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**SOCIAL DEPRIVATION AND WIDENING  
PARTICIPATION:  
THE CONTINUING POWER OF LOCAL CULTURE**

**WAYNE DERRICK BAILEY**

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

The University of Huddersfield

March 2015

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores why a group of young people with level 3 qualifications, living within traditionally working-class communities, choose not to participate in HE. It discusses their expectations, motivations and aspirations and the social, cultural and personal factors that contribute to their decision making. The findings are drawn from a set of semi-structured interviews with 36 sixth form students. The research adapts a Bourdieuan framework and utilises a three-level methodology. Though the analysis considers the subjective points of view of the participants, with respect to their non-participation, it also pays attention to factors which appeared to have shaped and moulded decisions. Participants' decisions appeared to be shaped by their place of study, their friends and family and, most importantly, by their parent(s) and this impacted on their aspirations and how motivated they were to participate in HE. The importance of academic-related support is evidenced throughout. It seemed to instil a sense of belonging and solidarity and was motivational. Without a guarantee of similar support, participants were not prepared to participate in HE. A particularly complex attitude to debt was also highlighted. Not incurring debt appeared to be a cultural rule, particularly when there was no guaranteed financial and employment related benefit to participation. This thesis argues that similar outlooks, backgrounds, interests, lifestyles and opportunities resulted in the adoption of shared practices, common patterns of reactions and accepted ways of doing things when it came to HE participation. This thesis helps us to understand why a particular group of young people has not been influenced in the same way as some others by the change in attitude towards HE. More specifically, it enhances our understanding of the complex, yet subtle influences that can lead young people to choose not to participate in HE.

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Finally, I am grateful to my wife Amanda and our children, Tiger and Jamie, for their motivation, encouragement and above all else, patience. I dedicate this thesis to them.

## List of Abbreviations

A level	Advanced Level
AS level	Advanced Subsidiary Level
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BIS	Business, Innovation and Skills
BMBC	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CAQDAS	Computer-assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CWPP	Collaborative Widening Participation Project
DBIS	Department of Business Innovation and Skills
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
FE	Further Education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HEIPR	Higher Education Initial Participation Rate
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LSIS	Learning and Skills Improvement Service
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UK	United Kingdom

# Chapter 1 Starting Points

## *1.1 Chapter Introduction*

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the motivation behind my choice of doctoral topic, to explain what is undertaken throughout this research and to offer a justification for this research being carried out. The chapter begins by discussing two important factors influencing this thesis:

- Firstly, University Campus Barnsley (UCB) (part of the University of Huddersfield until August 2013), my place of work at the commencement of this doctoral thesis.
- Secondly, the influence of my own upbringing and educational trajectory, referred to by Pierre Bourdieu as social origins and coordinates (2000).

Having explained the motivation behind this research and its boundaries, I consider and contextualise social deprivation, explaining why the participants can be classed as socially deprived. I focus on both national and local participation rates before explaining why the participants can also be viewed as being working-class. Widening participation policies and practices from 1960 to 2014 are briefly considered to emphasise the fact that widening participation in HE is not a 21st century political mantra. I close this chapter by examining the institutions where this study took place, briefly considering the change in political landscape that took place whilst this study has been completed.

I began this research whilst working at UCB, a centre which developed as a result of a report commissioned by the University of Huddersfield which indicated that HE participation in Barnsley was well below national average and the lowest in South and

West Yorkshire. UCB was established to narrow these gaps and help create a change in the Barnsley economic trajectory by encouraging a higher proportion of young people to participate in HE (Yorkshire Forward, 2008).

UCB aimed to combine educational developments through widening participation, with objectives for urban and social regeneration. Its goals were: to bring HE to students in their own community, to raise aspirations, to develop curricula to reflect local need and to enhance the contribution that HE makes to the local economy. In addition to helping meet the then Labour government's targets for widening participation and access to HE, it was anticipated that UCB would help reshape Barnsley as a university market town, reinvigorate local businesses and make communities more sustainable (Yorkshire Forward, 2008).

At a UCB staff meeting, the qualification levels in Barnsley were scrutinised and the Barnsley students' level 3 achievements were discussed. The small percentage of Barnsley's population with a level 3 qualification, evidenced in a Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) report, was discussed in detail (see appendices 1, p.264 and 2, p.265). Of particular interest to me were those young people who had gained a level 3 qualification, yet chose not to participate in HE. Whilst this is not the main focus of widening participation as a general social goal, this is a sizable group.

As well as working at UCB, my own upbringing and education which had been influenced by widening participation policy and the culture in which I was immersed impacted on my choice of research area. Living on socially deprived council estates in West Yorkshire with my extended family shaped my own dispositions. As a group we



were family-orientated and community-spirited, and both generations of my family, with whom I lived, valued being in employment. This shaped my early life and my attitude towards work. Whilst my move to a middle-class area at the age of 11 may have realigned my own trajectory, the dispositions shaped in my early years were, and are, still present today.

When I started at a 'new' university in 1992, I chose to study business, believing it would help me to get a job. Had my fees not been paid by my local authority and had I not received a partial grant, I suspect that I would not have participated and would have been a young person, with a level 3 qualification, who chose not to participate in HE.

The combination of living my early years in socially deprived, working-class communities that appeared to be influenced by local culture and community spirit, my own educational trajectory, in conjunction with my roles in HE, has shaped my interest in HE participation decision making and the influence that local culture may have on such decisions. Consequently, within this study, I investigate why 36 young people in Barnsley, who have gained a level 3 qualification, choose not to participate in HE. This doctoral thesis considers the following aim and research questions:

#### Aim of the investigation

- To understand why young people, with appropriate qualifications, from the most socially deprived areas of Barnsley are under-represented within Higher Education (HE).

Research questions:

- To what extent do the expectations, motivations and aspirations of a group of young adults impact on their HE participation decisions?
- What prevents young adults from entering HE?
- How do social, cultural and personal factors contribute to the group's decision-making processes with respect to entry into HE?

It is worth noting that when discussing expectations, I was referring to what the participants believed participation in HE would involve. I wanted to ascertain the reasons why the participants chose not to participate and what inclined them to act in the manner they did. Finally, in terms of aspirations, I was interested in the participants' hopes and ambitions for the present and the future as they had chosen not to participate in HE.

Ultimately, I explore the influence that the participants' local culture has on their HE participation decision making and utilise a Bourdieuan methodological approach to help facilitate this. When I discuss influence, I refer to what has impacted on the behaviour of the participants relating to their HE participation and its effect.

This investigation has value because there has been only limited research focusing on the decision-making processes of people who possess qualifications that would enable them to enrol on higher-level courses, but choose not to participate (Fuller and Heath, 2010). Getting students to enter university who have relevant entrance qualifications has become an important policy issue (Marks, Turner and Osborne, 2003) as in policy terms, those people with a level 3 qualification are a sizable group that has not been significantly researched. Most existing research that focuses on barriers to participation

concentrates on the individual experiences of those who manage to get into the system, but tells us little about the experiences of those who do not participate at level 4 (Heath, Fuller and Paton, 2008).

Whilst there are clearly some persuasive arguments, in many studies, which consider how people from working-class communities view participating in HE, there have also been some shortcomings associated with such work (Bradley and Miller, 2010).

Bradley and Miller are critical of the fact that much of the previous research has focused on the views of working-class young people from London and that this is unfortunate given the then Labour government's attention to close-knit social networks such as the UK's former coalmining communities. Finally, much of the earlier research failed to take on board HEFCE's (2004) research strategy which recommends that for quick, effective change, those young people with a level 3 qualification that choose not to participate in HE should be focused on (Bradley and Miller, 2010). That young people with appropriate qualifications from working-class backgrounds do not participate in HE seems to have been an area of great concern to politicians from all denominations for decades (discussed later in this chapter). Yet it still appears to be unclear why some students who could participate in HE do not go to university. I take up this debate at length in Chapter 4. This research takes into account many of the outlined criticisms and focuses on a group of working-class, socially deprived young people who possess level 3 qualifications, and who live in close-knit, former coal mining communities.

The data on which this study is based were gathered over a four-year period at two sixth forms in the north of England. Town Sixth Form is part of a large Further Education (FE) college and Village Sixth Form is part of a local academy. I discuss

these institutions later in this chapter. The young people who participated in the study were encouraged to participate in HE by their place of study and had initially considered doing so.

## ***1.2 Barnsley and Social Deprivation***

This section considers deprivation and social deprivation and contextualises it in relation to Barnsley, my participants and this study. Within it, I highlight several opinions and explain why the participants can be considered as socially deprived.

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough is one of four districts in the county of South Yorkshire, lying approximately 15 miles north of Sheffield and 20 miles south of Leeds. Barnsley Borough covers a diverse area stretching 24 miles from the Pennines in the west to the Dearne Valley lowlands in the east. It covers an area of 127 square miles, featuring landscapes ranging from high moorlands to urban areas and arable lowlands (BMBC, 2000). At the outset of this study, Barnsley had a total population of 222,100 comprising 108,200 males and 113,900 females. Within Barnsley, 70,900 males and 65,500 females were of working age, with 99,900 being economically active. Barnsley is the least ethnically diverse of the major population centres in Yorkshire and Humberside, with just 15 of England's local authorities ranking below it on the Office of National Statistics' diversity index. Its population is 99% white with 98% being white British. The Asian population is 0.3% of the total and the black population less than 1% (BMBC, 2006).

Barnsley's population is growing at one of the slowest rates in the country. Employment rates are also very low; the district ranks in the bottom 20% of districts nationally. In

2010, unemployment rates were high, with 5.6% of people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance. In Barnsley, earnings and productivity remain well below average with Barnsley's labour market and industrial structure performing poorly by national standards. Economic growth rates are low and Barnsley is in the bottom 40% of districts nationally. It also ranked 342 out of 408 local authorities on the overall industrial structure score, indicating a knowledge economy that performs in the bottom 20% of districts nationally. This is well below average. A strong correlation exists between the presence of knowledge workers and levels of prosperity, with Barnsley residents having a prosperity level that is well below the average, with average incomes amongst the resident population being in the bottom 20% of districts nationally (BMBC, 2010a).

Throughout most of the 20th century, Barnsley had a strong coal-based economy. The 1980s and early 1990s, however, saw the almost complete disappearance of mining employment and, since the demise of the Yorkshire coal industry, Barnsley's economy has been lacklustre (Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, 2007). The socio-economic context in Barnsley, a town in the top 20% of the most deprived areas in the country, is well documented: "It is in the unenviable position of being at the top of almost every negative indicator for health, wealth and the general economy" (BMBC, 2006, p.12). Key influences on Barnsley's high level of deprivation are the number of people with low-level or no qualifications and the fact that few young people stay in education (BMBC, 2006).

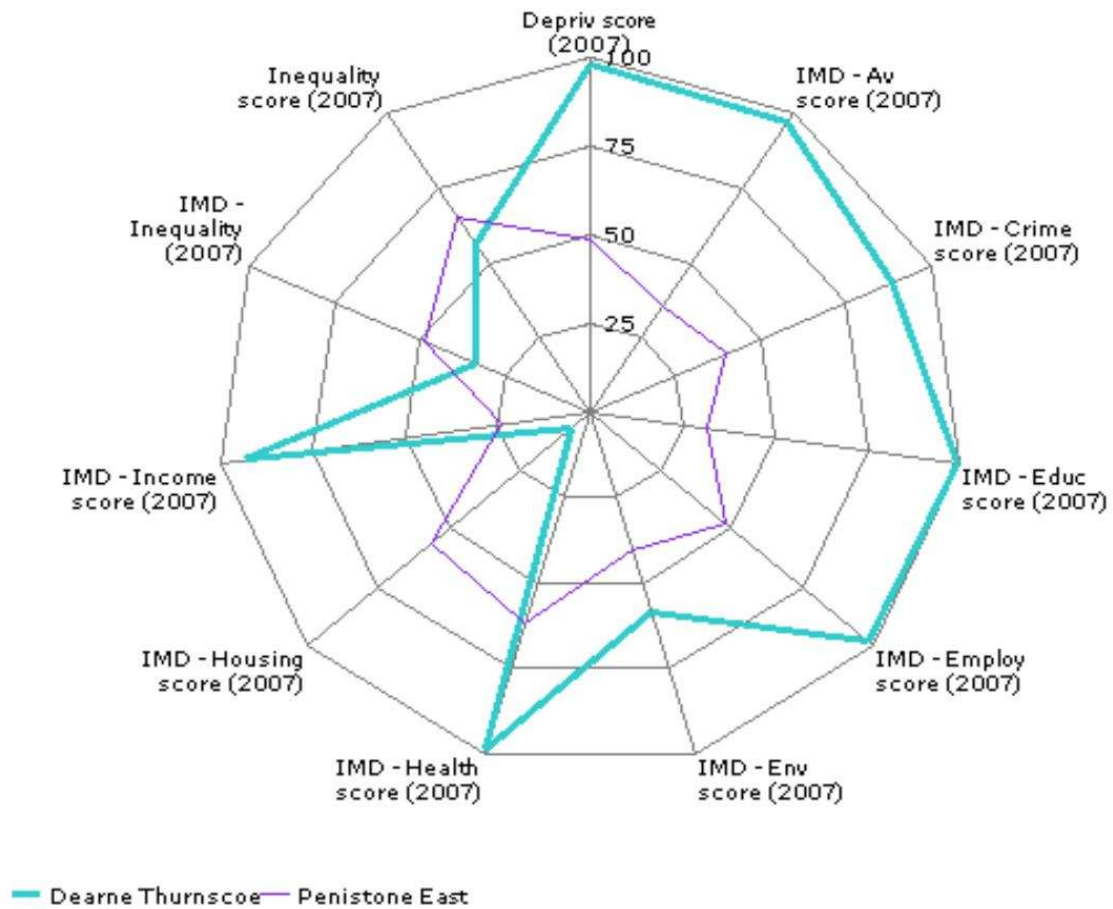
Using the Indices of Deprivation 2004, Barnsley was ranked 28th out of 354 most deprived local districts in England and fell within the 8% most deprived areas in

England. In 2007, things improved slightly; Barnsley moved up to 43<sup>rd</sup> and fell within the 12% most deprived areas in England. By 2010, Barnsley was ranked the 47<sup>th</sup> most deprived districts in England. However, even though there has been some improvement, Barnsley remains in an overall deprived state in accordance with this measure (BMBC, 2012). Appendix 3 (p.266) illustrates the 2010 Indices of Deprivation levels of deprivation in Barnsley. As can be seen, levels vary considerably according to location within the district, with the wards in the east of the borough having the higher levels.

The spider charts below show how Barnsley rates against the national median on a group of key indicators. Data for every district in the country is converted into a percentile score, with the top ranking area scoring 100 and the bottom, zero (BMBC, 2010a).

Figure 1 further illustrates the differences between the west and the east of the Barnsley borough.

Figure 1-1 Deprivation Profile

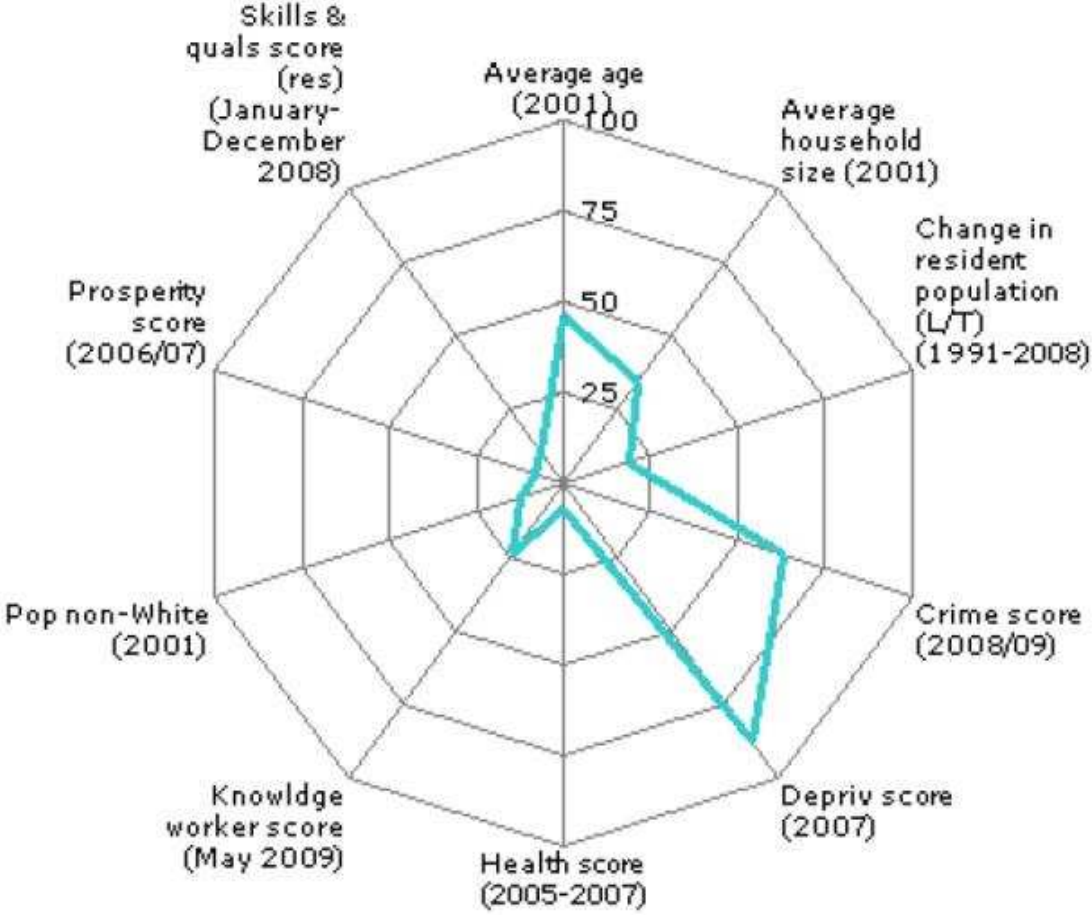


(BMBC, 2010a)

There are also some social and educational indicators that help to illustrate levels of deprivation. Barnsley underperforms on many of these indicators. Consequently, Barnsley also appears to suffer from high levels of social deprivation.

The profile below (Figure 2) summarises such social indicators.

Figure 1-2 Social Indicators



— Barnsley

(BMBC 2010a)

The skills and qualification profile for Barnsley makes interesting reading. Out of all 408 local authorities, Barnsley is ranked at 365. This indicates a resident workforce that performs in the bottom 20% of local authorities by national standards, in terms of human



capital. Interestingly, in 2008, 21.31% held a degree or equivalent; nationally the figure was 29.01% (BMBC, 2010a).

As well as the skills and qualification profile, there are a number of additional negative social indicators that contribute to Barnsley's social profile that have implications for levels of prosperity and consumption locally. These include the average age in Barnsley which is 39.06 years, compared to 38.71 years in South Yorkshire and 38.61 in Great Britain, with Barnsley being in the middle 20% of districts nationally. Barnsley has an average household size of 2.37, which compares to 2.39 in South Yorkshire and 2.40 in London. Barnsley is ranked 53 out of 375 English local authorities on the affordable housing affordability score, indicating that the area is in the top 20% nationally in terms of housing affordability. In terms of its resident population, Barnsley ranks 331 out of 408 districts on long-term change and is in the bottom 20% of districts nationally. Whilst Barnsley's population grew by 1.2% between 1991 and 2008, nationally growth was at 6.7%. The gap in life expectancy between Barnsley and England has widened in recent years. Levels of overall life expectancy in Barnsley are in the bottom 10% of English local authorities, ranking Barnsley 347 out of 375 English Local Authorities in terms of health score. (BMBC, 2010a).

As a result of the negative indicators discussed above, particularly the skills poverty that exists, I would like to suggest that for the purpose of this research, participants can be viewed as being socially deprived. Social deprivation occurs when something has been taken away or denied and when there is a power differential. This results in the exclusion of the members of one group, who are left with fewer opportunities to grow and advance within the dominant group (Townsend, 1993).

Being socially deprived, it is possible that the participants are denied rights to an equal share in the benefits of social progress. Being denied the right to HE participation is an indicative factor. This research seeks to ascertain if the participants' local culture influences their HE decision making, as a response to social deprivation is to seek help through close relationships, cultural traditions and community structures. Being socially deprived would indicate that my participants lack certain freedoms and experience barriers to full participation in community life (Bassuk and Donelan, 2003).

Over the last 10 years, studies have discussed why young people from the most socially deprived areas choose not to enter HE; I take this up Chapter 4. Despite the research around these issues, and the claims of increased participation in HE, the same issues appear to be preventing young people from traditionally working-class backgrounds from participating in HE.

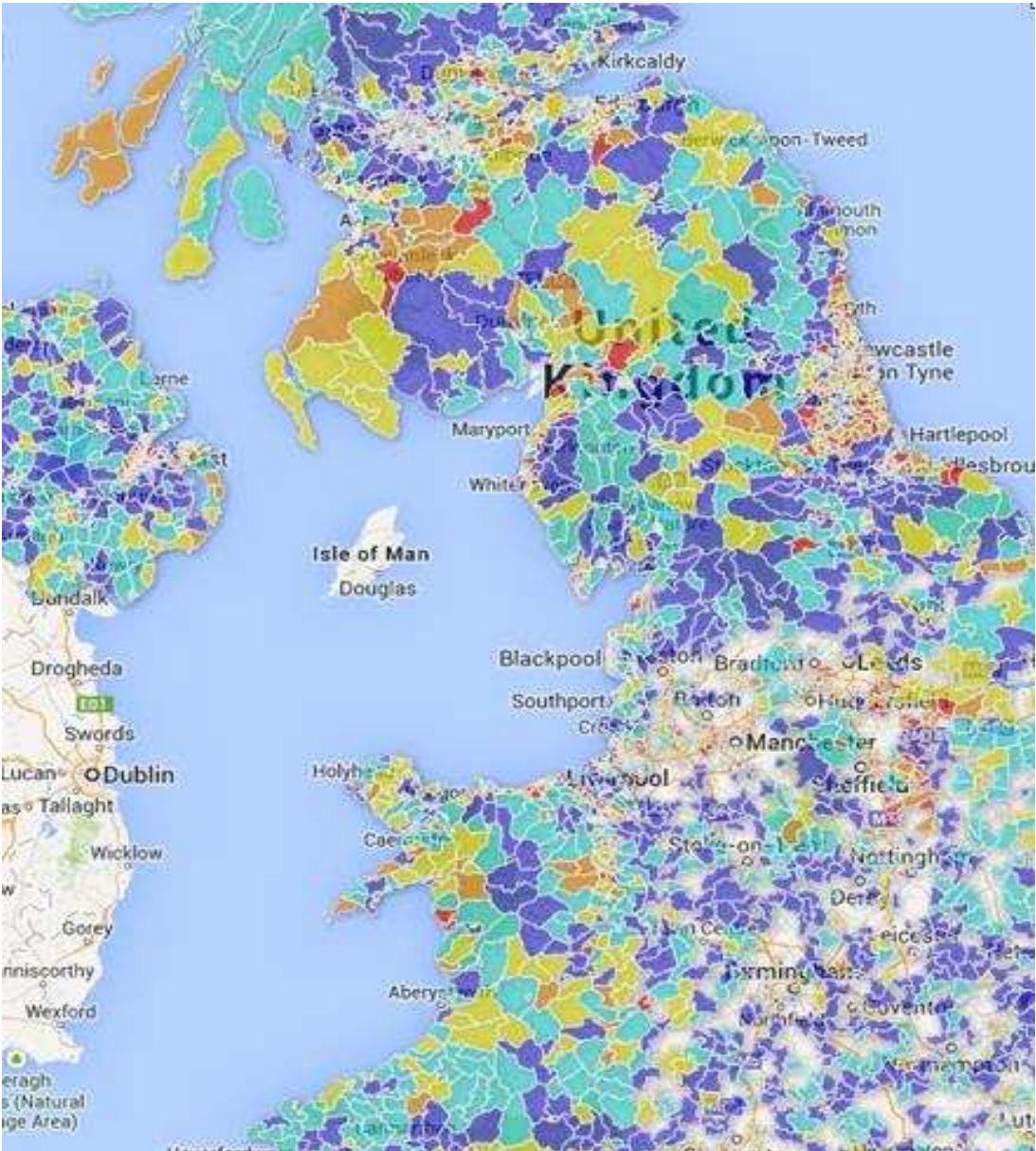
### ***1.3 HE Participation in Barnsley***

To further illustrate the socially deprived state of my participants, and to ascertain how this impacts on Barnsley, I pay attention to participation rates in HE. The participation rates of young people from disadvantaged areas have, according to HEFCE, increased from 30% in the mid-1990s to 36% by the end of the 2000s. There has been a "...substantial and sustained" (HEFCE, 2010, p.2) increase in HE entrance since the mid-2000s. In addition, there has been a 30% increase over the last five years in young people living in the most disadvantaged areas entering HE. To illustrate how this impacts on Barnsley, I use HEFCE's POLAR classification which shows how the chances of young people entering HE varies by where they live. HEFCE's classification comprises five quintile groups of areas ordered from '1' (those wards with the lowest

participation) to '5' (those wards with the highest participation), each representing 20% of UK young cohort (HEFCE, 2013).

POLAR3, the most recent classification, uses information on those who entered HE during the 2005-6 to 2010-11 academic years (HEFCE, 2013). HEFCE points out that the average young participation rate during the POLAR3 definition period was 34.7%. The map below outlines how the participation of young people in HE varies across the UK (the 2001 census wards are utilised).

Figure 1-3 Participation of Young People



(HEFCE, 2013)

The following map encompasses the Barnsley borough, with the majority of the borough falling into quintile 1.

Figure 1-4 Participation of Young People in Barnsley



Participation rates in the Barnsley borough based on the POLAR3 definition period can be found in Appendix 4 (p.267). The participants who took part in this study lived in the following socially deprived wards of Barnsley. All of the participants who took part lived in quintile 1 wards.

Table 1 Barnsley Wards

Ward	Number of participants
Worsbrough	22
Athersley	6
Wombwell North	4
Monk Bretton	4

Whilst HEFCE's figures indicate an increase in the participation rate, young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are still the most under-represented group, and this background remains a strong determinant of HE participation (National Audit Office, 2008).

### ***1.4 Traditional Working-class Backgrounds***

Class, as a concept, is not straightforward; there are different definitions of class. In the past, when some people either worked for capital or owned capital, definitions appeared easier to categorise. However, a modern classification of class is much more difficult (Eder, 1993). Eder (1993, p.12) proposes that class is a "...structure that translates inequality and power into different life-chances for categories of individuals. It is therefore a structural determinant of life-chances". Eder's definition is interesting as there is an element of comparison between individuals. It also appears to consider the capital that they have accrued (economic, cultural, social), which leads to a class structure that is highly individualised. Bernstein (1977) views class as something that helps us to start to think through cultural control, codes, modalities and power; he views it as an important intellectual resource. For Apple (1992), class is not a positional concept but a trajectory-based one. There is also evidence to suggest that, as well as viewing class as structural, it should also be viewed as "...discursive and cultural" (Burke, 2012, p106). As working-class occupations can be associated with social economic groups C2, D and E of the Office for National Statistics which has eight hierarchical categories based on types of employment, I considered using the occupations of the participants' parent(s) to justify their working-class background. However, when interviewing my participants, I chose not to ask questions regarding parental occupation, as even if I had ascertained their employment status, this model of

class definition is static. I understand that social class is a dynamic relationship and that it is not just a set of separate and bounded groups such as working, middle and upper class. Subsequently, within this research, all three are viewed in a symbiotic relationship; members of other social classes are pivotal and in no way marginal as they influence the life chances afforded to the participants of this study (Beider, 2011; Garner, 2011).

In trying to justify that my participants are from a working-class background, several things were taken into consideration. Beider (2011) and Garner (2011) discussed how people living in low-income neighbourhoods that are in the top 20% of the IMD can be viewed as being working-class.

Significantly, Thomas and Quinn make some interesting points regarding students linked to socio-economic status and the working class:

Whether a student is seen to belong to a low socio-economic group seems to depend on four main factors: income, occupation, geography and level of education... Nevertheless it can be argued that understandings of 'working class identity' as linked to lack of economic or cultural capital underlie all of these definitions of socio-economic status, even though identifying class is increasingly complex and contested.

(2003, p. 82-3)

Quinn, Thomas, Slack, Casey, Thexton and Noble (2005) employ the definition of first-generation learners to identify students as working class. Whilst they suggest this is not without problems, they point to international research (Knighton, 2002) to justify that first-generation status is more indicative of educational disadvantage than parental

occupation or income. Whilst my participants ultimately chose not to participate in HE, they pointed out that they were the first members of their immediate family to have the opportunity to participate in HE.

I also suggest that the participants have a working-class identity and that such an identity cannot be considered independently to belonging to a working-class locality. The participants live their lives, for the most part, within their locality and this attachment to their neighbourhood has had a significant impact on the formation of their identity. In having a working-class identity, the participants found it difficult to belong outside of their local geographical context (Ingram, 2009). Several studies have alluded to a strong connection between educational success and working-class identity and locality (Connolly and Neill, 2001; Healy, 2006; Archer, Hollingworth and Halsall 2007; Ingram, 2009). These issues are taken up further throughout this study.

To summarise, within this study the participants are viewed as being from a working-class background because:

- they live in low-income neighbourhoods that are in the top 20% of the IMD;
- none of their immediate family has participated in HE; they were the first members of their families to have the opportunity to participate;
- they have different life chances and less opportunities for an upward trajectory than people from middle-class backgrounds;
- they have a working-class identity.



## ***1.5 Widening Participation in Context***

Whilst the intention of this research was not to critique widening participation policy past or present, the primary intention of this section of the chapter is to provide a brief overview of widening participation policies and initiatives from 1960 to 2014 and, in addition, to discuss the concept of widening participation in order to give some wider context to this study. Widening participation is a much-researched area and there are many definitions of widening participation. For example, the DfES (2006b) posit that widening participation means helping people from under-represented groups, particularly those from low socio-economic groups, to participate in HE successfully. This definition is taken further by the Higher Education Academy's (HEA) definition of widening participation, which resonates with patterns of participation in Barnsley. The Academy discusses how widening participation is concerned with addressing patterns of under-representation in HE, due to the fact that specific groups of students are proportionally underrepresented in the UK. The Academy outlines how groups that are particularly underrepresented are those from lower socio-economic groups or working class backgrounds, low participation neighbourhoods and families with no experience of HE.

