this is a bad uni, but, you know

what I mean. I'd have gone away and I'd have done it properly.

Like Richard, Kate's imagined mobility for university sits in contrast to her current

ties to place; when I asked whether she would move in the future, she replied that she

and her husband and children 'might as well stay where we are, I think.' Because

Kate's only undergraduate experience is CBHE, where her status as a 'local' student

is by far the most common, her description of the association between going away and

doing 'it properly' shows the dominating nature of this shared societal narrative,

which stretches beyond Kate's immediate experience. Both Richard and Kate

understood undergraduate mobility according to a powerful accepted narrative in

which moving for university study is a necessary precursor to a mobile life after

graduation (Goodhart, 2017; Smith and Holt, 2007). For both participants, having

missed the temporal moment on which this narrative relies means constructing an

educational subjectivity relied against the narrative. As can be seen in both accounts,

this non-traditional educational subjectivity blurs into their long term relationships to

place and to future movement. Rather than being cut off at the moment in which they

became impossible, these other imagined futures are sustained as definitional

narratives, acting as the dominant discourse through which the past can be seen as

causally connected to the present. Seen in this way, 'that life' which is seen as not

wanted by students of CBHE is also constantly connected to their current lives

through narratives in which it is the impossible other possibility.

While the above narratives of 'other lives' demonstrate the enduring and powerful effect of the English national narrative of undergraduate mobility, they also serve to de-naturalise that narrative. The accepted narrative is highlighted as one in which the privileges of ease of movement and coherence of placed, educated subjectivities are taken as a given. For the participants in this study, the complexity of their classed and racialisedd relationships to place, and their town's position in the geography of English HE, result in a disruption of the widespread assumption that HE means attending university, and that attending university means leaving the familial home and locality. Represented by participants as either consciously rejected or accidentally missed, the traditional student trajectory is shown to be both dominant in the imagination and often disrupted in practice by lack of privilege in material and symbolic experiences of place.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the arguments in this chapter offer a response to the common binary distinctions between mobile and immobile subjects, and local and 'traditional' HE students. There are several facets to this response. For participants such as Ben at Tobston College, and Andrew at Sebford College, it was important to reject the dominant narrative that associates the 'traditional' mode of HE study with growing up and gaining independence (Holdsworth, 2006). Gemma's experience of beginning her degree at a university before transferring to CBHE is useful in de-naturalising this 'traditional' mode of study, showing residential student mobility practices to be both particular and exclusionary. These participants also emphasise their positive and stable relationships with place, and the important role of CBHE in allowing them to sustain these relationships. At the same time, as explored in the previous chapter,

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these relationships to place are further complicated by placed histories of deprivation and lack of educational and employment opportunity. As shown by Jack's characterisation of Tobston as the 'underdog', Anna's deliberation over whether to stay in the town, and Kate's, Aisha's and Brian's accounts of the need to move away in order to build upon their undergraduate education, CBHE continues to occupy a contradictory position. HE provision in these towns acknowledges the specificity and strength of potential students' ties to place, but the future as a graduate-level educated subject in these places is hard for participants to imagine.

Most of the participants engaged explicitly with commonly accepted discourses of mobility, narrating themselves as having chosen against or having missed the opportunity to participate in the experiences these discourses describe. These narratives therefore demonstrate that, far from being divided from a 'traditional' experience by their status as 'immobile' or 'local' students, this experience is instead shared by these participants. Occupying a dominant position in the collective imaginary of English HE, the association between undergraduate study and leaving the familial home acts as a past possible future, against which present experience is defined. Discussions of students' mobility trajectories should therefore begin from an understanding that narratives of both mobility and fixity, and of past foreclosed and presently realised possibilities co-exist in multiple, non-linear ways that cannot be divided from a larger societal narrative of 'going to university'.

In the following chapter, I explore how educational subjectivities, already shaped by relationships to place and by narratives of im/mobility, are enacted in and shaped by relationships to institutional space.

CHAPTER 8

THE 'PART' AND 'WHOLE' OF CBHE SPACES

Introduction

> If it is true that a spatial order organises an ensemble of possibilities
>
> (e.g. by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g. by a
>
> wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualises
>
> some of these possibilities. In that way, [s]he makes them exist as
>
> well as emerge. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 98)

This chapter explores the institutional spaces of the HE sites of each case college, seeing these spaces both in terms of the 'ensemble of possibilities' they offer, and in terms of the ways in which these possibilities are 'actualised'. The chapter argues that the 'ensemble of possibilities' that is the institutional HE space in each college can be understood as implicated in and shaping of the spatial stories of place and student im/mobilities that have been set out in the previous chapters. The absence of university-based HE from the shared cultural history, and the shared imagined future, in each town is also an architectural absence. HE buildings are not part of either town's streets; street signs and town maps do not call attention to HE spaces. In Tobston, where it was necessary to travel by bus to the HE site, the destination was not signalled on the bus timetable as an HE site. For the students who, like me, caught the bus in the town centre and left it at the stop just outside the HE site, the shared destination of an HE space was unspoken and, as I will go on to discuss, hidden from public view. This chapter therefore places the 'ensemble of possibilities' offered by the spaces of an HE site in the context of places where HE spaces are unusual, unmarked or unexpected. As shown in Chapter 7, the geographical positioning of the

case colleges in 'cold spot' areas of English HE also has implications for student im/mobilities. The chapter draws upon these findings in order to look at how spaces in these case sites shape and become shaped by perceptions of the 'commuter' student as non-traditional in a national logic of HE but expected in a 'local' understanding. Building on the findings of the previous chapters in order to contextualise space according to the specific im/possibilities of place and mobility, the chapter also advances the conceptualisation of possible selves, showing the material conditions in which possibilities for educational subjectivity are offered, lived and limited in these CBHE spaces.

The findings from each case college combine two sources of data. The first of these is data from my field notes and from descriptions of the sites by participants in interviews, and is used to set out the 'ensemble of possibilities' that makes up and is made up by the spaces of each HE site. While this section risks presenting a 'proper' meaning of the spaces that, de Certeau argues, can only ever be 'merely the fiction produced by a use that is also particular' (1984, p. 100), I attempt to make use of my relative unfamiliarity with the sites to destabilise habitual uses of spaces that render their physicality 'implicit' (Gieryn, 2002, p. 61). The description therefore sits between an encounter with the spaces for the first time, and an observation of their habitual use, both of which seek to de-naturalise the ways in which the spaces produce and are produced by educational subjects. I focus particular attention in this section upon material objects that quickly blend into the background once a space has become familiar, such as chairs, doorways and written signs. I also focus especially on the shared social spaces in each HE site, arguing that the uses of space in these communal areas extend beyond the boundaries of the spaces themselves.

The second data source in this chapter is from mobile interviews (Anderson, 2004; Evans and Jones, 2011; Jones *et al.*, 2008; Lynch and Mannion, 2016; Parent, 2016) with the participants in each college. In these interviews, participants were asked to walk with me through the HE spaces on the site, discussing their uses of the space as they did so. The analysis of these interviews uses de Certeau's (1984, p. 101-102) spatial adaptation of the rhetorical figure of synecdoche, the form of metonymy in which a part stands in for the whole. The figure relies upon a shift in understanding that becomes so commonplace as to be unnoticeable. It is this shift that enables a use, for example, of the word 'crown' to signify the monarchy, or 'the pen' to signify the written word. In using space, de Certeau argues, we select particular possibilities (part) from a range of possibilities (whole), and quickly that part becomes understood as the whole. For example, the walk across a park replaces, in our understanding, the multiple possibilities of the space of the park as a whole. The way a subject habitually uses a space such as a campus or building therefore becomes their spatial story of the space.

My reading of literature on mobile interviews (see Chapter 3) suggested that this style of interview has the potential to offer a shift in power balance between researcher and researched, putting the participant in the position of guide and expert (see, for example, Brown and Durrheim, 2009). I was (again) surprised, therefore, that many of the participants appeared confused, non-plussed or resistant to the suggestion that they show me the spaces they most often use on the site. The most common response was that there was no point, because they did not use any other spaces than the one we were speaking in. Some participants remained seated despite my explanation of

what the mobile interview involved, and listed the buildings they regularly entered, sometimes pointing to them from their seat. It is possible to read these responses in several ways. They served as a useful reminder of the strangeness of my presence in their everyday lives (Rowe, 2014). The participants' struggle to fathom my interest in their use of institutional buildings was, I realised, both understandable and reasonable. At the same time, I was aware that it was impossible to negotiate the HE sites regularly and not 'use' at least some of the spaces. I therefore came to understand my participants' reluctance to describe or demonstrate their spatial movements as in part their assumption that I expected a more full or more complete occupation of the spaces than they were able to give me. They defined their 'part' uses of the site's spaces in relation to a 'whole' that at times seemed attributed to their reading of my expectations, and at times reflected their own expectations. In exploring the data from mobile interviews, I look at what comprises the 'whole' in my participants' accounts of their 'part' occupation of institutional spaces. In particular, I argue that the 'whole' of the HE space is in turn widened to encompass a more abstract and more nebulous sense of the 'other' HE space of the university.

Tobston College

'Not anywhere'

Important to situating the 'ensemble of possibilities' of Tobston's HE site within its placed context is a description of how difficult the site is to find. As explained in Chapter 6, the site is rural, located on the outskirts of a village 5 miles from Tobston town centre. Students and staff referred to the site by the name of the village it is closest to, so that although the site acts as the college's separate HE campus, it was almost never referred to as such. Travelling to the site involved getting off the bus at

the only stop in the nearest village. Again, this stop was named for the village rather than for the HE site, despite the fact that the entrance to the site was directly opposite the bus stop. It was therefore impossible to get a bus that explicitly went 'to' the HE site. This impossibility is evidence of the absence of HE from the spatial language of the Tobston area. The result was that finding the HE site required a previous knowledge of it being there, a purposeful journey towards it rather than a chance happening.

Those who knew and used the site knew it in part for its invisibility. Gemma, who emphasised the practicality of the site, including its ease of access from her home, transferred in the first weeks of her degree to Tobston College from a nearby university. When I ask if she liked the HE site, she responded:

> Yeah, yeah, because nobody knows it's here. They're like, "where?" and it's impossible to describe as well because it's not anywhere. You can't say, "Well it's near this," because it's not. It's not near anything. It's literally here on its own.

Although Gemma couched her response to my question in positive terms, the absence of the HE site from popular understanding was similar to Anna's and Jenny's descriptions, in Chapter 6, of the absence or impossibility of HE subjectivities in popular placed narratives of the town. In Gemma's account, the site is not only unknown, but is also impossible to situate in understandings of the area that would position it as 'near this'. By extension, the student subjects attending the college are similarly invisible, so that an already contradictory degree-level educational

subjectivity is further complicated by the absence of degree-associated spaces from public view. This description directly contrasts perceptions, in university towns and cities, of HE students populating whole spatial areas with spaces associated with living, learning or socialising at HE level (Hubbard, 2008; Sage, Smith and Hubbard, 2012a; 2012b). In such places, HE study is instinctively understood as a material lived experience. In Tobston, this experience is absent from public view.

Unused seats in social spaces

My experience of the HE site at Tobston College can be understood as an extension of my navigation to it. The site, like the route to it, demands a certain amount of prior knowledge. Its buildings, arranged in something close to a circle around a central, steeply sloping green, did not clearly correspond to the maps positioned at various points around the site. The building closest to the entrance, confusingly, was not part of the HE provision, but was instead a restaurant and hotel complex, with a reception desk catering for enquiries related both to HE and the hotel and restaurant. By my second visit to the site, I knew to walk further along the path to the next building in the circle, which housed the canteen and coffee shop, along with a number of classrooms and offices. My fieldnotes, often written in the social space in this building, detail the ways in which the spaces appeared to offer contradictory uses.

In particular, I found myself focusing on the unused seats in these spaces. The coffee shop, a space that has wider societal associations with socialisation that exceed the transaction of buying coffee (Turner and Manderson, 2007), had the most obviously comfortable seating. In this space, wide leather sofas appeared to invite students and staff to settle into the space. This invitation was contradicted by the notice on the

shop's door, detailing firstly that the shop closed at 3.30, before the end of the day's classes, and secondly that a beverage must be purchased by anyone sitting in the shop. Having been asked to leave the coffee shop on two occasions, once as it closed earlier than the advertised time, and once again as I had finished my coffee, I found these conditions of entry were tightly adhered to by the shop's staff. The sofas were therefore almost unused, and the coffee shop was, in contrast to wider popular understanding, most often a space used for the purchasing and taking away of coffee.

Here, the 'ensemble of possibilities' becomes a site of competing social signifiers, each of which shapes a particular use of the space – the sofas shape a site of social interaction, and the written signs shape it as a space of transaction. The resulting common use of the coffee shop – according to the second possible use, a space of transaction – works as an extension of the overriding sense of the HE site as a series of spaces best negotiated by purposeful movement. After finding, rather than chancing upon, the site, and after finding, rather than being led to, the site's central building, I encountered the coffee shop as a largely functional space that both offered and discouraged other possible uses. I spent more time in the site's canteen, which is explicitly set up as a functional space. Its plastic, upright chairs were positioned around tables. A water fountain and till were positioned in the middle of the room, and in each corner was a cart into which empty trays should be put when their user has finished eating, along with bins and recycling points. This punctuation of space with the practices of acquiring, paying for and disposing of food, along with the discomfort of the plastic chairs, shaped the canteen's use as a brief temporal and spatial break between classes. Around midday, almost all chairs were occupied and the noise level was high, as were levels of movement. No one sat still in this space,

instead moving to buy and consume food, and then to leave the space. When afternoon classes began, the space was completely silent and unused. While the 'ensemble of possibilities' did not dictate that the room should be used only at particular times, and the canteen was not subject to such strict policies regarding its use as the coffee shop was, the materials of the space shaped a similarly transactional use.

During the mobile interviews, participants were keen to emphasise their use of the space as functional and practical, driven by the requirements of their course and shared with the demands of their lives beyond the college. Paul, whose use of space was split between the small studio he rented, the camper van he lived in, and the college, gave the following account as we walked past the canteen:

> I've been there sometimes with [student] but my timetable's quite
> fragmented, because I, I help a lot of people out. I do - because I've
> got the van - I do so much for other people, um, that I'm not here
> all the time, so I eat while I'm out [away from the college]. And
> then when I'm here, I just get on with my work. The one thing I use
> this place [the HE site] for, mainly, is meetings with tutors to
> discuss what, how I'm getting on with my work.

In Paul's narrative, the canteen is associated strongly with its explicit function of eating; because he was not often on site for mealtimes, he rarely used it. The spaces of the site were, for Paul, designated for HE work. Paul's description of 'just' getting on with his work, and work as the 'one thing' he used the site for suggests both an

awareness and a denial of the other possibilities offered by the space – he identified

his use as a part, against a larger whole. At the same time, Paul also measured his

occupation of space against the demands of his life as a whole, narrating an

educational subjectivity that was split spatially, 'fragmented' between the demands of

a degree timetable and other people in his life. This narration created a strong contrast

with the coherence of 'traditional' spatial subjectivities in 'studentified' city spaces,

as discussed earlier. Seen in this way, the material functionality I noticed in my

fieldnotes is shaped by student needs, reflecting the everyday mobility practices

(Holton and Finn, 2018) of the 'local' student.

For other participants, the spaces of the site represented a more marked and more

negative contrast to imagined university spaces. Ryan's strong feelings that the site

did not offer a 'whole' HE experience were clear as he guided me around the site in

his first interview, his descriptions of buildings and facilities relying upon a denial of

their use. He pointed to the bar (in a building adjacent to the building housing the

canteen and coffee shop) with the accompanying statement that it was 'always

empty'. Here, the (lack of) use of the spaces was haunted by the ever-present

possibility of their use, and the sense that a more 'whole' use of the space would

require the bar to be full. Ryan also made a comparison to a nearby university,

explaining that:

> The buildings are so old. They need a lot of work to them. The
>
> equipment's not brilliant. I think we do lack decent equipment
>
> and decent facilities. At [university] I think they're, like, it's all

bang up to date. New buildings, everything brand new, decent

technology, equipment, and a decent library that's open 24 hours.