In spite of the recent definitions outlined above, widening participation in HE is not a new 21<sup>st</sup> century policy mantra (Parry, 2010). Equality of educational opportunity has been a policy theme over the last 50 years. During the 1960s, educational opportunity was extended as a result of the Robbins Committee report in 1963 with the creation of new universities (Parry, 2010). The Committee was put together to review patterns of full-time HE and to consider what long-term development should be based upon. It documented inequalities that existed and discussed ways to "...redress the inequalities

and imbalances in the higher education population” (Ross, 2003, p.42). The implementation of what became known as a ‘binary policy’ created targeted opportunities for either academic students in universities, or via vocational opportunities at polytechnics from 1970. The binary policy was significant because polytechnics were expected to offer different types of student access to a different form of HE (David, 2010). As Ross (2003) points out, the binary policy had several effects, such as the sector increasing in size, particularly within polytechnics, with a marked increase in women students. Yet:

...while the fastest rate of growth went to the lower socio-economic groups, the absolute incremental growth went to the higher socio-economic groups...about three-quarters of the students were middle class, and one-quarter working class.

(Ross, 2003, p.52)

Whilst the early 1980s began with cuts in the finance made available to HE, the impact of which was severe (Tight, 2009), widening participation was discussed more strongly and became a government priority (Lewis, 2002). During the 1980s, Robbins was reformulated by consecutive Conservative governments, with an additional objective that referred to the provision of continuing education to facilitate social change and to meet the needs of individuals. The governments of Thatcher and Major drove the expansion of HE with both growth and access policies that were very different from the retrenchment imposed on HE at the beginning of this period of Conservative rule (Tight, 2009; Parry, 2010).

The 1985 green paper *The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s* recommended that it was necessary to make a commitment to access for mature learners and to non-standard entrants. In polytechnics, both were prevalent, although their presence was less widespread in the university sector (David, 2010). During this period, the government outlined that in order to improve the performance of the country, HE needed to contribute more effectively (Tight, 2009). According to Ross (2003), the paper was preoccupied with levels of national economic growth, which were low comparatively. The alleged anti-business bias of HE institutions and the low number of students qualifying in technology, engineering and science was seen as a major contributing factor. It was viewed that there was a lack of linkage between industry, business and commerce and HE.

In 1987, an expansion of HE was announced by Kenneth Baker, the then Secretary of state for Education and Science, that allowed demand for HE to be transformed into HE places. Consequently, student numbers grew by 54% from 1988-89 to 1995-96 (Lewis, 2002). The 1987 White Paper, *Higher Education Meeting the Challenge*, offered a revised policy on access and recognised three routes into HE: the traditional A-level qualification, vocational courses and access courses. Institutions also had the right to admit people from other routes if they were fully satisfied that it had the capacity to benefit. This change led to rapid growth and 'mass' participation (DfES, 2006b). The White Paper proposed an age participation index of between 630,000 and 720,000 full-time students by 1999. In fact, there were 1,150,000 students by 1999 (Ross, 2003).

According to Lewis (2002), although there was no overarching strategic plan for widening participation in HE, there was a sudden growth in demand in the late 1980s

which was attributed to the inception of GCSEs. This led to a greater number of pupils staying on at school. As touched upon, whilst the then Secretary of State for Education and Science discussed an expansion of HE to meet this demand, the social composition of those students participating in HE did not change. Accordingly, Lewis (2002, p.2) asserts that "...while more students came from lower social groups, the same was true of all groups, so the balance did not change".

The trends established in the 1980s were much the same for the majority of the 1990s, with the steady and continued growth of HE participation. During the 1990s, there was a sector-wide strategic attempt to broaden the recruitment profile of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Many HEIs ran institutional schemes aimed at improving awareness and widening access in HE. Special initiatives adopted by the HEFCE were aimed at ethnic minorities and students with disabilities. In the White Paper, *Higher Education: A New Framework* (1991), the binary policy was ended and the *Further and Higher Education Act* (1992) created new universities in place of polytechnics and removed the binary policy (Lewis, 2002; Tight, 2009; Parry, 2010). Universities began to be referred to as pre-1992 and post-1992 as ways of referring to structure types. The traditional, or pre-1992, universities from medieval times included the elite of Cambridge and Oxford, other Victorian or red-brick universities (from the nineteenth century) such as Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield, and twentieth century universities such as Warwick and Keele. Finally, there are those referred to as new or post-1992 universities that include Sunderland, Wolverhampton, Huddersfield and Staffordshire. This was the greatest single university creation in UK history (Tight, 2009; Parry, 2010). HEFCE also established an advisory group, in 1992, to consider access and participation issues and to advise on measures to improve the participation of those people from disadvantaged

groups. Two initiatives were adopted aimed at students with disabilities in the early 1990s and in 1993-94, 38 institutions were allocated £3 million for special projects to widen access for those students with disabilities. There were also initiatives to increase the participation of ethnic minorities (Lewis, 2002).

By the mid-1990s, it was recognised that those from a lower socio-economic background, along with the disabled were the major underrepresented groups in HE (HEFCE, 1996 in Tight, 2009). In 1995, a committee of inquiry chaired by Sir Ron Dearing was appointed. It was tasked with reporting on how to maximise HE participation, but at the same time maintaining equality and diversity, whilst enhancing teaching and learning. Prior to being published in 1997, it commissioned a number of studies on a variety of areas including access for students from lower socio-economic groups and on women and ethnic minorities. Whilst renewed expansion had been expected to broaden participation, the Dearing Committee (1997), in laying out its vision of a learning society, discussed that progress would be greater still if widening participation was an objective of national policy (Ross, 2003). According to Tight (2009), in considering the purpose of HE, the Dearing Report was seen to serve as a summation of the official HE thinking at that time. The new Labour government accepted the recommendations made by Dearing for renewed growth. It was proposed that HE opportunities would be offered to all those who had the potential to benefit, with courses being provided to satisfy both students and employers. The closing of social gaps became the focus of widening participation policies (DfES, 2006b). The implementation of the Dearing recommendation was the first of four phases of policy that made a concerted effort to reduce the social class gap in participation. The then newly elected Labour government placed increasing and widening participation at the

heart of its policies (Parry, 2010). According to Ross (2003), the four main purposes of education, defined by Robbins thirty-five years earlier, were elaborated by Dearing:

- For individuals to develop capabilities to higher potential throughout life, so they grow intellectually, are equipped for work, contribute to society, and achieve personal fulfilment
- To increase knowledge and understanding, for its own sake and to apply beneficially to the economy and society
- To serve the knowledge-based economy, locally and nationally
- To play a major role in shaping a democratic, civilized, inclusive society.

(Ross, 2003, citing Dearing 1997:para.5.11)

Whilst in some quarters, Dearing was seen to have had a lesser impact than Robbins, because of its concern and focus on a single policy concerning student funding (Tight, 2009), as Vignoles and Crawford (2010) assert, the underlying concerns of both Robbins and Dearing were to provide access for less advantaged students.

During the first phase of policy, the cap on expansion was taken away with priority in the allocation of additionally funded numbers given to institutions that could widen access for underrepresented groups and expand sub-degree provision. The second concentrated on the slow rate of growth in HE that had been achieved since 1997. To increase demand targets were outlined for participation in HE and foundation degrees were launched (Coffield and Vignoles 1997; Robertson and Hillman 1997). As discussed above, the main focus of the 1980s and 1990s was on various underrepresented groups, with Governments making tacit recommendations that underrepresented groups should be better represented (Duke and Layer, 2004).

However, whilst these growth years saw expanded participation by middle and higher socio-economic groups, what had not changed significantly was the ratio of participation between social classes (Coffield and Vignoles 1997; Robertson and Hillman 1997).

Whilst student numbers increased, the 'social make up' of students remained broadly the same (Lewis, 2002). The launch of the 'Excellence Challenge' in 2000 by David Blunkett, the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment provided additional funds to widen participation of young people in HE. As a result of this, HEFCE introduced and revisited several schemes related to encouraging participation of students from low participation backgrounds (Lewis, 2002).

A third and, according to Parry (2010), a contested element of widening participation policy was the decision to allow variable fees to be charged for full-time undergraduate education. In 2003, a white paper on the future of HE was published. The policy emphasis was to aim for 50% of 18-30 year olds to participate in some sort of HE by 2010 (David, 2010). Figures were to measure participation rather than access or entry, and the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) was created as a device for evaluating the progress of HE institutions. As David (2010, p10) contends "...these administrative and policy measures laid the foundation for the 2004 Higher Education Act". The Labour government limited the amount of fees that each university could charge to £3000 per annum, and also decided how many students universities could recruit. Individuals were also offered the opportunity to have either loans or bursaries in order to finance the fees. The Labour government focused their efforts on increasing the number of young people from traditionally underrepresented groups in HE. Their aim was to reach out to those social groups that were excluded and they were motivated by social inclusion and economic development (David 2010).

The fourth phase arose due to suggestions that progress in widening participation had stalled, with HEFCE being asked again to look at its support for widening participation, the effectiveness of interventions and the option for going further still (Parry, 2010; citing DfES, 2006a). HEFCE outlined, amongst other things, that academic research was neither a ready nor reliable guide to 'what works' (HEFCE 2006b). An independent assessment concluded that too little was known about the widening participation activities of universities, although within the high-level strategy of the majority of institutions, widening participation was recognised (Parry, 2010).

In spite of the relative success in increasing participation, there were still concerns about the social class gap in entry to HE, with children from poor backgrounds far less likely to go to university than more advantaged children (Crozier, Reay and Clayton, 2010; Vignoles and Crawford, 2010).

Throughout New Labour's 13 years of power, HE was a significant policy discourse but by the end of their third term, the debate had begun to change as they commissioned a report about how to provide HE that was sustainable. However, the Browne Committee did not report until after the 2010 general election.

The newly elected coalition government took forward a more individualistic agenda with regard to social mobility and consolidated a narrowing of policy discourse through the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS) offering the argument for the need for austerity. Being more individualistic and financially focused, that little attention appeared to be paid to equalities was evident within the policies (David, 2010). The Government accepted the proposal by the Browne Committee and in the Government



white paper *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* (2011), it was outlined how universities were to be funded through fees paid by students and loans were offered by the government with fees being capped at £9,000 per year with a planned average fee of £7,500.

In *University Challenge: How education can enhance social mobility*, Milburn (2012) recommends that universities can take action to improve social mobility by breaking down the life cycle of students into four stages:

- getting ready – the outreach activity which universities undertake to improve attainment and aspiration, and to help potential students make the right choices
- getting in – the admissions processes and criteria which universities use
- staying in – the work of student services and bursaries in improving rates of retention at university
- getting on – the steps which universities take to help students succeed in their chosen career after graduation.

(p.6)

Finally, in *Higher Education: Fair Access Challenge* (2013), The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission summarises how universities responded to the recommendations to 2012s *University Challenge*. It emphasises that, whilst government has a key responsibility, more needs to be done by universities to ensure that their doors are open to a wider pool of talent.

So, in spite of over 50 years of widening participation policy and various initiatives, many of the same inequalities still exist. As Vignoles and Crawford (2010, p.59) aver

...evidence suggests that the key concern going forward in terms of widening participation in HE should be the gap in participation between richer and poorer students.

This research helps explore some of the reasons for this.

### ***1.6 The Character of the Post-16 System in Barnsley and the Location of the Research***

At the outset of this doctoral thesis, young people in Barnsley had several post-16 educational opportunities. Barnsley had two school sixth forms, Town and West, and a large FE college. The available qualifications varied from academic to vocational. The academic qualifications available included the Advanced Subsidiary level (AS) and Advanced (A) level qualifications. The AS level is a stand-alone qualification and is half the value of a full A level. The A level is the main pre-university qualification in England taken by students (Sheffield Hallam University, 2014).

Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and City and Guilds technical levels were also available to the participants. BTECs are work related and are built with the needs of employers in mind. They allow progression to university and can be taken alongside AS and A levels. Technical level qualifications, such as City and Guilds, viewed as being appropriate for students who intend to specialise in a particular technical occupation and designed to give young people a route into HE, apprenticeships or employment were also available to the participants (BMBC, 2014).

Other opportunities included apprenticeships which are Nationally designed training programmes for 18-25 year olds. Whilst on an apprenticeship young people can learn on the job with an employer, build their knowledge, make money and gain a qualification

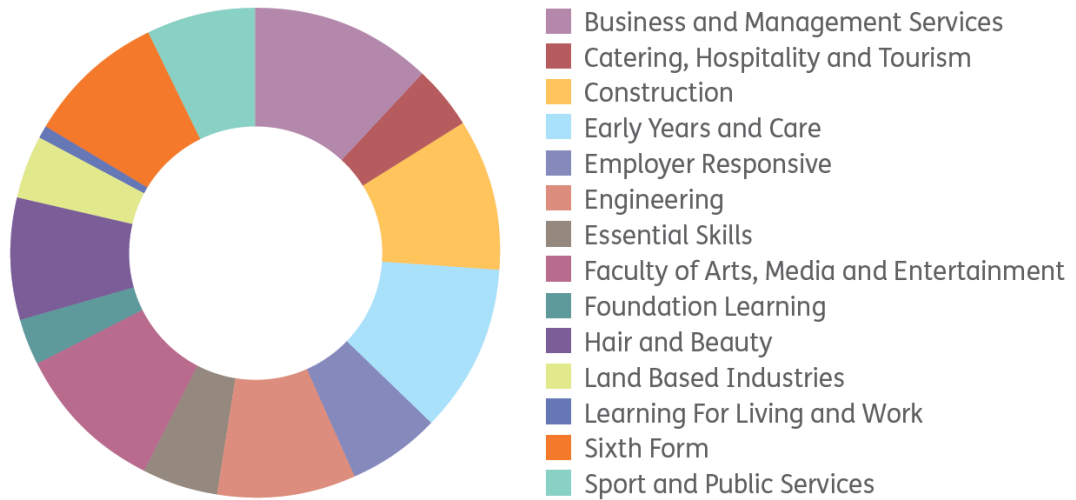
(Sheffield Hallam University, 2014). Whilst undertaking an apprenticeship, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are normally completed within the workplace, with young people being assessed by portfolio which includes evidence of the work that is undertaken. A key strength of the apprenticeship route is that it gives young people the opportunity to work for an employer whilst gaining experience and skills within the workplace (BMBC, 2014).

The participants of this study were working toward a variety of academic and vocational qualifications and the research was undertaken at two of the three sixth forms, Town sixth form, part of a large FE college and Village sixth form, part of an academy in Barnsley. They were chosen because they have students who resided in low-income neighbourhoods that were in the top 20% of the IMD and who had chosen not to participate. West sixth form was not chosen as it did not fit these parameters.

## **Town Sixth Form**

Town Sixth Form is part of a large tertiary college serving the town and surrounding areas in the north of England. 80% of school leavers in the town attend the college which is the main provider of post-16 education. It provides courses in the following subject areas:

Figure 1-5 Town College Subject Areas



(Town College Annual report, 2013)

In 2009/10, 7770 learners attended the college, with just less than 60% aged 16 to 18, with 60% of students being female. At Town College, slightly less than 3% of learners have minority ethnic backgrounds compared to 2% of the local population (Ofsted, 2010).

The table below summaries the type of provision the college offers and the numbers enrolled to each type of provision:

Table 2 Type of Provision and Number Enrolled

Type of Provision	Numbers of enrolled learners in 2009/10
<b>Provision for young learners:</b>	
14 to 16	375 part-time learners
FE (16 to 18)	3592 full-time learners 433 part-time learners
Foundation learning (including the above)	477 full-time learners 49 part-time learners
Entry to employment	229 learners
<b>Provision for adult learners:</b>	
FE (19+)	443 full-time learners 1685 part-time learners
<b>Employer provision</b>	
Train to Gain Apprentice	989 learners 647 apprentices

(Ofsted, p.3, 2010)

Town College is seen as being highly effective by Ofsted, particularly with regard to raising learners' aspirations and supporting them to succeed, with learners of all ages achieving well at the majority of levels (Ofsted, 2010).

The college has recently been recognised as one of the best colleges in the UK by Ofsted and it has also been awarded Beacon Status by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) (Town College, 2013).

Leadership and management within Town College are viewed by Ofsted as outstanding, with the principal and governors offering strong and effective leadership in their eyes. The staff across the college are seen to share the same ambition and this has been singled out as a reason for the improvements since their previous Ofsted inspection in 2007 (Ofsted, 2010).

Fourteen interviews were carried out at Town Sixth Form.

## **Village Sixth Form**

The Academy, of which Village Sixth Form is a part, is a relatively newly established provider of post-16 education and, since it opened in 2006, it has continued to grow steadily and increase the number of courses on offer with a view of meeting the needs of its students and the local community. The overall effectiveness of the new and growing Sixth Form was satisfactory in 2009; however, in February 2014, it was viewed as being inadequate (Ofsted, 2014).

Village Academy is smaller than most secondary schools and the proportion of its students who are supported by the pupil premium is well above average. The vast majority of students are White British, with students who are supported by School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs being above the national average. The Academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics. Those students attaining five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C including English and mathematics is low and the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and others in the school is wide. Within the school, teaching is viewed as not

being as effective as it could be as students do not make the required progress (Ofsted, 2014). It was levelled at leaders and managers within the Academy that they do not ensure that the teachers make best use of information they are given about their students' abilities and progress, and consequently they do not ensure that work is always hard enough. The governing body has also been criticised for not holding the academy rigorously enough to account (Ofsted, 2014).

Village Sixth Form presently has 79 students who study a variety of academic and vocational courses and it has seen a gradual rise in levels of achievement.

Increasing numbers of sixth form students are participating in HE, including at 'top-flight' universities. However, much like the overall school, the Sixth Form has been criticised recently by Ofsted as not all students make progress as well as they might. Whilst teaching at the Sixth Form has been seen to offer some opportunities to develop the skills that students will need in HE, with many students making the progress that is expected, there was some evidence that students do not develop their research skills and discover things for themselves. Evidence suggests that there is an over-reliance by students on being told things; teachers do too much for them. They are not encouraged to find things out themselves and this appears to have slowed the progress and quality of the students' learning and consequently, they are not always as prepared as they could be for what HE demands (Ofsted, 2014). However, despite the criticism, Village Sixth Form's students gained impressive results in 2013. Of those students studying A levels, 27% achieved an A grade and 53% received A\*-B compared to 8% in 2012, with an overall pass rate of 100% (Barnsley Chronicle, 2013). The Sixth Form offers a

programme of level 3 courses which are designed to build on the success of GCSE and prepare students for entry to university (Ofsted, 2009; Village Academy, 2014).

At Village Sixth Form, 22 interviews were carried out.

### ***1.7 The Changing Political Landscape***

At the commencement of this study the New Labour government, elected in 1997, was in power in Britain and it seemed particularly interested in pushing the widening participation agenda. Whilst there were some who argue that this was of secondary importance to 'upskilling' (Hall, 2003), it appeared that they were committed to increasing the participation of young people in HE to 50% by 2010. Since May 2010, the Coalition government has been in power and it has implemented some major reforms to HE funding based on the recommendations of Lord Browne's review, which was set up by Labour (Conservatives, 2012). The Coalition government has raised the upper limit on tuition fees to £9000 with courses charging between £6000 and £9000 being subject to new requirements on increasing access to the poorest students. Whilst tuition fees are not paid up front by either students or their parents, this change in policy had the potential to skew my research, with prospective students placing greater emphasis on financial constraints as a reason not to participate in HE. This is something that is given consideration within the empirical chapters.

### ***1.8 Structure of the Thesis***

This first chapter explains the motivation behind this research and gives consideration to concepts of deprivation and social deprivation, the socio-economic context in Barnsley, the shifting political landscape and locates the study.



Chapter 2 outlines methodological issues. Consideration is given to assumptions of an ontological and epistemological nature and I examine methodological issues, and outline and justify the method chosen to collect data. This chapter also draws on literature that discusses key issues such as reliability, validity, ethics and piloting. I close this chapter by justifying and explaining how the qualitative data collected was analysed. Particular reference is made to Pierre Bourdieu's three-level methodology.

Chapter 3 looks critically at culture, the concept of culture and its differing, all-encompassing conceptions which have influenced my chosen definition of culture. In attempting to justify my choice, I give consideration to various definitions and interpretations of culture and local culture. I conclude this chapter with a discussion and justification of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of practice, field, habitus, capital and symbolic violence which, in part, guide the analysis of this research, using it as a theoretical framework against which the decision making of my participants has been evaluated.

Chapter 4 summarises a wide range of literature on HE participation and it makes reference to literature that considers why people from the most socially deprived areas are under-represented within HE. Consideration has been given as to why people living within traditionally working-class communities choose not to participate in HE, and literature that uncovered the social, cultural and personal factors which contribute to the choice not to participate in HE is considered. Literature is included that considers people's expectations, motivations and aspirations with particular emphasis being placed on social class and culture.

Chapter 5 is the first of two findings chapters and attempts to analyse the data that I have collected to begin to answer my research questions. In this chapter, I consider a wide range of participant viewpoints pertaining to what is understood and expected from HE. I explore the implications of debt and the general uncertainty linked to the costs of HE whilst giving consideration to the fact that HE participation offers no guaranteed future benefit. I pay particular attention to Bourdieu's Framework and other possible cultural implication and locate my own findings within that of some of the significant research highlighted within Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 6, the second findings chapter, outlines how there seems to be a persuasive view that, for the majority of the participants, their choices regarding HE participation were influenced both implicitly and explicitly by their close family, by their friends and to some extent by broader networks. Once more, I pay particular attention to Bourdieu's Framework and other possible cultural implications, whilst locating my own findings within some of the significant research highlighted within Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 7 discusses the conclusion that can tentatively be drawn as a result of the research that was undertaken. Within this chapter, I pay particular attention to the research questions outlined above. I also make some suggestions as to why young people, with appropriate qualifications, from the most socially deprived areas of Barnsley are under-represented within HE and outline how this thesis contributes to knowledge in this area.

## **1.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has outlined what will be undertaken, the reason for and motivation behind my choice of doctoral topic. In particular, I have concentrated on the scale, nature and focus of the study and, in doing so, the boundaries of this research were outlined. I have paid particular attention to the concept of social deprivation. Several different indicators have been outlined within this chapter, but a key influence has been shown to be the number of people with low level or no qualifications at all. Within this chapter, I have justified why participants could be viewed as being both socially deprived and from working-class backgrounds.

The HE participation rates offered by HEFCE's POLAR classification illustrated that the wards in which the participants reside all fell in quintile 1, with participation rates ranging from between 12.7% and 15.8%. I have explained that the participants are viewed as being from a working-class background and whilst some of the many definitions are referred to, of importance is the fact that class appears to be structured, trajectory based, as well as being both discursive, cultural and relational to members of other social class groupings. I have also taken account of the idea of working-class identity in justifying their working-class background and the impact this has on place attachment and locality.

Whilst this research does not focus on policy, in order to offer some context, widening participation policy from 1960 to 2014 was summarised. What is clear from this overview is that widening participation is not a new issue and in spite of over 50 years of widening participation policy, many of the same inequalities still exist.

In order to start to explain the relationships between the participants, the institutions where they study and the fields that they inhabit, Town College and Village Academy were discussed. Each location was considered separately with appropriate information being referred to.

I closed this chapter by considering the changing political landscape since the outset of this study, before outlining the structure of the study and giving a brief synopsis of each of the seven chapters.

## **Chapter 2 A Bourdieuan Approach**

### ***2.1 Chapter Introduction***

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the methodological context within which this educational research has been undertaken. The choices that are discussed are profoundly important to this research because they justify the philosophical position taken, how it influenced the conducting of the research, what was researched and how the data collected was interpreted (Newby, 2010). It proposes an interrelationship between the method and methodology I use and the epistemological and ontological standpoint I adopt, and this is explained and justified (Crotty, 1998). The decisions that are made within this chapter are shown to be relational and this point is illustrated nicely by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p.21) who suggest:

...that ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions; these, in turn, give rise to methodological considerations; and these in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection.

Within the chapter, I also draw on literature that discusses key issues such as reliability, validity, ethics and piloting. I close this chapter by justifying and explaining how the qualitative data collected was analysed.

### ***2.2 Ontology and Epistemology***

I start this section by reiterating my aim and research questions, as the decisions made in this chapter were taken with the requirements of this study in mind and they imply particular ontological and epistemological standpoints:

## Aim of the investigation

- To understand why young people, with appropriate qualifications, from the most socially deprived areas of Barnsley are underrepresented within HE.

## Research questions:

- To what extent do the expectations, motivations and aspirations of a group of young adults impact on their HE participation decisions?
- What prevents young adults from entering HE?
- How do social, cultural and personal factors contribute to the group's decision-making processes with respect to entry into HE?

In order to attempt to resolve my research questions, assumptions of an ontological and epistemological nature needed to be addressed. How I viewed the construction of reality and knowledge and how I interpreted them had major implications on how I went about my research and how I attempted to resolve my research questions.

Ontology is concerned with the essence of phenomena and the nature of their existence, and is often used to refer to beliefs regarding reality or the types of things that make up the world. It is concerned with whether the world exists and, if it does exist, in what form. For some, a real world exists and it is their role to understand and explain it (Glesne, 2011). If I held such a view within this research, social reality would be viewed as being external to my participants, imposing itself on their consciousness from without, and objective in nature (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Alternatively, for others, the world is viewed as being shaped by the mind and how things are perceived, categorised and interpreted (Glense, 2010; Newby; 2010). If this particular view was held, social reality would be viewed as a product of my participants'

consciousness and the result of their cognitions, created by their own minds and subjective in nature.

In order to help resolve my research questions, the work of Pierre Bourdieu was instrumental. Bourdieu attempted to develop an ontological account of the social world that transcended the conceptual oppositions of social science highlighted above. His 'praxeological' account was developed as a way of resisting social reality being reduced to the extremes of objectivist/subjectivist (Bernasconi-Kohn, 2007). Much like Bourdieu, within this research I view the social world as an "...intrinsically two fold reality..." (1990b, p.135) and I follow a Bourdieuan framework to capture the "...dialectical relationships between these two realities of the social world" (Bourdieu, 1989, p.14 quoted in Bernasconi-Kohn, 2007) when addressing my research questions.

### ***2.3 An Epistemological Stance: Objectivism Vs. Constructivism***

If ontology is concerned with beliefs that relate to reality, epistemology is concerned with the criteria for what does and does not constitute valid knowledge within that reality. Epistemology provides a philosophical background for deciding what kinds of knowledge are legitimate and adequate. This involves more than just helping with the design of a chosen research tool, it influences the overarching structure of research including the kind of evidence that is gathered and from where, and how it is interpreted. How I aligned myself in this particular debate, and the stance I took, profoundly affected how I went about uncovering knowledge of the social behaviour of the participants with regard to HE participation (Gray, 2009).

As touched upon, the question of whether knowledge is independent of the knower and a particular situation or a product of it (Cuff, Sharrock and Francis, 2006) was initially hard to reconcile. Having reviewed both objectivism and constructivism, I saw potential and possibilities in both epistemological standpoints. Constructivists, for example, believe that truth and meaning do not exist in some external world, but are created by a subject's interactions with the world. Meaning is constructed not discovered, so subjects construct their own meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon (Gray, 2009). Within this research, I was first and foremost interested in my participants' subjective points of view pertaining to their reasoning for non-participation and how they were influenced by their interactions. Interestingly, Kratochwill (2008) notes two basic commitments to the core of constructivism. Firstly, agency matters in social life and secondly, if the human world is accepted as one of artifice, that is, one based on ingenuity and inventiveness, then any ideas or notions that individuals have about their actions, matter. Consequently, I was particularly interested in the decision making of the participants, their reasons for non-participation and the 'strategies of action' that they had constructed as an alternative to participation.

However, in spite of my interest in the participants' subjective points of view, it seemed clear that this alone was not adequate to explain their decisions, as I was also interested in that which shaped and moulded such choices. Therefore, whilst the subjective feelings and opinions of the participants needed to be considered, I also needed to pay particular attention to the objective structures that either knowingly or unknowingly may have impacted on their decision making. Objectivism holds that reality exists independently of consciousness; in other words, there is an objective reality 'out there'. So, research is about discovering this objective truth. The world



exists as an objective entity outside of the mind of the observer and, in principle, it is knowable in its entirety (Gray, 2009). Researchers can be separated from the object which they are researching as they are able to observe in a neutral way that does not affect the object being observed (Della Porta and Keating, 2008). Therefore, I was also interested in understanding how objective social structures such as social class, the family or education influence the participants' decision making, whether knowingly or unknowingly.

Much like Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), I am against methodological monism which has the ontological priority of structure or agent. Within this research, the approaches of objectivism and constructivism were both viewed as being flawed as the more subtle elements of the middle way is missed because such an approach reduces behaviour to one or the other (Layder, 2006). In order to reconcile the dualisms of objectivism and constructivism (Bourdieu talks about subjectivism), as already mentioned, I was drawn to the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who suggests that the two orders, objectivity and subjectivity, are "...tied together through actual social practices, wherein objective social relations are produced and reproduced within particular situations" (2006, p.194). In utilising a Bourdieuan framework, I was not obliged to choose between the two poles as social reality, action and structure and their intersection as history lies in the relationships between the two (Layder, 2006). False oppositions like objectivism and subjectivism have been criticised by Bourdieu because, for him, the reality of people's activities (practices) are a combination of many different influences (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). As he points out:

...how artificial the ordinary oppositions between theory and research, between quantitative and qualitative methods, between statistical recording and ethnographic observation, between the grasping of structures and the construction of individuals can be...

(Bourdieu and de Saint Martin, 1978, p.7 in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.27)

For Bourdieu, the subjective point of view has two key features that were important to this study. Firstly, the location of the participants within society, in being socially deprived and working-class means that some things are not available to them and secondly, their own practical concerns shape the way in which they actually see things and this can change over time (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

However, objectivity, by contrast, is distinguishable by permanence and comprehensiveness and forms "...the basis for representation and constitute the structural constraints that bear upon intentions (Bourdieu, 1989, p.14). Both subjective and objective standpoints are important, as only partial truths are expressed by both subjectivism and objectivism and it is only from an objectivist viewpoint that the subjectivity of my participants' points of view was able to become clear. For the participants, the world in which they live is fixed whilst their own experiences are very real (Cuff *et al.*, 2006).

By giving consideration to both objectivist and subjectivist standpoints, I was able to begin to ascertain how the participants' opinions, beliefs and 'strategies of action' were influenced by their working-class and socially deprived backgrounds, as well as their place of study and family. Such an approach allowed the interviews that were undertaken to yield data that related to the participants expectations, motivations and

aspirations and their subjective reasoning for non-participation. However, the interviews also emphasised objective structural influences relating to social, cultural and personal factors that may have unknowingly influenced their decisions. Such an approach also helped to illustrate the participants' apparent lack of freedom when it came to participation. Although aspects of this were financial, it extended to social and interpersonal factors that related to their family, friends and place of study.

In summary, utilising particular ontological and epistemological stances helped to shed light on the research questions highlighted above. Whilst a subjective approach would allow me to ascertain thoughts, opinions and feelings pertaining to the HE participation choices, there is clearly more to the participants' social world, as it is also made up of "...structures and systems that are irreducible to ideas and intentions (Bernasconi-Kohn, 2007, p.69). A Bourdieuan framework was utilised to ascertain how objective structures influence participation decisions and vice versa.

## ***2.4 Research Methodology and Data Collection Methods***

As discussed, the research that was undertaken throughout this study was guided by Bourdieu and adapts a Bourdieuan framework to help explore the research questions outlined above. A three-level methodology was utilised and in doing so, the following key areas were considered:

- The construction of the research object
- Field analysis
- Participant objectivation

(Grenfell, 2012)

Within this study, the object of research (why young people who could participate in HE choose not to) was considered in relation to the national and local context, as well as in relation to the links between, and with, key institutions and finally in relation to the participants. In order to carry out a three-level methodology, I utilised some of Bourdieu's relational thinking tools to interrogate the decision making of my participants. Particular attention was paid to practice, field, habitus, capital and symbolic violence, "...to effect the synthesis of objectivism and subjectivism..." (Wacquant, 2008, p. 267). I discuss these tools in Chapter 3.

To ensure that the three levels were adequately considered, five areas were utilised:

- Initial research construction
- Data collection
- Field analysis
- Research presentation
- Research discussion

(Hardy, 2012)

Each of the five areas is justified in relation to the requirements of the study. Utilising the five areas helped me to understand why the participants chose not to participate in HE and to begin to resolve my research questions.

## **Initial research construction**

Within Chapter 1, the scale, nature and focus of this study was discussed. I also identified the sets of relationships associated with my participants and key institutions. Within this research, my aim was to break from 'scholastic knowledge' itself, as I did not want to produce knowledge as a result of my own position within a social space, my

own habitus and life trajectory. In order to do this, I have engaged in the process of participant objectivation, or the objectification of the objectifying subject, which is a key element of Bourdieu's epistemological experiment and which, for him, entails the sociologist being reflexive about their research method and other procedures that they use.

For Bourdieu, reflexivity is viewed as an epistemological necessity (Grenfell, 2012). It entails the systematic exploration of the "...unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought (Bourdieu, 1982, p.10 cited in Grenfell, 2012), as well as "...guide the practical carrying out of social enquiry" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.40). In *Pascalian Meditations* (2000), Bourdieu discussed the scholastic point of view in which he refers to intellectual bias and specific dispositions that are produced within the academic field. He talked of the danger of the scholarly gaze and the three types of biases that could have blurred my gaze. Firstly, my social origins and coordinates were considered. Secondly, the position I occupy within the academic field and the field of power was taken account of. Finally, the intellectualist bias that may mean that I construe the world as a spectacle, as a set of significations that need to be interpreted rather than problems that I needed to be solved practically, which could have led to me missing the entire logic of the participants' practice were considered.

Whilst personal awareness was not enough, it was a start (Grenfell, 2012). It was important to note that the focus, scale and nature of this study were based upon my own views of a particular social phenomenon that were shaped by my own point of view. Throughout this study I reminded myself that I am an academic at a 'new'

university, who previously worked in FE and that at the onset of this study, I worked at UCB which had a particular remit for widening participation. My interest in the HE decision making of young people was the result of my own upbringing, background and employment. I had a definite opinion on these issues. I was keen not to present findings that suggested that non-participation was the wrong choice, given my own predisposition to participation as a result of my employment, upbringing and education. In order to do this, I ensured that data collection and analysis was an iterative and cyclical process. I revisited the interview transcripts periodically over a four year period and re-worked through the phases of thematic analysis (see p.67). The purpose of this was to see if I had misinterpreted or missed anything of significance during the previous passes and to ensure that I had not tried to influence the participants' decision making pertaining to their participation decisions. I was constantly conscious of the power relationships that existed between myself and the participants, both with regard to trying to influence their decisions and in the way I have discussed their experiences. Following an iterative process made sure that these issues were always in the forefront of my thinking. This helped to ensure that my own concerns, which may have contained taken-for-granted assumptions, which could have led to bias in my research, did not stop me seeing what was in front of me (Kamler and Thompson, 2006).

In being reflexive, I also interrogated the work I produced for this study. In the same way I have done with the work of others I have utilised, I adopted a critical stance and asked how particular events, categories or assumption have been produced as a result of my own dispositions, culture and social practice. For example, when first writing my findings, in places, I seemed to infer that non-participation was a bad thing and that participants should consider participating. Even if I held this opinion, it would not help to

resolve my research questions, so I readdressed the writing of my findings and ensured a more critical standpoint that related more specifically to the research questions (Kamler and Thompson, 2006).

## **Data Collection**

The purpose of the data collection was to gather information about my participants' practices, attitudes (habitus, capital) and other key characteristics and influences such as their place of study (Hardy, 2012). In order to help resolve the research questions highlighted above (see p.40), 36 semi-structured interviews were carried out. Arksey & Knight (1999, p.32) point out that:

Interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit – to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings.

Semi-structured interviews have been used as this method allowed rich information that was personal and unique to the participants to be collected (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Using semi-structured interviews enabled the meaning of the central themes to become visible and this helped to shed light on the social, cultural and personal factors that contribute to the decision-making processes of the participants with respect to HE entry (Kvale, 2007). As the objective of the research was exploratory and involved the examination of the participants' attitudes, opinions and feelings, semi-structured interviews were deemed an appropriate method to use (Gray, 2009).

Through using semi-structured interviews, I was able to uncover information at both a factual and meaning level and as Kvale (2007, p.11) discusses, "It is necessary to listen

to the explicit descriptions and the meanings expressed, as well as to what is 'said between the lines'". Interviews can be useful when people enjoy talking rather than filling in questionnaires. Carrying out semi-structured interviews allowed participants the opportunity to consider and reflect on issues, without having to write anything down. If I had chosen to use questionnaires, then the meaning of questions may not have been clear. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to offer immediate clarity and deal with any potential ambiguity. Any questionnaire I designed was likely to include open-ended and complex questions and therefore, the range of depth and detail hoped for may not have been forthcoming (Gray, 2009). Similarly, I discounted focus groups, as a particular criticism of focus groups is that data collection remains at a surface level. Whilst opinions can be gained from a focus group, it has been shown to be difficult to get those involved to articulate why such opinions and beliefs are held, a particularly important element of this research (Newby, 2010).

Whilst I may have initially contemplated the use of additional methods of data collection to supplement the data I collected during the semi-structured interviews, I quickly discounted the idea and chose not to venture beyond the interview data. I was mindful of the criticism that multiple data sets amassed through different methods can encourage laziness; "...as soon as you have a problem analysing one dataset, you switch to another (thereby resolving nothing)" (Silverman, 2010, p.201). I did not want to use multiple methods as a 'comfort blanket' so I could argue that I had considered the research object from several angles, as this would have only masked any potential difficulties. Whilst I appreciate that using multiple methods can assist in data triangulation, improve the reliability of the data and help to balance out potential weaknesses in each of the data collection methods utilised, I was robust in my use of



semi-structured interviews in terms of design and how they were administered (this is discussed in greater detail below) (Gray, 2009; Silverman, 2010). This enabled me to amass a great deal of useful information pertaining to the decision making of the participants.

Utilising semi-structured interviews to collect primary data was useful because it allowed the order of questions to be changed and additional questions to be asked as issues arose. This enabled the probing of views and opinions where it was desirable for participants to expand upon their answers, and it allowed participants to provide nuanced accounts of the varied reasons for their choices not to participate in HE (Kvale, 2007; Gray 2009). The use of open questions provided original data that helped to outline the reasons why the participants who could potentially participate in HE chose not to. Such an approach was seen as being vital, as my objective was to explore the participants' subjective meanings pertaining to their reasons for non-participation (Gray, 2009). The semi-structured interview allowed participants to tell their stories in their own way, in their own words. This helped me to get an understanding of their reasons for non-participation, as they appeared in the context of their own frames of reference.

In designing the interviews, it was important that I paid attention to how I might use them to operationalise the Bourdieuan concepts of practice, field, habitus, capital and symbolic violence. I designed the questions to collect data that would help to resolve the research questions and to operationalise these key concepts. For example, question 1 ensured that data was collected that shed light on the participants' practices, on the activities they undertook and what they intended to do instead of participating in

HE. It helped to uncover common reactions that appeared to be standardised amongst the participants on issues such as the importance of gaining employment.

Question 4 helped to tell me something about the importance of the sub-field of sixth form education and how it appeared to influence what the participants expected from HE. The participants felt safe in this sub-field, they had some recognised cultural capital and they felt that the sub-field could help enhance their social capital and, most important to them, their economic capital.

Questions 3 and 5 helped me to understand the participants' dispositions and what appeared to impact on their 'strategies of action', their values, the cultural rules they followed and the way they thought and felt, about issues such as debt and employment.

Question 1 helped to illustrate the relationship between the participants' habitus and the sub-field of sixth form education and their family and the influence both had on the decision making of the participants. For example, the participants seemed to view the pedagogic action that took place in the family as being legitimate and when that was backed up by their respective sixth forms, it pushed some participants towards apprenticeships.

However, in carrying out semi-structured interviews I was fully aware of the criticisms that have been levelled at them. For example, it is important to note that there could have been a danger of bias due to poorly constructed questions as well as some response bias. Further problems could have included inaccuracies due to the poor

recall of participants or the fact that the participants could have given what they thought I wanted to hear (Gray, 2009). These issues are addressed below.

As touched upon, ambiguity could also have been a problem, with the possibility of participants giving contradictory statements during interviews, as well as them interpreting statements or questions that I asked, differently. It is worth noting, however, that the purpose of this research was not to “...end up with unequivocal and quantifiable meanings of the themes in focus” (Kvale, 2007, p.13). My task as the interviewer was, where possible, to clarify whether:

...the ambiguities and contradictory statements are due to a failure of communication in the interview situation, or whether they reflect genuine inconsistencies, ambivalence and contradictions of an interviewee’s life situation.

(p.13)

Whilst the interviews were semi-structured, there were some structured elements that were put in place to alleviate issues relating to ambiguities and contradictory statements. For example, an interview guide/schedule was followed that considered key topics/themes to be covered along with guidance notes, there was a starter question and there was also guidance on areas of follow up (Newby, 2010). The questions were designed in such a way as to reflect the research questions, whilst taking into account the subject matter being researched and the age and education level of the participants.

The 36 interviews that were carried out over a four-year period uncovered a wide selection of information, pertaining to why young people living within socially deprived,

working-class communities in Barnsley choose not to participate in HE. The themes which emerged from the data have helped to highlight the expectations, motivations and aspirations of the participants, whilst giving consideration to what prevents them from participating in HE. The data that was collected also highlighted social, cultural and personal factors that contributed to their decision making.

In much the same way as I initially considered using multiple methods of data collection, I also contemplated interviewing the participants' parents and sixth form teachers to glean their opinions pertaining to the participants' choice not to participate. However, as I discuss in Chapter one, first and foremost I was interested in the participants' subjective reasons for choosing not to participate in HE. Interviewing the participants' parents, or staff members at the respective sixth forms, would have told me very little about the participants' actual decision-making processes. The views of parents and teachers are an important part of the overall picture; I wanted to contribute however, by providing a more detailed and in depth understanding of the perceptions of the participants themselves. Whilst I could see the value of undertaking a comparative study of applicants and non-applicants, and think this would be an interesting piece of research, this again would not give me the chance to focus in such depth on this overlooked group of young people. I think this research can contribute to this bigger picture by providing some depth of understanding, and indeed something that might be used as the basis for designing comparative work at a later stage.

### ***Ethical considerations***

There is a wide range of ethical issues that are particular to specific research methods. One of the challenges of ethical behaviour is that it lies in a 'grey zone' where clear-cut

dichotomies between what is right and wrong may not exist (Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin and Kakabadse, 2002). This research followed the Ethical Guidance for Education Research outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004; 2011). The Association considers that educational researchers should operate within an ethic of respect for any persons involved in the research they are undertaking. Participants in this study were treated fairly, sensitively, with dignity and within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, cultural identity, partnership status, faith, disability, political belief or any other significant difference. I recognised the right of any participant to withdraw from the research for any or no reason and at any time, and they were informed of this right prior to the interview taking place. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, as was the participants' entitlement to privacy. The specifics of individuals have not been discussed with anyone and each participant was allocated a number which was used when expressing their opinions and viewpoints (BERA, 2011). Letters were sent to Town College and The Village Academy seeking permission to interview their students. Both establishments agreed to my request and in each establishment, a liaison was requested. At Town College, I liaised with a Sixth Form Progress Coach and at Village Academy Sixth Form, a Learning Mentor.

A key ethical consideration that was addressed was informed consent. For this, an informed consent form was designed and presented to all participants prior to the interview taking place (see Appendix 5, p.268). The securing of participants' voluntary informed consent was considered the norm for the conduct of the research as it was important that the participants understood and agreed to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway (Arksey and Knight, 1999).

## ***Validity and Reliability***

Validity and reliability issues were also considered within this study. Validity in the social sciences refers to whether a chosen method investigates what it is supposed to investigate. This piece of research takes account of the following types of validity:

- **Descriptive validity:** I ensured that my research was a factual and accurate account that was not made up, selective or distorted. Interviews were transcribed verbatim.
- **Interpretive validity:** I ensured that meanings, interpretations, terms, intentions, situations and events were interpreted appropriately. For example, I asked the participants to clarify issues if I could not fully comprehend their meaning and I also clarified issues if the participant asked me or if I felt that it might be prudent. Also, as discussed above, I readdressed my data over a four year period to help to ensure it was interpreted appropriately.
- **Theoretical validity:** I gave consideration to the theoretical constructions that I bring to my research (see the section on reflexivity above, p.47). I have ensured that my research explains all key phenomena.

(Maxwell, 1992)

As my participants were all young adults, the majority of whom were aged seventeen or eighteen, there were several issues that needed to be given consideration. I consulted the work of Russell (2011) to help to ensure that I made the most of the interview process. She interviewed pupils in several schools and she makes reference to the decisions that have to be made prior to entering the field, pertaining to whose side the researcher is on (Becker, 1967) or whose side the researcher appears to be on (Mac and Ghail, 1992). Whilst interviewing the participants, consideration was given to the relationship I intended to foster with the sixth form students and the impression I gave them. Taking the participants' side impacted on the manner in which I conducted the

interviews. Like Russell (who cites Corrigan, 1979), I adopted a non-threatening role, presenting myself as a researcher who wanted to understand why those students who could participate in HE choose not to. My hope was that the students would find this approach novel and would subsequently be happy to share their reasons with me which, in fact, was the case. I distinguished myself from teaching staff and dressed informally to help gain the trust required to aid the acquisition of the right type of information, and interviewed them in their natural setting. This approach helped to address issues relating to the notion of power which can be of significance within an interview situation. As I defined the situation, the topics and the course of the interview I, as such, had the balance of power (Kvale, 1996). Much like Russell (2005) and Eder and Fingerson (2002), my avoidance of being associated with the classroom teacher and refraining from conveying that there was a right or wrong answer to an interview question helped to redress the balance of power.

Bias can be a persistent problem when interviewing (Cannell and Kahn, 1968). As interviews are interpersonal, it was inevitable that I would have some influence on the interviewee and, thereby, on my data (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). In order to alleviate some of the problems attached to possible bias, all interviews followed the same protocol and guidelines. I endeavoured to ensure that interviewees were at ease during the interview process, giving consideration to the following areas (Gray, 2004; 2009):

- Uses of language
- Improvising
- Questioning techniques
- Active listening skills

- Observing
- Testing and summarising understanding
- Closing the interview

During the interview process, I was careful to ensure that the language used was accessible to the interviewee and that specific meanings of words were clarified as and when needed.

Within certain interviews, improvisation was the key to success (Arksey and Knight, 1999). This was facilitated by varying question order, rephrasing questions where appropriate, and via building rapport and trust. For example, participant 13 was particularly shy and reluctant to talk about her future, however she seemed keen to discuss her family and her boyfriend. Had I not improvised and allowed her to do this, then the interview may not have been successful. Our rapport and her self-confidence developed throughout the interview.

All questions asked were free from jargon and phrased in an unambiguous manner and I made a point of listening carefully to responses and showing the participants that I was actively listening. Body language was observed with a view to ascertaining concentration levels, whether the interviewee was motivated enough to carry on and whether they were at ease (Gray, 2004). This approach helped me to collect meaningful data which I may not have been able to do without such an approach. For example, participant 8 was clearly uncomfortable with being interviewed and whilst I gave him the opportunity to opt out, he chose to stay. I allowed him to veer off track immediately and we talked about football. I made a point of actively listening, summarising and repeating back to him what I believed he was discussing and whilst it



took twelve minutes to move away from sport, eventually rapport was built and his body language became more open and he explained his reasons for not wanting to participate. He thanked me for "...actually listening..." to him. Repeating back to the interviewees to ensure that the particular issue that has been raised had been understood was a strategy that worked well; they clearly liked the idea of being listened to.

The ways in which my interviews were closed were also very important. Firstly, I checked that all questions had been asked. I also asked if the participants had any questions because "...interviewees often make some of their most interesting and valuable points once they think that the interview is over" (Gray, 2004, p.226).

Validity was also addressed by ensuring that the question content related to the research questions that had been set for this research. Interviewees were asked to illustrate and expand on responses where appropriate and I attempted to ensure that the interview process was sufficiently long as to enable subjects to be explored in depth (Arksey and Knight, 1999).

### ***Reliability in qualitative research***

In qualitative research, reliability can be regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched. Issues of reliability extend to the ways in which interviews are analysed, not just prepared for and carried out. The interviews were fully transcribed to help eliminate issues of bias that could occur as, if the participants' comments were summarised, this would have involved an element of selectivity which may have led to bias (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

### ***The use of a pilot study***

Several authors including Oppenheim (1992) and Morrison (1993) have argued that a pilot is carried out with a view to increasing reliability and validity. It is important to note that five pilot interviews were carried out and that the purpose of the pilot study was not only to probe reasons why my participants had chosen not to participate in HE, but also to test the design of the data collection method. The pilot study interview schedule can be found in Appendix 6 (p.271).

### ***Pilot Study findings and subsequent changes***

Undertaking the five interviews was very useful, both in order to test the design of the interview and to review the data that each interview elicited. On the whole, the questions used enabled some rich data to be collected, particularly when discussing reasons not to participate in HE. However, the question that asked what would need to be put in place for the participants to be able and/or want to access HE received little response. Whilst this may have been a result of my probing technique, I felt that it was worth rephrasing the question. As a result of the pilot study, an amended interview schedule is presented in Appendix 7 (p.272). This final interview schedule contained questions that were drawn from appropriate literature and based on the findings of the pilot study.

### ***Sampling***

The quality of a piece of research is impacted upon by the suitability of the sampling strategy adopted (Gray 2009; Newby 2010; Silverman, 2010; Cohen *et al.*, 2011). For this research, data was obtained from a subset of the total population of those students at two Barnsley sixth forms who had chosen not to participate in HE. It was important that the sample chosen represented the whole population in question in order for it to be

a valid sample (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). In choosing the sample for this research, I took account of the size of the sample, its representativeness, access to the sample, the strategy to be used and the fact that I was carrying out qualitative research (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011).

### ***Sample size***

There is no clear-cut answer for the correct sample size. It depends on the purpose of the study and the nature of the population being studied (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). For this research, the sample comprises 36 participants who were interviewed in their natural setting: 22 at Village Sixth Form and 14 at Town Sixth Form. At the Village Sixth Form, over a four-year period, I interviewed all those students that could attend university, but had chosen not to, and at Town Sixth Form, over a four-year period, I interviewed students who had chosen not to participate in HE who were prepared to be interviewed. All participants lived in low-income wards of Barnsley that are in the top 20% of the IMD. Whilst it is difficult to know, with absolute certainty, that the themes which emerged were saturated, during the fourth year of interviews no new insights, codes or themes emerged from the interviews pertaining to the decision making of the participants. The data collected fitted in existing themes and as Ezzy (2002, p.92) proposes, "Saturation is achieved when the coding that has already been completed adequately supports and fills out the emerging theory". Consequently, the decision was made to stop interviewing after year four.

### ***Representativeness***

The choice of the non-probability sample was undertaken on the basis that it would be representative of the population as a whole, with the sample's characteristics being similar to those of the population, which in this particular case were young people from

Barnsley, who had gained a level 3 qualification, were socially deprived and working-class. All participants fit these parameters (Gray, 2009).

### **Access**

Access was an important factor that needed to be addressed, both with regard to physical access and permission. Those sixth forms with students who fulfilled the parameters outlined above were approached and access was agreed and organised through a liaison (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

### **Sampling Strategy**

Purposive sampling was chosen and as the name suggests, I chose this type of sampling for a specific purpose. As Teddlie and You (2007) discuss, I was aware of the trade-off associated with purposive sampling. Although it provides less depth than probability sampling, it did provide real detail and this was evidenced in the data that the interviews elicited. As Denzin and Lincoln point out:

Many qualitative researchers employ...purpose, and not random, sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where...the processes being studied are most likely to occur.

(1994, p.202)

Appendix 8 (p.274) discusses the stages followed when planning the sampling strategy.

## ***Claims and Assertions***

Whilst I have justified the use of semi-structured interviews, I am aware that gathering data through semi-structured interviews limits the claims and assertions that can legitimately be made and that this, to an extent, limits this study's ability to provide conclusive evidence relating to the reasons why young people, with appropriate qualifications, choose not to participate in HE. As touched up on, the fact that I, as the interviewer, defined what was talked about and what was viewed as being relevant, has implications. For example, there was an inescapable danger that the participants may have attempted to evidence competence when answering the interview questions because of cues I may have given off about the acceptability of the participants' accounts or otherwise. There was also a danger that I could have boxed up the experiences of the participants in a way that could have done violence to their meaning. As the interviewer, I chose the messages that were heard and this undoubtedly influenced the data that was collected. Consequently, because of the interviewer's activity, interview data are fraught with problems (Dingwall, 1997). However, I am not suggesting that the data collected offers a comprehensive description of my participants' reality. I recognise that the accounts of my participants were likely to contain a mix of 'real life' and 'representation' (Dingwall, 1997), but this does not mean that it is not of use. As discussed, to try to alleviate some of these issues, I have been careful in my use of semi-structured interview and have been reflexive throughout, as highlighted within this chapter.

## Field Analysis

The sub-field of sixth form education has been analysed from three different levels as all three provide a different perspective which together emphasise the interrelations between people and organisations. Whilst these issues are considered throughout this study, additional information about the participants can be found in Appendix 9 (p.275) and additional information about the sub-field of sixth form education can be found in Appendix 10 (p.279).

Level 1 involved a brief examination of the sub-field in relation to the field of power. The field of power is a collective of people who can occupy more than one field at a time (Bourdieu, 1998). Bourdieu explains that the field of power (which should not be confused with the political field) is not a field like the others:

It is a space of the relations of forces between the different kinds of capital or, more precisely, between the agents who possess a sufficient amount of one of the different kinds of capital to be in a position to dominate the corresponding field...

(1998, p.34)

The field of power consists of multiple social fields and, as there are some homologies between them, some agents can be dominant in each of the multiple social fields (this did not apply to any of participants in this study). For example, the type of education people receive in the education field can make a lot of difference to their position in the economic field, so what happens in the field of power shapes what happens in other fields at the same time and vice versa (Thompson, 2012). The second part of level 1 involved the scrutinising of the economic, cultural and political contexts of the research

object in order to see how they shape the social activity in question which, in this case, pertains to participation in HE.

Level 2 involved the examination of the interconnection between agents and field institutions. In doing this, the participants in the field were considered in terms of key organisations, institutions, networks and communities. Within this level, the institutions most connected to the participants and the nature of such an interconnection was considered and this helped to identify other active fields within the social space such as the cultural field.

Finally, within level 3, consideration was given to the habitus of a range of participants in order to identify which forms of capital were the most valuable within the field. Common characteristics were considered as well as differences (Hardy, 2012).

## **Research Presentation and Research Discussion**

In presenting the data that was collected, the objective structure of the social space and the subjective experiences of the participants, as well as the relationship between the two, were considered. The figures discussed within this thesis were given consideration as were the lived experiences of my participants that were evidenced in the interview testimony.

### ***Using computer software for Qualitative Analysis***

Initially, I considered using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to analyse my data as it enables researchers to import transcripts and work through data (Gray, 2009). An example of CAQDAS is NVivo and this is something I thought about using until I tried it out. Using NVivo can be a fairly steep learning curve

and, in order to make the most of what is on offer, a lot of preparatory work is needed. Using computer software programs like NVivo can be useful because they provide a single location storage system for materials which can then be accessed quickly and easily. They can also handle large amounts of data in a consistently coded system and they force detailed consideration of all text in the database on a line-by-line basis. References to external documents such as handwritten field notes, recordings and books can also be held on computer software programs such as NVivo (Robson 2002).

However, a major problem that I found with NVivo was the time it takes to become proficient in its use (Robson, 2002). If I had used NVivo, I would still have been the decision maker and interpreter as the software does not pull out major themes or apply research codes to the data (Gray, 2009; Glesne, 2011). As I would have decided what to enter in when using NVivo, and what I asked it to do, I decided not to use a CAQDAS to analyse my qualitative data. Using NVivo made me feel somewhat distanced from my data and I was mindful that the software is only as good as the codes and themes that are inputted (Gibbs, 2007). I felt much closer to my data reviewing the physical transcripts and this allowed the analysis to be driven by my data and not the actual software (Crowley, Harre and Tagg, 2002). Flick (2009) discusses how using software for the practicalities of data entry, coding and retrieval can detract researchers from thinking about, explaining and understanding their data; I did not want to fall into that trap. As Garcia-Horta and Guerra-Ramos (2009) points out, qualitative software is no substitute for the requirement and capabilities of researchers. Consequently, I made the decision that I was best placed to interpret my data and to make decisions pertaining to coding and the themes that were developed. In making this decision, I was also mindful of Richards (2002) who discusses that using software could encourage



researchers to opt for coding and theming that neglect more complex text interrogations. Finally, Gibbs (2007) makes an interesting point when he observes that most of the classic studies carried out in the last century were undertaken without using any CAQDAS. Consequently, the analysis contained in this thesis results from close scrutiny of the data, with codes and themes being identified that related to the research questions outlined above.

## ***2.5 How the Interview Data was Analysed***

The purpose of the data analysis was to organise, and to make sense of, what was heard during the interview process. In order to undertake analysis, a processing stage was carried out which involved note-taking, transcribing and recording (Gray, 2004). This was part of the data-reduction process which was the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appeared in the transcriptions. Data reduction started as my data was collected and continued after fieldwork until my thesis was completed (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

There are several approaches that could have been utilised to analyse the qualitative data such as content analysis, grounded theory and discourse analysis. However, for the purpose of this research a more general thematic approach was followed. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.77) espouse that "...thematic analysis is a poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative method". This approach was followed because it is compatible with Bourdieu's framework in that it allowed the examination of the ways in which events, realities, meanings and experiences impact upon the participants' decision making. As Braun and Clarke suggest, (2006, p.85):

...thematic analysis...seeks to theorise the socio-cultural contexts and social conditions that enable the individual accounts that are provided.

Thematic analysis was used because it helps to identify, analyse and report the themes that emerged from the data and unlike some analytical methods, thematic analysis is not tied to any pre-existing frameworks. I deliberately chose to make this research inductive, but to some extent this was an iterative process that saw me move between my data and the literature. I was not attempting to falsify or corroborate a particular theory and instead have gathered data linked to the non-participation of a particular group of young people and attempted to establish some reasons why they may have chosen not to participate (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Again, whilst I was not looking for a predetermined list of specific codes and themes, I did take account of key Bourdieuan concepts that might help to explain the non-participation of the participants and help to resolve my research questions. For example, when reading the transcripts, I looked for codes and themes that might help to explain the participants' practices and their decision making, that might begin to explain their 'strategies of action' or the importance of the sub-field of sixth form education and their families. I also looked for codes and themes that might explain their values/beliefs and the importance of cultural rules, and why participants placed such value on the opinions of their parents. Gray (2009) points out, it is not the case that an inductive process takes no account of pre-existing ideas or theories. Consequently, when approaching an issue, such as non-participation, I was mindful of the existing literature pertaining to non-participation and culture and this inevitably influenced some of the areas probed throughout the interview process and the coding process.

## **Phases of thematic analysis**

The analysis undertaken was not viewed as a process that was linear in nature; it was more of what Braun and Clarke call a “...recursive process, where movement is back and forth as needed, throughout the phases” (p.86). The analysis of the data involved the following of five phases which were adapted from Gray (2009) and Braun and Clarke (2006).

### ***Phase 1: familiarising yourself with the data***

Within this phase, I immersed myself in the interview-generated data. As mentioned, all 36 interviews were recorded, transcribed and typed up, so I was able to familiarise myself with the data that had been collected (see Appendix 11, p.281). The transcripts were read through repeatedly in order to get a flavour of what was happening and to search for meanings and patterns and, in doing so, transcripts were annotated and highlighted as appropriate. The initial ideas, which were noted down, included issues relating to my participants’ aspirations, their attitude to debt, the need for support mechanisms and the importance of families and their locality.

### ***Phase 2: generating initial codes***

Phase 2 began after I had read and familiarised myself with the data. Coding was undertaken from the beginning of the research process and this allowed me to become familiar, at an early stage, with the issues that were emerging from the data. Interesting features were considered and coded in a systematic fashion across the entire data set. The initial ideas/codes can be found in Appendix 12 (p.289).