Ryan's mobile interview reveals him to be conscious of an imagined 'whole'

occupation of institutional space that is deemed appropriate to HE, and that is lacking

both in his use of the site and in the available possibilities of the site. In reinforcing

this lack through a comparison to the material conditions of university study, Ryan

offered a different understanding of space to Paul's. In Ryan's view, his partial use

of the site's spaces was dictated by the spaces themselves, shaped by what was

lacking from them. In turn, the whole of the space was narrated as partial to the

larger and more complete HE experience offered by the university.

As is clear from the above accounts, the functional spaces of the college can be seen

in contrasting ways. On one hand, the spaces enabled heterogenous mobility

practices that extended beyond those of the traditional undergraduate, and which

destabilise HE provision as the central spatial orientation of the educational subject.

On the other hand, the Tobston College HE site spaces were defined and delimited

by the language of necessity on which the provision itself is premised, and

experienced by the students in contrast to a dominant spatial imaginary of university

provision. In either view, just as the spaces of the college cannot be divided from the

larger narratives of place, education and mobilities, they were also implicated in the

dominant narratives of HE that persist both because of and despite their historical

absence from the town. These narratives were felt in the unused chairs of the site,

which acted as a perpetual signal that another educational subject, another possible

self, was imagined as sitting on them. At the same time, the empty chairs also

signalled that Tobston's HE subjects were sitting elsewhere, at home or on their way to or from the site.

Green space, benches and a path

The explicit functionality of the above social spaces seemed at first to be contradicted by the external characteristics of the site. Each building was situated on the edge of a green so large and sloping as to make it impossible to see all the buildings that made up the site from any point within it. Here, too, the space was marked by unused seating. Picnic benches were clustered at a variety of flatter points on the green. These appeared to encourage those using the site to stop, to face each other and to communicate in a space that was away from, literally outside, their classroom environment. The green was also divided, however, by a path that led from the building at the lowest point in the slope to the building at the highest point. It was the path that was used, far more often than the benches, as students and staff moved as quickly as possible from one side of the site to the other. The openness of the green, reinforced by the collegiality of the picnic tables, was contradicted by this path, so that the green became primarily a space to be traversed.

This second perception of the green was reinforced in mobile interviews. For many participants, the green space between buildings extended the time and effort taken to move around the site. Gemma, for instance, was glad that her cohort's classes in their final year took place in a different building than those in her first two years because the more recent room was 'closer to the car park'. Similarly, Anna described her use of the site's space as so dominated by practicality that a change in the buildings in

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which her classes took place had meant that 'we don't really come up here [pointing to the social spaces of the canteen and coffee shop] any more'. As Rebecca put it:

> If I'm a bit early I might get a coffee in there [the coffee shop] but not so much now because, like, we've got most of our classes down in that building. So it's, we're a bit kind of out of it now.

Here, the spaces of the site are divided both spatially and temporally by the incidentals of timetabling and room allocation, with occupation of some spaces becoming impossible through this division. In their focus on considerations of time and transport, Gemma, Anna and Rebecca emphasised the CBHE educational subject as balancing multiple demands and occupations, with these demands shaping use of institutional space. At the same time, however, these accounts show the space as acting to shape possible uses, showing how space shapes and is shaped by educational subjectivities. In Rebecca's narration, even the functional or practical use of the social spaces had become a past, impossible, rather than a present, possible occupation of institutional space. Rebecca narrated herself and her cohort as spatially positioned on the outskirts of the site's possible uses, 'out of' an 'it' that might offer different spatial possibilities.

Taken together, the 'ensemble of possibilities' in these shared spaces worked to produce an ideal possible educational subject who would moved about the site with a purpose firmly linked to the external commitments that defined them as 'local' students. The subject would enter and leave the spaces of the site needed, with the particular function of each space in mind. This educational subjectivity works in

contradiction to the 'traditional' undergraduate in 'studentification' literature (Smith and Hubbard, 2014). In this literature, undergraduate study is spatially all-encompassing, defining and defined by the ways in which the subject socialises, sleeps in and comes to 'know' a place (Holton, 2015; 2016). In turn, the places of 'studentification' come to be known by seemingly generic spatial practices of the traditional undergraduate educational subject. Where there is no history of university provision, and where student mobilities are 'local' in all the complexities of that term, these spatial practices were de-naturalised, invisible in the spatial language of the town and dis-associated from the lived experience of undergraduate study.

'Having your own little country estate'

The anticipated closure of the separate HE site at Tobston College, announced just before my second fieldwork visit there, resulted in a heightened reflexivity from participants about their relationship to the site. In these accounts, uses of the spaces are measured against those of an immediate future of integration into the contemporary architecture of the main FE site, as well as those of the impossible past/future of imagined university spaces. Here, what is seen to be lacking in the spaces is measured against an imagined university space, a spatial and temporal 'whole' in which learning needs are met by equipment and ease of access. When, in his second interview, Ryan told me about the planned closure of the HE site, he deployed similar language to acknowledge that a move to the central, contemporary FE site would increase access to the learning facilities he saw as important:

> They've got better facilities there. They've got better computers,
> better technology, better equipment. It's just in the centre of town

though, which is not as nice as having your own little country

estate to learn in.

Contradicting his earlier representation of the disparate, unoccupied spaces of the HE site, Ryan encapsulates them here into a coherent, whole 'estate' that brings with it a sense of ownership and belonging (Thomas, 2015) as well as the reputational affect (Stich, 2014) of more elite HE architecture (Baker and Brown, 2007). The suspended temporal moment in which the present HE spaces were re-narrated as soon-to-be past prompts complex reflections on the site as at once a whole, and as a part always relative to a larger stratified HE spatial imaginary. Anna's response to the site and to the intended move also demonstrated competing spatial definitions of HE. In addition to a largely negative account of the site, Anna's 'love' for the beauty of the campus offered another, different view of her relationship to the spaces there, and this view was reiterated in her second interview, as she discussed the planned site closure:

It's just like, it's just a bit sad for us, do you know? Because we've

all grown up here together and I think, you just think that they'd

want to keep it. But apparently they're in loads of debt so they want

to combine it all together and staff cuts, funding cuts, they just

haven't got the money, which is one of the things you've got to

expect coming to a small uni. You wouldn't have these problems if

you were at one of the red bricks sort of thing.

In this description, the spaces of the HE site contained a complete temporal experience of 'grow[ing] up here' that contradicts the divided and closed spaces

which Anna described in her habitual use of the site. Anna's affective 'combin[ing] it all together' is set against the financial 'combin[ing]' enacted by the college in selling the site. Both of these understandings of the site as a 'whole', however, were further contrasted with the im/possible past-future of the 'red brick' spaces of elite university education. Like Ryan, Anna's narration of the site as a whole was inflected with her awareness of its imminent loss. Both Ryan and Anna's conflicting accounts of spatial division and lack in daily use, and coherent whole in anticipated nostalgia, highlight the ways in which HE spaces are shaped through but also exceed their habitual use. In the part as well as in the whole of these narratives are competing claims for what HE spaces might and should offer as possible educational subjectivities. While some of these claims are informed by the presence of empty or imminently abandoned spaces, the spaces themselves are also productive of possible other and possibly unrealised narratives of HE. As Ryan and Anna demonstrate, CBHE spaces in Tobston College were negotiated through complex narratives of subjectivities made possible by these, rather than other spaces, at the same time as they were defined against these other im/possible spaces.

Sebford College

Swipe card access only

As discussed in Chapter 6, there is a marked contrast between the HE spaces at Tobston College and Sebford College. In the marketing materials for Sebford College, much was made of the institution's newly built campus facilities, which had been part of a significant and ongoing programme of investment. The college's HE provision was located in a separate building as part of a campus made up of nine buildings grouped together, within easy walking distance of the town centre. As also noted in

Chapter 6, the FE College was a visible presence in the town. Street signs directed visitors there from the train station, and only a busy road divides the last of the main shopping streets from the first of the campus buildings. Students and staff, recognisable by their distinctive college lanyards, moved to and from the FE campus and the town centre throughout the day. Further Education therefore made its presence felt throughout the town centre, both architecturally and in the marking of bodies as educational subjects.

Despite, or as well as, this visibility of educational subjects and spaces in Sebford's centre, HE was largely absent. The college buildings, spread around the open urban spaces of a car park and bus stops, were distant enough from one another that it was not easy to read the name of any one building from its nearest neighbour. This meant that it was possible to attend classes in one building without either entering the other buildings, or knowing which levels or disciplines they catered for. The majority of the buildings were named for the specialist technical education they offered – a sports and leisure building, an automative technology building and a construction centre, for example. The central FE building used a metaphor for light and guidance as its name, and was therefore marked out as both a general and a central building. The buildings shared architectural features common to the Building Colleges for the Future (BCF) funding initiative launched in 2008 (Smith, 2017b). The emphasis upon steel, chrome and glass made the buildings, though spatially distant, easy to elide. The consequence of this elision, and of the HE building's place amongst the others, was that it occupied a contradictory position as part of the larger FE campus. It was separate, and therefore created a distinction between HE and FE. Its staff worked entirely in this building, rarely crossing the car park to any other building on the campus. At the same time,

because of homogeneity of the buildings, it was also possible to understand HE as another form of specialist technical education, not distinct from FE but another instance of it. It was equally possible, just as with the very differently positioned HE site at Tobston, not to know that the HE building exists at all. Moreover access to the HE building was organised at the reception of the general FE building, as the HE building itself had no reception, which in effect closed the building to enquiry and ensured that those entering already knew and were known to the institution.

As in Tobston, the absence of HE from the history of Sebford was reflected in a lack of spatial recognition of HE, and of HE subjects. Where university sites and spaces are often clearly demarcated in university towns, in Sebford the HE spaces and students were difficult to discern from the FE provision. In part because the mode of HE study was almost exclusively 'local', the spatial markers of social and residential 'studentified' places were absent from the town, and the material evidence of lived HE experience was absent from public understandings of possible educational futures. At the same time, participants' descriptions of the town as fractious and split along class and racial lines extended visually into the educational spaces in the form of controlled entrances and security guards that appeared as both anticipating and responding to violence, conflict or intrusion.

The sequence of transparent double doors at the entrance of the HE building, each requiring a swipe card, created a contradictory sense of visual accessibility and material impossibility, both inviting and impeding movement into HE. The requirement that a member of HE staff walk across the car park to the FE building in order to provide a signature to approve my access to the HE building served as a

physical reminder of the complex relationship between the two types of provision; they were administratively separate enough that no one in the FE building could provide the appropriate approval, but entwined enough that access to one building was organised through another. The physical difficulty of accessing the building therefore became a complex configuration of protection from and mediation of the historical narratives of place and poverty that extended into the institution from the town, and the ongoing intertwined sector identities of the FE and HE institution. Despite the distinct architectural and spatial differences between the Tobston and Sebford HE sites, they shared a requirement that HE provision must be known about in order to be accessed, and a lack of embeddedness in the public spaces of the town that, in turn, made the provision less visible, and less likely to be known.

The transparent double doors of the HE building at Sebford College gave way to an atrium of the kind that, like the exterior of the building, is typical of BCF structures (Smith, 2017b). It was a contradictory space; on one side, further transparent doors opened (with swipe card access) into the canteen and coffee shop, and directly ahead were flights of stairs and lifts to the five floors of teaching rooms and offices and the entrance to the library. Entering the building propelled further purposeful movement towards the practicalities of eating or learning. Opposite the doors to the canteen, however, were two different sets of seating. The first was a narrow oval sofa, brightly coloured and positioned just before and to the side of the lifts. The second set of seating was a series of single tables, each with two chairs, and each separated from the others by a small screen, placed against a glazed exterior wall. Both sets of seats were almost entirely unused, perhaps because the space was otherwise configured to promote progression through, rather than staying within. At times, students stood

around the oval sofa, clearly waiting for other students, but occupying the space so temporarily that they did not need to sit down. No one used the tables and chairs, perhaps because their arrangement suggested either study or private, professional conversation, both of which were at odds with the atrium's position as the building's entrance and main thoroughfare. In a building whose spaces were tightly organised and structured around their practical purpose, this space stood out as indeterminate, hovering somewhere between movement and stasis in its 'ensemble' of possible uses.

'Just com[ing] and go[ing]'

There was a single social space in the building, which blended together the spaces of common room, coffee shop and canteen. The space was structured as a semi-circle that curved around the building's central staircase, with access either side. To move through the space was to progress sequentially through its functions. A pool table, surrounded by sofas, was followed by a coffee shop with upright chairs and tables, and further on, a canteen with hot food, vending machines, and more chairs and tables. Again, the space was contradictory in that the seating suggested stopping, while the sequential functions of leisure, snacking and meal times worked to first define the spaces according to practicality, and then to draw movement along and through each function, through the semi-circle and out of the other side. This sense of sequential movement was particularly clear in the data from mobile interviews. Here, the methodological emphasis on movement through space seemed to echo participants' accounts of their occupation of this building's spaces, often prompted by guiding me through the atrium and canteen. Jack, who reported making the most of the HE spaces in order to justify the cost of travel from a neighbouring village, gave the following description:

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We'll all go down - we'll finish a lecture, go down for lunch, but

then we'll either go for a fag, but I've given up smoking, so we'll all

go to the library, do a bit of work, and then we'll all go back.

Jack's description reveals how the building could be occupied through a series of

repeated collective, time-determined movements that were both enabled and

structured by the sequence of spaces that led from the building's atrium. Jack was

unusual in that his narration suggested a sense of a complete or whole use of the space

that was not defined against other possible uses, or other possible spaces. Kate, who

expressed her use of the building as defined by her status as a student parent (Brooks,

2015), was more typical of the participants in making it clear that her movement

between the spaces was partial, and privileged time efficiency above all else:

I just come and go really. I might come in early and go to the library,

or stay later and go to the library, but I don't want to be talking. I

want to get on. I've got a limited amount of time - you have to use it.

Like Jack, Kate described a habitual sequence in which she 'come[s] and go[es]', but

unlike Jack, she gestured towards the social spaces without entering them, defining

them as closed to her through the 'limitations' of her time. The 'just' of her

movement in and out of the building, stopping only to go to the library, positions her

narrative against unspoken other possibilities of the space that might be more

complete. At the same time, however, a more whole occupation of student space

comes to represent a threat to the Kate's time management. Because it holds the

possibilities of something other than the immediate practicalities of study, the social space of the building must be negotiated in particular ways in order to sustain a coherent educational subjectivity alongside the other pressures in her life. The building was as such managed and divided into the possible and impossible, by students whose educational subjectivities were always experienced through demands external to education itself.

A similar sense of institutional space as potentially challenging to educational subjectivity is conveyed by Lucy, who lived within walking distance of the college, and who found the pull of home a constant temptation when in college spaces:

> I just spend my time on this floor, because I know if I walk somewhere else I'll just want to go home. So if I just stay where I'm meant to be, um, at least on this floor anyway, I can just crack on with it. Then I'm not going to get distracted by anything else. If I go downstairs I'll see something and I'll be like – ooh - or I'll see a person who'll be like, "Oh I'm going home now," and I'll be like, "Oh I'm coming with you." Yeah, so I've got to, I just need to try and stick it out a bit.

In Lucy's narrative, the spaces of the building represent a site of struggle between the impulse to leave and the obligation to stay, so that guarding against the possibility of leaving requires partial occupation of space. Like Kate, Lucy worked to sustain this partial, and fragile, use of space even while she saw it as lacking that which would make it more whole. The 'downstairs' space is depicted here as a space to be

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managed; where Kate saw the space as potentially impeding her movement in and out of the building, Lucy described herself as fighting against its tendency to move her on and away from study. For both participants, the building at once housed and threatened their educational subjectivities, offering possibilities that had to be balanced against the demands of their experiences outside of the building. As the only HE space in the town, the HE building can be seen as alternately insignificant and important in these accounts. Rather than being embedded within a spatial language of 'studentification', the building was used alongside and amongst the spaces of everyday life and everyday mobility (Finn, 2017). At the same time, the building held the possibilities of both more and less than this use, and both possibilities threatened the imagined future coherence of already-fragile educational subjectivities. In turn, these subjectivities were only first imaginable because the spaces offered precisely the partial, rather than whole, occupation of student space that also rendered both subjectivity and space fragile.

'A lot more support'

Just as in Tobston, many Sebton participants described their use of space in the context not only of the whole of the possibilities it offered, but in terms of a wider, imagined whole of HE study at university. Rachel, who described the HE building as her 'home from home' was keen to emphasise the available facilities in the library and the canteen. As she showed me the library's resources, she made an explicit comparison to imagined university spaces:

> You have a lot more support because, in a big university you'd
>
> have, like, a big lecture room and you wouldn't get that, that sort of

like - I don't know how to explain it - that sort of like one-to-one

time where, you know, you can just go and ask your tutor, "Oh can

I just have a word with you?" When you've got, like, 100 people in

a room, listening to one lecturer, then how are you going to do

that? It's just impossible.