### ***Phase 3: searching for themes***

Phase 3 of my analysis began after the data was initially collated and coded. Codes were then collated into potential themes, ensuring that all data relevant to a theme was gathered. When searching for themes, consideration was given to what would actually count as a theme. The chosen themes within this study actually captured something that was important within the data and that related to my research questions. The themes that are discussed were consistently evident within the data set. However, more instances of the theme were not seen as evidence of its relative importance. Braun and Clarke (2006) make an interesting point when they discuss that the 'keyness' of a theme should depend on how it relates to the overall research questions; it should not depend on quantifiable measures. During this phase, I began to think about the relationship between the codes, the themes and between the different levels of the themes. The emergent candidate themes and sub-themes can be found in the initial thematic map in Appendix 13 (p.290).

### ***Phase 4: reviewing the themes***

As I had devised a set of candidate themes, I was able to begin phase 4 and on subsequent readings of the transcripts, the candidate themes were reviewed and modified as necessary. Within this phase it became clear that some of the candidate themes did not have enough data to support them as individual themes, for example aspiration and its contradictory nature became a sub-theme. Two levels of review were carried out in phase 4. Firstly, I reviewed the coded extracts for each of the themes with a view to deciding whether or not they formed a justifiable pattern. I also had to make a decision as to whether the candidate themes that were generated needed reworking or whether a new theme was necessary. Once I was satisfied that the candidate themes

that I had generated were able to capture the essence of my data, I created a refined candidate thematic map which can be found in Appendix 14 (p.291). The second level involved the reviewing of my entire data set to ascertain whether it was an adequate reflection of the meanings that emerged from the data. I reread the data set to decide whether the themes worked and to see if any additional codes were needed due to them being missed in earlier coding stages. By the end of this phase, I had a good idea what my themes were and how they fit together (see Appendix 15, p.292).

### ***Phase 5: defining and naming the themes and writing up the findings***

I began phase 5 after I was satisfied with my thematic map, the specifics of each theme were refined and that the overall story that emerged from the analysis helped to generate clear definitions and names for each theme. Having carried out thematic analysis on the data that was collected, two broad themes were considered at length within the findings chapters.

The themes and sub-themes that emerged were:

- Expectation, understanding and uncertain pathways
  - Cost vs. benefits
  - Indebtedness
  - Aspiration and its contradictory nature
  
- Family, friends and peer networks
  - Personal confidence and identity
  - Ties to locality

Each theme was analysed and the 'story' that emerged from it was told (see Chapters 5 and 6). The findings chapters tell a complicated story that moves from a descriptive to

an interpretative level and within them, reference is made to key literature and Bourdieu's key concepts to aid the production of this thesis. The findings chapters consider the socio-cultural, contexts and structural conditions that impact on my participants' decision making with respect to HE participation. Each of the themes forms the basis of a chapter within this study, with minority, significant and majority discourses being considered. Within each findings chapter, the information uncovered was located within appropriate literature and considered in light of Bourdieu's framework. I also consider how the 'story' of each theme fits into a broader overall story that links to my research questions and I make clear the contribution this research has made to knowledge in this area (see Chapter 7). An example of the coding process can be found in Appendix 16 (p.293).

## ***2.6 Chapter Summary***

The purpose of this chapter was to justify the methodological approach that is followed within this study. I began by discussing decisions of an ontological and epistemological nature and made it clear that the question of whether knowledge was independent of the knower and a particular situation or a product of it was initially hard to reconcile, as I saw value and potential in both objectivist and subjectivist epistemological standpoints. As the actions of my participants show, agency cannot be separated from structure, or the environment in which they live (Hillier, 2008). I have taking a stance that was against methodological monism which has the ontological priorities of structure or agency, I have drawn on literature pertaining to Pierre Bourdieu to help reconcile such a dualism. Bourdieu makes it clear that I was not obliged to choose between the two poles, as only partial truths are expressed by either objectivism or subjectivism.

In using Bourdieu, I have justified the use of a three-level methodology that discusses the construction of the research object, carries out field analysis and participant objectivation.

I have discussed that primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews, with some secondary statistics being drawn upon. This chapter has also illustrated the importance of ethical consideration, as well as explaining issues that pertain to validity and reliability, piloting and sampling and the claims and assertions that can be made when using data collected through semi-structured interviews.

I close this chapter by paying particular attention to how I analysed the qualitative data that was collected, following a thematic approach that utilised five phases of analysis.

In sum, this chapter has offered a detailed justification of the key methodological issues that were likely to impact on this study.

## Chapter 3 The Importance of Culture

### *3.1 Chapter Introduction*

Many people have researched the concept of culture. Griswold (1994; 2013) suggests that culture is a word people use all the time but struggle defining and, according to Williams (1983, p.87), culture “...is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language”, so any attempt at definition is made with trepidation (cited in Orr, 2009). Jenks (1993) takes this concept further when he explains that culture, as an idea, embraces various processes, differences, a range of topics and even paradoxes, so much so that only a confident and wise person should begin to pontificate about it. Whilst giving consideration to both Williams and Jenks this chapter, in seeking to define culture and to ascertain the influence that culture may have on the decision making of the participants, gives consideration to various interpretations.

This chapter commences with a critical discussion that considers the concept of culture and its differing, all-encompassing conceptions which have influenced the definition of culture that is operationalised within this study. In attempting to justify my choice, I give consideration to various definitions and interpretations of culture. I also emphasise the importance of local culture, discussing how local understandings and interpretations of a community’s history can reflect past events that feed into, and are partially driven by, the demands, sentiments and interests of those in the present (Brennan, 2005). This chapter also discusses Bourdieu’s concepts of practice, field, capital, habitus and symbolic violence and the use of a Bourdieuan framework to interrogate the data that is collected is justified. Consideration is also given to some of the criticisms levelled at Bourdieu. I close this chapter by proposing an appropriate and specific definition of



culture that I have used when considering the influence culture has on my participants' decision making pertaining to HE participation.

### ***3.2 Key Definitions of Culture***

When devising the definition of culture that was operationalised within this research, several all-encompassing definitions of culture helped to inform my thinking. For example, Parsons and Shills (1954) group culture into three types, discussing it as a symbols system, a values system that impacts on the actions of people and directs them, and as a system of evaluation, a 'way of life' or an orientation to a specific type of action (Patterson, 2010). They outline how culture, as a tool, can facilitate the construction of knowledge through these various definitions. In line with this all-encompassing definition is Jarvis's (2007 p.24 quoted in Orr, 2009, p.55) description of culture. For him, culture is viewed as:

...all the knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values and emotions that we, as human beings, have added to our biological base. It is a social phenomenon; it is what we as a society, or a people, share and which enables us to live as a society.

When sociologists discuss culture, they usually mean one of four things: norms, values, beliefs or expressive symbols (Peterson, 1979). Norms are the way people behave within a given society, whilst values are what they hold dear, beliefs are how they think the universe operates and expressive symbols are often representations of social norms, values and beliefs themselves (Griswold, 1994). Hogan, Divya and Henderson's (2010) comprehensive definition outlines four ways to think about culture. Their findings suggest, firstly, that culture is performed; culture is viewed as something that is held and practised. It is something humans do and have in common (Swidler, 2001; Richardson,

2001; Brennan 2005; Griswold, 2013). Secondly, culture is viewed as signs, customs, symbols, codes and texts of meaning (Geertz, 1973; Jenks, 1993; Griswold, 2013).

Thirdly, culture is creative because human cultures are expressive, reflexive and creative. Finally, culture travels and, in its movement, it is transformed and therefore it is "...embedded in a series of relationships and exchanges across time and place that are asymmetrical but reflexive and transformative" (p.341).

Whilst all-encompassing definitions of culture were important, the significance of local culture and community could not be overlooked when devising the definition of culture that was operationalised within this research. Local culture and local communities, in Barnsley, have been shaped by the coal industry and its legacy. As discussed in Chapter 1, the 1980s and early 1990s saw the almost complete disappearance of mining employment and, since then, the demise of the Yorkshire coal industry (BMBC, 2006). There seems to be little doubt that this has shaped the character of communities in Barnsley. The 'way of life' in Barnsley can be seen broadly to be represented by rules, values and expected behaviours. Common meaning has developed over time, which reflects shared attachments amongst members of the Barnsley community and there appears to be commonalities which relate to the values, knowledge and experience that are held by the participants of this study. The concept of culture in Barnsley has a history in relation to traditions of thought that are seen as living traditions (Jenks, 1993). I have reached these tentative conclusions, having carried out this research and having considered the work of several authors who have considered issues that relate to community and local culture. For example, Brennan's (2005) research into the influence of local culture proposes that culture is often used broadly to represent a 'way of life' and that rules, values and expected behaviours are included in

such 'ways of life', with common meaning accumulating over time that also reflects shared attachments amongst members of a specific community. These commonalities relate to the values, knowledge and experience that are held by a particular culture. He places particular emphasis on values which are seen as shared ideas and beliefs constituting what is deemed as being morally right or wrong, or culturally desirable. Brennan points out that values reflect ideals and visions and are based in culture. They influence and mould rules and behaviour which are deemed to be acceptable:

These rules are accepted ways of doing things and represent guidelines for how people should conduct themselves and how they should act towards others.

(p.2)

It appears that we can talk about community in terms of its jokes, symbols, slang, conventions, stereotypes, typical practices and common knowledge and how its symbols represent its members in relation to how people within that community think, feel and behave. However, community can also be considered in terms of its social structure, taking account of things such as the network of relationships among its members, institutions, economic and political life (Brennan, 2005). For Brennan, local culture provides a sense of identity that facilitates common understandings, traditions that help to build a sense of local identity and solidity. Brennan (2005, p.2) goes on to suggest that:

Providing local linkage and cultural basis for development is important. People are likely to take part in and remain committed to development efforts to which they have a direct connection. Through such efforts, local residents can encourage development that preserves or promotes their culture.

Crucially, local culture is seen as helping to provide belonging to an area and it plays a pivotal role in shaping local community and character. It can be tied to the existence of shared pasts and prospective futures, with local cultures organising action into a commitment to continuity which incorporates temporality and order into social life (Katovich and Couch, 1992; Fine 2010). In carrying out the research, I was interested in how much of a fundamental component of community life local culture was for the participants. I was also interested in whether it shaped my participants' unique characters and needs and how local culture impacted upon the confidence and decision making of my participants within their community (Brennan, 2005). I drew on a Bourdieuan analysis, which is discussed later in this chapter to help wrestle with these issues.

Much like Fine (2010), in considering culture, I wanted to break from treating culture as belonging to large-scale social systems (macro-cultures) and I wanted to utilise an approach that accentuated the 'micro' level of analysis. Fine examines how culture can be linked to interacting groups and to well-networked population segments. In doing so, he extends the idea of culture by:

...emphasising that it is a form of practice that is linked to local understandings and social relations. A microsociology of culture is a valuable addition to more structural, institutional, and societal views.

My approach emphasised the 'micro' level of analysis; I view culture as a form of practice that is linked to local understandings and social relations. I treat culture as something that people have, or may well be given, as a result of their location within a particular community, as well as something that is actually constructed or shaped.

Therefore, my analysis of culture, like Griswold's (1994, 2013) began with the assumption that culture provided orientation for my participants which may influence their decision making in relation to HE participation and that it directed their behaviour towards certain choices and away from others.

Culture can infiltrate all aspects of our lives and everything that we construct is impacted upon by the experiences of those within it. Everything that is produced is inscribed with the identity of the person who created it, and subsequently re-inscribed by those who come into contact with it (Richardson, 2001). As Geertz (1965, p.112) quoted in Jenks (1993) argues, "...there is no such thing as a human nature that is independent of culture".

### ***3.3 Culture as a 'Tool Kit' or Repertoire***

The research of Ann Swidler (1986; 1998; 2001) also influenced my definition and understanding of culture, as it helped me to understand the 'strategies of action' that the participants developed in relation to participation in HE. Swidler (1986; 1998; 2001) offers an analysis of culture that, much like Hannerz (1969), argues that a culture is like a 'tool kit' or repertoire for constructing 'strategies of action'. Swidler's theory accounts for individual choice and the structuring of behaviour by semiotic codes, institutions and large-scale societal structures.

She pays attention to how individuals actively engage with culture and how culture has an independent causal influence as it:

...makes possible new 'strategies of action'. People use it to constitute new actors (selves, families, corporations), shape the styles and skills with which they act, and model forms of authority and cooperation.

(Swidler, 2001, p.103)

Her analysis consists of three steps. Firstly, she contends that symbolic vehicles such as rituals, stories and sayings help to create and sustain those modes of behaviour or outlook.

Secondly, Swidler explains how these social processes are viewed as 'strategies for action' and the symbolic vehicles that create and sustain them are elements of an individual's cultural repertoire. In order to analyse culture's causal effects, 'strategies for action' need to be focused upon. The 'strategies for action' that are drawn from an individual's cultural repertoire are particular to specific situations:

...strategies for action are the major links between culture and social structure. Culture powerfully influences action by shaping the selves, skills and worldviews out of which people can build life strategies – strategies made possible in turn by culture.

(Swidler, 2001, p.87)

Thirdly, she sees culture's causal significance not in defining ends of actions, but in constructing 'strategies of action' based on the cultural components that have been provided. Culture shapes the capacities from which 'strategies of action' are constructed because it has an independent and causal role. Swidler views strategy as a way of organising action such as depending upon a network of family and friends. 'Strategies of action' incorporate habits, moods, sensibilities and world views. They are

not built from scratch; they construct chains of action that begin with at least some prefabricated links and it is culture that "...influences action through the shape and organisation of those links, not determining the ends to which they are put" (Swidler, 1986, p.277).

Culture, in one of its most widely accepted meanings, describes those commonplace knowledges, habits and taken-for-granted understandings that enable people to get through everyday social life (Swidler, 1998). In fact, Swidler believes that people may have cultural capacities that they do not often employ and that all people know more culture than they use. She refers to the work of Garfinkel (1967) and Wrong (1961) in considering what makes a realistic cultural theory and suggests that the theory should not lead us to expect passive "...cultural dopes" (1986, p.277), but the active and sometimes skilled users of culture. She points out that:

...if culture provides the tools with which persons provide lines of action, then styles or "strategies of action" will be more persistent than the ends people seek to attain. Indeed, people will come to value ends for which their cultural equipment is well suited.

(p.277)

Within this thesis, values are viewed as being important and significant pieces of cultural equipment for establishing 'strategies of action'. They organise and anchor patterns of action and fine-tune the regulation of action within an established way of life. However, it is worth noting that people do not go about their business in the same ways; their approach is shaped by culture which provides a repertoire of capacities that allows them to construct various 'strategies of action'.

Swidler (1986) also offers a note of caution when discussing beliefs and contends that in certain contexts, what governs people's actions are not internalised beliefs, but "...their knowledge of what meanings their actions have for others". Culture has influence on people's actions when it shapes people's knowledge of "...how others will interpret their actions" (Swidler, 1998, p.39). The external or relevant meaning of the culture, instead of the internal meaning determines people's actions in some situations (Swidler, 1998).

What seems clear is that it is the available set of cultural resources that impacts on any strategy that is put together and in a given life, certain cultural resources may become more central and more fully invested with meaning. The challenge is not to estimate how much culture shapes action, but it is to find a theoretical framework and/or model that allows effective analysis (Swidler, 1986). Within this research, a Bourdieuan framework was utilised to aid such an analysis.

### ***3.4 Bourdieu's Framework***

In order to ascertain the influence that local culture had on the decision making of the participants, a Bourdieuan approach was followed as there was strong evidence to suggest that such an analysis fits well with the issues that have been interrogated within this research. Chapter 2 has already outlined how some of Bourdieu's key concepts were operationalised in terms of data collection and analysis. As Burke (2012) points out, widening participation research has extensively drawn on the theoretical perspectives of Bourdieu to help understand socio-cultural inequalities and how they are reproduced. Researching widening participation from a Bourdieuan perspective allowed me to:



...disrupt the problematic focus on individual attitudes, which tend to construct those targeted by widening participation policy as deficient and needing remedial help through the intervention of the (middle-class) professional.

(p.45)

As discussed, throughout this research, I wanted to understand how objective social structures such as social class, the family or education, as well as embodied structures such as gender influenced the actions, attitudes and behaviours of the participants, to ascertain if the decisions which they made, in relation to participation in HE, were a result of their own thoughts and decisions (Atkins, 2009). Bourdieu helped me to do this as his sociology transcends the objectivist/subjectivist dichotomy discussed in Chapter 2 and, much like Bourdieu, I was concerned with the participants' 'subjective hopes' and 'objective chances' and whether there was an adjustment between such hopes, aspirations, goals and expectations (subjective hopes) and the situation that they found themselves in as a result of their place in society (objective chances) (Jenkins, 1992).

As Bourdieu (cited in Jenkins 1992) points out:

Outlooks on the future depend closely on the objective potentialities which are aspect defined for each individual by his or her social status and material conditions of existence. The most individual project is never anything other than an aspect of the subjective expectations that are attached to the agent's class.

(1977, p.53)

Using Bourdieu's ensemble to interrogate the relationship between 'subjective expectations' and 'objective probabilities' enabled consideration to be given to the social category to which the participants of this study belonged and its significance in relation to their objective collective futures and their own personal futures (Jenkins, 1992).

As touched upon in Chapter 2, in order to reconcile the objective and subjective dichotomy, some of Bourdieu's relational thinking tools were utilised to interrogate the decision making of the participants. Particular attention was paid to practice, field, habitus, capital and symbolic violence. Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital were particularly important to this study as they are, perhaps, the most successful and significant attempt to understand the relationships that take place between institutions, fields and every day practices, taking account of what people do and why they do it (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002).

I used Bourdieu's ensemble to, in part, guide the analysis of this research, using it as a theoretical framework against which the decision making of the participants was evaluated. In doing so, I examined and explained the relationship between the participants' practices and the contexts (the discourses, institutions, values, rules and regulations) in which those practices occurred (Webb *et al.*, 2002). The remainder of this chapter concentrates on and explains Bourdieu's concepts before outlining some criticisms that have been levelled at his work.

## **Practices**

Social practices became the foundation on which Bourdieu's research offered accounts of the practices of everyday life (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984 and 1990b; Rawolle and Lingard, 2008). However, Bourdieu did not offer a simplistic definition of practice and in outlining practice, he indicates three interconnected associations. Firstly, practice is the carrying out of an activity, secondly, it is the formal naming of an activity that gives it social organisation, points of harmony and boundaries and finally, it has structures, limits and meaning (Rawolle and Lingard, 2008).

Practice was important to this study because the common patterns of reaction that people share, what they view as being acceptable ways of doing things could, according to Bourdieu, become standardised without them consciously planning the way in which they do things. This warranted investigation. These are what Bourdieu would term 'practices' and, interestingly, the practices employed may not be the most efficient means of attaining a goal but they may be viewed as the 'right way' to do something. Practices have their own built-in and intrinsic logic and the practices employed, although seeming rational to one group of people, may be deemed unreasonable to a different group (Cuff *et al.*, 2006).

## **Fields**

The second concept that I utilised within this research was that of field. In his interview with Loic Wacquant (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989) and in *The Rules of Art* (1996), Bourdieu describes a field as a social arena where struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them. The analogy he uses is being within a battlefield, in which people vie for position (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The stakes that are at stake actually define fields and each field has a different structure of necessity and relevance, that is taken for granted. A field also has its own particular logic, which is both a producer and product of the habitus (habitus is discussed at length later in this chapter, see p.90) that is both specific and appropriate to a particular field (Jenkins, 1992).

In order to understand the interactions that take place between people, it is necessary for the social space in which such interactions, transactions and events occurred to be examined, as the social positions that are held in a particular structured system define

the situation individuals find themselves in, within that particular field (Bourdieu, 2005 cited in Thompson, 2012).

Each specific field has its own laws, its specific relations of force, its dominant and dominated (Bourdieu, 1993) and fields are occupied by agents (people or institutions) and consist of positions and boundaries; there are limits to what can be done and this is shaped by the conditions of the field. As fields are competitive by nature, various agents are likely to use different strategies to improve or maintain their position within particular fields and the positions they hold are determined in terms of power relations (Thompson, 2012). This is determined by the access to what Bourdieu (1986) calls capital. In fact, the central concept in Bourdieu's theory is capital. As he points out in his interview with Wacquant (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989, p.40):

A capital does not exist and function but in relation to the field: it confers a power over the field, over the materialized or embodied instruments of production or reproduction whose distribution constitutes the very structure of the field, and the rules which define the very ordinary functioning of the field, and thereby over the profits engendered in the field.

There are several forms of capital which individuals and social groups can use to gain advantage such as social capital (relationships with significant others), cultural capital (knowledge that is seen as being legitimate) and symbolic capital (prestige and social honour), in addition to economic capital (directly convertible into money) (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural and social capital was particularly important to this study.

## ***Cultural Capital***

Within this research, I was interested in cultural capital which was gained within the participants' family environment and through education. As Webb *et al.*, (2002, p.x) discuss, cultural capital is "...a form of value associated with culturally authorised tastes, consumption patterns, attributes, skills and awards". They point out that cultural capital is not set in stone, either within or across fields, and the amount of power any individual has within the field depends upon an individual's position within the field and the amount of capital which they possess (as touched upon above). In *Pascalian Meditations*, Bourdieu (2000) discusses the competition for capital within fields by giving consideration to reproduction and transformation. Individuals are likely to adjust their expectations with regard to the capital and the position they are likely to attain as a result of practical limitations such as their place within the field, their educational background, class position and social connections. Consequently, according to Bourdieu, those individuals with the least amount of capital are generally those with the least ambition. Within this research, I was interested in whether my participants' choice not to participate in HE was due to the 'practical' limitations imposed upon them as a result of their place within particular fields, their social connections, background and class position. As touched upon earlier, were their 'subjective hopes' regarding participation in HE adjusted to the 'objective probability' of participation, and was culture being reproduced? Or were their choices not to participate in HE, in fact, the participants gambling in order to gain capital (finding work to increase their status, for instance)? (Webb *et al.*, 2002). Again, this is considered within the empirical chapters of this study.

In *The Forms of Capital*, Bourdieu (1986) outlines how cultural capital can exist in three forms. Firstly, it can exist in an embodied state, in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the body and mind (such as clothes, a muscular body or suntan). The acquisition of this type of cultural capital requires self-improvement and to work on oneself. In its embodied form, the acquisition of cultural capital begins in early childhood and it requires pedagogical action as well as the investment of time by parents, family members and other professionals (Reay, 2004). Secondly, it can be in an objectified state and take the form of cultural goods such as books, instruments, artefacts etc. which can be appropriated both materially and symbolically. Finally, institutionalised cultural capital takes the form of objectified academic qualifications that confers a kind of cultural competence on the holder.

### ***Social Capital***

Social capital also proved to be important to this research. In discussing social capital, Bourdieu (1986) points to the importance of social connections which can be mobilised for particular purposes. He defines social capital as:

...the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognition...

(1986, p.51)

The amount of social capital that individuals possess depends on the size of the network of connections they are able to mobilise, as well as the amount of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed by members of their network. The network of relationships that people have results from investment strategies aimed at

establishing or reproducing social relationships that are usable in both the long and short term.

Capital plays an important role in structuring the positions that individuals hold within particular interrelated fields, as it provides them with power in each field which can lead to additional capital being accumulated. It does not, however, have meaning or function that is independent of the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992 cited in Thompson 2011).

Through participating in a particular field, it is implied that individuals hold a shared commitment to the capital that is specific to that field and to the value of the activities of the field (Bourdieu, 1996). It appears then, that each field has a specific form of interest, "...a specific *illusion* as tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game and as practical mastery of its rules" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.117). Fields have their own rules, histories, star players and legend and everyone is not equal in a field as some people dominate and some are dominated (Thompson, 2012). It is worth noting however that "...the field provides the objective conditions determining, at any particular time, the effectiveness of the strategies used by occupants of different positions" (Thompson, 2011, p.17). Consequently, as the field changes, so too may the strategies that are utilised or, if the strategies do not change, the effectiveness of them will either increase or decrease.

Bourdieu (1998) also suggests that a social world which is made up of multiple fields can be divided into sub-fields which follow the logic of the larger field, but that also has

its own logic and rules. Within the findings chapters, I consider the sub-field of sixth form education explicitly, whilst paying attention to the intersecting cultural field.

## Habitus

Central to Bourdieu's approach and my own was habitus. He describes the concept of habitus as:

...a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks...

(1977, p.82-83).

It seems that habitus can be understood by considering an individual's inclination towards certain dispositions to actions and values which they gain from their cultural history as members of a particular social group or class that, for the most part, stays with them across contexts. It is both durable and transposable. As a result of the aforementioned dispositions and values, individuals are likely to respond to cultural rules and contexts in various ways and, for the most part, their responses are likely to depend upon where and who they have been within their particular culture (Webb *et al.*, 2002; Cuff *et al.*, 2006). Habitus, as a way of acting, feeling and being, captures how people carry their history, and how they bring this history into their present circumstances. How they do this impacts on the choices they make and whether they act in certain ways and not others, and this is dependent on their position in a particular field (Maton, 2012). Colley (2003) proposes that it can be understood, in each individual, as a combination of beliefs, attitudes and values, class and cultural background, personality, lifestyles, identity/ies and their previous biography. She points



out that such dispositions are not unique to individuals, but in fact embody a collective aspect in certain respects as a result of previous experiences.

It appears then, that habitus is an attempt to reconcile the dualisms of agency-structure, objective-subjective and the micro-macro (Reay, 2004). It connects agents and practices through "...systems of dispositions, which are bodily incorporations of social history" (Rawolle and Lingard, 2008, p.731) and it provides predispositions towards, and capacities for, practice with agents which are transposable between different contexts. It is structured by material conditions of existence and it also generates beliefs, perceptions and feelings in accordance with its own structure. It impacts on whether people feel at ease and like 'fish in water' or whether they feel awkward, like 'fish out of water', in a particular social situation (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989; Maton, 2012).

As illustrated, the notion of habitus is complicated and like Reay (2004), I have analysed the habitus of the participants by giving consideration to four related aspects. The four aspects also nicely summarise what has been discussed above.

**Habitus as embodiment:** An important feature of habitus is the fact that it is embodied within the participants. It is not solely composed of mental attitudes and perceptions; it is expressed by their thinking and feeling, through their speaking and walking. It is conveyed through their relationship with the dominant culture.

**Habitus as agency:** In *Sociology in Question*, Bourdieu points out that:

Habitus is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products.

(Bourdieu, 1993, p.87 in Reay, 2004)

For Bourdieu, habitus can potentially generate a variety of possible actions that would enable the participants to simultaneously draw on transformative and constraining courses of action. Whilst habitus allows for individual agency, it also predisposes the participants to behave in a certain way (Reay, 2004). The habitus is "...the source of 'objective' practices, but is in itself a set of 'subjective' generative principles produced by the 'objective' patterns of social life" (Jenkins, 1992, p.82).

**Habitus as a compilation of collective and individual trajectories:** Habitus is viewed as being multi-layered with more complex notions being at an individual level, and more general notions at a societal level. So, whilst the participants' individual histories constitute their habitus, so does the class and family history that they are themselves members of (Reay, 2004, citing Bourdieu, 1990a and Bourdieu, 1990b).

**Habitus as a complex interplay between past and present:** For Bourdieu, habitus is historical and so linked to the participants' history and, as a consequence, to understand habitus it is important to understand such history. Early life experiences are added to through internalised experiences as a result of what is going on around them. As the participants encounter the outside world, their habitus is continually re-

constructed and, as a result of encountering a field that reproduces dispositions, habitus can be replicated or it can be transformed (Reay, 2004). Each of these four aspects is considered within the empirical chapters.

Clearly, there is a relationship between habitus and field and Thompson (2011), in considering Bourdieu and Waquant (1992), outlines the relationship as operating as a conditioning relation. He points out that “The habitus is both a lens through which everything in the social world is perceived and the set of principles governing an agent’s response” (p.18). Both habitus and field evolve and change constantly; they do not match perfectly. Each has its own logic and history which allows the structure of the field and the habituses of its members to be one of varying degrees of fit or mismatch (Maton, 2012). It appears that habitus is not formed once and for all and that it is, in fact, a product of different fields where individuals have resided and the positions occupied within those fields.

The primary habitus, constructed in the family and structuring their initial experience of school, is successively re-structured by the various fields constituting the young person’s social environment as they encounter secondary and further education, work and peer groups.

(Thompson, 2011, p.18)

Interestingly, Grenfell and James (1998, p.15) quoted in Reay (2004, p.435) point out “If habitus brings into focus the subjective end of the equation, field focuses on the objective”. As a result of the workings of Habitus, practice (agency) is linked with capital and field (structure) (Reay, 2004).

I have used Bourdieu's conceptual tools of field, capital and habitus to analyse the experiences of my participants and the predefined objective structures which they encounter that makes it possible for their experience to take place. These issues are considered at length within the empirical chapters.

## **Symbolic violence, cultural and social reproduction**

The final concept of Bourdieu's that was given consideration and which impacted on the participants is symbolic violence. When Bourdieu discusses symbolic violence, he alludes to the imposition of culture on groups or classes in a manner that makes them experience it as being legitimate. By making the production and reproduction of social hierarchies appear to be based on skills, merit or sanctions, the education system fulfils the function of legitimisation through the pedagogic process (Bourdieu, 1973; 1990a). It is the fact that it is viewed as being legitimate that allows the power relations to be obscured in order for such an imposition to be a success, and this contributes to its reproduction. Bourdieu espouses that symbolic violence is:

...the violence which extort submission, which is not perceived as such, based on 'collective expectations' or socially inculcated beliefs...the theory of symbolic violence rests on a theory of belief or, more precisely, on a theory of the production of belief, of the work of socialisation necessary to produce agents endowed with the schemes of perception and appreciation that will permit them to perceive and obey the injunctions inscribed in a situation or discourse.

(1998, p.103)

For Bourdieu, symbolic violence is the result of domination and the suffering that is caused due to contemporary social hierarchies and social inequality which is produced and maintained through symbolic domination and less by actual physical force

(Schubert, 2012). As touched upon, symbolic violence's central proposition involves the activity of education, what Bourdieu calls pedagogic action. Pedagogic actions are carried out within the framework of social structures by peers, families and schools who inculcate meaning. It involves both the exclusion and inclusion of specific ideas (Bourdieu, 1973). Pedagogic action helps to reproduce culture in all of its arbitrariness and it also reproduces power relations because the pedagogic action reflects the interests of dominant groups or classes. This tends to reproduce an uneven distribution of cultural capital amongst the groups or classes who occupy the field in question. However, it is, in fact, pedagogic authority that allows for successful pedagogic action (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990 cited in Jenkins 1992). It is "...an arbitrary power to act misrecognised by its practitioners and recipients as legitimate. This legitimacy makes it possible for pedagogic action to work" (Jenkins, 1992, p.105). Symbolic violence seems to be an efficient and effective form of domination as the dominant need to do very little to ensure that such dominance is maintained other than "...let the system they dominate take its own course in order to exercise their domination" (Bourdieu, 1977, p.190 cited in Schubert, 2012).