As Rachel described the 'part' that the college represents in relation to her imagined

'whole' of university-based HE, she also saw this 'part' as the only possible HE space

for her to occupy. Depicting the space of the 'big lecture room' as 'impossible', she

contrasted this with the enabling and supportive spaces offered by the HE building. In

Rachel's view, these spaces shaped the kinds of interaction that made her educational

subjectivity imaginable and liveable, even while defined against the imagined

impossibility of the university.

Jack, like Rachel, was keen across both interviews to emphasise the resources on offer

at the college, as well as his frustration with other students' complaints about what is

lacking. As he put it:

Some of the students get a bit disillusioned, like, "Why don't we

have this? They have this at other universities," like, "Yeah, but

you've come to Sebford College University Centre, it's not a

university. You can't really be expecting the world."

Jack resisted the other students' comparisons with 'other universities', defining the

college as offering a 'part' that is defined against and distinct from the whole 'world'

of university-based HE. Like Rachel, and like Anna and Ryan in their sadness at the loss of the Tobston HE site, Jack also constituted the college HE spaces as a 'whole' in themselves, offering something coherent and complete against the more expansive threat of the university lecture hall space:

> I remember when I was at [sixth-form] college, we went for an open day around [university], and I remember walking into one of the lecture halls, and I'm like, if I'm here I'm just going to be messing about. I'm just going to be sat at the back on my laptop just, like, googling like what I'm going to buy for Christmas. Whereas here, you can't have that. You've got to be here, you've got to be listening.

For Jack the spaces of the HE building worked to shape an educational subjectivity that was purposeful and attentive, closed against the possible threat of disappearance or erasure within the larger imagined space. Again here, as in Kate's and Lucy's accounts above, there is the sense that CBHE spaces themselves hold together otherwise fragile educational subjectivities. Like the placed narrative through which CBHE provision is seen as both incongruous to place and essential because of its incongruity, CBHE spaces seen in this way both *cater for* and *reinforce* student vulnerability; they are at once the only possible spaces in which educational subjectivities can be imagined and lived, and the spaces that define the other, university spaces as impossible.

This contradictory nature of CBHE spaces as both enabling and limiting of possible student futures is captured by Kate, whose account of her use of college spaces above reinforced practicality above all else. Although she described herself as 'just com[ing] and go[ing]' from the HE building, Kate also positioned the building as a part in a larger imaginary of university space:

> I've never been to another uni, I don't know what they're like. In my head, they're like massive places and people just come in and sit wherever they want and leave whenever they want. It's very strict here. If you're late, like, people get mad at you, if you don't attend. So that's very much like school to me, as opposed to what I think uni would be like. And there's no pub or anything. There is on Hollyoaks, isn't there? Do you know what I mean? There's nowhere to, like, meet, apart from there [gestures to the social space] which again is just like school, isn't it?

In Kate's description of the social and teaching spaces of the HE building, they are defined as partial against a 'massive' whole of university spaces in imagined and popular culture (Edgerton, 2005; Reynolds, 2014). The spatial practices shaped by these imagined 'massive places' come to define the spaces as possible or impossible for HE subjects. Like Jack, who saw the spatial requirements to be present and attentive as usefully constraining an otherwise vulnerable and wayward educational subjectivity, Kate saw these requirements as clearly differentiating college space from imagined university spaces. Her description goes further than Jack's in that her likening of the building's spaces and spatial practices to school positions the HE

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building outside HE altogether, instead occupying a 'part' of educational experience that is defined and limited by age and compulsory participation. Whereas these accounts support the argument that the building's spaces are shaped according to student need, Kate suggested instead that the spaces and spatial practices dictate possible student subjectivities. This suggestion, seen in the context of her earlier description of purely practical engagement with the HE spaces, sees this practical engagement as shaped or prompted by the space itself, and by what is lacking or missing from the space that would enable, if present, a more 'whole' HE experience.

Kate's contradictory position, as first guarding against the temptations of the existing social space in the HE building, and then seeing this space as lacking against the imagined spaces of the university, is representative of the contradictory demands placed upon CBHE spaces. The spaces of the Sebford HE building meet the demands of the complex everyday mobilities of their majority of local students through their organisation around a logic of movement and purposeful progression. At the same time, the seating areas in the atrium and canteen offer a different possible occupation of space that gestures towards but does not meet shared imaginings of university HE spaces. For some participants, the 'part' of HE experience offered by the HE building is a complete whole even as it is defined against university-based HE, complete because it is the only possible, defined against the impossible. For others, it is this containing of the possible that both enables and limits the spatial practices of HE.

Conclusion

In order to explore the significance of CBHE spaces to educational subjectivities, this chapter has established the 'ensemble of possibilities' from which spatial practices are

enacted. In both case college towns, the relative invisibility of HE from public spaces and therefore public imaginaries means that the 'ensemble of possibilities' was already structured through the narratives of placed inequality that define the towns as HE 'cold spots'. Similarly, the majority of 'local' students in CBHE means that social and residential HE spaces, common to university towns and cities, are not part of the towns' architecture. HE student subjectivities are therefore unseen in the material practices of each town, even in the case of Sebford where Further Education forms a visible part of the geography of the town centre. As a result, HE spaces in these towns did not permeate the collective spatial understandings of educational spaces and subjectivities. The ensemble of possibilities must therefore also take into account the spatial practices that are a result of student im/mobilities, themselves in part a consequence of placed educational possibilities.

Although architecturally very different, and occupying contrasting spatial positions in relation to the FE college, the HE sites at Tobston and Sebford bore some similarities. Both were structured around a spatial logic of movement, the material features of these spaces appeared to respond to the demands of students with heterogeneous mobility practices, and to enable an engagement with HE that did not require the all-consuming spatial experience of residential and social student life. Participants narrated their negotiation of institutional space as both a response to and a demand for this functional practicality. de Certeau's concept of spatial synecdoche leads to an interpretation of these narratives as emphasising partial engagement with space against the whole of unused possibility, in which that whole is lost or unrealised. At the same time, most particularly visible in the anticipation of the loss of Tobston's separate HE site, this partial engagement also represents a whole that is the 'only

possible', where 'only' signifies both that something has been made possible that otherwise would not be, and that it is a single and smaller than usual possibility. These dual definitional possibilities of CBHE, experienced as the 'part' synecdoche of spatial practices at the HE sites, were measured against the imagined whole of university-based HE, sometimes as freedom from, sometimes as less than, and often as both at once.

CHAPTER 9

PLACED POSSIBLE SELVES: SPATIAL STORIES OF IM/POSSIBILITY

Introduction

Where the previous three chapters set out three spatial analytical perspectives, this chapter brings place, mobilities and institutional space together in the 'spatial story' as an analytical framework. The chapter focuses on the extended narratives, or 'spatial stories' of four participants. These spatial stories work to locate the subject within a bounded locality through definitional narratives of what the place is or is not, what is possible for the subject within it, and what kinds of mobility are enabled in and beyond it. In order to show how place, mobilities and space factors structure and delimit available educational subjectivities, the chapter also draws on the possible selves concept. This focus employs the language and logic associated with this concept, which, for example, describes possible selves as either feared or desired (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Erikson, 2018), and more effective in terms of motivation if a balance between these is struck (Oyserman, Bybee and Terry, 2006). Possible selves are also seen as multiple, separately connected to education, career or relationships (Pizzolato, 2007), and as strongly or weakly elaborated (Stevenson and Clegg, 2011), with the degree of elaboration again seen to affect motivation. While acknowledging the usefulness of these categories, my analysis looks at the narrative function of possible selves, rather than their behavioural impact. This use of possible selves complicates their categorisation by emphasising the importance of impossible or unrealised possible selves, against which current subjectivities are defined and experienced. Multiple possible selves are also seen as potentially contradictory, and

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this chapter explores these contradictions and scrutinises the ways in which they are made narratively coherent in participants' accounts.

The four participants whose narratives are drawn out in this chapter are chosen because they could be classed as 'outlier' cases within the larger case that is each college site (Thomas, 2011b; Yin, 2014). As 'outlier' cases, they are unusual in the context of other cases, and yet they exaggerate characteristics that are common to but perhaps not as obvious in the other cases. In discussing each of the four participants, this chapter builds up a representation of them from their interview data. The risk in this approach is that the representation appears 'complete', seeming to capture each participant or their experience as something whole. This 'wholeness' could individualise the issues and inequalities that the analysis seeks to highlight, so that the reader asks more questions of the individual's experience than they do of the structures illuminated by that experience. This risk is particularly present in representations of Further Education, in which, paradoxically, a focus on structural disadvantage can easily reinforce discourses of individual resilience as it triumphs against deficit, and the important role Further Education plays in supporting this resilience (see, for example, UCU's 'Transformational Stories', UCU, 2017).

Ball, Maguire and Macrae (2000) emphasise the incomplete nature of any set of interview data:

> We have only glimpses into complex lives: they [the participants]
> select, revise and re-order their experiences in interviews and then

we select, re-order and interpret these experiences in our analytic

work (p.19).

Like Ball, Maguire and Macrae, I emphasise that the presentation of data in this

chapter is a re-presentation of my participants' own re-presentation of their

experiences. It is drawn from interview data that is partial, a 'glimpse' rather than

anything more solid or complete. Additionally, I am aware that my interview

questions often served to reproduce the imperative, inherent to educational contexts,

for my participants to construct coherent narratives of their educational trajectories

and their imagined futures. As discussed in previous chapters, not to have done so

would have been to ignore the importance of this imperative in their educational

experience, or to assume that it is possible to subvert that imperative in a single

research encounter. With these complexities in mind, the analysis in this chapter

highlights the fragility of narrative coherence, where possible showing the work done

by the student in creating a causally robust account of past decision and future

implications (Ricoeur, 1992; 2000) The chapter also situates the narratives presented

within the social conditions outlined in the previous analysis chapters. In this way,

although the narratives themselves are the production of a fleeting moment within a

single research encounter, they can also be seen as shaped by and evocative of the

enduring and the shifting structures of HE in England.

Leon: Impossible possibilities

Leon had lived in villages around Tobston all his life, and at the time of our interview

lived 'about two bus rides away' from the HE site, with his mother, his siblings and

his mother's partner. His relationship to place was complicated by his family's

downward social mobility, caused by his mother's sudden unemployment during his early teenage years. This change in circumstance took the family from being 'nice and well off' to 'legally homeless' within a short time. As a result, the family now lived on a council estate:

> I hate the place I live. It's a council estate. I can't stand it. I live
> with my mum, my brother and my sister, and my mum has a
> boyfriend now, but let's just say I'm different. I like to think I'm
> the black sheep.

In contrast to the children in Reay and Lucey's study (2000), who express both dislike of their social housing estate and a defensive sense of belonging to it, Leon's experience of the council estate as a consequence of downward social mobility means that he associated the estate with a negative change in his life. Leon resisted being defined by the place of the council estate and its class associations by seeing himself as 'the black sheep' and strongly arguing that there was a dissonance between him and the place. While the figure of the 'black sheep' usually signifies a negative experience of alienation and difference, Leon saw the 'black sheep' as a desired possible self. This unusual use of the figure highlights the strength of his disengagement from the locality; alienation and otherness from this place was vital to the way that he experienced his present and imagined his future as a coherent subject.

Leon's narrative of his difference from the estate, however, was contradicted by the impossibility of leaving: 'If I had a way out, I'd take it'. Here, he both creats and rejects a possible self that is able to leave his surroundings. This process of an

imagined-rejected future was repeated as he described his initial decision to remain at

home for degree study. He recounted his decision-making process as one in which

better options in different places were progressively ruled out. For the first of these

options, he had not made an application, and he was rejected from the second:

> When I looked on the UCAS website, when I was 19, for comic art
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> courses, there were only about, I think there were two or three. I
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> can remember two. One of them was in Oxford, which I didn't go
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> for because I'm not an A* student, and one of them was in
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> Staffordshire which I didn't go to. But I came from a modern art
>
> course, so my portfolio was built with modern art, and that didn't
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> look very nice to them. So things didn't go very well, so I came
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> here because they're, well, it's easier for me because I live closer,
>
> so financial wise, it's simpler.

Both place-related mobile student possible selves, in Oxford and Staffordshire, were

narrated as having been made impossible by Leon's educational past. In this past, he

was not 'an A* student', and, in his art foundation year at Tobston's FE site, he had

not built up the kind of art portfolio that is valued at the other institutions he applied

to. Tutors and HE directors in both Tobston and Sebford's HE provision discussed

their frustration that colleagues teaching in FE in the same institution often

encouraged their students to apply to high status university courses, rather than

guiding them to study HE at the college. That Leon was apparently not encouraged to

apply further afield is suggestive of a subtle 'cooling out' process (Alexander, Bozick

and Entwisle, 2008; Clark, 1960), in which 'weakly prepared students' (Alexander,

Bozick and Entwhistle 2008, p. 373) are 'channelled away' from seemingly more ambitious places of study. Bathmaker and Thomas (2009) highlight the workings of institutional processes of 'positioning' in colleges providing both FE and HE; CBHE provision occupies a position within the stratified HE sector as HE for 'certain sorts of students' (p. 122), where these 'sorts' contrast with those suited to elite HE. Institutional advice and guidance processes therefore recognise and position these students to enter HE through this 'particular route' (ibid.). Through this process, students such as Leon are seen to have already been excluded from elite forms of HE prior to the application stage, and are therefore further channelled away from them, or simply not encouraged to pursue them, during this stage.

Leon continued to experience this exclusion in a material way throughout his degree study, in his perpetual awareness of the impossible self studying at Staffordshire University. When I asked about the institutional spaces of Tobston College, Leon first described the spaces he might have occupied in Staffordshire:

> The Staffordshire one, I'll not lie, that looked gorgeous, and I was ashamed, I was very, very ashamed that I didn't get in, because everything was set up like for proper comic artists. Everyone had their own work stations, that they didn't pay for, it was given to them through the university.

The ongoing presence of the Staffordshire institutional space, which to Leon offered the shaping of a 'proper comic artist' subjectivity, was also an enduring reminder, to Leon, of his failure and his shame at that failure. As Alexander, Bozick and

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Entwhistle write in their study of 'cooling out' processes, structural barriers are presented and internalised as personal failure: 'If the rules of the competition are perceived as fair, the losers have no one to blame but themselves' (2008, p. 373). In his occupation of Tobston's institutional spaces, therefore, Leon lived alongside the student possible self he saw himself as having failed to realise. At the end of a day at the college, he then returned to the estate he 'can't stand', so that the materialities of his daily life became repetitions of impossibility, even as he continued to progress through the linear, future-oriented degree course.

In Leon's representation of his decision-making process, his understanding of and preparation for the application could be seen, in Bourdieusian terms, as lacking the social and cultural capital he needed to make an informed decision (Reay, David and Ball, 2005). Although he knew that the UCAS website was where he should search and apply for courses, the paucity of options in comic art that he described suggest that his search was not thorough, and he did not recount looking at institutional or discipline-specific websites, or attending careers fairs or advice sessions. The student possible selves imaginable to Leon were therefore limited by his engagement with the application process, which can be seen as structured by the orientation of the FE institution to HE progression, the positioning of the college's HE provision within this orientation, and the ways that students were deemed as suited to this provision. The possible selves that were available were fragile rather than strongly elaborated, so that they were easily made impossible (Oyserman, Bybee and Terry, 2006; Stevenson and Clegg, 2011, Stevenson, 2018). Importantly, Leon's resources as a 'contingent chooser' who 'often act[s] on the basis of very limited information' (Ball, Reay and David, 2002, p. 337) of HE institutions also constrained his geographical possibilities.

Constructing a narrative of successful progression through education was therefore challenging for Leon, whose depiction of the past failures that kept him in Tobston is sustained into his imagined future. When I asked about whether he saw himself staying in Tobston in the future, he responded:

> **Leon:** Hopefully not. No, no, no, no, hopefully not. I'd hate - let's just say I would be depressed if I stayed here for the rest of my life. I would be depressed.
>
> **Holly**: Why's that?
>
> **Leon**: Because I hate it. I hate this, I hate Tobston. When we went to London [on a course field trip] I loved it, purely because it was like a new, sort of like, you're reinventing yourself. No one knows you. You could be anyone, so wiping the slate clean so you have a new life and a new place. But no, I can't stand Tobston, where I am right now. I'd like to leave. I'd like to become marginally successful and live in a nice area but, like I said I'm, it's too, I get distracted too many times. Something will distract me where I won't work as hard as I should be doing.