The relative success of pedagogic action in different groups or classes relies on their pedagogic ethos, their disposition towards education and is a result of family education and a general recognition of the value of education. So, for example, whether the participants, in being from a working-class background, recognise the value of education might be based upon its value within the labour market. So there is, in fact, an implication that explicit teaching is more important than an implicit experience in the internalisation of habitus. So:

The long-term function or effect of pedagogic work is, at least in part, the production of dispositions which generate 'correct' responses to the symbolic stimuli emanating from agencies endowed with pedagogic authority.

(Jenkins, 1992, p.107)

Bourdieu is clear that the dispositions of the dominant or elite groups are better placed to benefit from external pedagogic strategies. The different pedagogic works of groups or classes are both different in terms of explicitness, as well as in the fact that they inculcate different dispositions to acquire the symbolic mastery of the dominant (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977 cited in Jenkins, 1992). Interestingly, those who suffer symbolic violence are usually interested or invested and willing participants in the actual systems that are doing harm. Specific systems are seen as being legitimate by both the dominant and dominated (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

### **Criticisms levelled at Bourdieu's conceptual framework**

In using a Bourdieuan approach for analysis purposes, I take account of some of the criticisms levelled at his framework. Jenkins's strongest criticism of the work of Bourdieu is that he says he is doing one thing, when he is actually doing something else and that he does this consistently. For example, he seeks to transcend the objectivist-subjectivist dualism but he remains rooted in objectivism. He also produces models of social process that are deterministic but he is at pains to reject determinism (Jenkins, 1992). Robbins (2000) cites the work of several authors to level criticism at Bourdieu's work. Swartz (1977) and Bredo and Feinberg (1979) for example, are critical of his method and style as his key concepts are not always clearly defined.

Swartz (1977) is also critical of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital because of the theoretical ambiguities. Lamont and Lareau (1988) are equally confused by Bourdieu's use of the concept of cultural capital because of the absence of explicit statements about the concept. It makes comparisons and assessment of his work very difficult.

There has also been criticism levelled at his writing on the working class, for example Jenkins (1986) when discussing *Distinction*, made reference to the arrogance and condescension of Bourdieu's discussion about the working class and that, despite his good intentions, this perspective taints his analysis.

A further criticism from Cicourel (1993) cited in Reay (2004) is that habitus should be widened to explore gender and racial differences and other cross-cultural issues within larger nations, although Reay believes that such an expansion would be equally important to small-scale research. Jenkins (1992) asked what habitus actually is and how does it relate to the notion of culture as it is discussed as a collection of consumable, material artefacts and as an abstract rhetorical concept. In particular, there is some debate about the extent to which Bourdieu's concept of habitus can account for radical change. For example, Brooks (2003) discusses the differences between some young people from a similar social location, where young people and their parents were actively attempting to change their habitus. Interestingly, Brooks' research evidenced change that was intergenerational, with few of the young people in her research coming from families with experience of HE. Also, whilst habitus appears to fit well with the "...complex messiness of the real world...there is also a danger of habitus becoming whatever the data reveal" (Reay, 2004, p.438). However, within this

research, I have used habitus as a conceptual tool and I have viewed it as a "...way of understanding the world" (p.439) of my participants. As a result, I believe that the risks of inconsistencies and determinism have been minimised and are much less problematic (Reay, 2004). As Bourdieu (1993, p.271 cited in Reay 2004) points out when discussing his theoretical framework:

I blame most of my readers for having considered as theoretical treatise, meant solely to be read or commented upon, works...intended for exercise, or even better, for putting into practice...one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality.

Whilst habitus has some difficulties that are conceptual in nature, it offered theoretical potential as it can be both collective and individual and in operationalising habitus, I attempted to work with this duality and consider the data that was collected in light of the participants' practice (Reay, 2004).

Despite the criticisms levelled at Bourdieu, I still believe that using his framework was justifiable, for a number of reasons, within this thesis. For example, his theories are established upon research-based engagements. Without such research, he was reluctant to theorise about the complexities of social life. Whilst this in itself is not justification for utilising his framework, he continually reflected on his engagements and considered the impact of undertaking research in a specific manner and particular context had on the theorised products of the research process. Taken together, these make it very difficult to ignore Bourdieu (Jenkins, 1992).



Whilst Bourdieu's framework has been critiqued extensively as a result of focusing on elements of education that are reproductive, and consequently, his work has been viewed as overly deterministic (Reay, 2004), there is some evidence to suggest (Mills and Gale, 2010) that Bourdieu has been misunderstood. His framework offered me a way of "...recalling subjective human dispositions and actions and the objective social world within which they are framed..." (p.20) as well as the transformational opportunities that were offered, influenced by the participants' experiences (Reay, 2004).

Having considered the information above, my position is that I recognise that there is some validity in the criticisms levelled at Bourdieu and that to some extent this was bound to limit the results and findings that are tentatively offered. That said, there still appears to be enough that is important and significant for it to be of value in my research.

Finally, as Jenkins (1992, p.176) alludes, Bourdieu "...is enormously stimulating, he is good to think with". This is just what I have used him for: to help me think about why those young people from socially deprived areas, who could participate in HE, choose not to.

### ***3.5 The View of Culture Held for this Doctoral Thesis***

Having considered many across-the-board, all-encompassing definitions of culture, it was clear that one needed to be agreed upon which could be applied within this thesis. The definitions and concepts above have been enlightening and they helped me to think about what culture means to me and how it impacts on the decision making of my

participants. It seems that in ascertaining the impact of culture on my participants, I needed to take account of their beliefs, symbolic and value systems, the attitudes they had and, above all else, how this orientated them towards specific forms or 'strategies of action' in relation to HE participation. I was keen to ascertain if the actions that my participants undertook were the result of the culture and community in which they were immersed, and how this influenced their decision making.

I reviewed many definitions and considered the ideas of numerous authors to create a definition of culture which could be applied throughout this thesis:

Culture is a way of life consisting of traditions. It is represented by rules, beliefs, values, symbols and expected behaviours, conceptualised as a set of actions and forms of discourse, by groups of individuals situated within a particular local community. Culture provides a sense of local identity, belonging, solidarity and a common understanding that facilitates common local meanings that are accumulated over time.

In devising a definition that best suits this study, the findings gleaned from Chapter 1 which considers social deprivation and Barnsley, and this chapter, which defines culture and considers the influence of culture, were taken into account. In undertaking this research, my aim was to do more than simply define culture; I wanted to conceptualise and operationalise how culture and the social world came together and how my participants within social contexts created meaning. As discussed in Chapter 2, I attempted to do this during the interview process and when analysing my data. The interview questions were designed in such a way as to elicit information from participants that gave consideration to their values, to the importance they placed on local identity and the meanings that had accumulated over time. Similarly, when

analysing the data, I looked for data that might help to explain the influence culture had on the participants' HE decision making. This is considered in detail within my empirical chapters. To reiterate, my view is that my participants' culture provides them with a sense of identity and belonging that facilitates common understandings, traditions and values that have helped them to build a sense of local identity and solidarity, which, in turn, impacts upon their confidence as members of their community (Brennan, 2005). When culture is discussed within this research, I am referring to the rules, values and expected behaviours that impact on the decision making of the participants. In particular, I am referring to the common meanings accumulating over time that reflect their shared attachments. For example, the culture of Barnsley tells us about the kind of things that are happening in Barnsley and to people who live in Barnsley and, as such, indicate the way that those people from Barnsley view the social world.

### ***3.6 Chapter Summary***

This chapter, in seeking to define culture and to ascertain the influence that culture may have on the decision making of my participants, has given consideration to several interpretations of culture. In attempting to define culture, consideration was given to the various definitions, and a general definition has been proposed and utilised. I have drawn on literature that discussed how local understandings and interpretations of a community's history can reflect past events that feed into, and are partially driven by, the demands, sentiments and interests of those in the present (Brennan, 2005).

Consideration was also given to several key themes within this chapter, including community and local culture as well as cultural repertoires and 'tool kits'. I have emphasised how culture can be considered in terms of its social structure and the

networks of relationships that exist amongst and between a community's members and institutions, and that it is important to understand that my participants' culture influences its social structure and vice versa. I have illustrated that culture provides a sense of identity, community understanding and values that help to build a sense of local identity, solidity and belonging to a local community. This chapter has also emphasised a micro-level of analysis with culture being viewed as a form of practice that is linked to local understandings and social relations. Culture is viewed as being a 'tool kit' for constructing 'strategies of action' which are based on cultural components that incorporate habits, moods, sensibilities and world views.

In the second half of this chapter, I have illustrated that there is strong evidence to suggest that a Bourdieuan approach fits well with the issues that are interrogated throughout this study. I justify the use of five elements of his ensemble: practice; field; capital; habitus and symbolic violence.

I closed this chapter by discussing some of the criticisms levelled at Bourdieu, but I point out why the use of his framework was justifiable and finally I offer the definition of culture that is applied throughout this research.

## **Chapter 4 Why people from Disadvantaged Areas Choose Not to Participate**

### ***4.1 Chapter Introduction***

There seems to be a persuasive view that for the majority of people, the choices that they make relating to participation in HE is an immensely complex and messy process (Reay, 2001) with non-academic factors exerting the greatest influence on the most disadvantaged of qualified young people (Forsyth and Furlong, 2003). There is literature that suggests that those young people from relatively disadvantaged areas are less likely to participate in HE (Coffield and Vignoles, 1997; Melcalf, 1997). This review summarises a wide range of literature on HE participation, considering that which pertains to both traditional and non-traditional students. The purpose of this review is to draw out literature that sheds light on why people from the most socially deprived areas are underrepresented within HE. In doing so, literature will be reviewed that gives consideration as to why people living within traditionally working-class communities choose not to participate in HE. Literature that uncovers social, cultural and personal factors which contribute to the choice not to participate in HE is also included. This review also outlines literature that considers people's expectations, motivations and aspirations with particular emphasis being placed on social class and culture. Financial constraints are also discussed, with consideration being given as to whether the gains of HE outweigh the costs of participation.

I begin by reviewing literature that considers the influence of social class and cultural issues and how they impact on people's decisions not to participate in HE. I pay particular attention to debt aversion, and aspiration and confidence issues, drawing on

literature that emphasises the important role which parents, family and social networks have on people's decision-making processes. Whilst a great deal has been written about non-participation in HE, this review places particular emphasis on literature that investigates what prevents people, living in socially deprived, disadvantaged areas, from participating in HE.

#### ***4.2 The influence of Social Class and Culture on HE Participation***

Whilst there is some literature which outlines how traditional conceptualisations of social class have no impact on the decision making of young people with regard to participation in HE (Noble and Davis, 2009), a growing body of evidence exists that rejects this thesis and points to social class as a key site of social exclusion in HE (Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997; Reay, 2001; Reay, Ball and David, 2002; Archer, Hutchings and Ross, 2003 and Burke, 2006). Historically, participation of working-class groups in HE has remained persistently low (Archer *et al.*, 2003) and there is undoubtedly a link between participation and social class (Gilchrist, Phillips and Ross, 2003). The reasons for the underrepresentation of lower socio-economic groups in HE has been described by McGivney (1990) as complex and multiple, and it appears that many authors have rightly discussed the fact that, although the overall number of full-time students who participate in HE has increased, there still remains an underrepresentation of school leavers from disadvantaged backgrounds (Burnhill *et al.*, 1990; Halsey, 1992; Blackburn and Jarman, 1993; Shavit and Blossfield, 1993). Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) figures from 1999 pointed out that only 10% of new degree entrants were in social classes IV and V. These inequalities, according to Forsyth and Furlong (2003), were due to poorer academic

achievement whilst at school. In considering the three lower social-class groups, Baxter, Tate and Hatt (2007) discussed that the issues that affected their choice to enter HE included finance, personal confidence and the expected outcome: is the investment worthwhile? It seems, then, that young people from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds are less like to apply for HE (Coffield and Vignoles, 1997; Metcalf, 1997). In fact, young people are much less likely to enter HE if they come from social class V than if they are from class I (Conner, 2001). It is well established that there are groups who continue to be underrepresented within HE. There is an abundance of research that confirms how socio-economic status, linked to educational background, is a key determinant of HE participation (Sutton Trust, 2001; Bibbings, 2006). This is confirmed by the Sutton Trust (2001) which discusses that the education of a child tends to resemble that of their parent, insofar as young people brought up by parents with few or no qualifications and no family experience of HE tend to have low educational aspirations. It appears that "...more generally, social context can influence young people's perception of what is and what is not 'for the likes of them'" (Bibbings, 2006, p.76). It seems that socio-economic and educational disadvantage can lead to an inequality of opportunities which can lead to the talent, ability and potential of young people being wasted. Equally, there is some persuasive literature that attests to how many young people show no incentive to access HE, as academic failure has been inscribed upon their life whilst at school (Reay, 2001).

There is evidence to suggest that disadvantaged young people do not enjoy an equal level of participation in HE in relation to their more advantaged peers (Forsyth and Furlong, 2003) with children from poor backgrounds remaining far less likely to go to university than more advantaged children (Vignoles and Crawford, 2010). Archer

(2003) explicitly seeks to make visible that, within HE choices, participation is an “...inherently more risky, costly and uncertain ‘choice’ for working-class groups than for middle-class groups” (2003, p.16). Differential valuing of HE between social classes and differing class perceptions in relation to accessibility goes some way towards explaining participation rates. Interestingly, much literature points to a large difference in middle-class parents’ experience and knowledge of social class and that this ultimately influences the impact they have on the decisions their children make in relation to HE participation. It appears that middle-class students, to a varying degree, have more preparation for university life. They receive much more advice and grooming than their working-class counterparts (Brooks; 2003; Crozier *et al.*, 2010).

The notion of identity and how it impacts upon the routes into education, which are perceived as being accessible, worthwhile and desirable to the working class, are also of importance, as they are central to the ways in which working and middle-class people can or cannot negotiate the education system (Archer and Leathwood, 2003). As they point out:

Identities and inequalities of social class...and gender structure the resources and capital (cultural, economic and social) available to working class groups which, in turn, mediates their potential, and likelihood, of their participation in higher education.

p.175)

For the working class, there are emotional forces that impact on their negotiations and choices in terms of HE participation. Identity is embedded within common-sense notions of what is appropriate for them and many of the reasons given for non-participation are grounded within identity and emotion discourse (Archer and



Leathwood, 2003). As Ball, Maguire and Macrae (2000) suggest, identity is both socially and culturally located. It is altered by desire and rejection. The choices made by post-16 individuals are associated with the expression and suppression of those young people's identities. There is evidence to suggest that dispositions and behaviour could, as a result of working-class locality and identity, be restricted in a manner that could be socially limiting (Ingram, 2009) and that this could impact on both educational and career aspirations due to the working class having restricted horizons, as their world view tends to be represented by their own locality (Connolly and Healy, 2004). In using Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Ingram outlines how locality can both mould and constrain the formation of identity and friendships which are fostered within 'close-knit' communities as they rely on a shared habitus (the concept of habitus was considered in Chapter 3, see p.90) being recognised and validated with local friendship networks impacting upon the structure of the habitus. Ingram's use of qualitative semi-structured interviews in a densely packed, deprived, working-class community in Northern Ireland illustrates that many working-class young people live their lives within the confines of their own neighbourhood and that this strongly impacts upon their identity. For many, it is difficult to separate belonging to a working-class locality from having a working-class identity and both together have been shown to construct powerful boundaries. This means that for individuals to feel that they belong outside of their local geographical context, both physically and emotionally, can be very difficult (Ingram, 2009). In fact, several studies have highlighted the powerful connection between locality and identity, and working-class educational success (Connolly and Neil, 2001; Connolly and Healy, 2004; Healy 2006; Archer, Hollingworth and Halsall, 2007).

It appears, then, that identity should be considered in terms of both 'difference' and 'sameness' and that when giving consideration to identity formulation, multiple, contradictory, social positions must be taken into account with individuals negotiating their identities. Such negotiation is not always a smooth process and, whilst it can be complex and continual, it is always linked to experiences, both social and personal histories, that are connected (Burke, 2012). Identity has been seen to both precede and guide human interactions and to communicate the essential aspects of self or personality (Martin, 2005). Martin goes on to suggest that though:

...human identities are typically 'held' individually, they are regarded as having distinctively social origins and expressions. For instance, 'class', 'gender' or national identities imply individual selves fashioned around the shared content of these social categories and the practices associated with them.

Identities can be socially, culturally and institutionally assigned and are internalised by those individuals who take them on (Weedon, 2004). Giddens (1991), in considering the changing nature of identity, discussed how the traditional sources of identity such as the family are being replaced by a reflexive self-identity with individuals more purposively negotiating their identity. Hall (1996, p.222) offers an interesting definition which views identity as "...a 'production' that is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representations".

Class still remains a key ingredient of identity and can be used as a way of conceptualising social relations which can lead to an understanding of societal inequalities and how particular forms of identity relate to the reproduction of economic and social inequalities (Weedon, 2004).

More broadly, the question of whether, and how much, culture influences decision making in relation to HE participation is an interesting one. There is a substantive body of literature that gives consideration to culture and how it impacts on HE participation. Indeed, many authors have researched how an individual's way of life represented by rules, beliefs, values and expected behaviours is conceptualised as a set of actions or non-actions. Local identity, belonging, solidarity, a common understanding and shared meaning have all been shown to influence HE participation (definitions of culture were considered in greater detail in Chapter 3, see p.75).

Whilst there are clearly some convincing arguments in many studies which consider how people from working-class communities view participating in HE, there have been some shortcomings associated with such work, according to Bradley and Miller (2010), in terms of the methods used to collect data, the samples chosen and the location of study. Consequently, Bradley and Miller use a quantitative Q-methodology which they argue allows them to explore subjective beliefs and values, of young people who were following a level 3 programme, from former coal mining communities in the East Midlands. They demonstrate that there is a range of distinctive viewpoints on 'going to university', even within an apparent homogenous group. Data were drawn from interviews, focus groups, participants' comments from other research and statements that appeared in the printed and broadcasted media, from which over 200 different statements about 'going to university' were collected and printed. Participants in the study were then asked to sort them from 'most agree' to 'least agree'. Based on the responses, factor analysis was undertaken. In spite of the participants having a strong fear that they might not fit in, and that HE participation would be a big financial risk with debt being a real fear, they recognised the potential benefits. Interestingly, some young

people, although unlikely to apply for HE, saw it in a positive light. However, ambivalence about the career benefits of a degree was also highlighted and there was a strong belief that they were just as likely to get a job without a degree with apprenticeships being viewed as good alternatives to attending university. Home and friends were also important to the young people with any exploration of HE involving studying locally and living at home.

The idea of ambivalence is also an interesting one; using the concept of 'ambivalence' provides a useful framework to help understand some complex issues linked to HE participation. Decision making has been shown to be embedded within social practice that is linked to behaviours, attitudes and dispositions that hold importance within an individual's social network (Heath, Fuller and Paton, 2008). By exploring the extent to which HE participation might be viewed as being possible, particular attention is paid to non-decision making and how it might be embedded within 'networks of intimacy' which include family, friends and peers. This is considered in greater detail later in this chapter.

The idea that the cultural values held by the working class may vary across genders and, as a result, influence participation is also an important one (Stuart, Lido and Morgan, 2012). For example, Skeggs's (1997) study considered white working-class females and how they valued caring and more practical skills over academic skill which they viewed as being useless, whilst Reay (2003) outlined how both material and cultural factors inhibit the working-class women in her study from accessing HE. Research on women from working-class backgrounds has discussed the struggles

faced with regard to support from family, funding, debt and due to masculine ways of learning and not fitting in (Bowl, 2003).

Alternatively, the constructions of working-class masculinity have been shown to constrain educational aspiration among working-class men (Mac and Ghail, 1994). Men from socio-economic groups IV and V were identified by Dearing (1997) as the most unlikely to participate in HE. Participation is often viewed as being incompatible with notions of working-class masculinity and involving many costs and risks to masculine identities (Archer and Leathwood, 2003). Attention needs to be drawn to men's gendered experiences of participation in regard to the ways that marginalised masculinities affect men from working classes (Burke, 2006). 'Laddish' masculinities and being lazy have been viewed as a key barrier to educational progress (Mac and Ghail, 1994; Francis, 1999). The constructions of 'laddishness' as 'being lazy' operate as a strategy to protect self-worth, as feelings of self-worth are undoubtedly linked to academic ability. One possible strategy is to blame not trying as the cause of failure. Men seem to talk of a natural tendency towards laziness and disorganisation and that this is constructed as an essential male characteristic (Jackson, 2002 cited in Burke, 2007). Burke points out that:

The negotiation of access to HE is entangled in the complex interplay of identity. Power and discourse and must take into account boy's/men's heterogeneity across age, class, ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, sexuality and other auto/biographical differences.

(2007, p.422)

Discussed in relation to this study in Chapter 3, the concepts of habitus (see p.90) and cultural capital (see p.87) have been shown to be integral to students' and their families' choices of university (Reay, 1998) with several authors identifying habitus as an issue for non-traditional students (Reay, Ball and David, 2002; Hutchings 2003; Archer and Leathwood, 2006; Stuart *et al.*, 2012). Described as having a 'practical mastery' that people possess of their situation (Ball *et al.*, 2000), habitus is the embodiment of history: "...a kind of history that matches the present conditions facilitates one's engagement with that present reality" (Crozier *et al.*, 2010, p.66). For example, many middle-class students appear to be more prepared for university life than their working-class counterparts, having been given advice by family members and parents who have been to university themselves and have been brought up in a culture of entitlement for university education. Their schools "...groomed them, endowing their habitus by providing insights and relevant experiences" (p.66-67). It seems that middle-class parents have extensive resources of social, economic and cultural capital that they use in the pursuit of information regarding HE, which they pass onto their children (Reay, 1998). Moreover, many middle-class students express a strong sense of entitlement about going to university, which is engendered by their schools and families. Yet, crucially, for working-class students, this is not the case; they often view themselves as people who could not be students (Hutchings, 2003; Crozier *et al.*, 2010). In fact, social origin, as well as individual circumstance, led some working-class people to view university as a place for clever, rich people and that it was a middle class pursuit. HE was 'not for people like them nor 'for people from where they came from' (Marks *et al.*, 2003). Part of the preparation for university, according to Crozier *et al.* (2010) involves the "...inculcation of self-confidence" (p.67). Some families indirectly (rather than directly) transmit to their children a certain cultural capital and ethos. Ethos is viewed

as a system of deeply implicit interiorised values which help to define attitudes towards educational institutions (Bourdieu, 1976). Seemingly, whereas HE choice may be presented as clear-cut and natural for students of middle-class families, it is very different for the students of working-class families as it can be seen as uncertain and even chancy (Maguire, Ball and Macrae, 1999). Research has indicated that prospective students also lack confidence as they do not know what is needed to participate in HE other than the fact that high qualifications are required. There is evidence to suggest that, as they are not confident that they would gain the required qualifications, they constructed HE as being totally out of reach. Interestingly, middle-class students tend to demonstrate greater confidence and a sense of self-worth than their working-class counterparts (Hutchings and Archer, 2001; Crozier *et al.*, 2010).

### **4.3 The Implications of Debt**

There has been a great deal written about debt and debt aversion and the question of whether debt plays an important role in individuals' choices when deciding whether to attend university, is paramount. There appears to be equivocal evidence of the impact of debt on HE participation decisions. The research of Forsyth and Furlong (2003) indicates an aversion to the prospect of debt. In fact, the costs of participation and financial concerns have been considered by many researchers including Conner, (2001); Wolf, (2002); Callender (2003); Dodgeson, (2004); Watts (2006) and Baxter *et al.* (2007). Significantly, evidence suggests that students from working-class backgrounds are more likely to be averse to being in debt and reluctant to accept the debt attached to being a student. Moreover, indebtedness is viewed as a major risk by many working-class students and their families. They are reluctant to be exposed to these risks. In spite of the perceived value of HE, many young working-class people

consider participation in HE in terms of risks, costs and benefits (Callender, 2003). In fact, financial barriers have been shown to be the biggest barrier for young people (Church, Hillier, Hyde, Robinson and Watson, 2010). Baxter *et al.*'s (2007) research echoes the widespread concern about debt. They aver that:

Given the changes in student financial arrangements and the new fee levels for 2006, this could be a serious issue for the future of HE and the fear of debt could deter the very groups at whom widening participation initiatives are targeted.

(p.279)

It appears that finance is viewed as a major concern for parents, specifically in relation to their children getting into debt (Dodgson 2004). Conner's (2001) comprehensive study of non-entrants from lower social class groups emphasises a range of financial concerns. She found that there were some genuine instances where the financial costs associated with HE study were the main reason her participants chose not to enter HE. Significantly, it was interesting to note that those who held these views generally had quite a poor understanding of student finance. Importantly, Conner also found that cost was not, by itself, the overriding reason for non-participation.

An important study by Callender and Jackson (2008) concentrates on factors associated with students' choices and pays particular attention to social class, attitudes towards costs and the costs and benefits of higher education, as well as the general fear of debt. They rightly propose that, in order to understand the impact of debt more fully, focus needed to be placed on the more subtle and hidden disadvantages of debt and move beyond the question of whether or not prospective students participate in HE. Indeed, students present complex attitudes towards debt and employ a variety of



strategies to avoid debt and to reduce the possible cost of HE participation (Forsyth and Furlong 2000, 2003). It appears that for many, choices are constrained by the cost of going to university but that these constraints are more frequently seen among students from lower-class families. Prospective participants seem to see relatively few benefits of university, with students from low-income families' fear of debt playing a pivotal role in their decision making (Callender and Jackson; 2006). Importantly, there is evidence to suggest that cost is sometimes used as a socially acceptable reason for non-participation, and that this may mask reasons that are, in fact, much more complex (Herbert and Callender, 1997).

Whilst many writers point out that for the majority of working class, going to university can be very expensive and that finance is seen as a major obstacle, significantly, Hutchings and Archer's (2001) study points out that whilst it was generally accepted that students were 'skint' and ended up in considerable debt, there is often misinformation and vagueness about how much it costs to go and live whilst attending university; there was some confusion and uncertainty. The equation, which takes account of risks, costs and benefits in relation to HE decision making is clearly not equal for all social groups, as the balance between benefits weighed against risks and costs is structured differently across social classes (Archer, 2003). For example, Melcalf (1997) discusses how those from less affluent backgrounds may regard HE as irrelevant to their future, as opposed to those from more affluent backgrounds who view it as being important for securing better job prospects. The financial costs of participation are clearly an issue with better-paid jobs as a result of participation in HE being far from certain. It can be unclear how young people from working-class or lower socio-economic groups benefit from HE participation (Watts and Bridges, 2006). It seems that the decision to go to

university involves more risk for those from working-class backgrounds than for their middle-class counterparts (Baxter *et al.*, 2007) and that the financial costs of HE can outweigh any future financial returns (Watts, 2006). Baxter *et al.* (2007) question the pay-off from HE and outline how the respondents in their study preferred to enter employment. They relate this issue to the plight of working-class men discussing how HE participation can conflict with images of masculine identity (as aforementioned) resulting from the need to work and earn money in order to buy symbols of masculinity.

Whilst going to university is viewed as being very expensive, there is evidence of some misinformation and even vagueness about how much attending university actually costs and how university is paid for (Conner, Burton, Pearson, Pollard, and Regan, 1999; Hutchings and Archer, 2001).

#### **4.4 The Significance of Aspiration**

The question of whether those people who choose not to participate in HE have 'low aspirations' can be contested. A great deal has been written about the aspirations of non-participants and how these impact on their desire to participate in HE. There appears to be a body of literature that makes the assumption that not wanting to undertake HE is an example of 'low aspiration'. Discourse relating to 'raising aspirations' outlines the main widening participation problems as being those individuals and communities who do not see the value of HE participation (Burke, 2012). Young people who choose not to access HE are seen to have 'low aspirations' and it is believed that these must be raised to allow them to fully participate in the benefits of education (CWPP, 2004, quoted in Watts and Bridges, 2006). This is a problematic assumption as 'raising aspirations' has been viewed as not paying enough attention to

the processes of identity formation that are situated in schools and colleges (Burke, 2012). Social exclusion discourses contain the assumption that inclusion is best and there is some evidence to suggest that initiatives such as Aimhigher have produced some positive responses from young people in relation to improved confidence and self-worth. The interviews and focus groups carried out by Baxter *et al.* (2007) highlighted how Aimhigher was viewed as being advantageous and of benefit. This was echoed by HEFCE (2006a), cited in Burke (2012) who pointed to a change in attitude and an increased interest in HE from those targeted by the Aimhigher initiative. However, 'raising aspirations' discourse has been heavily criticised for failing to redress social inequalities and the idea that social inclusion is achievable through widening participation in HE can also be seen as problematic. It focuses on inequalities of aspiration, comparing those who are viewed as having a lack of appropriate aspirations against the middle classes, when attention should be focused on inequalities that are historically reproduced and that are located in wider social relations and structures (Burke, 2012).

'Low aspiration' discourse assumptions can also be challenged because non-participation may not simply be a matter of low aspirations; it may arise from different aspirations. These aspirations seem to be linked to the lives and lifestyles of individuals who may not see any benefit to HE (Watts and Bridges, 2006). New Labour's widening participation policy can be criticised, particularly in relation to the stress placed on aspiration-raising and the way in which working-class students' aspirations are seen as deficient and in need of change, with young people being expected to adapt to change in order to participate in the (unchanged) HE institutional culture (Archer *et al.*, 2003; Baxter *et al.*, 2007; Burke, 2012). As Archer *et al.*, point out:

...the notion that working-class groups are 'socially excluded' from higher education has been linked to attempts to change or 'raise' working-class aspirations and attainment...the governments focus upon changing working-class cultures and patterns of decision making represents, at least implicitly, a desire to make working-class groups more like the middle classes.

(2003, p.195)

Policies aimed at raising aspiration appear to have operated essentially within a deficit model which tries to change students in order to make them fit into the provision that already exists, rather than changing the existing provision to meet the needs and accommodate the educational skills of students (Thomas, 2001; Burke, 2012).

Importantly, Watts and Bridges (2004) make reference to the previous New Labour Government's widening participation policies as being perceived as 'downgrading' the aspirations of young working-class people. Watts (2006, p.308) argued that:

...in ascribing low aspirations and low achievements to those who choose not to enter higher education, typically those from the working classes and lower socio-economic groups, it could be argued that this policy makes victims and scapegoats of them.

The deficit model seems to have undermined widening-participation initiatives as it causes students to feel stigmatised and this can particularly impact on their willingness to participate. Young people with these attitudes are unlikely to want to progress through the education system. The aspirations of low-participating groups appear to be viewed as being less valid than those of other participating groups and, as a result, need to be changed (Bridges, 2005; Baxter *et al.*, 2007). This view still had currency in the early 2000s and, in fact, underpinned various widening-participation initiatives that were aimed at raising aspiration and challenging the cultures of non-participation among

underrepresented groups. However, there appears to have been a shift away from cultural explanations towards the role of the school or educational processes and “...towards more nuanced, complex accounts of culture” (Archer, 2003 p.9).

For example, Burke’s (2006) study of 38 men taking foundation programmes in three FE colleges and one university considered the aspirations of men in shaping their HE participation decisions. She argues that classed and gendered identifications are discursively constituted and that aspirations are re/fashioned as a result of changing identifications and contexts. Discourses are viewed as shaping aspirations and world views and these, in turn, are interlinked with sets of competing cultural values. She goes on to discuss how, through gendered power relations and identifications, aspirations are discursively fashioned. Aspirations are embedded in gendered relations and are socially contextualised. As Burke (2012, p.105) points out, “...aspirations are tied to the classed, gendered...identities and subjectivities in complex ways that require close, critical and qualitative analytical attention”.

Burke (2006) is rightly critical of the connection between New Labour’s policy discourse of social exclusion and how it is connected to the raising of aspirations. She purports that, within this particular discourse, specific cultural values and perspectives are legitimised when they should be problematised. The discourse of ‘raising aspirations’ emphasises individual aspirations without:

...understanding the interconnections between a subject's aspirations and their classed, racialised, (hetero) sexualised and gendered social positioning and identifications, ignoring the social and cultural contexts in which certain subjects are constructed, and construct themselves, as having or not having potential or indeed not choosing to participate in higher education for a range of valid reasons.

(Burke, 2006, p.720)

Various types of aspirations have been alluded to by Burke (2012) including contradictory aspirations, which are tied to subjective constructions of 'becoming', relational aspirations that highlight that aspirations are formed in relation to others and respectable aspirations, the association between education and respect. An interesting study by Atkins (2009) discussed examples of participants having fantasy futures. She found a dissonance between the participants' aspirations and the course they had chosen to study.

#### ***4.5 The Importance of Information***

A lack of information pertaining to university entrance and university life is one of the main reasons put forward for low participation by working-class groups (Keen and Higgins 1990; Howieson and Semple 1996; Connor and Dewson 2001; Thomas 2001; Hutchings 2003). Significantly, non-entrants to HE have been shown to be ill-informed about many of the aspects associated with life and study in HE. Furthermore, the information which they do receive from universities has been shown to be hard to understand. Many young people outlined how they had not received sufficient information and that the information was often poorly presented, particularly that which pertained to the cost involved (Conner, 2001). Three key arguments (Hutchings, 2003) have been put forward to explain why working-class individuals are less well-informed than their middle-class counterparts. Firstly, working-class young people know fewer

people who have experienced HE. Having friends and family members who have experienced HE is a form of cultural capital that much of the working class may not have (Reay, 1998). The ideas of 'hot' and 'cold' knowledge are important here. 'Hot' knowledge or 'grapevine' knowledge, which is embedded in various networks and localities, is often seen as being more reliable than official sources of information (Ball and Vincent, 1998). 'Cold' knowledge is information that is supplied by official sources that do not have a personal interest in the person who receives the information. This has been shown to be viewed with suspicion and scepticism as those who provide the information are seen as having their own interests and agendas. Secondly, schools and colleges supply less information to learners from working-class backgrounds. Finally, information needed by working-class potential participants is more complex than that needed by middle-class learners. The complexity relates to the courses that are available and routes of entrance. However, there is a suggestion that much of the information that people and parents receive on HE is not neutral and that it is designed to show why HE study is an economic necessity. University literature has been viewed as a barrier as it can be written in a complex manner that requires significant prior knowledge. The language and descriptions used can also be a barrier (Pickerdn, 2002). As already discussed, this is key as it is the judgements of parents, teachers and friends that appear to be the most important (Kidd and Wardman, 1999, cited in Hutchings, 2003).

Hutchings and Archer (2001) also referred to what prospective students imagined being at university would be like, with student life involving long hours, pressure and potential stress. This is important because a distinction is made between local universities and those outside the locality, with the former being constructed as being much more

preferable. In fact, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have been shown to be much more likely to attend a local university and to live at home (Brennan and Osborne, 2008). Hutchings and Archer's analysis also identified discourses through which working-class respondents identified HE as 'not for them'.

#### ***4.6 The Role of Parents, Family and Social Networks***

Despite Noble and Davis's (2009) claim that parental occupation and education levels should not be seen as a way in which to predict whether individuals will participate in HE, Chowdry, Crawford, Dearden, Goodman and Vignoles, (2013) allude to several studies which found that HE participation is determined significantly by the characteristics of parents, particularly the parental level of education (Gayle, Berridge and Davies, 2002; Carneiro and Heckman, 2002; Blanden and Gregg, 2004; Meghir and Palme, 2005). In fact, there is a growing body of literature that recognises the important part parents, other family members and friends play in the participation decisions of young people (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 2001; Ball, Reay and David, 2002).

Families play an important role in people's understanding and conceptualisation of HE, with as much as 90% of people talking to their parents about HE participation (Brooks, 2003). The important role of parents, other family members and friends in relation to HE choices cannot be overlooked, as families have an important part to play in choosing what is most appropriate for their children (Archer, 2003).

As touched upon, there seems to be compelling evidence (Brooks, 2003) that a family's class position has a strong bearing on an individual's decision about whether to go on to university (Archer and Hutchings, 2000; Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001) and on



how people understand the HE market (Pugsley, 1998; Ball *et al.*, 2002). Several authors have discussed that many working-class parents support their children in whatever decisions they made with regard to participating in HE, although they are not prepared to push them in a particular direction (Reay, 1998; Conner and Dewson, 2001; Church *et al.*, 2010). Many working-class parents want their children to participate in HE, but underlying fears associated with "...abandoning the family and its norms and values" still remain (Thomas and Quinn, 2007, quoted in Crozier *et al.*, 2010). Significantly, this can be very different for young, middle-class people whose parents are much more prepared to attempt to influence and to shape the decisions of their children in relation to HE participation (Archer, 2003). This is the result of middle-class parents' exposure to HE, as previously touched upon (Brooks, 2003). However, when considering the attitudes and knowledge of parents in relation to HE, significantly, Dodgson (2004) found that 92% of the parents sampled rejected the view that HE was a waste of time and money. Dodgson's study considered the viewpoints of 214 parents and his findings do highlight some important issues of concern in respect to parents' attitudes and opinions of HE. Perhaps his most striking finding was that, in the context of the north-east which is characterised by high levels of socio-economic deprivation, the young people who took part in his research rated parents as a source of information they would listen to most when deciding about HE. Similarly, McShane's (2003) illuminating report also discusses the attitudes of parents in the north-east of England and how they contrasted with traditional assumptions about the low educational aspirations of families in the north-east. However, of significance is the fact that working-class parents who have not been to university are less able to advise their children as they know less (Reay, 1998) and whilst parents have been shown to understand the importance of education, some do not want their children to make

decisions that might have a negative impact on their future job prospects (Church *et al.* (2010).

The degree to which social capital, which is embedded within families and communities, impacts on how individuals participate in, and are included within, society has been considered by several authors (Putnam, 2000; Fuller and Heath, 2010). Being accrued through interpersonal relationships that exist within and between groups of individuals and other networks to which individuals have ties, the notion of social capital is “...founded on the insight that social relationships have value that can be mobilised to facilitate particular courses of action and activities to help create ‘horizons of possibility’” (Fuller, 2011, p.69). It is defined by Putman as “... connections among individuals’ social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Fuller and Heath, 2010, p.136 quoting Putnam, 2000, p.19). Networks, norms and sanctions can be viewed as the key components of social capital that can be identified within groupings (Halpern, 2005, cited in Fuller, 2011). Networks refer to extended groups of people that have similar interests; they interact with each other and remain in informal contact for mutual assistance or support. Norms relate to the values and expectations of groups that impact on decision making and guide individuals’ choices and behaviours in which decision making is embedded (Fuller, 2011). Fuller’s networks were characterised by high levels of trust, emotional support and taken-for-granted assumptions that can generate collective perceptions of what the right decision is for a particular individual. The power of unwritten ‘guides for action’ and how they impact on decision making within a network in relation to education and HE participation are key.

The perceptions and experiences that people have of HE and how this can be transmitted within their social networks was the focus of Heath, Fuller and Johnston's, (2010) research. Their comprehensive study explored sixteen networks which resulted in 107 young people being studied. They were specifically interested in considering how and in what ways HE decision making, or non-decision making, had the potential to be embedded within social networks. The networks in question included family members, friends and peers and their research considered the extent to which HE participation could be perceived as a future possibility amongst those in the network who were not participating. Educational experiences and the aspirations of younger generations appear to play a pivotal role in shaping the perceptions of other network members. Network influence is viewed as a multi-directional process and is apparent between and within generations, but not solely from older to younger generations.

Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam have focused on networks and how forms of advantage and disadvantage are transmitted between and within them. Whilst Bourdieu's importance and influence in this area is key, particularly his writings that considered a distinction between cultural and social capital and which emphasise the importance of shared attitudes, dispositions and behaviours within networks and how these shape individual outcomes (Heath *et al.*, 2008), Coleman (1988) and Putnam's (2000) ideas are considered in some detail and they offer significant insights (Heath *et al.*, 2010). Various forms of social capital appear to impact on how people can participate in the educational sphere. In particular, the downward intergenerational transition of resource from parent to child and from older to younger generations more generally can be seen as being paramount in understanding the transmission of social capital and how this impacts upon educational attainment (Coleman, 1988, cited in

Heath *et al.*, 2008). Bridging social capital refers to diffused and indirect types of linkage and reciprocation within, and between, groups. Bonding social capital refers to specific forms of reciprocation associated with homogenous groups. It refers to the values of solidarity, support and mutual reinforcement. Parental social capital flows from parents to their children as a resource that is shared between siblings; the more children there are, the less social capital that is available to each (Coleman, 1988 cited in Fuller and Health, 2010). Significantly, Putman discusses the educational outcomes of children, outlining the possibilities for social mobility that are afforded by access to particular forms of social capital, with bridging capital having the potential to facilitate social mobility, whereas bonding capital is seen to reproduce inequalities that were also in existence. Interestingly:

In the sphere of widening participation policy and practice, access to bridging capital as represented by prior parental experience of HE is seen as being particularly important. Strongly correlated with social class, parental participation is widely understood to be a key determinant of whether younger generations are likely to participate in HE.

(Heath *et al.*, 2010, p.399, citing Thomas and Quinn, 2007)

Influence on HE participation can be exerted within networks by those who have had a prior experience of HE and whose experiences appear to be critical in shaping other people's perceptions. Yet interestingly, there are also other notions of social capital that identify possibilities for families and networks to develop 'linking' and 'bridging' and for social capital to be introduced as well as depleted (Woolcock, 1998; Putnam, 2000). 'Linking capital' is seen as a third variety of social capital (Halpern, 2005) which enables vertical connections between social groups occupying different power positions. This gives people the ability to access institutional resources such as HE (Thomas and

Quinn, 2007 cited in Fuller, 2011). Clearly, social networks may accrue different types of social capital.

There is also a potential connection between social capital and place attachment. Poor communities, homogeneous in terms of lower income, have been shown to be rich in bonding social capital and this is typified as being exclusive and inwardly looking, helping people to 'get by'. However, such communities have been seen to be lacking in bridging capital which, as touched upon, is described as being inclusive and being capable of helping people to 'get ahead' and giving them the capabilities to generate wider identities and reciprocities (Field, 2003, Fitzpatrick, 2004). So:

...for poorer...communities, high levels of social capital (being of the bonding variety) may strengthen place attachment in that the ability to get by is associated with living in a particular community and place. For more affluent people, high levels of social capital (especially of the bridging variety) does not have the same effect of reinforcing place attachment since it derives from connections to people in a variety of places.

The bonds or ties that people may have to a particular place or neighbourhood is known as place attachment. This is seen to occur due to local social relationships or interactions that can form between people who possess common backgrounds, interests, culture, religion or lifestyles. People can form strong bonds with places due to residence or repeat visits and if the place meets their particular needs and matches their goals and lifestyles, then an attachment is likely to be formed. The longer an individual resides in an area, the stronger the attachment. Although, it is worth noting Brown, Perkins and Brown (2003) who posited that length of residence in a particular place may not be the main reason for high attachment. Place attachment can also be

emotional; this refers to the moods, emotions and feelings that people have for places and communities. This attachment can be psychological and is partly due to the development of social relationships within communities that help to develop a sense of belonging. Emotional attachment is represented by a commitment to a particular place and is the result of institutional ties, interaction and social activity, as well as residential satisfaction and the presence of friends and family locally (Giuliani and Feldman, 1993, Giuliani, 2003 cited in Livingstone, Bailey and Kearns, 2008). Emotional attachment can have a positive impact on how an individual's identity is defined, how it fills their life with meaning and enriches it with values and goals. This can contribute to an individual's well-being and mental health (Giuliani, 2003).

Whilst there are limited studies that consider place attachment in deprived areas, Livingstone *et al.* (2008) refer to Woolever (1992) who points out that variations in a neighbourhood's education levels are associated with higher place attachment. Whilst deprived areas have lower attachment on average, for those who felt attached to an area, most often, social networks and family were seen as being important. Another key factor was deemed to be one of cultural resources, with higher levels of education in an area helping to generate social involvements and, subsequently, place attachment. However, irrespective of area deprivation, people are seen to be more attached in well-integrated, residentially stable communities which are cohesive and close-knit.

A note of caution is offered by Fried (2000) who espouses that place attachment can have a negative effect as it can prevent people from seeking out new experiences and opportunities for personal development.

Crucially, Heath *et al.* (2008) emphasise the importance of considering the networks rather than the individual within those networks as the primary unit of analysis and that there is a lot to be gained from doing this. They used the concept of 'ambivalence' (discussed briefly above, see p.109) as a framework to help them understand the complexities attached to this. They refer to Lüscher (2005) who points out that ambivalences are rooted in the simultaneous existence of "...polarised emotions, thoughts, volitions, social relations and structures that are considered relevant for the constitution of individual or collective identities" (p.100). Lüscher's model focuses on differing forms of ambivalence within families and how this leads to accommodation or change. His model takes account of the extent to which members of family share similar outlooks and values and the degree to which they preserve traditional forms or embrace change. It relates to family relations that are intergenerational. The conceptualisation of ambivalence outlined by Connidis and McMullin (2002) purports that network-based relationships are both central to the processes of individual decision making and that they impact on the reinforcement or challenging of the broader social order, as they provide an impetus for action (Heath *et al.*, 2008 citing McMullin, 2002). For example:

...decisions made by children as to whether to stay on at 16 or 18, or whether to return to study as an adult may be firmly rooted in socially structured inter-generational ambivalence. Confounding network-based expectations may be a way of managing ambivalence, but may simultaneously serve to reproduce or challenge existing inequalities.

(Heath *et al.*, 2008, p.223)

They focus on a network of sixteen people aged 21+ (91 members of their broader networks were also interviewed) whose highest qualification is at level 3 or equivalent

and who have not continued their education beyond this level. Networks of intimacy are conceived as sites of varying forms of social, cultural and economic capital. They provide a context in which the thinking of individuals with regard to HE is embedded and co-constructed across the life course. Educational decision making is seen to be embedded within networks and not an individualised process. They help to make sense of the strategies that people use to manage ambivalence and the contradictions and tensions that are integral to social interactions within networks.

Finally, whilst not directly discussing issues pertaining to HE participation, Atkins' (2009) important study is useful as it points out that support is not only provided by parents and the family, but that it also provided by educational institutions. There is evidence to suggest that individuals can become over-reliant on the support offered by some educational institutions (as part of an overall network), something she describes as well-intentioned, pseudo-therapeutic interventions, which can lead to what could be described as a 'diminished self' and reduced agency, with a discourse of fragility being bought into (Ecclestone, 2004, 2007 cited in Atkins, 2009). What Furedi (2004) referred to as a 'therapy culture' has been criticised as such an approach can result in an individual's autonomy being eroded as they are always in need of support (Ecclestone, 2004 citing in Atkins 2009). For effective individual agency, autonomy has been shown to be an important contributing factor (Hillier, 2008).

#### ***4.7 Chapter Summary***

This review has summarised a wide range of literature on HE participation and it has made reference to literature that has shed light on why young people from the most socially deprived areas may be underrepresented within HE. It has shown that, whilst



everyone has a set of unique influencing factors, there are several commonalities with people showing uncertainty and even trepidation towards HE participation (Osborne, Mark and Turner (2004). Within the review, I have concentrated on themes that will go some way towards helping resolve the research questions that were set in Chapter 1. The five broad themes that have been reviewed were: the influence of social class and culture; the implications of debt; the significance of aspiration; the importance of debt and the role of parents, family and social networks. Each of the five themes has helped to broaden my understanding of what prevents young adults from entering HE, particularly with regard to the expectations, motivations and aspirations of young people. These themes have also helped to illustrate some of the social, cultural and personal factors that contribute to the decision-making processes of young people pertaining to HE participation. I have demonstrated that there is a growing body of literature that considers why people from disadvantaged areas might choose not to participate in HE and that the said literature has illustrated that the reasons for non-participation are both complex and multiple.

I began by reviewing literature that considers social class and cultural issues and how they appear to influence people's decision not to participate in HE. The literature highlights that those individuals that come from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to participate in HE and there is evidence to suggest that differential valuing of HE between classes goes some way towards explaining participation rates and why the education of a child tends to resemble that of their parent(s). The literature has also suggested that notions of identity are also vital as they are central to the negotiation of the education system with common sense notions of what is appropriate, with regard to

HE participation, being identified which result in a restricted horizon for those from working-class backgrounds.

I have also drawn on literature that suggests that cultural influences are paramount with the idea that cultural values that are held may militate against participation as there is greater risk and uncertainty around HE participation for the working class. The literature has also suggested that gender constructions of the reasons for non-participation are varied and complicated. The work of Pierre Bourdieu can be seen in several pieces of research and appears to be influential, particularly his concepts of habitus and cultural capital. It is worth noting, however, that within this study, because habitus and capital are relational, as they exist within a particular field, that field is also considered.

Justification for using Bourdieu's framework was discussed, at length, in Chapters 2 and 3.

It is clear that research into debt has uncovered unequivocal evidence that debt has a profound impact on the decision making of those individuals from working-class backgrounds, as they consider participation in terms of risks, costs and benefit. Consequently, they tend to avoid debt and the fear of debt is pivotal to their decision making regarding HE participation. Some concerns related to the fact that better paid jobs as result of participation in HE were far from certain, were also addressed.

Consideration has been given to the significance of aspiration. I have drawn on literature that proposes that non-participation is the result of 'low aspirations' and that there is an assumption that such aspiration should be raised. This is clearly a problematic assumption and this is borne out in the literature as raising aspirations

discourse has been seen as failing to address social inequalities that are historically reproduced and which are located in wider social relations and structures. The policies aimed at raising aspirations have been shown to make students fit into provision that is already in existence, rather than changing the existing provision and, consequently, initiatives have been undermined. The literature has, once more, pointed to classed and gendered identifications that shape aspiration and various types have been alluded to.

The literature reviewed in this chapter also makes it apparent that a lack of information about HE has also been put forward as a reason for non-participation by working-class groups, with individuals considering 'cold' official knowledge as being of limited worth and 'hot' grapevine knowledge, which came from local networks, to be more important.

Finally, this chapter has offered an argument outlining the influence that parents, families and social networks seem to have on participation decisions. I have drawn on literature that proposes that parents are clearly a key resource for their children, yet the evidence suggests that those from working-class backgrounds are less able to offer advice as they have not participated themselves. Equally influential are wider social networks which are characterised by high levels of trust, support and taken-for-granted assumptions that have been shown to generate collective perceptions of what the right decision is for particular individuals. The literature has also explored the relationship between social capital and place attachment within poor/disadvantaged communities. People can have closer ties to places, particularly when they have lived there for a long time. Similarly, the evidence suggests that people can become emotionally attached to institutions and whilst deprived areas, on average, have lower attachment, those that

are attached cite family and social networks and being close knit as reasons for such an attachment. Interestingly, place attachment has been shown to prevent people from developing personally and seeking out new experiences.

In sum, this literature review has considered several reasons why working-class people may identify HE as not being for them. However, rather than one particular discourse being the reason why people choose not to participate in HE, there appears to be a whole network of discourses that work together to influence HE participation decisions.

## **Chapter 5 Expectation, Understanding and Uncertain Pathways**

### ***5.1 Chapter Introduction***

Knowing what to expect when participating in HE when your understanding of what participation really involves and its implications is limited, inevitably leads to some uncertainty. In this chapter, I consider a wide range of participant viewpoints pertaining to what is understood and expected from HE. I explore the implications of debt and the general uncertainty linked to the costs of HE whilst giving consideration to the fact that HE participation offers no guaranteed future benefit. I review, verbatim, commentary that relates to these issues and pay particular attention to Bourdieu's framework and other possible cultural implication whilst locating my own findings within that of some of the significant research highlighted within Chapters 3 and 4.

Throughout Chapters 5 and 6, I am careful about the claims and assertions that I make. Whilst the following findings cannot necessarily be generalised, nor offer conclusive evidence of the participants' reasons for non-participation, they are still of use and make interesting reading. When discussing the participants' points of view as evidenced in their interview testimony, I refer to majority, significant and minority discourse. Majority discourse refers to that expressed by 67% of participants and over (25-36 participants), significant between 34% and 66% (13-24 participants) and minority discourse refers to less than 33% (12 participants or fewer).

Throughout the interview process, it appeared that the majority of the participants had at least, initially, given some thought to participating in HE. The majority had attended

talks at their sixth form and a minority of the participants had attended open days at a variety of local HE providers in Barnsley, Huddersfield, Leeds and Sheffield. If taken at face value, it appears that their decision not to participate in HE came after a taste, or at least an explanation, of what university life could involve. As participants 4 and 24 point out:

Well, we've sat in all the things about university in tutorials, so we know as much as most other people do...

*Table 3 - Participant 4*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
4	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

...we've done trips to universities...it just seems to be practically the same apart from they've got, like, living quarters on campus and other things. They've got halls and rooms and everything near. It just seems pretty much the same but for older students.

*Table 4 - Participant 24*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
24	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

However, when probed more deeply within the interview process, it became apparent that the participants' reasons for choosing not to participate in HE were varied, conflicting and contradictory, as well as both predictable and, at times, surprising. This chapter tackles the following broad theme: expectation, understanding and uncertain pathways. Within this chapter, I analyse this theme and tell the story that emerged from it. This is a complicated story that I tell, which moves from a descriptive to an interpretative level. Within Chapter 7, I consider how the story of this theme fits into a broader, overall story that links to my overarching research questions.

## ***5.2 Expectations of HE***

In the first part of this chapter, I want to suggest that, despite attending talks at their respective sixth forms and university open days, the majority of participants tended only to concentrate on what I might view as being the negatives attached to participation, although I do realise that viewing them as negatives may be the result of my own predisposition towards participation in HE. I focus on the apparent impact that their sixth form and specific members of staff have had on the participants' decision making, in trying to reshape their habitus with regard to HE participation. I want to suggest that, ultimately, my participants, due to their working-class and socially deprived backgrounds, seem to believe that their habitus does not fit the field of HE.

When asked about their expectations of HE participation and attending university, the majority of participants were uncertain. After initially explaining that they had attended various events and open days, in the majority of cases the participants, somewhat surprisingly, appeared to be unsure about what to expect, in spite of the sessions they

had attended. The comments of participant 1 quite nicely summarise the general consensus of the majority when asked about their expectations of university life:

I haven't really got that much expectation for university 'cause I don't really know anybody who's been or what's involved; I'm not right certain about any of it, to be honest.

*Table 5 - Participant 1*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
1	M	17	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

When probed further about what they expected from university life, the participants shared more information. Of particular interest were the issues and areas that they chose to concentrate on. Perhaps not surprisingly, they seemed to concentrate on things they viewed less than favourably and this seemed to have shaped their views on HE participation. Lots of students/people, massive lectures, lots of independent study, lots of work and lots of time off were alluded to by the majority of the participants. This can be illustrated by the interview testimony of participants 3, 5, 22, 23, 24 and 29:

I know my friend Amanda's boyfriend goes and he gets loads and loads of time off. I think he's had five months off...what's the point of that? But I think you have to work more independently though when you're in uni so that's summat else I'd have to get ready for as well.



*Table 6 - Participant 3*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
3	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

You have to work on your own...I'm already no good with deadlines.  
If I'm being honest, I'm not sure what studying at uni would be like.

*Table 7 - Participant 5*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
5	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

I expect it to be right big classes and, you know, loads of people and  
I'd get right nervous about that like asking for help.

*Table 8 - Participant 22*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
22	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Athersley

Loads and loads of essays and stuff and lectures and listening to people. Depends what you wanna do really, isn't it? Like, if you wanted to do summat that wasn't really practical, you'd really just be sat listening and writing and not much else really.

*Table 9 - Participant 23*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
23	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Athersley

...I'd be in a massive lecture room, and I'd have to work independently without any help from my teacher (see Table 4, p.136).

Environment 'cause like, you're in a different environment to what you're usually in and different people like you know, more hours. I don't know what else.

*Table 10 - Participant 29*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
29	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsborough

I want to suggest that habitus, a central tenant of Bourdieu's approach and philosophy of practice, is a useful concept to help analyse the participants' expectations and understanding of participation in HE. As discussed in Chapter 3 the participants' habitus is structured by both their past and present circumstances. For example, their educational experiences, both at school and at their respective sixth forms, help to shape both their present and future practices (Maton, 2012). A basic introduction to university life has, at least in part, shaped their decision making, or at least that is how it appears, with both sixth forms encouraging them to participate in HE, to shape their habitus. The idea of shaping and remoulding habitus which is central to Colley's (2003) work on engagement mentoring is important. The respective sixth forms, and particularly the specific Learning Mentor and Progress Coach, appear to have attempted to change the mind-set of the participants by extolling the value and virtues of HE to them, encouraging them to participate. To a lesser or greater extent, their habitus seems to have been treated as something that is pliable and easily reshaped.

Interestingly though, it does not appear to have worked for the majority of participants, as their 'strategies of action' were not shifted towards HE participation in spite of the pedagogic action that was carried out. As participant 23 (see Table 9, p.140) discusses when considering participation, "...they're always on about it... they are trying to brainwash us...". Explanations as to why the brainwashing appears not to have worked can be found later within this chapter and in Chapter 6.

In fact, when considered more closely, the information the participants received about HE participation is just one of a plethora of reasons why they appear to have chosen not to participate. Significantly, habitus does not act alone; an unconscious relationship exists between the participants' habitus and the fields that they inhabit. Whilst the

participants' practices are determined by their dispositions - their habitus - they are also impacted upon by the position they hold within, and the current state of play in, any field they inhabit (Maton, 2012). I would like to suggest that there may be a mismatch between the structure of the field of HE and the habituses of the majority of participants, as they seem to be considering potential social situations at university where they anticipate feeling awkward or uncomfortable (Maton, 2012). Their dispositions have generated a perception of HE participation which makes them feel uncomfortable and they appear to think that they would be "...like a 'fish out of water'" (2012, p.56). Consequently, this appears to be one reason why they think participation in HE "...is not for the likes of me." (p.56). Their habitus seems to be well-matched to the sub-field of sixth form education, however it was mismatched with the field of HE, or so they thought.

The fact that the participants were concerned about being 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu, and Wacquant, 1989,1992) before they even experienced HE is of particular interest and could be accounted for, to some extent, by the participants' working-class backgrounds. Coming from such a background means that they are likely to share particular positions within society that could be seen as being similar in structure and consequently impact on their decision making. I am drawn back to Cuff *et al.* (2006) as the background of the participants exposes them to particular environments which could be seen to make them behave in a particular way, and be concerned about being 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989,1992). Although the participants are individuals with a configuration of social forces that is unique, because these forces are social, even when the participants were seemingly being different, individual and unique in choosing not to participate, they appear to have done this in a socially regular way

(Maton, 2012 citing Bourdieu, 1977). I am reminded of the work of Crozier *et al.* who proposed that part of the preparation for HE participation involved the "...inculcation of self-confidence" (2010, p.67). Whilst HE participation can be presented as clear-cut and natural for students of middle-class families, it is very different for the participants of this study. They do not really know what to expect as there is nobody within their immediate family to whom they can talk about what it is like to be at university (the importance of parent(s)/family is considered at length in Chapter 6). It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that participation might be viewed with uncertainty.

### **5.3 Support Issues**

In the second part of this chapter, I begin by illustrating that the participants appear to view the academic related support mechanisms offered at their respective sixth forms as being vital ingredients for success, and that the anticipation of less or no support, should they participate in HE, was one of main reasons behind their choice not to participate. I argue that the participants seem to be comforted by the support they received at sixth form and that this, as part of the respective institutions' habitus, appears to give them a sense of belonging that has contributed to them forming a strong attachment. I propose that within their sixth forms, their habitus appears to align with the sub-field of sixth form education. They were attuned to the practices of the field and the unwritten rules of the game; they were 'fish in water'. I also suggest that such support may have, in fact, impacted upon them negatively and that this has resulted in reduced agency and a lack of autonomy. When I discuss support, I am referring first and foremost to academic related support and support that was offered to help them complete their studies.