There are a series of impossibilities in this narrative, each contradicting the other. In the first, Leon both imagined and denied the possibility of remaining in place, creating a feared possible self that 'would be depressed' if this were to happen. At the same time, both of the possibilities he imagined away from Tobston are, to some

degree, represented as impossible. He drew on his recent visit to London in order to create a desired possible self in which the place he was in did not reflect his past, instead offering something 'new'. However, he represented this as a fleeting moment of enjoyment, situated in the past, further informing his disengagement from Tobston in the present, but not fully informing a clear plan to leave. A further possible self, as 'marginally successful' was associated with the ability to live in a 'nice' area, with the implications of social class that Rebecca, in Chapter 6, also used to distinguish between the 'nice, and quiet' areas around Tobston and those that are 'not as good'. This possible self was represented as both resting on and made impossible by Leon's educational subjectivity. The possibility of 'success' he spoke of, that might enable a move away from the area he hates, was success in his degree course and his subsequent career, and Leon saw this as made impossible by his perceived failings as an educational subject. In producing this narrative of educational progression that is also place-based progression, Leon pinpoints the risks of such narratives; for those who struggle to complete undergraduate education in such localities, the loss of a possible graduate future is also the loss of a possible geographically and socially mobile future, an imagined future made all the more important by the locality itself.

Leon described his progression through degree study and his development of educational subjectivity as structured through an interplay between the imagining and the denial of a desired career possible self. His choice of comic art as a degree subject was prompted by his discovery of manga:

> As soon as I read it, and saw what it was, I was mesmerised. It felt
> like something, straight away. I thought, 'I wish I'd have done my
> own.'

Leon's discovery of manga was immediately followed by his imagining of a career possible self as a manga artist. The past tense of this possible self represents the impossibility that Leon had come up against as he had read and learned more about manga:

> I'd still love to do my own, it's just after looking in depth into it,
> especially when it comes from Japan, and I'm not Japanese, I don't
> speak or like Japanese.

Arguably, the very place-specific Japanese possible self that had drawn Leon to HE was also what threatened it. The more elaborated the possible future in manga art became, the more it revealed itself as impossible, in direct contradiction to educational narratives of progression, as well as to literature on possible selves that suggests a more elaborated possible self is more likely to be realised (Oyserman and Fryberg, 2006). Leon reported having 'nearly given up' the degree course in his second year, and when I asked why, he answered that, 'I think I got a bit down, because I want to be a manga guy.' In contrast to the participants in Pizzolato's (2007) study of university students whose career paths seem impossible, Leon had not revised or shifted his career possible self in response to its seeming impossibility. Instead, despite the fact that the impossibility of 'want[ing]' to be a 'manga guy' was

the cause of his having been 'down', he sustained this desire as a present and enduring possible future self.

The enduring narratives of place, and the intertwined impossibilities of past, present and future mobilities for Leon were both powerfully present in his everyday material experience of HE. When I met Leon and interviewed him in the college's illustration and graphic design rooms, I was struck by his unusual occupation of space. He and his closest friend on the course worked at two desks in one corner of the room, and had decorated the corkboards behind the desks with a corporate-style logo featuring both of their names, along with copies of their ongoing illustrations. In contrast, the other desks in the space were unmarked, clearly used by students as and when they were required. Leon's almost exaggerated commitment to the space and to a future-orientated subjectivity could be read as an attempt to replicate the dedicated space he imagined occupying at Staffordshire. There was clearly a powerful relationship, for Leon, between the materiality of a dedicated working space and the taking up of an educational subjectivity with a future, career-focused narrative. At the same time, I saw Leon's visible and performative occupation of work space as an almost-exaggerated commitment to sustaining an educational subjectivity he himself described as fragile. This exaggeration was replicated in his account of the time he spent in the room:

> Me and [student] are in all the time, all the time. We're in, we're
> pretty much in every day. We come in here we're pretty much 9 till
> 8, so we leave at like 8pm. We're always the last ones here. I mean
> you can ask [tutors], me and [student] are always the last ones here,

and we try and do as much work as we can here, and we go home

purely to have some tea, go to sleep, wake up in the morning, time

for round two.

Leon represented himself here as driven and determined, contradicting his earlier

suggestion that he was easily distracted. However, when I returned to the college four

months after Leon's interview, to conduct the second round of interviews, Leon no

longer attended the college. His name and self-fashioned logo were absent from the

materiality of the room, and even the memory of them seemed outlandish in the

context of the other anonymous desks and work stations. I was informed by the course

tutors that Leon had not formally left the course. Instead, he had stopped attending or

communicating so completely that the college was left with no choice but to post a

letter to his address, informing him that he was no longer a student on the course.

They had received no response. The silence reported by his tutors was repeated in my

contact with him; although I tried to contact Leon by phone and by email several

times, I did not hear from him again. Leon's physical, written and verbal absences

from the final term of his undergraduate study serve as an erasure of his previous

presence. In this context, it is difficult not to read his previous occupation of space,

outlasting other students and stopping only for the necessities of eating and sleeping,

as an attempted resistance to the encroaching feared possible selves that threatened

and ultimately overwhelmed Leon's educational subjectivity.

Leon's story, as presented here, shows a crowding of impossibilities, in which the

incongruity between Leon's educational subjectivity and his relationship to place was

compounded by the structural limitations that kept him in place even as they offered a

'way out'. There were stark spatial disparities between the place Leon felt he should live in and the place of the council estate that he hated, the spaces he imagined studying in at Staffordshire and the spaces of Tobston College, the place in which his imagined career would have been made possible and the place in which it was understood as impossible. Importantly, the causal connections of failure that Leon drew to explain his current experience and previous decisions as 'acceptable after all' (Ricoeur, 1992; 2000) served to minimise and therefore to reinscribe the structural barriers he has already experienced. The coherence in his narrative of educational subjectivity came from the repeated impossibilities he described, and therefore, unusually, what became 'unspeakable' and unimaginable for Leon was the very narrative of progression and possibility that is expected of educational subjects. Leon's experience also highlights the precarious potential CBHE has in contexts such as Tobston. The possible self offered to Leon at Tobston College was all the more important because of the multiple impossible selves in his place and from his past. At the same time, the loss of this possibility was all the more exaggerated when that possibility was the only one.

Rebecca: The proximity of impossibility

 Rebecca's journey through her degree course had been smoother than Leon's, and in many ways her narratives of relationships to place and space highlight the importance and the success of CBHE. In Rebecca's experience, CBHE had offered a possible future that might have been unimaginable had the provision not been available. At the same time, there were intricacies and complexities in these narratives that can only be seen when place, mobilities and space are considered together. Rebecca described herself as having lived 'locally to here' throughout her life, though she had moved

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between villages in the area surrounding Tobston several times. At the time of the study, she lived in the village closest to Tobston's HE site with her husband and children. Both her own and her husband's parents and siblings lived in the same village, and she said with pride that her children attended the same school as their cousins on both sides of the family. Like Ryan in Chapter 6, Rebecca's descriptions of the area highlight the local differences in what might be considered to be a single geographical area. When I asked what she thought of the area, she responded:

> It's alright, there's certain parts I wouldn't, I wouldn't want to live
>
> in, erm, I love where I live now.

When I asked her to say more about the places she wouldn't want to live in, Rebecca focused on the urban centre of Tobston itself:

> It's the people. It's just, yeah, it's just, well, it's not got a lot to
>
> offer in terms - Tobston town centre's not got a great deal to offer,
>
> compared to, like, [nearest city], in terms of what shops there are.
>
> And, and the people that are there, um, you know, it's just, yeah,
>
> it's not, it's not great.

Rebecca's characterisation of Tobston town centre echoes Anna's, in Chapter 6, of 'no prospects' and violent, 'uneducated' people, from whom both participants distanced themselves. Although Rebecca was more reluctant than Anna to define exactly what it was about the 'people' that made her uncomfortable, and situates Tobston's failure to 'offer' a great deal in its range of shops, the discourses were similarly weighted with unspoken associations between social class and urban centres.

Rebecca imagined an impossible self in the urban centre, alongside the 'people', which served to confirm her present and possible future subjectivity of belonging to the rural village she now lived in.

At first glance, then, Rebecca's relationship to place can be seen in terms of narratives of long-term investment in and loyalty to a locality, similar to those in Cahill's (2007) and Bright's (2011) research on young adults' decisions to stay in place. She could also be described as performing an aspiring middle class identity through her attention to urban and rural differences in the area, akin to participants in Benson and Jackson's (2013) study of middle class place-making in Peckham, London. Importantly, both these studies feature not only relationship to place but also the intertwined relationship to material or imagined mobility. A greater investment in place, particularly in the terms of Cahill's and Bright's studies, makes participants in those studies less likely to move away. Rebecca's relationship to place might therefore also be characterised through Corbett's (2007) theorisation of mobility capital. Seen in this way, ties to family members who have also remained in place represent a lack of mobility capital that, in turn, made it less likely that Rebecca would have imagined possible selves away from her locality. In turn, that lack of imagined mobility made material or realised mobility even less likely. Given that Rebecca was unlikely to move away from the area to access HE, and that Tobston is situated in a national HE 'cold spot', provision of CBHE in this area was vital to her accessing HE.

Despite these representations of embeddedness in place, however, Rebecca's account of her educational trajectory was marked by interruption and mobility. When I asked how she came to be studying at Tobston College, she began by explaining her

departure from sixth form education after her AS Levels, 13 years before she started
her undergraduate study:

> At 17, the, the main incentive behind it was that I wanted to move
> out. I wanted to leave home. So um, that's what I did. I got, I got
> offered a full time job and I got my own flat and wanted to just live
> alone.

Despite her current material closeness to her own and her husband's extended family,
Rebecca related her educational past through a narrative in which a possible self away
from her family became the most important future for her to realise. Rebecca did not
explain why this move was so important for her, and though I broached the topic
again in both the first and second interviews, she made it clear that she did not want to
elaborate further. Rebecca remained in the Tobston area, moving to a village 'a
couple of miles away'. This localised mobility served to achieve the mobile possible
self Rebecca had imagined, and she spoke with fondness about the career she
established and the city she worked in, that she saw as having offered her 'a bit of a
student life' because her friends were studying there while she was working. At the
same time, she saw her mobility at that point in her life as having worked as a barrier
to an educational possible self which, while just as elaborated as her working possible
self, endured as a narrative of unrealised mobility:

> If I had my time again and I was back when I was 18, I would have
> wanted to have gone to a large university. But I think in hindsight,
> you know, yeah I was desperate to move out. But I could've, if I'd

have, if I'd have lasted out another year and done my A Levels then

I could've gone wherever I wanted, and I could've done my degree,

and lived away from home, and had that experience.

Rebecca's account shows how the accepted undergraduate narrative of leaving the

familial home and gaining independence (Christie, 2007; Holdsworth, 2009b) has a

very specific temporal moment. If a part of the narrative, such as moving out of home,

is enacted at a different moment, the remaining elements of the narrative are made

less possible, no matter how elaborated they may be. The barriers to traditional HE

for Rebecca were established as she realised a (locally) mobile possible future at the

expense of the educational possible future she had imagined. As Rebecca explained,

although the loss of this educational future did not initially stop her 'progressing'

through her career in business analysis, she became increasingly aware of the

importance of degree-level education. When looking for new job opportunities, she

described realising that:

I'd be able to do everything that they listed, for the same salary that

I was on now, but the first thing they'd say is, 'degree essential'.

And I'm like, 'Well I haven't got a degree,' you know, like, 'I can

do this,' you know. And I think that was one of things that made me

think, 'Oh, this is as far as I'm going to get now.'

For Rebecca, past and possible futures intersect in multiple ways. The absence of

degree education from her past means that her career possible self of further

'progression' is limited. At the same time, her decision to study for a degree meant a

return to a more distant past. In recounting her decision-making process, she recalls reminding herself that teaching was 'what you always wanted to do anyway'. Rebecca therefore establishes an important thread of coherence and causality which connects her past to a new career possible self, and which imagines that new possible self as also pre-existing, temporally outlasting the locally mobile and educationally interrupted subjectivities she had otherwise occupied.

Despite the coherence of this narrative thread and the singularity of a career possible self in teaching that Rebecca traced to early secondary school, the competing possible selves of long-term relationship to the locality and unrealised traditional degree study from the intervening years shape her accounts of engagement with the institutional space of the college. Rebecca was similar to several other participants in describing her interaction with the spaces of the site in terms of convenience. When I asked her to show me the spaces on the site that she uses, she responded:

> I literally come in just before the lecture, and go home after. That's
> pretty much what I do.

Here, Rebecca characterised her engagement with space as 'just', suggesting that the space held a potential for further engagement that was foreclosed to her through her non-traditional, and therefore differently purposed, student status:

> I didn't come to socialise as such […] it's very different to if I'd
> have gone to university at 18.

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Rebecca continued, as discussed in Chapter 8, by pointing to the coffee shop as somewhere she used to go 'sometimes', before her classes were timetabled for a different building. This was the extent of the demonstration of space that Rebecca gave during the mobile interview, so that she constructed a subjectivity through a rejection of the site's spatial possibilities. This account of her use of the spaces of the site accorded with Rebecca's reasons for having chosen to study at Tobston:

> The reason I chose here was mainly convenience, because I live in [village] which is like the next village on [from HE site]. So I'm very local, and that was, when I first started looking it was a case of, "Where is the closest place that I can do this? Because it'll just make my life a lot easier with childcare."

As discussed in Chapter 8, Rebecca showed how the spaces of Tobston's HE site offer a different kind of engagement with higher education spaces than the total spatial immersion often associated with traditional university study (Hubbard, 2009; Sage, Smith and Hubbard, 2012a). In making the decision to begin her degree study, Rebecca needed to imagine a possible educational subjectivity that was necessarily more divided than those of a traditional university student; in its proximity to her childcare arrangements, the college site enabled a transactional engagement with institutional space, driven by practicality and by her status as a 'very local' student.

Despite this practicality and her apparent disengagement from the site, Rebecca, like Ryan and Anna in Chapter 8, expressed real attachment to the site. It formed an important part of her familial history, as she had held her marriage ceremony and

reception in the function and event spaces rented out by the college on the same site.
As she stated, the decision to close the site 'wipes out a lot of our history'. Perhaps
precisely because the site enabled her to sustain an educational subjectivity alongside
her other placed commitments in a way that might not have been possible had she had
to travel further, the site gained a lasting significance both through and despite her
everyday disengagement from it. Importantly, Rebecca saw the closure of the site as
limiting other possible futures, as well as removing the past:

> I've got friends that I've been working on for the last few years,
>
> trying to - they've got kids - and trying to get them to come and do
>
> the degree. But then I've said, "Oh, but you'll have to go to
>
> Tobston now for it." So, for them, they'll probably be less
>
> interested.

The shift in the way Rebecca represented the degree course as a possible future for
others since the decision to move the provision five miles away into the town centre
represents the small scales of distance that change what is possible to imagine.
Particularly with the additional factor of childcare arrangements, seeing CBHE as
further from home was also seeing it as impossible to imagine. In imagining a future
in which students like her would be 'less interested' in studying the degree at Tobston
College, Rebecca also highlighted the fragility of her own educational subjectivity,
signaling a possible different past in which her present study might have been
unimaginable. Just as the coffee shop on the site became erased from her daily
experience of higher education through a timetabling change, so the closure of the site
as a whole shifted the possible higher education future, in the lives of her friends,

towards the status of a dismissed possibility. The seemingly minor causal factor in this shift – a further distance of five miles to travel – highlights the intensified importance of the material conditions of CBHE, intensified because the experience of higher education in such places is unexpected, or unusual, or must be fitted in around existing spatial demands. Where CBHE occupies a more important position, it is therefore also a frailer position, more easily erased by a shift in circumstance.