When considering HE participation, the participants regularly referred to the stress and pressure that they associated with the intensity of the work and an increased workload, lots of deadlines, exams (rather than exams and course work), things being much harder and that, above all else, they would have to rely on themselves much more which worried them as they were not used to it. Autonomy was not something they appeared to want, when it came to their studies. Whilst becoming more autonomous is likely to be a concern for all perspective HE students, for the participants, the idea that HE institutions would have much less support on offer was seemingly a real issue. It is worth recalling the work of Fuller (2011) who looked at the importance of wider networks which were characterised by high levels of trust, emotional support and taken-for-granted assumptions that can generate collective perceptions of what the right decision is for a particular individual. The majority of the participants gave the impression that they were comforted by the support they received from their network, particularly within their sixth form environment. This point is illustrated by participant 31 when discussing what university life might be like:

I don't think it'd be as good as here 'cause, like, you've got loads of students haven't you at uni, depending on what course you're on and here, here you can have 1:1 time with your teachers, 'cause classes are only really that small so I think it'd be big change for me to go to uni to study. I feel at home here, you can go to teachers whenever you want and they'll help you...they don't make you feel like idiots.

Table 11 - Participant 31

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
31	F	17	White, British	Level 3	Level 3	Worsborough

This support appeared to instil a sense of belonging and even solidarity amongst participants. When it came to the expectation of support, for them it was the norm in terms of their educational expectations. They had common patterns of reaction and acceptable ways of doing things when it came to support; what Bourdieu calls 'practices' (Cuff *et al.*, 2006). The participants had even developed their own discourse that related to support in regard to getting it when they wanted it and the need for it, with participants at both sixth forms talking about support in similar ways, in terms of the need for it and what would be needed should they have chosen to participate. As participant 3 (see Table 6, p.139) points out:

Like working on my own where, like, here you get loads and loads of help and that from teachers, whereas there, like, you get your lectures and then you work on your own and it's not like that here, so I'm not quite that ready for it... At sixth form we get it when we want really, I wouldn't finish with out in 'cause I need it.

In this particular instance, the structure of the sub-field of sixth form education and the habitus of the participants were, once again, aligned; they fit. Within this particular sub-field, it was taken for granted by the participants that they would receive an amount of support that would enable them to pass their Level 3 qualification. Their habitus was structured by the present circumstances in which they found themselves. It matched

the logic of the field; the participants seemed to be attuned to the practices of the field, the unwritten rules of the game, the doxa. Within their sixth forms they felt like ‘fish in water’. Their habitus had provided them with a feel for the game, a practical mastery (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989, 1992; Maton, 2012). As level 3 students, the participants may be seen to have some credibility, or capital, in this particular sub-field, with only a small percentage of the population of Barnsley (BMBC, 2006) gaining a level 3 qualification, yet if they were to participate in HE, success in this particular field was far from certain, as it would be dependent on them mastering that field’s unwritten codes, manners and behaviours (Atkins, 2009, citing Grenfell and James, 1998). For them, this required support – a lot of support. The interview testimony gave the impression that there was a definite fear and a belief that such support would not be available if they participated in HE. They would not have their Mentor or Coach to turn to, their friends, or other staff members. Their expectations of the support mechanisms on offer to them, should they participate, appear to have impacted on their ‘strategies of action’ and seem to have, in part, guided the participants’ choices and behaviours which has then impacted on their decision making. As participant 24 (see Table 4, p.137) and 32 point out:

I think it’d be more like on your own really, ‘cause your tutors in your lecture room, they’d just give you lectures and send you off and tell you to come back when you’ve completed your work whereas here at sixth form, we can go and ask for help. If we’re stuck on a certain part of us course, we can go and say “will you be able to help me out with this?” and they’ll come and sit down with you and spend so long with you until you get hang of it. If I didn’t have that support and I weren’t able to progress with my work then I wouldn’t be able to complete would I?



Yeah, here I feel like I've got some more support and I, like, know teachers so they are easier to approach and to ask for help.

*Table 12 - Participant 32*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
32	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsborough

The idea of what makes the right amount of support is particularly interesting, as it seems that the support that the majority of the participants had been offered at their place of study that helped them gain their level 3 qualification may, in fact, hinder their progression into HE. Indirectly, something that is to all intents and purposes seen as a positive appears to be having a detrimental effect, as the expectation of a lack of continuing academic-related support is a reason for non-participation as the participants have not learnt to cope independently. As mentioned, without any exception, all of the participants discussed the amount of support they received at their place of study and many quickly related this to what they would need from HE, should they participate. There was also reference to relaxed deadlines at sixth form and the participants did not expect to get at the same treatment at university (particularly at Village Sixth Form). Participants either made direct reference to second chances or alluded to them. This is illustrated in the testimony of participants 25 and 26:

Second chances here, like, if you don't hand summat in then "give it me next week" makes you get it in but there I don't think you'd get that. I think it'd be if you don't get it on this day, you don't get it in. You get a lot more assistance I think than you would there. I think it'd just be like, right you listen, you do that and then you go off and do it.

*Table 13 - Participant 25*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
25	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Wombwell North

Because if I don't meet deadline here then they just give you a different deadline or say "give me it when you've finished" where at university I'd probably get kicked out or summat.

*Table 14 - Participant 26*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
26	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Athersley

As a result of the support mechanisms that are in place, the agency of the participants appeared to be reduced (Atkins, 2009). The majority of the participants outlined how the additional support they received helped to build their confidence and self-esteem academically, although, in actual fact, as discussed above such personalised one-to-

one support appeared to have a negative impact in relation to their participation in HE. The idea of standing on their own two feet, with what they believed to be little or no support, was seen as a reason for non-participation. They did not appear to have the cultural repertoire or 'toolkit' to enable them to develop appropriate 'strategies of action' that would allow for them to participate in HE because they viewed support as the main ingredient of success. None of participants indicated any awareness that, at some point, they would have to be able to do things for themselves. The perceived lack of support seems to have impacted on the 'strategies of action' that they devised. This was not to deal with a potential lack of support should they participate, but to find an alternative to participation.

An over-reliance on support mechanisms at their sixth forms appears to have disempowered them. As a result, there was a real belief that they could not cope without the same amount of support they received whilst at sixth form, with participants expecting, and becoming reliant upon, support. The participants also appear to be regarded as "...in need of support" (Atkins, 2009, p.134) and, as a result of this, are being offered what might be termed as excessive support. This is illustrated nicely by participant 17:

As soon as we get into the common room they ask us what they can help us with before I've even thought about it.

Table 15 - Participant 17

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
17	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Monk Bretton

The objective conditions provided by the sub-field of sixth form education and the sixth forms themselves seems to have made this reliance on support a fruitful strategy, within this particular sub-field, as all of the participants gained their level 3 qualification.

Support in both sixth forms was easily obtainable because it appeared to have become part of the respective institutions' habitus. The history and the experiences (Ingham, 2009) of both sixth forms seem to have partly shaped the respective institutions' habitus in relation to what it communicates to members of staff and students. Support that stunts the autonomy of the participants seems to have been inculcated into the habitus of the participants by the respective sixth forms. Support, as a value, seems to have been institutionalised into the respective institutions habitus. I am reminded of Patterson (2010) who discussed the key to institutionalising a value as being to concentrate power in the hands of those who believe in the value. Consequently, the importance of support is transmitted from the sixth forms' hierarchy, to the respective Learning Mentor and Progress Coach and finally to the participants. As schools and sixths forms are judged in terms of results and achievement, it is not surprising that they offer so much support. As touched upon, this appears to have become counter-productive in relation to HE participation. What appears to be excessive support is viewed as the norm and the fact that the majority of participants seem to suggest that

they needed the support on offer, by the respective sixth forms, appears to a reason for non-participation.

Whilst there were not many definite gender differences in the participants' reasons for not participating in HE, there were some interesting gender differences with a minority of male participants' attitudes to support. Whilst there appeared to be little evidence of my male participants viewing participation in HE as being incompatible with their notions of working-class masculinity, which was evidenced by their attitudes to participation in HE, there was evidence that the support they envisaged needing involved costs and risks to their masculine identities (Archer and Leathwood, 2003). However, it is worth pointing out that this minority of the male participants was somewhat contradictory in its viewpoint. On the one hand, they discussed the benefits of support and how it was something that would be needed should they participate, yet there was also an inference, from some, that this was a weakness. As participant 22 (see Table 8, p.139) points out:

What's the point of going to uni if you can't do it yourself and you need loads of help from people you don't know? What's the point...?

There were also some examples of 'laddish' behaviour with some participants blaming being lazy or the fact that they "... couldn't be arsed" (participant 22) as a reason for not participating in HE (Mac and Ghail, 1994; Francis, 1999). Yet interestingly, for these participants, the support on offer seemed to counterbalance their own self-proclaimed laziness or lack of motivation. One possible explanation is that, for this minority of male participants, the support they anticipated needing to successfully participate negatively impacted on how they viewed themselves. I am not suggesting that the constructions of

'laddishness' as 'being lazy' was used as a strategy to protect self-worth (Jackson, 2002 cited in Burke, 2007) as the participants clearly had some academic ability and were not as lazy as they led me to believe, given the qualifications that they gained. It was more that being recognised as someone who needed "...a shed load of support..." (participant 22) in an alien environment, again, 'like a fish out of water', appears to have made them worry about how this made them look to people they did not know. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, excessive support in an environment where it was the norm was viewed as acceptable and expected. Being known as someone who was getting support in an arena where it was not viewed as the norm appeared to be unacceptable for this small group of males. The most confusing aspect of this discourse was that these participants were not expecting any support, had they participated in HE anyway, yet they seemed to worry just as much about getting excessive support as about it not being available.

In spite of the minority discourse discussed above, it is worth noting that both the majority of the male and all of the female participants had the same attitude to support. These participants were happy to talk about needing support, should they participate. There was no indication of this being viewed as a weakness it was something that was needed and something they valued. I am reminded of Skeggs's (1997) study which considers white, working-class females and illustrates how they value caring skills. Such values and beliefs were evidenced by all of the female participants and the majority of the male participants.

## ***5.4 Costs and Indebtedness***

In this part of this chapter, I explore the idea that participants seem to have a general fear of debt and I suggest that there is an expectation that the costs associated with HE participation should lead to a guaranteed job, a sense of value for money. I indicate that the participants show complex attitudes towards debt and that the interview testimony indicates that they have a particular set of beliefs and values that relate to debt. I propose that any 'strategies of actions' that were devised were about making money and not owing money and that, at times, the amount of debt appeared to be inconsequential; being in debt was just not the accepted way of doing things.

The issue of debt, perhaps not unexpectedly, was an area that all the participants were very happy to talk about in detail with the majority showing complex attitudes towards debt. The idea of being in debt was viewed as a major risk by the majority of the participants and their parent(s). They appeared to be reluctant to expose themselves to such risks. They considered participation in HE in terms of risks, costs and benefits and this resonates with the work of Callender (2003) and Callender and Jackson (2006) whose participants also came from a working-class background, and who also appeared to be averse to being in debt and reluctant to accept the debt attached to being an HE student, in similar ways to the participants in this study. My participants appear to have a particular set of beliefs and values with regard to indebtedness. I am reminded of the work of Brennan (2005) who makes reference to the idea of a common meaning that is accumulated over time and the shared values and beliefs that can influence local culture and local communities. The participants did not want to be what a significant number of them termed as "lumbered" or "saddled" with a debt that they

would not be able to pay off. It appears that the majority of the participants associated HE participation with having a “...massive bill that goes on forever” (participant 16).

*Table 16 - Participant 16*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
16	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Athersley

The participants just did not like the idea of debt, any type of debt. The thought of being in debt was repugnant to them; it filled them with dread. This is illustrated by participant 16:

...it’s hard, isn’t it, for students and stuff and you’ve got all this debt hanging over you when you’ve done and I just don’t want that. I don’t know, I just don’t like thought of having it, having debt. It fills me with dread.

There were clear commonalities that related to values, as well as their knowledge of, and experience of, debt in one way or another. Many of the participants had stories that related to debt; it was viewed as being “corrosive” (participant 6).



*Table 17 - Participant 6*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
6	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsborough

Implicit within the majority of the interviews was the fact that people did not have much money and if they could not afford it, then they should not spend it. Their values and beliefs seem to reflect the ideals of their local community; not being in debt was an accepted way of doing things (Brennan, 2005). Bourdieu (2000) discusses the ‘natural way’ of doing things and the obvious actions that are conditioned by our habituses. For the majority of the participants, an obvious action in terms of accruing debt was not to accrue debt: this was the ‘natural way’. They had an inclination towards ‘strategies of action’ that ensured that they were not in debt. Perhaps this is not surprising, given the legacy of the miners’ strike, although no participant referred to this directly and the cultural history of their social group/class. Whilst Barnsley, as an area, and Barnsley people were not considered explicitly very often by the participants, reference was made to people not having much money and people not being in work and that the priority for many families was just getting by.

The social structure of the participants’ local community such as their network of social relationships (family/friends) and the institutions where they study also seemed to have, in part, shaped their attitude to being in debt. Their working-class backgrounds appear to have exposed them to specific dispositions and different material conditions that have

instilled preferences that may even be unconscious (Bourdieu, 1984). Participant 9 gets to the nub of this issue:

...but I think for everybody especially coming from here, and I'm not saying Barnsley is as deprived as what everybody makes it out, it isn't as bad as what everybody says but I think coming from an area like this where traditionally people haven't got that much money, it is a problem.

*Table 18 - Participant 9*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
9	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsborough

The idea of having to spend years paying back a debt accrued as a result of HE participation appeared to be just unacceptable. The idea that debt is “...always there” and “at the back of your mind” was discussed and the thought of this was disconcerting. Any ‘strategies of action’ devised by the participants were about making money; the preference was always earning money not “...owing it out” (participant 18).

Table 19 - Participant 18

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
18	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Worsborough

The thoughts of participant 24 (see Table 4, p.137) illustrate this nicely:

No-one wants to be in debt really, do they? Yeah, that's another thing that I didn't want, to be leaving owing money so really .... I don't know how to explain it. Just knowing you're in debt and knowing that you owe out money really, and it takes ages to pay back. That's it.

University debt was seen as a debt for life and participants seemed uncomfortable with being in such debt without being able to gain employment and pay it off. As participant 21 suggests:

Yeah, that's a lot as well, all cost issues and having to borrow off student loans and when you have to work, you have to give it back and things. It's a lot of money. It's getting in debt before I can even get a job. It makes me feel like I wanna run away and not go to university.

*Table 20 - Participant 21*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
21	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Monk Bretton

As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the participants seemed to be influenced by their parent(s). It seemed that debt had its own cultural rules; the participants appeared to carry a history of debt into their present circumstance (Maton, 2012). There were several examples of “...horror stories...” (participant 6, see Table 17, p,155) when it came to debt.

Their family upbringing seems to have shaped their attitude to, and how they feel about, being in debt. This is illustrated nicely by participant 4 (see Table 3, p.136):

My mam says debt’s right bad, she won’t even have a credit card. She says she got caught out in the past.

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study spans two British governments with some interviews taking place prior to 2010 and the subsequent hike in fee, and a number being carried out between 2010 and 2013. Significantly, my research has indicated no real change in the participants’ relationships to debt, whether interviewed before or after 2010. Whilst my post-2010 participants continued to be debt-averse, the hike in fees, whilst discussed, did not appear to be the reason why they chose not to participate. The amount of debt seemed to be of limited significance, whether £3000 or £9000 per

year, the outcome was the same - debt. This is interesting, as their habitus may have predisposed them to behave in a particular manner in relation to debt. The participants' attitude to debt appears to be the result of their experiences as children and socialisation within their families. As previously discussed, all mentioned parental attitudes to debt. Also, as young adults, many had encountered debt, either indirectly in terms of stories, or directly in terms of friends and family, and this had likely shaped/moulded their habitus with regard to debt and being anti-debt.

### **Cost versus Benefit**

In conjunction with a general fear of debt linked to their attitudes towards the costs and benefits of HE as discussed above, for the majority of the participants there appear to be more subtle and hidden disadvantages of debt that moved beyond the question of whether they should participate in HE. When probed further about debt, it quickly became evident that debt alone was not their main consideration; HE was a guaranteed cost, without a guaranteed benefit. Unless there was a guaranteed extrinsic reward, specifically employment related, then the participants gave the impression that they had no motivation to participate in HE. The participants seemed to be carrying out something that can only be described as a cost-benefit analysis. They were worried about incurring debt and then being unable to secure what they saw as an appropriate job to allow them to pay off the debt. This may go some way toward explaining why the amount of incurred debt seemed less important and why those participants who would have paid up to £3,000 a year seemed not to view debt any differently to those participants who potentially would have been paying £9,000 per year. In either case, participants appeared to have a shared outlook and mode of behaviour (Brennan, 2005) when it came to debt.

There was an emphasis on value for money. There had to be a guaranteed benefit to participation, particularly a career benefit. This resonates with Bradley and Miller (2010) who explored the subjective beliefs and values of young people who were also from former coal mining communities. Much like them, the participants appeared to show a definite ambivalence about the career benefits of a degree and there was a strong belief from many of the participants that they were just as likely to get a job without a degree. The participants seemed aware that the decision to go to university involves a certain amount of risk (Hutchings and Ross, 2003; Baxter *et al.*, 2007) and they appeared worried that the financial costs of HE were likely to outweigh any possible future financial returns (Watts, 2006). The majority of the participants made reference to graduates who, having left university, were unable to secure employment that related to their studies. Many of the participants had a particular story to share that alluded to graduates not being able to find 'the right' job. Participant 6 referred to a cousin who had participated in HE and studied for a sports science degree. He referred to his cousin as being "...lumbered with debt because sports science never caught on" (see Table 17, p.155).

Participant 26 (see Table 14, p.149) discussed how degrees would be devalued if everyone got one. She referred to a cousin who had gained a degree but who could not get a job that allowed her to use the skill set she had developed whilst at university. The cousin had had to become a cleaner. Employers were "...looking for people with experience and if you spend three years at university, it's not real life experience" (participant 9, see Table 18, p.156). They were clear that they did not want to waste three years and come out with what they perceived as nothing and end up with a job that they could have obtained when they left sixth form. They proposed that the three

years would have been better-spent gaining experience and “...moving up the ladder” (participant 12).

*Table 21 - Participant 12*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
12	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsborough

Participant 14’s attitude to this issue is synonymous with the viewpoint held by the majority of the participants:

If I do go to university, it’ll cost me a lot of money so I’ll be in a lot of debt and even with a degree with climate the way it is now, there’s no guarantee I’ll get a job with a degree so I can’t pay my debt off so I’m looking at paying debts ‘til I’m near retirement. I may as well just get a job...

*Table 22 - Participant 14*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
14	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsborough

There is an interesting link to the cultural field here which is made up of a series of institutions, rituals, conventions, rules, appointments and practices and, as a result of these, certain activities and discourses are produced and authorised (Webb *et al.*, 2002). For the majority of the participants, the interaction between elements of the above appears to have combined to make employment seem like the most appropriate, and an authorised, 'strategy of action' as such a course of action is much more likely to bestow the participants with economic and cultural capital. Consequently, the majority seemed to question the pay-off from HE and, as a result, they appeared to be drawn to employment (Baxter *et al.*, 2007) although their career aspirations did not always appear to be that well thought out. There seems to be evidence of cultural reproduction in the participants' attitudes to debt, costs and benefit. The pedagogic actions that have been carried out within the participants' family structure with regard to debt seem to have reproduced the same attitudes to it. The participants have produced disposition "...which generate 'correct' responses to the stimuli..." (Jenkins. 1992, p.107) with the rules, values, behaviours and attitude to debt appearing to be shaped by their family.

### ***5.5 Aspirations and their Contradictory Nature***

In the final part of the chapter, I consider discourse pertaining to aspirations and how they impact on participation decisions. In doing so, I propose that my participants do not exhibit low aspirations, but that they have different aspirations. I suggest that the majority of these point them towards the world of work with some wanting to gain an apprenticeship. I argue that the participants appear to have been steered towards apprenticeships, particularly after they had made the decision not to participate, and that the pedagogic action that took place within their sixth forms and within the home made apprenticeships/employment seem like the "...right thing to do" (participant 13).



*Table 23 - Participant 13*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
13	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

I suggest that gaining this type of employment seems to fit with their working-class identity. Reference is made to the potential benefits in terms of economic and social capital that participants associate with an apprenticeship or work more generally. Finally, I illustrate how the participants exhibit several types of aspiration including respectable, contradictory and relational aspirations, with some examples of what might be termed fantasy futures.

Whilst the participants of this study may have been viewed by some as having 'low aspirations' because they did not wish to participate in HE, I would suggest, much like Watts and Bridges (2006), that this is not the case but instead, they chose not to participate because they have different aspirations. A majority of the participants referred to work aspirations when interviewed with a number discussing the appeal of apprenticeships over participation in HE. This can be illustrated by the testimony of participants 4 (see Table 3, p.136) and 22 (see Table 8, p.139):

I'm interested in health care and stuff like that so I want to go for an apprenticeship in the NHS.

I'm thinking about doing an apprenticeship in this school, a housekeeping apprenticeship.

It seems that many of the participants had been steered towards an apprenticeship once they made it known that they did not want to participate in HE. It is worth recalling the work of Archer *et al.* (2003) who refer to attempts to change or 'raise' working-class aspirations with a view to changing working-class cultures and their patterns of decision making, at least implicitly. Apprenticeships appeared to be seen as a way into the labour market. Within a significant number of interviews being carried out after the Coalition government gained power, there seemed to be evidence of pedagogic actions being undertaken within the sixth form and the home that inculcated the virtues of apprenticeships to the participants and this impacted on their attitudes to becoming an apprentice. They saw it as clear possibility, in spite of the fact that, in the majority of instances, they did not appear to know how to go about obtaining one. Of the significant numbers of participants who referred to apprenticeships, several made it known that there was little talk of them prior to their decision not to participate in HE (I cannot confirm this), although a minority mentioned apprenticeships being discussed beforehand. Participant 33 makes this point well:

Well, I am focussing on a job or apprenticeship within the travel and tourism industry with a bit of business background 'cause that's what I'm studying at minute and that's what I enjoy to do, really. I wished they'd mentioned them earlier, not just when I told them I want off to uni.

Table 24 - Participant 33

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
33	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Wombwell North

Whilst I can only speculate here, as none of the participants had secured an apprenticeship when they were interviewed, such pedagogic action at their sixth form, and in the home, had the potential of steering the participants towards apprenticeships because of the pedagogic ethos of their family structure and their disposition towards education. With an apprenticeship, there was the potential that the benefit could outweigh the cost.

As discussed in Chapter 6, whilst the majority of participants' parent(s) would have supported their children had they chosen to participate, once the decision was made not to participate, participants inferred that their parent(s) quickly moved on to the world of work and this seemed to suit a significant number of the participants. Whilst there were no guarantees in real terms, the participants liked the idea of money, work and education. It made the cost benefit analysis add up, for the participants. This is referred to by participant 1 (see Table 5, p.138):

I'm hoping to do an ATT in Accounts. It's an apprenticeship and you get paid at same time. I talked about it with me mam and she thinks it's a good idea. You go on to take all like these tests and go on to become a certified accountant. It just seems like the right thing to do...

The education that they would undertake had a value in the labour market, such that it is deemed as being legitimate by both them and their parent(s). The pedagogic authority that was the result of the Coalition governments policy and rhetoric with regards to apprenticeships, in conjunction with the pedagogic action that took place at sixth form and within the structure of the family made apprenticeships seem to be an attractive course of action for someone who had chosen not to participate in HE. For Bourdieu (1990), the fact that this is viewed as being legitimate allows the power relations to be obscured and this allowed cultural reproduction to take place in relation to the participants' attitudes, beliefs and common understanding of the type of work and level of education that is right for them. Enculturation or social learning appeared to have taken place both within, but particularly between, generations with vertical transmissions between parent(s) and some horizontal transmissions between peers (Patterson, 2010). These issues are considered, in detail, in Chapter 6. Whilst I cannot comment on whether the participants' aspirations had been labelled as deficient and whether their schools had attempted to raise their aspirations in relation to HE participation and employment (although I suspect this was the case), what seems clear is that the Learning Mentor at Village Sixth Form and the Progress Coach at Town Sixth Form spent a lot of time with the participants discussing the benefits of participation in HE and apprenticeships, if they chose not to participate. It appears that the Learning Mentor and Progress Coach were attempting, if not to remould the participants' habitus in relation to the benefits of education generally, then to shape their perceptions regarding what was viewed as an acceptable/appropriate outcome once they left sixth form, and in doing so making sure that the respective institutions' values and beliefs were passed on to the participants. They were actively encouraged to fit into provision that already existed (Thomas, 2001; Burke, 2012) and to apply for university or an

apprenticeship. Both sixth forms appeared to be challenging the culture of non-participation by encouraging the participants to have future aspirations, even if they did not always seem realistic or achievable, in the short-term at least. This again resonates with Colley's (2003) work on engagement mentoring. Within the sub-field of sixth form education, members of staff within the sixth forms such as the Learning Mentor and Progress Coach are seeking to shape the habitus of the participants, with a view to them choosing to participate in HE, or apply for an apprenticeship, if the interview testimony is to be believed. They appear to want to do this in a manner that is dictated by the specific institution, in order to meet the agenda of the dominant group (Colley, 2003) such as the previous Labour government's target of 50% HE participation, the Coalition's agenda for apprenticeships or specific sixth form targets. Whilst this may well be coincidental, there was no reference of apprenticeships leading to HE within the interview testimony.

I am reminded of Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence that was discussed in Chapter 3, "...the violence which extort submission, which is not perceived as such based on 'collective expectations' or socially inculcated beliefs..." (Bourdieu, 1998, p.103). It is possible that the habitus of my participants, in viewing the idea of an apprenticeship as being more legitimate than HE participation, in fact, reinforce such disadvantage as they define participation in HE as 'not for the likes of us' and eliminate themselves. Whilst the participants could tell me little about what an apprenticeship involved, what they could tell me was that it involved "...training; working and earning". (participant 19). It appeared to be a legitimate way to eliminate themselves from HE as the opinions of the people who were important to them, their parent(s), Learning Mentor, Progress Coach thought it was a good idea. As participant 19 discusses:

I've seen external sources which'll provide me with a PDR technician course which is paint-less dent repair and I've been looking through that and I'm really interested in doing it and it's changed my mind from going to university. Jane [learning mentor] put me on to it and my dad thinks it a great idea.

*Table 25 - Participant 19*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
7	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Worsbrough

As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) point out in suffering symbolic violence, the participants are interested or invested and willing participants in the actual systems that are doing harm. In fact the "...process of cultural production reproduces the class relations of social structure" (Jenkins, 1992, p.113). The participants appear drawn to the world of work, either through getting a job or obtaining an apprenticeship, and they find what Bourdieu called their rightful place in the social world.

Whilst the sixth forms seem to have a hierarchy in relation to their steerage, HE participation, an apprenticeship and finally a job, it seems that the socialisation that takes place within the family and wider network helps the participants navigate towards the world of work in one way or another. Again, this issue is taken up at length in Chapter 6.

As evidenced in Burke (2012), the participants in this study exhibited various types of aspirations including respectable, contradictory and relational aspirations. There was evidence of them having respectable aspirations. This is illustrated by the testimonies of participants 10 and 17 (see Table 15, p.150):

Firstly, I'm gonna do a year out doing a teaching assisting job 'cause I've been offered it and I'm finalising everything. It's in current place that I'm in now. I'm gonna do that for one year and look at a way into possibly getting into university and then into teaching eventually.

*Table 26 - Participant 10*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
10	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsborough

I'm going to try and get in the police force at every opportunity I can in about two or three years, and then I've got more life experience.

As discussed, there were clear examples of the participants wanting to gain employment which, in itself, was viewed as a respectable aspiration, in a number of different areas instead of participating in HE, including childcare, beauty therapy, animation, shop work, marketing and sports coaching. Those who could not tell me a specific job or vocation made it very clear that not working was not an option. Again, the participants evidenced shared values and beliefs, and referred to expected

behaviours when it came to finding a job. It appeared that there was a definite expectation from their parent(s) that they would need to get a job if they did not participate in HE and without any exception, the participants focused and placed value on being employed - just employed. As participant 4 (see Table 3, p.136) articulates:

I don't ever want to be nothing. I never want to be out of a job. I always think in a couple of years if I'm not doing what I want to be doing, I can always go back to university and do something in the future.

In negotiating their identities, the majority of the participants placed emphasis on gaining employment. The personal and social histories of the participants (Burke, 2012) are such that having a job seems key to their identity; they want to be identified as having a job. It seemed like their employment aspirations were about them finding a place in the social world that appeared to be right for them, given their dispositions and the resources at their disposal, and thus achieving 'subjective expectations' of 'objective probabilities'. The participants seem to be gravitating towards certain employment fields that match their habitus where there are likely to be fewer chances of a clash between the fields they choose to inhabit and their habitus. For example, participant 16 (see Table 16, p.154) talks about a part-time job she has:

I've got a job for a couple of years at the minute. I've got work at Tesco and when I get a bit older, I'm gonna train up. I just hope I do well in the future and I hope I do well without going to university 'cause I really don't think I need to go to be honest, and that's my opinion...I'm gonna work my way up.



Whilst this is, of course, an assumption on their part, it appears that they believe that such a course of action will allow them to continue to be ‘fish in water’ and to feel at ease in the same way they appear to be at their respective sixth forms where they had a feel for the game, a ‘practical mastery’ (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989, 1992; Maton, 2012). Whilst gaining employment seemed a reasonable ‘strategy of action’ or the ‘natural thing’ to do, Bourdieu (2000) points out that such strategies are conditioned by their habituses and, as such, are a mediated form of arbitrary social structure so, once more, they have found their rightful place in the social world (Maton, 2012).

Although not discussed directly, increased economic capital was given as one of the reasons for wanting to gain employment (the participants made reference to money/wages). They also talked about how having a job would be viewed positively by their friends and family. It appears that employment would bestow them with a certain amount of cultural capital. Reference was made to being able to buy things such as, “...trendy clothes” and to “...being cool” (participant 16) (see Table 16, p.154). It appears that with the potential of increased economic capital came increased embodied cultural capital. A minority of participants also referred to the fact that gaining employment could impact on their social capital. This can be illustrated by participant 9 (see Table 18, p.156) who had already secured a job at the time of her interview and indirectly referred to a network she had, helping her to secure employment:

I’ve actually got a job already, signed contracts and everything and it’s what I would have wanted to do at university if I would’ve gone. It is marketing and product development of a nationwide company, I suppose you could call them, but they’re mainly Yorkshire. I’ll get to know lots of people. I’ve done a lot of work with them in the past. I

actually did my work experience there and it's all come into focus since then. I do work with them in holidays; they know me. This holiday just gone, I worked every day so that's what I'm planning on doing and it's hopefully gonna lead me on to greater things.