Rebecca's educational subjectivity could be analysed through the individual lenses of place, im/mobility and space, but these were also hard to divide in her narratives. Her ties to place, for example, meant that she had not followed a traditional pattern of student mobility. At the same time, the fact that her resistance to staying in place when she was younger has also precluded, in her view, a possible future of university education highlights the dangers of characterising the local student as fixed or stuck in place. While CBHE acted as a conclusion in Rebecca's coherent narratives, as the form of higher education made possible by both her ties to place and her movement from and within place, her use of space served to show how reliant on circumstance this conclusion is. In her reliance on, and deeply felt attachment to, the site's convenience and proximity to home, Rebecca showed how easily her undergraduate education might have made the shift from possible to once-possible. In a higher education cold spot, this shift would position CBHE alongside the traditional university, imagined only as unimaginable.

Brian: Local possibilities

Describing himself as having lived in the same county 'all his life', Brian lived in a town ten miles from Sebford. His parents owned a photographic supply shop in

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another town a further 5 miles in the same direction from Sebford, and Brian was in the process of inheriting this business from his father, having worked there with his father since leaving Sebford College. He completed a Higher National Diploma (HND) in photography at Sebford College after leaving school, 'back when that was the most you could do'. Without a degree course to progress to in the local area, Brian applied to Glasgow School of Art, and completed a foundation year there before deciding not to continue because he felt the course did not allow enough of a focus on photography. Returning home, he did not take his studies further, but reinforced his ties to Sebford College, so that a rejection of HE at the time was intertwined with a re-investment in the place he loved. He attended the degree shows at the end of every year, and kept in contact with his HND tutors, who now run the degree course. After seeing him again at one of the degree shows, the tutors contacted him to offer him a place in the second year of the degree, and he took up the place the following academic year, 14 years after completing his HND. His long-term commitment to photography was intertwined with his investment in place, so that ultimately it was this local capital that prompted his decision to return to HE. Sebford College's change in HE provision in the 14 years since Brian's HND made a graduate future possible for Brian to imagine, where it simply was not before that change. Implied but unspoken within Brian's narrative was the impossibility of leaving the area again for HE; this impossibility might be cast as educational immobility, but also speaks to the positive impact of local capital.

The change in Sebford College's provision also means a change in the educational possible self available to Brian, so that he balanced a previous possible self, for whom degree education was not necessary, against a new degree-educated possible self. He

expressed ambivalence towards the necessity of this new possible self throughout the two interviews, repeating at several points that 'I got asked on here [the degree course]. I didn't plan to do it.' While Rebecca's narrative demonstrated the necessity of CBHE as a 'second chance' at degree education, particularly for the instrumental purposes of achieving her career ambitions, Brian resisted any such implication of reliance upon CBHE undergraduate provision. When I asked what it would mean to him to gain his degree, he responded that:

> I mean, I'll be chuffed to have a degree but it won't make me think
> that I've gained anything in my style, because since coming here I've
> just photographed in my own style and it's been accepted.

While other participants emphasised the outside commitments, such as parenthood, which they balanced alongside their educational subjectivity, Brian described his enduring identity as a photographer as external to and outlasting his more temporary educational subjectivity. In doing so, he sustained the narrative in which the HND, as the 'most you could do' was also the most he needed, even as he continued to invest his time and commitment in the final year of his degree study. This contradictory and ambivalent narrative of educational subjectivity is therefore constructed through the temporal developments of college HE provision in a cold spot, where the levels of HE offered at the local college determine what is possible to imagine in HE. As can be seen in Brian's rejection of his degree as necessary, these temporal policy developments, in addition to limiting or enabling material access to HE, shape collective, placed narratives of undergraduate education and its purposes. As an educational subject whose degree study had been first limited and then enabled by

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changes to provision in Sebford, Brian narrated both possible selves simultaneously and in dialogue with each other.

Brian's occupation of the institutional spaces of the college had similar ambivalences. He referred obliquely to the community of practice he has found through the degree course, stating that, 'I'm aware that after college, I'll be on my own, as I was before.' While emphasising the stability of his graduate possible self, which was strongly connected to his pre-degree life, Brian also represented the degree experience itself as having offered something transitory but different. Again, this resisted the narrative imperative to connect educational experience to lasting change or progression, instead signaling an educational present that is complete in itself. Similarly, he enthused about the expertise of the tutors on the degree course, and about the facilities offered by the college, talking me carefully through each piece of equipment in the darkroom during our mobile interview. He recounted his experience, as part of his job with his family's business, of fitting photography equipment for another FE college in the area, which gave him the opportunity to compare the facilities to Sebford's:

> Their lenses were all knackered and stuff like that. The sink was the
> size of a kitchen sink. It was horrible. So seeing this, when I came
> in here then, and it being this standard, I was like, 'Oh' [noise of
> surprise].

Again, Brian's narrative is situated in his enduring identity and expertise as photographer, able to distinguish quality of equipment, but this account also

described a moment in which new possibilities opened up as he saw the material spaces of the college. Like the reference to being alone after the degree finishes, there was an implication that the degree had offered Brian an important physical space to work collectively with tutors and peers. In this space, and drawing on his expertise, Brian narrated the material practice of doing his degree as a previously unimagined positive possible self that was separate from his resistance to the symbolic value of the degree itself.

While Brian saw the well-equipped photography spaces of the college in a positive light, particularly against his experience of those of other colleges, he defined the available social spaces much more negatively:

> There's no real, what's it called, union bar. There's no student
> union where you go in and all have a laugh, and the music's blaring
> out and there's pissed 18 year olds there, and there's pissed 45 year
> olds who are in the corner, you know. There's no, there's nothing
> like that. It's very serious environment. It's just not the 70s, is it?
> Not that I was in the 70s, but that's what you want art school to be
> like. You want smoke coming out of every room, you know. You
> want paint everywhere.

Although Brian was clear that he had no previously imagined undergraduate possible self, he experienced the physical spaces of the college alongside and against an 'art school'. He situated the detail of this imagined space in the temporally impossible 1970s, but narrated its absence in the present: 'that's what you want'. The mingled

social experiences he described as missing from and limited by the 'serious' environment of the college seem at odds with his single-minded focus on photography, and with his rejection of degree education as formative of artistic identity. At the same time, this account sustains consistent rejection of instrumental aspects of degree education, suggesting that even, or especially, where CBHE intervenes to provide where there has been a lack, that lack is of something more than an opportunity to gain qualifications. In this way, Brian was not dissimilar to other participants in the study in implying that CBHE spaces often carry multiple significances. Their functional design (Smith, 2017b) works to make possible educational subjectivities that have been unimaginable. At the same time, the very functional focus of the spaces evoked the loss of possible selves that are unrealised but closely imagined according to dominant public narratives of student spaces and university experiences (Reynolds, 2014).

For Brian, the absent 'art school' and union spaces of the college were closely connected to narratives of Sebford as a place. Although he termed his home town, ten miles from Sebford, 'lovely – a nice place with local folk', Brian was more negative about Sebford:

> It's changed a hell of a lot. I don't know. I don't think they know
> what they want to do with it. I don't think they can see where it's
> going. There's nowhere to drink now as a student. You can't go out,
> and there's no community.

Like Richard and Robert in Chapter 6, Brian positioned Sebford in a temporal moment of indecision, between its re-shaping as something other than what it has been. In Brian's account, this indecision stretched into the imagined future, so that what Sebford lacks above all else is a collective sense of purpose or progression. The absence of places to 'go out' to as a student, and the corresponding lack of community, are all categorised as a result of the 'changed' town, which, like the social spaces of the college, Brian experienced in the present against what had been lost from the past, and therefore the future that might have been.

Brian's contradictory relationship to place, which saw his commitment to the local area define the HE options available to him while he also described the impossibility of occupying a student subjectivity in the town, also extends to his career possible self. When I asked about his plans for the future, Brian reiterated his resistance to a narrative of educational progression, depicting his imagined future as unchanged by degree study:

> My intention is, and it always has been, is to display photographs,
> have an art gallery.

While making it clear that this ambition was longstanding, Brian also found it difficult to say where he imagined opening an art gallery:

> I wouldn't have it, I wouldn't have it Sebford, I wouldn't have it in
> [nearby town], wouldn't have it in [another nearby town]. I'd have
> it in [home town], but it's quite a little town, a really small town

place. I wouldn't go over to [city]. There's a bit too much there now.

Brian's possible self as gallery-owner occupied an impossible place, between the towns he dislikes, the home town he liked for precisely the 'small town' feel that would make a gallery difficult to maintain, and the city that already had too much competition. The same narratives of place that allow him to simultaneously dismiss and realise a degree-educated possible self also sustain an ongoing investment in the area alongside an enduring imagined future that is at odds with it. This possible self, which became more elaborated as it became seemingly more impossible, was representative of the complexities of Brian's narrative. CBHE, in this narrative, had offered Brian an educational subjectivity that he saw himself as never having needed but having been glad to find, as well as evoking a newly imagined and newly lost student experience. Brian can be seen as subject to changes in HE provision at this local level, and to collective narratives of place into which this provision seeks to intervene, and with which it often therefore sits at odds. Maintained throughout his account is a longstanding commitment to place and investment in local capital that had led to a degree future, and been sustained through this future. The multiple educational and career possible and impossible selves produced through this mingling of residual and changing narratives are evidence of the perpetual re-making of educational subjectivity in a place where HE is not a given narrative conclusion.

Meera: im/possible im/mobilities

In Chapter 7, I discussed the surprise I felt in the first interview with Meera, when she responded to a question about her choice of Sebford College for her undergraduate

study by explaining, 'I get travel sick'. Here, I explore Meera's interviews in more detail. Meera was unusual amongst the participants focused on in this chapter, in that she gave an account of a relatively coherent educational subjectivity, with feared and desired possible selves represented as balanced in ways that enabled a clear imagined future (Oyserman, Bybee and Terry, 2006). At the same time, however, Meera's interviews touched on competing discourses of access to and progression through HE. Like the other participants represented in this chapter, Meera is an example of the double geographical and educational disadvantage of HE cold spots, in which the small number of available HE options within the immediate locality is further reinforced by the increased likelihood of remaining in place. However, as these accounts show, there are further complexities to be explored for each participant, and Meera in particular highlights the ways in which race and religion intersect with the spatial in constructing educational possibilities.

Meera lived with her extended family of parents, siblings, siblings-in-law and nieces and nephews, in what she described as an 'Asian-based area' on the outskirts of Sebford town centre. She was one of three BAME students in the study, and the only participant to describe her home and its immediate locality in terms of its racial population. This description highlighted the racially 'split' nature of the town as it is described by participants in Chapter 6, as well as showing how often majority-white places and spaces are unmarked as such (Lundström, 2010). Because Meera felt bound to mark her locality in racial terms, her implication in discourses of division in the town was different to that of white participants, who were able to both describe and distance themselves from these discourses. Despite this difference, Meera's account of her educational trajectory had strong similarities to others discussed in this

chapter. In particular, the unspoken impossibility of leaving either her local area or the family home in order to take up degree study showed a relationship to place and mobility that resembled Brian's:

> I got into [nearest university]. I got in, and I thought, I'm not travelling. No way. I couldn't do that, and I was quite surprised here by what they teach because I thought it would just be, just books really. So I'm quite surprised that the second year of this course is mainly about psychology as well. It was actually really interesting. I'd never pick it, but I was glad that I'd done a bit of it because it was really interesting.

Like Brian, Meera represented aspects of her degree study at Sebford College through a discourse of happenstance, or 'surprise' in which the seemingly circumstantial details of degree course content were also representative of a larger intertwining of possibility and impossibility in HE. In this discourse, because the degree at Sebford College is the only possible option, it is also not exactly chosen, or 'pick[ed]'. The English undergraduate possible self imagined by Meera turned out to have been different from the lived experience, so she narrated an educational subjectivity that was open to new possibilities, precisely because the available possibilities were narrowed by place and mobility. As is clear from Meera's narration of the impossibility of travelling to the nearest university, she saw the possibilities of degree study as structured through what was available in Sebford. Both the existence and the content of CBHE provision in Sebford therefore determined for Meera, as for Brian, what is 'the most you can do'.

The importance of CBHE provision in Sebford is reiterated throughout Meera's interviews. She described herself as a 'town girl' who could not live in a city several times, and drew on past visits to her grandmother and sister in large cities to explain her resistance to moving away:

> My sister, she has to, like, go in the car to go to a corner shop, just
> to get a packet of crisps. Well, I think, I could never do that. No, no
> I couldn't.

As Holton and Finn's analysis of everyday mobilities (2018) suggests, the im/possible self that Meera imagined and dismissed required a different kind of mobility than she was used to, but this dismissal did not make her immobile. Instead it is important to the coherence of her subjectivity as a 'town girl' that the specific mobilities required by the city are prohibitive to the kinds of mobility that a town allowed. In discussing her future career as a teacher, she was similarly concerned with the kinds of mobility that would make this career possible self impossible:

> Whilst you're working in the city, you've got to set off like an hour
> and a half before hand just to not hit traffic and I think that's so
> bad. I mean if I was to teach, say if I did my PGCE at [local school]
> and I, and they do give me the job, I can just walk to work. I
> wouldn't need to worry about anything like that, or driving, or
> paying parking, or paying for petrol.

In this elaborated spatial imagining of her career possible self, two contrasting mobile futures work together. In the first feared future, the imagined mobility required by the city involved extended time travelling and the practicalities of managing a car. In the second desired future, Meera was able to maintain her current mobility within and around Sebford, walking between home and work. Both possible selves included mobility, so that for Meera, to remain in Sebford to begin her teaching career was not to be immobile or 'fixed' in place (Jackson, 2012), but to retain the mobility she currently had. Imagined and experienced possible mobility was crucial to Meera's understanding of the places she had experienced. When I asked whether she liked living in Sebford, Meera again focused on the possible mobilities she saw as enabled by the size of the town:

> I think Sebford generally is a good town to live in because you
>
> don't really need a car. Everything's pretty much in walking
>
> distance, which is a good thing.

As Meera's accounts of place demonstrated, the challenges and complexities of local HE educational provision are that distance, locality and mobility are highly subjective. Meera's decision to attend CBHE rather than the nearest university was based on the kinds of mobility that are possible for her to imagine. Although the difference between her imagining walking or driving to her place of study was based on relative distance, it was not the distance itself that delimited possibility, but the mode of transport required by the distance. Underlying this distinction between possible and impossible mobilities is an attachment to place, in which mobility plays an important, but not the only, role. Although Meera's representation of Sebford as a

place centred largely on the ease with which she was able to move around it, she also described the strong social ties she had there:

> I'm really close with my friends. They are on the same level as my
> family, and I don't think I could ever get too far away from them.
> They are like a huge part of my life, so I definitely want to stay in
> or around Sebford.

Like Rebecca, whose spatial proximity to her extended family signified and sustained her commitment to them, and made moving away was unimaginable, social relationships are fundamental to Meera's placed possible self and the positive local capital associated with it. The 'close[ness]' she described here was both relational and geographical, and reinforced by a feared im/possible self in which this relational closeness was broken by a spatial movement 'too far away'. This investment in relationships, sustained by a shared commitment to remaining in place, again demonstrated a kind of local capital that is both distinct from and contrasts with Corbett's (2007) mobility capital. Meera's ongoing commitment to place can therefore be viewed in positive terms, in possible selves that retained the freedom of mobility she was used to, and that sustained social relationships. As noted above, however, Meera was also one of a minority of the study's participants to identify as BAME, and as Muslim, and she saw these particular identities as also framing her imagined future. As she explained when I asked if beginning her teaching career would also mean leaving the family home:

> In our culture we live at home till we get married. So no rent, no
> mortgage, no nothing like that yet.

As she did when describing her 'Asian-based' local area, Meera saw it as necessary to mark her Muslim culture, showing that she understood this association between marriage and leaving home as different from a dominant or unmarked other 'culture'. Although, as Bhopal (2010; 2016) and Ahmad (2001) suggest, there is no simple or homogenous relationship between the decisions to attend HE, leave home, marry or begin a career for Muslim women, Meera was clear that her 'culture' was a causal and unquestionable factor in her remaining at home until marriage. Therefore, although Ahmad's study, for example, cites Muslim female participants for whom undergraduate study has been an opportunity to leave home, for Meera having HE provision within her home town was fundamental to the possibility of her accessing HE at all. Given her long-held ambition to teach English at secondary school level, which Meera described as dating back to her own secondary school experience, the existence of this provision in an HE cold spot became enabling of both a degree-educated subjectivity and a career possible self. As in the examples of Brian and Rebecca above, CBHE enabled the sustaining of local capital alongside and in addition to a degree education, where these would otherwise be impossible.

In Meera's description of 'our culture', she signaled her awareness of a different, dominant narrative, in which leaving home was not always associated with marriage. This awareness was brought up at other moments in Meera's interview, as she made a connection between HE and gaining independence:

> For the first year, [tutor] was always saying, 'Stop calling me
> "Miss". You're an adult.' And, I was like, 'What on earth?' But I
> got off the habit, and I feel that they do teach us to be independent,
> but I find that quite daunting. I don't know if, because half of these
> people are already living on their own - or - but I obviously still live
> with my parents. I'm not married, I don't have kids, and being
> independent is a bit, it is harder for me than most, I'd say. So I
> think in a way they are teaching me independent skills for life, not
> for just the course.

As Christie (2007) highlighted in her study of undergraduate mobility and 'local' students, moving away from a locality and out of a parental home is often associated with gaining skills characterised as 'independence'. Often, and against this dominant narrative, Christie argues, these skills were more common to 'local' students, some of whom were balancing paid and academic work, managing childcare and had long since left the parental home. Meera complicated this distinction further, showing the diversity of these markers of independence even within the category of 'local student', particularly in localities of racial and religious diversity. For Meera, the markers of independence were similar, including living away from parents and having children, and her difference from some of her peers in this regard is, as she has described, in part due to the traditions of her 'culture'. Her description of a seminar scene in which her tutor repeatedly resisted being named according to the terms of address associated with schooling also recognises a diversity of ways in which independence is realised. Meera saw the interaction, and her progressive response to the tutor's naming of her, Meera, as an 'adult' as formative of a more

abstract form of independence than can be fully captured by such categories as leaving the parental home. This more abstract and more incremental gaining of independence was situated within the institutional spaces of the college's HE site, in which the materialities suggested similarity to other educational environments and relationships, but the interaction demanded a different engagement. The 'adult' possible self in this interaction is enforced by the tutor through a process of renaming that allows Meera to create an 'independent' possible self even as her living and marital situation remain unchanged.

Just as Meera saw the interactions within college spaces as defined by her status and experience outside of these spaces, she also gave an account of how the racial divisions in the town were reflected in the classroom. Meera took time away from her degree study in her second year through illness, and returned to the course in a different year group to repeat her second year. In the following excerpt, she described the moment that she decided to sit with the only other person in this year group that she knew. As her description of the moment suggests, this other student was white:

> We were quite segregated, so like the Asians on one side and the
> others on the other side. It was quite segregated. So in this class, the
> only person I knew, she repeated her year as well. So when I came
> back I sort of sat on that side, and it's like, 'Oh my god, there's an
> Asian sat on that side.'

Though several participants described the divided or 'split' spatial dynamics of Sebford, Meera alone referred to how these dynamics were felt and lived in the

classroom. Again, this sensitivity to race can be seen as at least in part due to her minoritised racial identity, which denied her the privilege of not seeing racial difference. From her description, this moment and the responses to it are represented as significant or even emancipatory, as she enacted a previously impossible or unimaginable subject position, performatively occupying space that was designated as white-only, and forcing a recognition of the previously unspoken racial divide in the room. The almost idealised role of HE in this moment is in offering the possible spaces for new or once-unimaginable possible selves that challenge what is possible outside of those spaces. While the homogenised spaces of university HE are seen as reproductive of social divisions in research on student halls (Holton, 2016) and 'studentified' localities, (Sage, Smith and Hubbard, 2012a), the smaller scale of CBHE and its specificity to the local area appears to offer other possibilities. At the same time, however, Meera's participation in HE has positioned her in a 'segregated' minority, outside her local 'Asian-based' area, and the responsibility for moving out of 'segregat[ion]', at least in this moment, lay entirely with her. In either reading of this spatial interaction, it is clear that the spaces of Sebford's HE site are shaped by and shaping of racialised interactions that reflect and develop from the town's divisions. The possible selves available within these spaces, especially to minority ethnic students, were necessarily racialised subjects, just as giving an account of the town required invoking a narrative of immigration and division.

As discussed at the beginning of this section, Meera gave a coherent account of her educational subjectivity. She was unusual amongst the participants in not voicing conflicting temporal narratives of past and unrealised educational possible selves, and in imagining a clear progression through and beyond HE. Her unequivocal attachment

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to the possible mobilities of towns in general, and her social embeddedness in Sebford in particular, highlight the importance of CBHE as the only HE provision in this cold spot. The impossibility of another option was occasionally voiced but often unspoken, though powerfully obvious, throughout Meera's interviews. The linear narrative that is conditional of her recognition as educational subjectivity was therefore itself conditional upon the availability of 'local' provision. 'Local', in Meera's terms, was made up of the combined and intertwined factors of possible and impossible mobile selves, distance and narratives of place, all of them difficult to capture and even more complex to quantify. As well as highlighting the specificity of what is meant by 'local', Meera's interviews show how occupying a 'local' student subjectivity need not prohibit gaining skills of independence often associated with traditional undergraduate mobility. Rather, Meera's account insisted upon a diversity of definition both of the understanding of independence and of the 'local' student and their life experiences. In Meera's narratives, institutional space in a 'local' college emerges as distinct within but not divided from the social realities of its immediate locality, so that the category of 'local' is expanded and complicated still further.

Conclusion

Though the narratives in this chapter invite a focus on individual experience, if read together they demonstrate what can be learned from combining the factors of place, mobilities and space in order to understand educational subjectivity. Taken together, these factors highlight a constellation of spatial narratives and materialities that combine to constitute the nuances of educational subjectivity, and specifically of CBHE's role in these educational subjectivities. Throughout these spatial narratives, the possible selves concept highlights how closely possibility and impossibility are

related to definitions of locality. When the 'local' is understood as a subjective intertwining of ties to place, lived and imagined mobilities, and interactions with educational space, its complexity and its vulnerability to broad or national-level shifts in definition are revealed. To describe Sebford and Tobston Colleges as offering the 'only possible' local HE provision is also to see them as making HE an additional possibility in the maintenance of local capital. CBHE is therefore positioned within the spatial story of the local, and the narrative construction of what is locally possible. As this chapter has shown, such analysis requires attention to what is made impossible, and lived as impossible alongside past, present and future possibilities. This interaction of the possible and impossible at times highlights the enduring dominance of traditional modes of degree study in England, and in this regard CBHE offers a rejection of or resistance to these dominant understandings. At other times, seeing CBHE as the 'only possible' HE for these students risks a discourse of individual or institutional deficit. I argue that the language of deficit is better applied to the geographical inequalities of a stratified HE system, through which possibility is determined by place in all of its material and narrative complexity.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This thesis has explored inequalities in English HE, by locating the 'local' HE institution within the national geographies of HE, and by locating the 'local' student amongst normative expectations of educational mobilities. The study has analysed educational subjectivities as spatial stories, which position the subject within the possibilities of their place and spaces, and which are structured according to the future-oriented temporalities of contemporary educational contexts. Destabilising the terminology of the 'local' as an objective or a neutral marker of institutional or student status, the study has used place, mobilities and spaces in relation to understandings of locality, showing how the spatial story of the local describes and determines possible and impossible educational futures.

The study began with five research questions. This chapter explores the ways that these questions have been addressed, the tools I have used in my attempts to address them, the answers I have found and the questions that remain. The research questions, listed in Chapter 1, are as follows:

1. Can a theorisation of educational subjectivities that takes into account the spatial and temporal conditions of HE provide new insights into educational inequalities?

2. How are understandings of the 'local' CBHE institution and the 'local' student represented by FE College Group Chairs, HE leads and course tutors, and institutional marketing materials at their institutions?

3. How do 'local' students of academic and vocational CBHE qualifications understand their educational subjectivities?

4. How do students in their final year of academic and vocational CBHE qualifications represent their imagined possible future selves?

5. What implications can be taken from this study for theorising educational subjectivities and understanding inequalities in HE?

It is important to contextualise these questions by acknowledging the limitations of this small and specific study. The case study design, with two case institutions, means that the findings are based on two very specific instances of CBHE. Both of these are based in the north of England, where there are more HE cold spots and where travel from Birmingham was realistic and affordable. When I first chose the institutions, they were examples of a particular type of CBHE provision, in HE cold spots in the national geographies of English HE. As my fieldwork proceeded, this initial understanding gave way to a more complex and richer impression of institutions situated within particular places, each with its own intersecting narratives of place, locality, mobility and HE. This complexity and specificity is both a limitation of the project and one of its key findings: what is generalisable from this specificity (to use the terms of case study design) is that HEIs are always situated within very particular localities, and are always instances of the geographical inequalities of HE on local, national and global scales.

The Research Questions specified that student participants would be studying for both 'academic and vocational CBHE qualifications'. This breadth of subject provision in CBHE is primarily found in institutions located in geographical HE cold spots, which have less local competition for their greater range of HE courses than those surrounded by university provision. Therefore the decision to explore both academic and vocational courses, initially premised on the unusual nature of academic degree courses in a sector so strongly associated with technical education, quickly revealed itself as a geographical decision. The decision determined the range of institutions in which my fieldwork was possible, and also shaped the groups of students with whom the research was possible. As I was to discover, these students were positioned, and positioned themselves, from within a variety of associations between social class and place. In turn, this positioning brought with it particular narratives of HE, its purposes and the available subjectivities within it. The findings drawn from interviews with and observations of this group of student participants are therefore specific to the place of the case institutions, to the case institutions' market position within the national geographies of HE, to the relationship between locality and narratives of academic and technical HE, and to the students' own positions within these larger narratives. At the same time, the findings demonstrate the importance of exploring precisely these multi-layered narratives, and of locating student experiences of HE within the narratives that link education and place in constantly shifting but locally specific ways.

Research Question 2 focused on understandings of CBHE students from the diverse perspectives of figures in national FE organizations and lobbying groups, HE staff at case study institutions, and marketing materials from case study institutions. Given

the variety in size of CBHE provision, and type and range of CBHE qualifications across England (Parry, Callendar and Temple, 2012), the construction of the 'typical' CBHE student within these data was surprisingly homogenous. This student attends CBHE because they are limited to this kind of provision, often through factors that limit mobility, such as family commitments or employment. They might also be limited by failure to achieve the qualifications necessary to attend university-based HE. Due to the place-based commitments that determine their decision to attend CBHE, this student thinks about both their day-to-day negotiation of institutional spaces and their graduate future in instrumental terms. They are therefore unlikely to require spaces for socialising, given their pre-existing social networks outside of the institution, and are likely to be particularly driven by employability, especially within employment networks that are local to the college. In this broad construction of the typical CBHE student, the answer to Research Question 2 highlighted:

a) The importance of issues of place and locality, im/mobilities and material engagements with space to understandings of CBHE student subjectivities, and

b) The importance of exploring these issues in order to challenge and complicate the homogenous representation of the CBHE student.

In response to Research Question 1, the study has developed a conceptual framework which grounds analysis of inequalities such as those of social class, race and age within the particular places of the unequal geographies of English HE, as they are structured through the neoliberal temporalities of the contemporary university. The study as a whole makes a strong argument for considering the spatial and the temporal together. Just as the spatial is crucial to consider for the reasons outlined above, future

temporalities are also indivisible from educational experience. In the section below, I set out this conceptual framework in more detail. The subsequent section focuses on three key contributions of the study, each of which demonstrates the potential of this conceptual framework for positioning CBHE and the CBHE student within the wider structures of HE systems.

The spatial story of possible selves

Temporality and the impossibility of possible selves

The study uses a theorisation of temporality that particularly identifies the possible future as fundamental to the way that educational subjectivity is experienced. This theorisation uses the possible selves concept (Markus and Nurius, 1986), which I explored in detail in Chapter 2. When I explain my use of the possible selves concept, I always make clear that there are research approaches using this concept that are *not* what I am doing. For instance, I am not looking at behaviour and how behaviour might be influenced by feared or hoped for selves. I do not see feared and hoped for selves as consciously knowable or easily delineated. I do not use the language of 'self', with its underlying concepts of self efficacy and emotional valence (Erikson, 2007). While there is useful research using the possible selves concept defined in this way, there is also risk involved in these definitions of self and temporality. The risk is that the self becomes an individualized problem and the source of the solution, and that this process excludes discussions of power and structural inequality.

Nevertheless, my research *does* use the possible selves concept. The concept provides a powerful way of understanding the ways that subjectivities are shaped and made recognisable in educational contexts. A knowable future, one that is possible to

clearly articulate and which is being worked towards, is an expected and prescribed discourse for educational subjects (Oyserman, Terry and Bybee, 2002). This is particularly the case as subjects move from compulsory to post-compulsory educational contexts, and must account for their choice to study further (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). Therefore, although my study does not *use* the concept in the ways outlined above, it is *about* those ways of seeing the self, and about the discursive power of 'selfhood' and 'the future'. Problematising and interrogating the linear, coherent account of the self and the narrative connections made between present and future, this study also explores that kind of account in detail.

Rather than dismiss the possible selves concept, then, this research has acknowledged the way that its logic underpins educational contexts, and de-naturalised this logic. An important part of this process has been to see the possible selves concept as an inherently narrative construct, and therefore to use theories of narrative from Ricoeur (1992; 2000) and Butler (1997) alongside possible selves. Ricoeur's theorisation of narrative focuses on the processes of narrative construction. He highlights the complexities involved in making narratives coherent, and in particular the requirement to establish causal connections between sequential events. These causal connections, he argues, are established after the events and in the process of giving narrative account of the events. In effect this theorisation denaturalises the inevitability with which events succeed one another in a narrative, showing this inevitability as constructed. Applying this theorisation alongside the possible selves concept explodes the narrative work done to establish causal connections in accounts of educational subjectivity. In particular, the theorisation suggests that an account of

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an imagined future reverses linear temporality in order to establish causality; the present is narrated as caused by the future that it is also working towards.

While I have used Ricoeur's theorisation of narrative to highlight the complexity of narrative construction, I have also used Butler's theorisation of implicit censorship (Butler, 1997) to show the compulsory nature of such narratives in educational contexts. The construction of a future-oriented narrative required in educational contexts in order that the subject makes themselves legible and recognisable as an educational subject. Crucially, in this theory of subjectivity and the processes of subjectivation, the subject is seen as shaped by discursive and material structures. An entry into discourse, seen in this way, is also an account of what is speakable under particular discursive and material conditions. When seen alongside Butler's theorisation of speech and subjectivation, the paradox and potential of the possible selves concept emerges with still greater clarity. An educational subject's narrative of imagined future can be read as both reinforcing *and* revealing the conditions in which it is produced. Because it holds the sides of this paradox in cyclical tension, this study is a study of possible selves, but is also impossible to describe as such. Its theoretical contribution is to use the possible selves concept sociologically, highlighting the dominance of this version of 'self' in educational contexts, and at the same time constantly looking beyond it.

Locating possible selves

Although Research Questions 3 and 4 suggest that issues of space and place are separate from those of temporality, I see them as inseparable concerns and concepts. In fact, the most productive way for me to theorise possible selves sociologically has

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been to follow Prince's (2014) call to locate possible selves in place. In order to do so, the conceptual framework also uses de Certeau's (1984) conceptualisation of the 'spatial story'. De Certeau argues that the Lacanian moment in which the subject recognises itself as being is necessarily a spatial moment, in which the subject also locates itself as being in a place. De Certeau therefore argues that narratives of subjectivity are spatial, positioning the subject within and amongst the multiple narratives that define and delimit place and space. I use this theorisation of the spatial story alongside Massey's (1993; 2005) definition of place as a power-geometry, in which a constellation of multiple, constantly shifting narratives restrict and enable particular kinds of mobility, access and inequality. Seen in this way, a narrative of educational subjectivity inevitably locates the educational subject within their locality, and amongst the places in which they imagine their future. At the same time, these places, the subject's material engagement with them and imagined mobility from them, shape the kinds of future that are possible to imagine.

Considering place, mobilities and institutional spaces in turn, Chapter 3 examined existing research studies and asked what was implied through their geographical findings about the imaginable and unimaginable futures. Just as de Certeau argues that all stories are spatial, this approach asserts that spatial stories are also temporal. Where subjects are seen to narrate their classed (Benson and Jackson, 2013; Pahl, 2008) and racialised (Cahill, 2007) relationships to place, I argue that these are also temporal narratives in which possible futures are imagined, restricted or dismissed in accordance with the ways that place is understood. This conceptualisation was then developed through Chapters 6-9, which explored data from student interviews and fieldwork observations. Through this framework, for example, Leon's downward

social mobility (Chapter 9) could be seen to compound and complicate his narratives of Tobston as a place, and this relationship between social class and place in turn limits his imagined future of mobility. Similarly, Meera's narratives of her racial and religious subjectivity are embedded in and produced through her attachment to her locality, and her imagined future of continued investment in family relationships and friendships. Continuing to both use and problematise the possible selves concept means that these accounts have emerged as examples of individual educational experience and the ways that place, space and mobility are narrated to construct a coherent subjectivity and an imaginable future. At the same time, the accounts also evidence the complex and multiple structures through which particular educational subjectivities and futures are made available in particular places and spaces.

While the conceptual framework developed through the study is applicable across HE contexts, its application in this thesis has been to a specific type of HE, in a particular kind of place. CBHE, as provision 'on the margins' of English HE, has allowed for an analysis of the dominant structures of national HE, as well as for a discussion of the possibilities for working outside or beyond these dominant structures. In particular, because CBHE is understood at a policy and practice level as 'local' HE, it must to be understood within the national geography of HE in England. In choosing case study institutions located in geographical HE cold spots, the study has highlighted the relational, subjective and nuanced relationship of institutions, tutors and students to their locality, and to perceptions of distance and mobility. These relationships are specific to CBHE in cold spot areas, and can also be extended to understandings of HE institutions more generally. While elite HE tends increasingly towards transnational and international expansion, the study has demonstrated the enduring

relevance of explorations of the local, particularly where the national distribution of HE remains starkly unequal.

Key Contributions

> *You're down the local but some students are sat in your usual*
> *seat.*
> *Do you . . .*
> *a. Sit somewhere else, you can catch them in the car park at*
> *closing.*
> *b. Go over and kick off bigstyle la, who do they think they are?*
> *c. Sit silently at the table opposite, staring at them all night.*
> *d. Delight them with the tale of 'my dad's second cousin was*
> *Paul McCartney's Uncle's plumber's live-in lover y'know'.*
> (BBC, not dated, cited in Holdsworth, 2009, p. 225)

Holdsworth's (2009) article on local students in Liverpool begins with this excerpt from a quiz entitled 'How Scouse are you?' found on the BBC website. Holdsworth uses the quiz to demonstrate two points about local students. Firstly, she argues, the depictions of violence, as well as the setting of the 'local' pub, perpetuate class-based stereotypes of people who are 'local' to Liverpool. Secondly, the quiz positions locals and students in mutually exclusive groups that are intolerant of each other. It is impossible, in this representation of locals and of students, to be *both at the same time*. Holdsworth's argument is that the category of HE student in England brings with it unspoken assumptions of mobility, so that it is almost unquestionable that a student in a 'local' pub will not also be a 'local' resident. I would add to Holdsworth's argument that the quiz, reductive and perhaps deliberately parodic as it is, highlights the powerful sway that the category of student holds in popular societal imagination

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in England. The quiz does not target students as its audience, but assumes a much wider general understanding of the association between students, mobility and locality.

Each of the three subsections responds to all of the Research Questions together, showing the ways in which the CBHE student was constructed and the ways that the CBHE student participants narrated their educational subjectivities over the course of the study. I argue in these sections that CBHE must be understood in the context of the shared cultural narrative of the typical or traditional undergraduate student. First, the study shows the dominance of this normative narrative where it is taken up by students who have not followed traditional patterns of HE mobility, but who measure their experiences against this imagined university experience. Secondly, the study problematises the accepted associations between the traditional student and mobility, arguing that everyday student mobilities (Holton and Finn, 2018) are more complex than this association suggests, and refuting the binary distinction between mobile and immobile students. Finally, the study also complicates the concept of 'mobility capital' (Corbett, 2007), by arguing that some of the student participants demonstrated a form of 'local capital', based on long-term commitments to their local area. As demonstrated by the 'How Scouse are you?' quiz, however, I argue that this local capital must also be understood in the context of continued associations between mobility, education and privilege, which pervade and extend beyond the HE system.

The dominance of university-based HE narratives in England

The strength of the narratives that constitute normative university-based HE experiences in England was demonstrated in the imagined 'other lives' of the student

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participants in the study. These 'other lives' were not simply degree studies at a university rather than an FE college. Instead, they were spatial stories of traditional undergraduate mobility, often imagined at a distance from the locality in which the student participants had in fact studied for their degree. At a conceptual level, these stories highlight the ways in which the possible selves concept can be used to explore complex imagined futures in non-linear temporalities; the narratives were of impossible futures, but sustained into the present as lost or once-possible selves (Stevenson, 2018) against which current educational subjectivities were defined. This conceptual work was important in showing the power and persistence of associations between undergraduate study and perceived mobility. Even where undergraduate mobility had not been experienced, participants saw their trajectories as having deviated or differed from the normative narrative.

These individual narratives of mobility were also intertwined with the local specificity of the cold spot. In the towns of Tobston and Sebford, where HE was absent from the architectural landscape and the material experience of place, travelling for undergraduate study was both more necessary and less likely than in the 'hot spots' of university cities. The prominence of the university as an imagined material and mobile experience was therefore all the more pronounced in these places due to its historical absence. The university lecture hall, filled with hundreds of undergraduate students, was frequently called up in contrast to the spaces of CBHE in both student and tutor interviews. This imagined space did complex work in these narratives, characterising a homogenised idea of the university in contrast to CBHE, and therefore signifying both the absence of the university and the necessity of CBHE. In this necessity, narratives of place and education combined with the figure of the local

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student to produce an understanding of the kinds of HE spaces that were needed by and accessible to the CBHE student. While the local CBHE student is understood in opposition to the traditionally perceived-as mobile university student, their occupation of space is similarly difficult to disentangle from understandings of the university and its spaces. The study of HE 'at the margins' (Scott, 2009) both geographically and hierarchically therefore throws into relief dominant and pervasive national narratives of HE, and these narratives are shown to operate spatially through the ways that locality, mobility and materiality constitute educational subjectivities.

Moving beyond immobility

Undergraduate students who have followed traditional patterns of mobility, leaving the familial home in order to study, appear to be not just geographically but educationally mobile. In the binary distinctions which are often drawn between traditional and non-traditional students, students who have not followed this pattern are seen as immobile, geographically and educationally. The narrative of choice of HE institution is always a spatial story, one that comes to signify a larger propensity towards movement or fixity on the part of the student, their everyday lives and their educational and career futures. However, like Holton and Finn's (2018) study of the 'everyday mobilities' of local or commuter students, my study has found that these students are likely to be highly geographically mobile in everyday ways. Their journeys to and from their HE institutions, as well as their management of often pre-existing external commitments such as family or employment, mean that their days often include several different journeys. By contrast, in the 'studentified' spaces of the university town or city (Hubbard, 2009), much less day-to-day movement is required in order to travel between living, educational and social spaces. Students

who might be characterised as immobile because they have not left their locality in order to study can therefore also be seen as highly locally mobile, a finding which problematises the binary distinction between mobility and immobility.

For the locally mobile student, the social spaces of the HE institution are de-centralised, because the local student is seen to be already embedded in the local area. This perception of the local student's spatial practice is particularly important in CBHE, where the local student is in the majority, and therefore the defining characteristic of institutional social spaces is that they are unnecessary. In an HE cold spot, where the presence of an HE space is all the more important because it is scarce, the CBHE spaces therefore occupy an ambiguous position. On one hand, they are vital to local students who have not travelled to attend university, and therefore look to the space to signify an educational transition. On the other hand, they are often described as insignficant by the same local students who have no need of additional social spaces because their additional commitments take them outside the college. The relationship between place and local mobility deepens this already complex position for the CBHE site. In Tobston, where the college's HE site five miles from the town centre was closing, the nuances of locality intertwined with dominant associations between landscape, architecture and elite HE (Baker and Brown, 2007). The new location of HE provision in Tobston town centre was seen as offering improved facilities but lacking the (classed) separation between FE and HE, which had come to be signified by the separation between town for vocational FE, and leafy rural village location for academic HE. This example, in which the HE provision itself is locally mobile, reveals how CBHE provision in a cold spot must negotiate the nuances of local knowledge and placed narratives on an intricate scale, at the same

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time as offering institutional spaces that are made both crucial and unnecessary by that locality.

In the familiar narrative association between undergraduate study and leaving the familial home, this kind of mobility comes to signify a movement towards adulthood and independence (Holdsworth, 2009b). Students who do not follow this undergraduate pattern of mobility therefore risk being seen not to have achieved the associated independence. As the experiences of students in the study demonstrated, however, this normative understanding of markers of independence belies the complexity and diversity of lived experience. Of the 21 student participants in the study, seven were living with their parents. The other participants had lived 'independently', if housing outside of the parental home is taken as a measure, for some time before taking up undergraduate study. Of those that lived with parents, and might therefore be seen as both immobile and dependent, one was a carer for both parents, inverting the assumed dependence in that relationship. Another had lived in nearby cities for several years before returning to her mother's home after the breakdown of a relationship. Another explicitly associated her degree study with the gaining of independence, but saw this as related to her increased critical skills and in particular to the development of her dissertation topic. Each of these 21 experiences could be re-narrated here in full to counter the common association between degree mobility and independence. Summarised briefly here together, they demonstrate the inadequacy of this often unquestioned narrative association, and show that where degree study is linked to independence, this connection must be understood as working in multiple and complex ways that are not always or only a product of normative mobility patterns.

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Local capital

As the historical association in England between undergraduate education, mobility, and the elite suggests, there are strong connections between educational mobility and privilege, and between assumed immobility and disadvantage. Corbett (2007) conceptualises educational mobility as a form of social capital, in which a student's previous experience with and awareness of mobility determines their possibility of becoming educationally mobile as undergraduate students. In this conceptualisation, mobility as privilege is temporally reproductive, with the privilege of previous mobility enabling the further privilege of imagined and realised mobile futures. By definition, immobility is equally reproduced, so that the absence of opportunities for mobility makes mobility impossible to imagine or enact. Seen in this way, the student who stays in place (even where this is not defined simply as immobility as discussed above) is understood as having a deficit of experience and imagination.

This study works to counter that simplistic understanding of the local student, by suggesting that for the students concerned, relationships to place cannot be described through a discourse of lack. Instead, these students have local capital through long-term investments in place. Like Corbett's (2007) conceptualisation of mobility capital, the concept of local capital brings together a range of social and cultural factors, so that the descriptor of 'local' signifies more than a fixedness in place. These students' friendships and family relationships, having not been disrupted by long-distance mobility, are committed and sustained over long periods. They refer in their interviews to the volunteering and employment commitments that would have been lost had they realised imagined futures of normative undergraduate mobility. This form of placed capital is enabled by the presence of CBHE in geographical cold spots,

so that a graduate possible self is also an imagined future of continued investment in the locality. For participants such as Meera, who saw herself as teaching in a Sebford school after completing her degree and teacher training, and James, who imagined marking Tobston out as an international centre for graphic design, the availability of graduate possible selves in the local area enabled an imagined commitment of newly gained skills to the locality.

However, the conceptual framework of narrative possible selves as spatial stories also allows an insight into the challenges for CBHE and local capital. Where Tobston and Sebford as HE cold spots were also characterised by histories of industrial loss, unemployment and poverty, CBHE can be seen as a vital interruption of these narratives. At the same time, some participants found graduate futures in their locality difficult to imagine precisely because of the history CBHE was seeking to redress. This difficulty created narrative incoherence, in which participants worked towards a qualification even while recognising the qualification's incongruity with local discourses of education and opportunity. For these participants, remaining in place after their degree course was inevitable, on one hand, and yet difficult to imagine, on the other hand. Therefore the study shows that undergraduate study in itself is only part of the required interruption to placed narratives. In order that local capital is extended into the graduate future as Meera and James imagined, graduate possible selves and place must be imaginable and realizable together.

Finally, while the study demonstrates the importance of considering local capital in order to counter deficit narratives of educational mobility, it is also important to position local capital and local CBHE within the stratified national, and increasingly

international HE marketplace in England. This stratification that both reinforces the dominant narratives of the typical HE student and necessitates alternatives to that narrative. Within the hierarchies of this system, the local college is always positioned in relation to the global elite university. Similarly, the local capital shown by the student participants in this study must be seen in the context of the mobility capital perpetuated by elite national and international HE systems. The study therefore occupies a difficult position; on one hand, it is an exploration of the local college that complicates and undermines homogonenised understandings of the university and normative perceptions of the nationally and internationally mobile HE student. On the other hand, it is an acknowledgement of the local college as always and inevitably 'on the margins', its marginal position working to sustain and to threaten its longevity.

Conclusion

The thesis has used the conceptual tools of possible selves, narrative temporality and the spatial to explore and explode definitions of CBHE as local HE provision. Where the local area, college, employer, community or student is referred to, this definition relies upon a spatial story that situates the subject according to narratives of place, mobilities and spaces. Each spatial story is also a narrative of possibility and impossibility, in which distances are too far to be imagined, and spaces too necessary to be used. The study sets these spatial narratives of educational subjectivity within a larger geography of HE, which positions the local against the global and the elite. In understanding CBHE and the subjectivities of CBHE students, then, the local must be seen both as nuanced, granular and specific, and as fixed within a hierarchy of HE provision that is marked by inequality.

This study has argued that the 'local' student as a category requires further complication and care in its use if it is ever to be defined away from the normative narratives of traditional, perceived-as mobile undergraduate experience. The study has shown as part of this complication that the binary opposition between mobility and immobility, and the binary associations between these and privilege/disadvantage work to reinscribe inequality through discourses of deficit. Secondly, the local student exists in the context of the availability and reputational affect (Stich, 2014) of HE provision in their local area, because local relationships to HE shape what it means to be a local student. Important to this understanding is that national and international systems of HE are also recognised to be experienced and lived at a local level. The spaces provided for learning and socialising in institutions that provide for a majority of local students could usefully take this lived experience into account, not closing down or limiting available spatial experience according to homogenised understandings of local student need. Finally, the language of the local should be acknowledged as both subjective and value-laden, positioning both student and institution within stratified HE systems – it is within these systems that some students, and some HE providers, are always more 'local' than others.

Appendix 1: Elite interview schedule

Before the interview:

a) Give participant information sheet about the study and check that they are happy with the information they have been given.

b) Ask participant to sign and date consent form.

c) Remind participant again that the interview will be audio-recorded, and check they agree to this.

Interview prompts:

1. Tell me about your experiences with CBHE.
   - What changes have you seen in this provision over your career?
   - What are the challenges faced by colleges providing HE?
   - How do you think the current area reviews might impact on CBHE provision?

2. Tell me about students who study CBHE.
   - Are there differences between students who study academic and vocational HE courses?
   - What opportunities are offered to students through CBHE?
   - What do CBHE students do after their degree courses?

Are you happy with how the interview has gone? Is there anything you haven't had a chance to say that you'd like to add?

Appendix 2: HE Director Interview Schedule

Before the interview:

a) Give participant information sheet about the study and check that they are happy with the information they have been given.

b) Ask participant to sign and date consent form.

c) Remind participant again that the interview will be audio-recorded, and check they agree to this.

Interview prompts:

1. Talk me through the history of the college's HE provision.
   - Which HE qualifications do you provide?
   - Do you have partnerships or franchises with universities?
   - Has this changed over time?
   - Why these universities?

2. Tell me about the students who take HE in your college.
   - What are the student characteristics in terms of gender/race/socio-economic status/age?
   - What are your rates of full time and part time students?
   - How many of your students are employed while studying?
   - Are there differences between the students who study for vocational and academic undergraduate courses?
   - How many students are local to the area? How local?
   - How many students have studied for other qualifications at this college?
   - How have the numbers changed in terms of participation rates since HE was first offered?
   - What are your students' next steps after their studies here?

3. Tell me about the future of CBHE at your college
   - What impact do you expect the current area reviews to have?
   - Does the college have plans to sustain or expand current HE provision?
   - Do you want to continue to work on CBHE?

Are you happy with how the interview has gone? Is there anything you haven't had a chance to say that you'd like to add?

Appendix 3: Tutor Interview Schedule

Before the interview:

a) Give participant information sheet about the study and check that they are happy with the information they have been given.

b) Ask participant to sign and date consent form.

c) Remind participant again that the interview will be audio-recorded, and check they agree to this.

Interview prompts:

1. Tell me about your role as a teacher of CBHE
   - When did you first come to the college?
   - Which subjects and levels of HE do you teach?
   - Has your teaching load changed since you began teaching at the college?
   - Have the courses you teach on changed since you began teaching at the college

2. Tell me about the students who take HE on your course.
   - What are their previous experiences and family experiences of HE?
   - What are their characteristics in terms of age/gender/race/socio-economic status?
   - Can you describe a typical CBHE class?
   - What do your students go on to do after taking degree courses here?

3. Tell me about your feelings about CBHE
   - What opportunities do your students gain from studying CBHE?
   - What are your students' next steps for the future after they finish their studies here?
   - Do you feel your students benefit from taking HE courses in FE colleges?

4. Tell me about the future of CBHE at your college
   - What impact do you expect the current area reviews to have?

- Do you want to continue to teach CBHE?

Are you happy with how the interview has gone? Is there anything you haven't had a chance to say that you'd like to add?

Appendix 4: Student Interview 1 Schedule

Before the interview:

a) Give participant information sheet about the study and check that they are happy with the information they have been given.

b) Ask participant to sign and date consent form.

c) Remind participant again that the interview will be audio-recorded, and check they agree to this.

Interview prompts:

1. Tell me about how you came to be at this college, doing this course.
   - What were your previous experiences of education?
   - How did you find out about the college?
   - Was the college your first choice of places to study?
   - Did you do other courses here before beginning your degree?

2. Tell me about the kind of student you are.
   - What kind of work do you most enjoy doing?
   - Have you always enjoyed the same kind of work, or has this changed over time and in different institutions.
   - What is the most important thing about getting your degree?

3. Tell me about a piece of work you have done that you feel pleased with.
   - What made you choose this piece of work?
   - How important is this work to your degree course?
   - What do you like about the work you do for your degree course?

4. Tell me about the places in the college you go to most often
   - Are there particular spaces for HE students in this college?
   - How do you feel about those spaces?
   - Are there parts of the college you never go to?
   - Have you used different places in the college at different times throughout your studies ?

5. Tell me about your local area
   - Was it important to you to go to a local college?
   - Do you think you will stay in your local area after finishing college?

- Has your time at college changed how you feel about where you will live in the future?
- Do you imagine you will always stay living where you are now?

6. Would you mind showing me where you spend time in the college?

Are you happy with how the interview has gone? Is there anything you've not had a chance to say that you'd like to add?

Appendix 5: Student Interview 2 Schedule

Before the interview:

a) Give participant information sheet about the study and check that they are happy with the information they have been given.

b) Ask participant to sign and date consent form.

c) Remind participant again that the interview will be audio-recorded, and check they agree to this.

Interview prompts:

1. How has this year of studying gone?
   • Has anything been easier or more difficult than you imagined?
   • How do you feel about finishing your degree?

2. Tell me about your future plans.
   • What do you imagine yourself doing in the future?
   • What plans have you made for next year?
   • What else do you need to do to plan for next year?
   • Do you feel positive about the future? In what way?

3. Tell me about how doing your degree has prepared you for your future
   • What can you do now that you couldn't do before taking the degree?
   • How have your plans changed since starting the degree?
   • What are the most important things about you that are different now than at the beginning of the degree?

4. This is a diagram of the places that you referred to in your last interview, and what you said about them
   • Would you say the same things about those places now?
   • Is there anything you would change or add to the diagram?

Are you happy with how the interview has gone? Is there anything you haven't had a chance to say that you'd like to add?

Appendix 6: Place concept maps

Ryan

HE site
Really close
Literally ten minutes from home
Beautiful location but buildings
need a lot of work
Thought about living on site but
live so close that it's pointless
Meet there if going out in
Tobston
Might stay to do a Master's

Home Town
Small town
Used to go drinking there but
don't do anything there now
Don't have anything to do with
the community

Tobston
Tend to go there rather than
home town

Nearest University
Applied there as well as
Tobston
Brand new, up to date
facilities

Gemma

HE Site
Not out for a long time
Can drive there, 15 minutes from
home
Can respond to calls from home/
school
Not even out school hours
More mature institute
Good location but don't know why
it would appeal to 19 year olds

Home Town
Bought parents' house when they
moved
Run down area
If you drove there you'd think it was
a bit rough
Like lots of places in the area
Same street as family

Tobston
Only know the town centre
Always gone there with parents
shopping
Don't know the little towns
around Tobston
Don't have a sense of direction
around them

Nearest University
Couldn't move there with two
kids at home
Wasn't worth the time getting
home
On the train, everyone else
going back to their rooms
Out from 6am to 7pm
Singled out
Not nice

The dream
Husband wants to live in Australia
Seems like what everybody does
Will be strange not having family
near
Want somewhere with nice living
circumstances, a nice area
Have to move away to get that

Anna

Brighton
Was considering applying
Wanted a different lifestyle
Would've been by yourself as a fresher

Leeds/Sheffield/Manchester
Lived and worked in cities before uni
Did the student socialising aspect while friends were there
Lots of friends there

The Future
Need own space
Thinking about a Master's in Manchester
Travelling – maybe TEFL
Want to be in a city or a town that has prospects
Won't be here this time next year

Tobston College
Left it a bit last minute
Really liked the campus
Was living at home and couldn't afford to move out
Close to home, have friends and family to support, won't get sucked into nightlife culture
Didn't want to be dragged into going out every night

Tobston
No prospects for anyone
Lots of people are rude and uneducated
Lots of hate crime
Things are getting worse
Not much here for anyone, no money
Personal, lost friends, outgrown people

Rebecca

Out of home
Main reason for leaving college
Wanted own flat
Got full time work in nearby cities

HE Site
More convenient because so local
Makes life a lot easier with childcare
Would've wanted to go away somewhere at 18
Everyone has a specific reason for being here

Home Town
Rural bit – nice and quiet
Wouldn't ever live anywhere else
Close with family – parents live locally
Kids go to same school as cousins on both sides

Nearest City
Liked days working in the city
Like being in the city centre
Feels familiar – there from 18-21
Had student days there
Kept friends from then

Tobston
Not great – would rather go further and go to nearest city
Not got a lot to offer
There are some lovely parts
One of those town centres

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Ben

HE Site
Like the seclusion
Nobody knows about it
Beautiful in autumn
Don't like nature, but like this place
Wanted to go further out than home town
Wanted to commute – not ready to be an adult yet

Home town
Work in theatre, volunteer at library, would have had to stop if moved away
All the family are in home town
Nothing there for a university student
Surrounding areas better for university students – hardly anywhere for teenagers/adults to go
Only good things are library and theatre
Would like to leave but would have no idea what to do with yourself
Know where everything is there

Nearest University
Probably would have gone if it wasn't that the building shook
Would have been sick every day – out of the question

Other cities
Plymouth – once wanted to go but don't know where it is
London – would go insane with all the traffic
Cousin working there at the moment

Stewart

HE Site
Closest place with a focused concept art course
Like living in a village, compared experiences of cities
More personal and relaxed
Living on site is not too bad, but means not talking to people very much
People keep themselves to themselves
Know people by name and five minute conversations

Tobston
Doubt you'll be staying in the area when you finish
Mixed bag
Different to home
Areas that are run down
Drug addicts and drunks
Gangs of homeless
Culturally different – clubbing
England's gypsy capital

Home
Will live at home until saved money to move out
More like Coronation Street
More like metal/rock kind of area
Looking forward to progressing with next stage of life

Jane

Tobston FE College
Originally did HND before degree level was option
Friend who had also been there suggested going to HE Site

HE Site
Wouldn't have come back if it weren't for friend
Some stigma, coming back as mature student, from outside learning environment
Having children means need to be here

Tobston
Nice, small, friendly town
Different to alien feel of city
Changed and developed a lot over the years
More densely populated now
Used to be more quaint, now strangers everywhere
Used to live on outskirts in more rural area
Living close to town means seeing people coming and going
Always a bit closed-minded
Sense of humour

Online
Starting selling on ebay and Etsy before taking the course
Want to promote and believe in own artwork and make a success in book illustration

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Leon

Manga Places
Come from Japan, hard to access if not from there or speaking Japanese
Some places in UK and US that hire non-Japanese manga artists

Tobston College
Went straight to the FE College from school
Closer and simpler financially
Contemplated living in dorms, but too expensive on student loan
Like to go to the bar to wind down and look at the view

Tobston
Hate Tobston accent
Hate living on council estate
Different before mum got made redundant
Ruffians everywhere, sister got attacked
Would like to move out and find a flat with a friend
Would be depressed to live in Tobston in the future
Would like to live in a nice area, have a new life and new place, wipe the slate clean

Staffordshire College
Would have liked to go there, but had too much modern art in portfolio
Well set up for comic artists
Very competitive and modern art let you down

Jack

Morrisons
Kept being told you were wasted there had talent to do more
Learned work ethic
Didn't come across creative people
who could offer constructive criticism

Travelling
Trips to London, Bradford and Barcelona.
Expected London to be scary but was awesome
Want to go to New Zealand - been told it's a good place to work in animation, and to see where LoR was filmed

HE Site
Nice campus, not too far away
Massive change – outside comfort zone at first
See it as a place of work
Campus is like Robin Hood

Home Town
About 20 miles away from campus
Middle of nowhere, smells of cow poo all the time
One pub – too expensive
Moved there from nearby city
Living in different town and moved back home, spurred on decision to do degree

Tobston
People say it's just Tobston
Like it, easy to get around
Bit of everything
Lots of potential in terms of getting animation companies into industrial estates
Would love to open animation studio here
Would prefer to stay because family here, home-oriented person
Middle of everywhere so good base

Paul

HE Site
Wanted to stay local to be close to son
Having known tutor since 16, was like going home
Why go anywhere else?
If it was in the centre at FE site, would be seen as a university
Location quite isolating

FE College
Graphic design course gave the confidence to break away from family model and create a better life
Almost didn't get a place there – completely changed life
Lovely old building
Now have studio there - perfect

Previous life
Travelled everywhere
Realised you can be deemed to have everything but have nothing

Tobston
Have worked away and lived in other places, but always come back
Odd place – a love-hate thing
Always feel depressed driving back
Family is here, and only 20 minute drive to see son
Not a lot of jobs here – have to go where the jobs are

Aisha

Sebford College

More convenient rather than commuting somewhere else

Brothers went to Sebford – family thing

Sebford

Born in Sebford

Never thought how it feels to live there

Doesn't have well disciplined schools

Home

Lots of family

One flaw of not living away

Work on assignments in the library because of home distractions

Partner University

Allowed to use their library

Planning to go once able to drive

England

Want to stay in England to teach

Might move from Sebford to get to a well disciplined school

Meera

Sebford College

No commute, so less worry

Nice walk from home

Home

Asian-based

Small community, know everybody

Not too main road

Family – never any peace

Sebford

Used to walk through on the way to university, now go a quicker way.

Probably stay in and around Sebford in the future

Nearest University

Would have been too far away, too much of a commute

Cities

Birmingham – sister

London – nana

Hate the traffic

Things are too far away

Claustrophobic

Susan

Sebford College
Near enough to access with children
Husband works in FE
A safer bet than going away, more convenient
Couldn't have gone to a different place

Home Town
Old mill town, lots of lovely countryside
People haven't had the best opportunities
When growing up, not much there, but more now

Sebford
No ties other than uni
Not somewhere you want to go
Drugs, drinking problems, fighting on a different scale to home town

Salford
Sister went to university there
Didn't want to leave her there
Home comforts but not home
Now really independent and grown up, travelled to India and Thailand

Manchester/London
Where sister/brother are
Where you can branch out
Massive industry
Different opportunities

Andrew

Home Town
Posh
One of the most expensive places in the area
Very very wealthy people
Where people come to hide away

Sebford
Flip side of home town
Working class town
Biggest town in the area
Come to Sebford for everything you do – cinema, bowling

Sebford College
Applied because established with house/girlfriend
Didn't want to move away
People from all walks of life but still part of local community
Could be the future – smaller, town universities

City universities
Eg. Birmingham/ Lancaster
Wouldn't have wanted the university experience
Can still access partner university's resources

Yurt in a field
Society messing people up
Go out hunting
Respect own human instincts

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Robert

Sebford College
Gives you a solid foundation
Knowing you're somewhere you feel safe
Been able to build on existing friendships and keep the same workplace

Going away to university
Mum thought you'd be going away
Media portrayals of university lifestyle
Stories from people who have gone away

Home Town
15 mins from where you used to live
Moved to Lancashire aged 5-6
Full of old people
Fairytale look to it
More places to go than Sebford

Sebford
Dying and decaying
Couldn't have a full university because of the lack of nightlife
No pubs, no shopping
Trying to get away from it

Nearest City
Might have gone if Sebford wasn't an option
Spend most of time there
Lots of friends there
Might move there if affordable
So much choice

Kate

Leeds/Manchester
Going there to university, would've spread wings and met different people
Would've done university properly and widened horizons

Home village
Tiny, everybody knows everybody
Very outdoors
Happy in the house you grew up in
Planning to stay there
Mortgage free
Children will get into grammar school

Sebford College
Nowhere for students to meet
More like school than uni

Sebford
Only come in for uni and to get something from a bigger shop

Anne

Sebford
Lived there since age of 4
Shock of going from lovely house to estate as a child
Good mix of people
Like anywhere else, changing and becoming more diverse

Places for business
Go as far as Plymouth, London, Inverness
Centre is London for high flying jobs, but don't want that

Places for photography
Venice in 2015
Contact with Liverpool police, and Leeds in relations to transgender project

Sebford College
More relaxed, flexible
Better than moving away
Better for being a mature student
Made it possible to keep business going while doing a degree
Knowing tutors from FE means having their trust

Other universities
Applied to Manchester, Bolton, thought about London
Bolton has a really good name and is a proper university
Son goes to Swansea

Richard

Landscapes
North-west former coal mines – dead industries
Tidal islands – social documentary piece

Sebford College
Wanted to keep working, not finish uni with no money
Convenient
Could work in smaller group
Started to use darkroom while on UAL course

Moving away
If for uni, would have been far away to create a distance
Moving away for uni wouldn't have been of benefit
If for work, wouldn't turn it down, but would have to be a good offer
Couldn't move to a city permanently, novelty would wear off, would have to come back

Sebford
Big sense of community
Rich in culture, even though some think that's not a good thing
Lots of changes and new buildings to change the image
Lots of jobs lost in the past, trying to make it a lot better

Home Town
Smaller than Sebford, but same industry
Everybody knows everybody
Same group of friends who have all stayed there
Close-knit family, close-knit friends

Lucy

Home Town
Really countryside
Hills and animals everywhere
Very quiet
Quite a posh area
An hour away from everything
Still miss it, but prefer living away
Couldn't move back home

Sebford College
Came because it was a smaller
uni
Thought it would benefit more
Wanted a fresh start
Proved to yourself you can stick
it out

Sebford
Live in the centre – busy
Guy showing round said people get stabbed/
raped here
Can see yourself living here or surrounding
area
Easy access to everything
Not as busy as Manchester, but still
something
Want to stay up north – don't like the
thought of southern people

Brian

Sebford College
Did two years in Harrison
building before Glasgow
County folk coming to a
county place
Facilities you wouldn't get
at other college

Home Town
Been in county for whole
life
Not in the centre, but at
the top, fields all around
Row of 8 houses, pub,
cricket club, football club
Lovely, historic place
Love local folk

London/Manchester
Possible for MA
depending on result of
degree
Could commute to
Manchester
Would have to move
away to London

Glasgow School of Art
Lots of pretence
Before world changed –
could smoke and drink in
buildings, things were truer
Regarded as a bigger
establishment
People from everywhere

Sebford
Changed a hell of a lot
Nowhere to go and drink
as a student
They don't know what
they want to do to it
Mills shut down and
terraced houses gone

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Stephanie

Sebford
Mixed opinions because it's a diverse city
Not too bad, but been here too long
Have lived on outskirts of Blackburn for whole life, but have family all over the country
Really easy for travel
Like being able to go off, using free bus travel

Sebford College
Living locally, it has the stuff you need
Know you've got something good for the degree
Small, but stretches resources further for students

Places for photography
Seville, with course
Edinburgh for camera obscura
Bradford for photography museum
Paris, Germany, Sweden

Other universities
Preston – lots of students and messed up interviewing process
Carlisle – too big and stretched out

Camper van
Where business will go from
Will be a hub for the business, so can travel the country and the world

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