Indirectly, social capital was made reference to within the interview testimony of a minority of participants. Reference was also made to the importance of knowing people and "...how they could help you get on..." (Participant 5, see Table 7, p.139)

Whilst the majority of the participants alluded to the fact that they wanted to get a job, as mentioned, when probed further some did not know how to work towards the career that they expressed interest in. This particular discourse can be illustrated by participant 24 (see Table 4, p.137):

I've been doing BTEC level 3 in sports science so I'm hoping to get a job in the sports industry somewhere like a gym or just somewhere like JJB Sports, summat to do with sports, but I'm not too sure how to go about it. That's what my dad wants...but I'm not sure if I even wanna work in a sports shop. I might just stay at sixth form...I dunno what to do.

Participant 24 was not alone in his uncertainty. Whilst the participants did not always explicitly refer to wanting to keep their parent(s) happy, it did appear to be the case that their aspirations were formed in relation to what was expected. This helps to illustrate the apparent importance and influence of the participants' culture. There were rules; the participants were clear that once they left sixth form, they had to have a 'strategy of action'. They had to be doing something, as it was an expectation. There were "...accepted ways of doing things..." (Brennan, 2005, p.2).

Within the interview testimony, there were also some examples of what have been called fantasy futures (this was a minority discourse) (Atkins, 2009 citing Ball *et al.*, 1992). For example, participant 14 (see Table 22, p.161) discussed seeking employment in professional golf, as it was something he had done all of his life:

I hope that I can achieve what I want to achieve. I've aspired to it and put things in place. A club professional would be nice and there's a few clubs in America that are looking for professionals, so it'd nice to be a club pro over in America.

Whilst I cannot say with certainty whether participant 14 had the capability to become a professional golfer, what gave this the appearance of being a fantasy future was the fact that he was unable to articulate how in fact he would become a club professional. This apparent dream of becoming a professional, I assume, was predicated on his ability as a golfer, however participant 14 had no idea how to get there. Interestingly, this occupation was talked about in terms of the credibility it would give him. He would be teaching people how to play golf (social capital, cultural capital) and gain increased financial security (economic capital). However, it seemed this idea of being a 'golf professional' in America helped him to accept the situation in which he found himself, i.e. leaving sixth form with no short-term realistic strategies to gain employment. Participant 14 emphasised throughout that he had the backing of his dad and that his dad would be really proud of him if he got a "...job like that".

Whilst I have emphasised the testimony of participant 14, there were other examples of, if not fantasy futures, unrealistic short-term aspirations. Examples included studying art but wanting to get a job in IT or studying IT but wanting to be a joiner. There was a dissonance between some of the participants' aspirations and the course they had

chosen to study (Atkins, 2009). Whilst this is not altogether unexpected, significantly, all of the participants aspired to gain employment that would give them a heightened status, both in the eyes of their parent(s), and also within their local community. Although none of these careers could be deemed to be fantasy, once more, without any notable exceptions, the participants were not clear about what to do to realise this dream. Like Atkins (2009, p.123) participants they did not demonstrate "...any understanding or knowledge of the educational route and prerequisite credentials necessary to achieve their aim...". It was inferred that they were expected to get a job and they were quick to point out that they wanted a job and would get one as soon as they left sixth form. This is illustrated by participant 21 (see Table 20, p. 158):

For meantime try and look for a job, either a part-time job or a full-time job as soon as I leave and then in future I wanna become a police officer so I'm gonna look into that...I just need to get a job...

## ***5.6 Chapter Summary***

In this chapter, the first of two findings chapters, I have given consideration to the broad theme of expectation, understanding and uncertain pathways. Within it, I have demonstrated how the participants' expectations of HE appear to have impacted upon their participation decisions. There was some vagueness and misinformation about university life. The majority of participants showed only a limited understanding of what studying at university involved. This is interesting, given the extensive work that has taken place in recent years to promote higher education for all. This demographic did not appear to have increased its understanding over time. Conner made a similar point when considering non-participation in HE, as long ago as 2001. She made reference to

the fact that the non-entrants from her study were ill-informed about many of the aspects associated with life and study in HE. Despite pressure put on participants to participate in HE, the 'strategies of action' developed were with a view to gaining employment. It became clear, if the interview testimony was to be believed, that the participants' reasons for not participating were both varied, many and complex in nature. Within this chapter, I have evidenced that a major obstacle for the participants seemed to be the issue of academic related support. Clearly, they had an expectation of the support needed were they to successfully participate in HE, and they were sure that their needs would not be met. This apparent need for support seems to have been fostered by their respective sixth forms' predisposition to support to ensure that they passed their level 3 qualification. I have argued that such support appears to have had a detrimental impact on the participants which has led to reduced agency and a lack of autonomy.

Without exception, all participants voiced major concerns about the financial implications of attending university and the prospect of debt. The costs of participation and financial concerns have been considered by many researchers within the last 10+ years (Conner, 2001; Baxter *et al.*, 2007), yet little seems to have changed to alleviate widespread apprehension about the prospect of debt. Baxter *et al.* make an interesting point when considering debt: "... the fear of debt could deter the very groups at whom widening participation initiatives are targeted" (2007, p.279). Whilst it could be argued that is the case with the participants in this study, when probed further, they seemed to have complex attitudes to debt. Whilst the costs were a major concern, participants also made reference to whether attending university would actually be of benefit to them. Interestingly, Watts (2006) considered how the financial costs of HE can actually

outweigh any future financial returns. This was a source of anxiety for the participants; they seemed to want guarantees that the substantial outlay that was attached to participation would lead to a guaranteed job. They voiced a particular set of beliefs and values pertaining to debt, a simple mantra: if you cannot pay, then do not buy.

Issues pertaining to the aspirations of participants have also been explored.

Significantly, Watts and Bridges (2006) discussed that non-participation was not simply a matter of low aspirations, but that it may arise from different aspirations which are linked to the lives and lifestyles of young adults who may not see any benefit to HE. I have intimated that a significant number of my participants, who chose not to access HE, did not appear to have low aspirations. They had, instead, a variety of future aspirations, ranging from gaining employment to obtaining an apprenticeship; they had different aspirations. Interestingly, in some cases, the job that they discussed wanting was likely to be out of reach in the short term, as they do not possess the right amount of cultural or social capital to secure such a job with the particular level 3 qualification(s) they possessed. Consequently, the goals they have set themselves are far from certain. Whether 'strategies of action' were devised to gain employment or an apprenticeship, it appeared that the pedagogic action that had taken place both at the respective sixth forms and within the home had shaped their aspirations.

Finally, this chapter has evidenced the interlocking nature of habitus, field and capital, three of Bourdieu's most important concepts (Maton, 2012). The practices undertaken by the participants appeared to have been the result of the relationship between their dispositions or habitus and the position that they find themselves within the fields they inhabit, as a result of the capital they have. It seems that, ultimately, the participants

are keen to get a foothold in the world of work and that they are developing 'strategies of action' to see this to fruition in order to develop the capital they hold.

## **Chapter 6 Family, Friends and Peer networks**

### ***6.1 Chapter Introduction***

Within the interview testimony, there seems to be a persuasive view that, for the majority of the participants, choices regarding HE participation were influenced both implicitly and explicitly by their close family, by their friends and, to some extent by broader networks. Indeed, I have uncovered data which suggests that the decision making of those young people, from relatively disadvantaged areas, is shaped either directly or indirectly by those close to them, but particularly by their parent(s). Within this chapter, I consider a wide range of participant viewpoints and in doing so, review some of the participants' verbatim testimony which highlights the influence of family and friends. I also pay attention to how this appears to impact on confidence and identity. Much like in Chapter 5, particular attention is paid to Bourdieu's framework and other possible cultural implications. I also locate my own findings within some of the significant research, highlighted within Chapters 3 and 4.

### ***6.2 Parents***

In the first part of this chapter, I begin by explaining that the interview testimony suggests that parents influence the participants, both directly and indirectly, and I discuss that it seemed like the majority of the participants' parents would have supported them, had they chosen to participate. I suggest that whilst the participants seem to place value on their parents' opinions, in this particular instance, they appeared to disregard their advice. I close this section by offering some possible explanations as to why the participants seem to have disregarded parental advice with regard to HE participation.



Throughout the interview process, the influence that my participants' parent(s) had on their decision making, with regard to HE participation, was apparent. There seemed to be, if taken at face value, evidence of clear support from the parent(s) of the participants in relation to them participating in HE. Significantly, all 36 of the participants cited discussing the possibility of HE participation with their parent(s) and it seems to be clear that the parent(s), in the main, gave the impression that they wanted their children to participate. In fact, it is worth recalling the words of Brooks (2003) who proposed that as many as 90% of her participants talked to their parents about HE participation and Dodgson (2004) who pointed out that 92% of the parents sampled rejected the view that HE was a waste of time and money. As participants 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 point out:

My mum's always wanted me to go.

*Table 27 - Participant 2*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
2	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

They said they'd be happy for me to go if I wanted to (see Table 3, p.136).

Well, my mam she'll just go 'oh get yourself gone' and that's all she'll say –'it'll be good for you' (see Table 7, p.139).

My mam's always been like 'oh, you should try and go to university' (see Table 17, p.155).

...my parents...always wanted me to go to university.

*Table 28 - Participant 8*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
8	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsborough

I think even from a really young age I've also been quite academic so they've always thought I should go to university (see Table 18, p.156).

There was also a minority discourse that mentioned the apparent pressure that was being put on them to participate in HE by their parents, as illustrated by participant 23 (see Table 9, p.140):

They do want me to go. I think it's because none of them did. I haven't told them yet. I don't know how to tell them. I feel right bad because they keep mentioning it and that and like saying they'd be proud and all this. It puts pressure on you I suppose doesn't it when you either don't get grades or you just don't go. I do wanna go eventually, just when I know what I want to do there.

I am drawn back to the work of Dodgson (2004) and McShane (2003) who discussed how young people have been shown to rate their parents as the source of information

that they would listen to most when deciding about HE participation. Particularly striking was the fact that both studies took place in an area that is characterised by high levels of socio-economic deprivation, much like the area I researched, and the young people who took part in their research rated parents as a source of information they would listen to most when deciding about HE, in a similar way as the participants in this study. Both of these important studies discussed the attitudes of parents in the north-east of England and how they contrasted with traditional assumptions about the low educational aspirations of families in this area.

Whilst participants discussed the importance of parents' opinions, significantly, none of the parents seemed to be able to tell their children much about participation in HE. Consequently, I was intrigued as to why their opinions appeared to have such gravitas, when it seemed that they could not really tell their children anything about HE participation, other than that they were happy for them to participate, if they chose to. There appeared to be a number of reasons for this. It became clear throughout the interviews that very few of the participants could articulate, with any real clarity or conviction, why they viewed parents as an appropriate source of information regarding HE and why they thought that their parents wanted them to participate. Whilst this may have been due to my limited probing technique initially, even as my technique developed throughout the 36 interviews, participants seemed unable to articulate what it was they were hoping to glean from their parent(s) and why it was so important that they "...get their blessing" (participant 25, see Table 13, p.148). The testimony of participants 30 and 33 help to illustrate this point:

My mum's told me some things about university that probably could've encouraged me to go. She says it will help me get a job, but she didn't tell me much about it to be honest...

Table 29 - Participant 30

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
30	F	17	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

Both my mam and dad want me to go to uni. I don't know why though; they don't seem to be able to tell me about it, other than I should give it a go (see Table 24, p.165).

Once more, I find myself returning to Brennan's (2005) work on the influence of local culture and it being broadly represented by rules, values and expected behaviours.

With the majority of the participants in this study, it appeared to be an expected behaviour that they placed value on the opinions of their parents. Their values, once more, appeared to have influenced and moulded the rules and behaviours which were deemed to be acceptable. The participants clearly valued the point of view of their parent(s), even if they did not seem to be able to receive enough information to make an informed decision about HE participation from parents alone. This can be explained by Bourdieu's concept of habitus. As a result of the dispositions and values that seem to be present within the majority of the participants, they seem to be responding to the cultural rules that dictate how they should respond to their parent(s) (Cuff *et al.*, 2006; Webb *et al.*, 2002). Their habitus was embodied; it impacted on the way they acted, on

what they said and did, thought and felt. It appeared to capture how the participants carried their history and how they brought this history into their present circumstances (Maton, 2012). Implicit within a significant number of the interview testimonies was the respect participants had for their parent(s) and grandparent(s) and how important their family members were to each other. As participant 21 points out:

I do what my mam and dad tell me and we all do what my nannan says (see Table 20, p.158).

Whilst participant 21 was discussing the family dynamic in a 'tongue in cheek' manner, a mutual respect seemed to exist within their family. This was also apparent within the families of other participants; they appeared to perceive things in the same way and even express things in a similar manner, as is illustrated within both findings chapters. So, whilst the participants' own histories constitute their habitus, so does their own family history (Reay, 2004, citing Bourdieu, 1990a and Bourdieu, 1990b). Again, whilst I was reliant on the testimony of the participants in talking about HE participation, the majority of participants talked about the same issues of debt, support, expectations etc. in very similar ways, and the influence their parents and grandparents had on their decision making with regard to such issues was apparent. In *Practical Reason* (1998), Bourdieu makes reference to language that families use about the family and that, as an active agent, it is capable of thought, feeling and action and that it is a place of trusting and giving. A sense of family seems to have been inculcated in a majority of the participants because of socialisation with the family and this appears to have influenced and constituted elements of their habitus, both in an individual sense and collectively within the family. As participant 16 (see Table 16, p.154) discusses:

Family is important to me...and to my friends, really. They're really important to me; I trust them. I know if I have any problems about ought that they will sort it out for me. Me and my mam are exactly the same. I don't know what I'd do if I didn't see her every day to have a natter about, well nothing really, just a natter.

It is also worth returning to the work of Brooks (2003) who referred to several studies that point to a family's class position as being an important determinant on whether their children participate in HE and how they actually understand the HE market. Bourdieu, in discussing class, outlines how all agents within a society, as a result of having a particular amount or volume of economic and cultural capital, have an objective position in social space. The participants and their parents, in being from a working-class background, appear to share similar conditions and positions in social space (Crossley, 2012). This is perhaps a reason why the working-class participants appear to receive much less advice about HE participation from their parents (Crozier, 2010) than was required to make an informed decision about it. This is key because of the stock they placed on their parents' opinion. The majority of the participants' parents did not seem to have extensive resources of social and cultural capital that they could draw on in the pursuit of information regarding HE, which they could then pass onto the participants (Reay, 1998). I am reminded of Bourdieu's theory of capital which he discussed in his interview with Loic Wacquant in 1989. For Bourdieu, capital confers a power over a particular field. Within the field of education, the participants' parents have limited cultural capital and within the field of HE, they have no cultural capital whatsoever. Consequently, it is likely that they were unaware of the rules and the functioning of the field of HE and, whilst a minority seemed to have an idea of the potential profits engendered in the field of HE, the majority of parents seemed not to. Unlike middle-class parents who are likely to be familiar with the field of HE, how it is organised and

understand the correct way of doing things, what Bourdieu (1984) called 'legitimate culture', the participants' parents did not. They seemed unable to navigate the process and the social space with any assurance, as they did not have the right amounts or types of cultural capital. The interview testimony suggested that they did not know the correct way of doing things when it came to inculcating their children with the information they needed to make an informed decision about HE participation.

Whilst the majority of participants had attended talks regarding university and some had even attended open days, I suspect that some of the lack of confidence that they exhibited (this is discussed later in the chapter) stemmed from them not being able to be given advice and guidance about what to expect at university from their parent(s), as they themselves did not participate. There appeared to be evidence of their place of study trying to prepare them for university life and attempting to endow the participants' habitus by providing relevant experiences and insight into university life. Whilst HE participation appeared to be engendered as an entitlement by their place of study, it seems that the participants, in the main, craved for this information to be validated by their parent(s), which in the absolute majority of cases did not happen.

For the majority of the participants, a degree of interpersonal proximity was evident within their lives (this was particularly the case for students of the especially small Village Sixth Form). It seemed that they lived and socialised in the same place and appeared to have developed similar dispositions and outlooks and what could be described as class habitus. The habitus of the participants appears to have been shaped through social interaction with their family and friends with whom they had developed relationships and who also appeared to have the same limited amounts of

capital, so it is not altogether unexpected that they could not get the information they required from their parents. Whilst there is likely to be some variation in the participants' habitus that might be the result of what Bourdieu described as cultural peculiarities that distinguish them from each other, the participants seem to have, nonetheless, collectively developed a sense of what was and what was not for the likes of them (Crossley, 2012). In *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu refers to the lifestyles of the working class and the choices that they have to make because of such a background and that this emanates from a deprivation of necessary goods that is inescapable. Consequently, there is an inevitable resignation to the limits that are placed on their lives and thus, a forced contentment that is produced due to working-class life. Whilst this idea of being resigned to their place in the world was not discussed explicitly very often, participant 27, when discussing why he had chosen not to participate, was an exception to the rule:

...what's point of going...even I did, I won't leave Barnsley. We've always lived in the same place; it's where I belong, in Worsbrough. Anyway, I couldn't afford to leave even if I wanted to. My mam hasn't got any money. Like my granddad says...born in Barnsley, die in Barnsley...that suits me fine.

*Table 30 - Participant 27*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
27	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough



Whilst admittedly, I was relying on my participants' testimony and their recollections of conversations with their parent(s) regarding their participation decisions and I did not actually interview parents, it seemed clear that the information they received, not unexpectedly, told them little about what participation in HE was like or would involve. As previously discussed this is significant, but not surprising. Of the 36 participants interviewed, none of their parents had participated in HE in any capacity and it was clear that parents were not good sources of information when it came to HE, if the testimony was to be believed.

What appeared less clear from the interview testimony were the reasons why parents, who knew little about HE participation, appeared to be encouraging their children to participate. As participant 8 (see Table 28, p.180) pointed out:

They want me to go, well, they just want what's best for me. They think that as long as I'm getting what I want, then they're not bothered but because they've not been to university. My mam and dad just left school and got a job so are not familiar with this.

One possible reason was discussed by a minority of the participants. There was evidence to suggest that some participants' parents view participation in HE as a springboard into a career. This is illustrated by the testimony of participant 12:

My dad says just go for it. If it's higher education that gets you a degree and a step into jobs, then go for it (see Table 21, p.158).

A further reason that was suggested by a minority of parents was that they wanted their children to participate in HE because they had not been able to do so themselves. As participants 6, 14, 22 and 23 illustrate:

Well, I think my mam would have liked to have gone. That's probably why she is so supportive about me going (see Table 17, p.155).

Yeah, 'cause they didn't go to university and my sister, as soon as she left year 11 she did a course at hospital and then she got a full time job and they wanted her to go to college so that's the reason I came to sixth form instead of getting a job (see Table 22, p. 161).

My mum'd like me to go to university 'cause she didn't go (see Table 8, p.139).

They do want me to go; I think it's 'cause none of them did (see Table 9, p.140).

A further striking point relating to the participants' parents' apparent appearance of support was the impact, or lack of impact, that it had on their decision making. This is significant because whilst it seemed clear that the participants placed great value on the opinions and points of view of their parent(s), they still chose not to participate. In some of the initial interviews, I was somewhat puzzled by this, as initially it appeared that the participants were disregarding the advice they were given by their parent(s), something they told me was important to them. When I probed this apparent contradiction, it became clear that, in actual fact, there was evidence to suggest that in a significant number of cases, participants did not seem to believe that their parents really did want

them to participate in HE, and that this influenced their decision making. Participants 16 (see Table 16, p.154) and 35 illustrate this point nicely:

I asked my dad if he would really be happy if I went to university and he said so, but he said that he was right worried about the cost of uni and had I thought about getting a job, or even staying at college. My mam really doesn't want me to go 'cause she says she will miss me too much. She says I can go if I want though...

Whilst I do believe them, when they tell me to go, I'm not sure that I really believe them. My mam is always on about Tesco's and how I could get a good job there and work myself up.

*Table 31 - Participant 35*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
35	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

When analysing my data, three things came to mind. Firstly, were parents expressing their support for their child participating in HE because they believed that this was the right thing to do as parents, or was it in fact genuine? Whilst this is speculation on my part and on the part of my participants this was, to some extent, explained in Chapter 5 as the majority of the participants believed that their parents would prefer them to get a job, rather than participate in HE. As well as this, as discussed in Chapter 4, there is some evidence to suggest that many working-class parents, whilst wanting their

children to participate in HE, fear that they would abandon their family and the norms and values that they held. In trying to explain their thoughts about parental attitudes in regard to this issue, a minority of participants, either directly or indirectly, referred to how HE participation might change them. Participants 12 (see Table 21, p.161) and 29 (see Table 10, p.147) evidence these issues nicely:

I was having a bit of a laugh with my dad about it and he told me, don't be getting all posh on me if you go to uni...I told him, not likely...I'm a Barnsley lad.

I think my mam is worried that I might change and if I go to uni I might, might not live near her and my Dad...that really worries her...my nannan lives up the road.

It is also worth discussing that a small minority of parents was explicit about not wanting their children to participate in HE (in these instances, one parent was supportive and one was not). The reason their children gave for them not being supportive also emphasised a lack of understanding on the part of some parents, as they seemed to be unaware that the participants could participate locally and live at home. As participant 16 (see Table 16, p154) discusses:

They don't want me to go 'cause I've never been away for that long, and they don't like thought of me going away like that. My mam wants me to stay with them.

In the eyes of some parents, HE participation meant their child leaving the locality and living somewhere else. There seemed to be limited understanding of the opportunities available locally, as illustrated by participant 18 (see Table 19, p.157):

...my dad's advised me that I don't really need to go and I could get into jobs quite easily and stay at home with him and my mam.

Once more, Bourdieu's concept of habitus can help to unpack this issue. The habitus of the participants which is shaped by early life experiences such as those within the family, is added to through internalised experiences due to what is happening around them. If the participants participated in HE, they would encounter something new that could influence their habitus. This can occur because habitus is continually re-constructed and, as a result of encountering the field of HE their habitus, could be transformed which could lead to the fears of some parents being realised (Reay, 2004).

In fact, in relation to the participants' parents' intentions, beliefs and reasons, I can only speculate, but the participants certainly appeared to be picking up on something in their conversations with their parent(s) and this seemed to impact on their practice. I am reminded of Bourdieu (1977; 1990b) and his discussion of practice. It seemed, to all intents and purposes, that the majority of participants had developed common patterns of reaction that they shared in relation to parental attitudes to participation in HE. Whilst they explained the importance of their parents' opinions, as a result of appearing to believe that their parents did not want them to participate, non-participating was viewed as being acceptable and this reaction seems to have become standardised amongst a significant number of the participants. Without them consciously planning the way in which they did things, such practices appeared to have their own built-in and intrinsic logic and whilst employing such practice could be viewed as contradictory to some, to the participants, it seeming rational and it made sense to them (Cuff *et al.*, 2006).

Secondly, did the participants actually believe they were helping their parent(s) by choosing not to participate in HE? As discussed at length in Chapter 5, fear of debt appeared to be a clear reason for non-participation, with parents being worried about the debt their children would accrue. There was also evidence of the participants themselves being averse to debt and that the amount of debt seemed to be inconsequential; any debt was deemed unacceptable. However, an interesting minority discourse made reference to the impact HE participation would have on their parent(s) should they have decided to participate in HE. This is illustrated nicely by participant 26 (see Table 14, p.149):

I couldn't go...even if I wanted to. Both my mum and dad would look after me, but I haven't got a clue how they would pay. It makes much more sense not going. If I get a job, I could give them money and not take it off them .

Finally, were my participants using their disbelief that their parents really wanted them to participate in HE, as a way to justify non-participation, when in fact the reasons were multiple and complex? Chapter 5 discussed several potential reasons for this and issues pertaining to lack of self-confidence are discussed later in this chapter.

Whilst I could not fully find the underlying cause of the three issues highlighted above, the interview testimony illustrated that the majority of participants had strong affective bonds with their close family members and it appeared that within the families, specific dispositions had been formed that endowed a sense of solidarity in both the participants and their close family, what Bourdieu called a family feeling. The participants gave the appearance of their families being united by an interest in what was best for one another. With this in mind, the parent(s) may have been expressing their support

because they thought it was the right thing to do and the participants may have actually believed that they were helping their family by choosing not to participate. It seemed like it was taken for granted that they would want the best for one another. The nature of the majority of participants' family units meant that they seemed not to want to leave their family and they associated participation in HE as leading to leaving the family home, a place where they belonged and where they felt safe. They appeared not have the confidence to do that. Participant 31 (see Table 11, p.145) gets to the nub of this nicely:

I just couldn't leave my home and live on my own. I'd miss everybody...I feel safe with my mam and dad...I'd even miss my sisters...not my brother though. I've lived with them all of my life...we do just about everything together. No, I just couldn't leave them.

Yet another particularly striking finding that relates to the above was the fact that once my participants told their parent(s) that they did not intend to participate in HE, their parent(s) appeared to have made no attempt to change their minds, or encourage them to rethink their choice in relation to HE participation. Whilst this resonates with several studies that were discussed in Chapter 4, which outlined how many working-class parents supported their children in whatever decision they made with regard to HE participation, this was surprising given they were initially supportive of their HE participation (Reay 1998; Conner and Dewson; 2001). Of significance is the fact that, whilst the parents of the participants did not appear to push with regard to HE participation, as soon as they decided not to participate, they were quickly steered by their parent(s) towards employment. Whilst the issue of employment was considered at length in Chapter 5, I feel compelled to return to this issue briefly, as the parents' failure to try to change the minds of the participants could be construed as evidence that backs

up the participants' hunch that their parent(s) did not want them to participate. One possible reason for this relates to the acquisition of cultural capital. It appears that for the parent(s) of the participants, the most valuable skills and awards were likely to be gained in the world of work which is, of course, inextricably linked to economic capital. Any power the participants were likely to gain within a particular field and the position they were likely to hold seems to be dependent on employment and the amount of economic capital they possess, if the participants were to be believed. As participant 4 (see Table 3, p. 136) states:

... when I said that I didn't like college anymore and didn't want to go to uni they were like, well we don't mind you not going as long as you get a full time job and you're doing something, you're not just sat at home all the time.

Whilst participant 4 had been encouraged to consider HE participation by his parents, when he considered not going, they were quickly happy with his decision, as long as he obtained employment. They appeared not to actively encourage him to remain in education. Interestingly, participant 4 went on to explain that:

...I knew they didn't want me to go but were too good to tell me. I think deep down I was relieved, because if they'd have tried to persuade me to go they could have.

The interview testimony suggested that employment was a key issue with both parents and participants. Whether as a result of HE participation or not, the participants made it clear that obtaining employment was vitally important as considered at length in Chapter 5.



### **6.3 Networks and Self-confidence**

In the second part of this chapter, consideration is given to wider social issues. I begin by discussing the impact that the participants' family networks appear to have had on their decision making, as well as their friends. I suggest that such influences seem explicit, implicit and multi-generational and I propose that there are bonds and ties that appear to exist between my participants, their family and close friends that have influenced their decision making. I close this chapter by illustrating the importance of locality and suggest that the participants have an attachment to where they live and that this has also impacted upon their self-confidence and, consequently, on their decision making with regard to HE participation.

Within this study, it appeared that close family members and close friends had impacted on the decision making of the participants in relation to their HE participation choices. As touched upon, such influences were explicitly referred to, but they were also implicit throughout the interviews. I am reminded of the work of Heath *et al.* (2010) who outlined the important part that networks can play in HE participation decision making. Throughout the early stages of the majority of interviews, the participants were particularly happy to discuss the influence that their parent(s) had on their decision making, both generally and with respect to HE participation. However, they seemed less willing to consider other people who may have influenced their choices and were less interested in talking about wider networks when being probed around these issues. Nonetheless, in talking about their parent(s), the apparent influence of their wider networks eventually became much clearer, particularly when grandparents were discussed. The majority of participants referred to grandparents within the interview process, whose viewpoints appeared to hold value. Their importance was brought to

light by participant 2 (see Table 27, p.179) who discussed how it was not just his mum and dad who thought that participating in HE, would be a good idea. As he discusses:

There's also my nannan and granddad who have passed but I think they'd be proud because they wanted me to go. I'd forgot to be honest; my man reminded me. I think I will go after all...next year...I think, if I get my confidence up.

However, there was also some evidence to suggest that a minority of grandparents thought that university was a "...waste of time and money" (participant 16) (see Table 16, p.154) and that their grandchildren should find a job. As participant 9 (see Table 18, p.156) points out:

My nan says when everybody has got a degree there's no value to it and from a business point of view, it shows more initiative if you've gone straight into employment into something that you want to do and want to learn from the bottom up. She says that not many people nowadays will take the lowest jobs and work their way up. She thinks that's the best way to go.

Grandparents also seemed to place emphasis on the family unit and some seemed to believe that university meant that their grandchild might move away or worst still, change. Participants 13 (see Table 23, p.163) and 27 (see Table 30, p.186) get to the nub of this issue:

My nan is dead worried about uni. She thinks I might leave Barnsley and never come back...

They don't see the point of uni [grandparents]. They seem to think it will be easy for me to get a job when I leave sixth form. They don't see the point of having no money and debt and all that.

As well as parents and grandparents, there was evidence within a significant number of the participants' interview testimonies that their friends had influenced their decisions.

Whilst in the main this was implicit, it was still important and the testimony of participant 10 (see Table 26, p.169) is particularly illustrative here:

...it's just away from everybody, all my mates...it's like you're on yourself, you've got to start again. I can't say I fancy that, but it's one of the options that I've got. None of my mates are going, they don't see the point. They are all going to get a job and make some cash.

Whilst being away from friends seemed to be a particular issue, reference was also made to friends not appearing to see the point of HE participation. There was also the underlying issue of not wanting to have to make new friends, and issues relating to confidence. The issue of self-confidence is considered later in this chapter. This is backed up by participant 13 (see Table 23, p. 163) who makes reference to her boyfriend as well as her family and the regret they have about non-participation:

Like, family have said they regret not going and things like that and my boyfriend's recommended it and everything like that so it makes me want to go, but I don't want to leave him. Yeah, my family like my brother and things they didn't go and they just went out and got a job straight away and they regret not going...But I'd also miss my mates.

As touched upon, there was evidence throughout the majority of interview testimonies that pointed towards the bonds and ties that existed between my participants and their family and friends, as discussed above. However, as well as this, there was an

apparent attachment to their locality. My participants appeared to have formed a strong emotional bond with their locality due to the local social relationships they had forged with people, with whom they had a common background. Without exception, all of my participants were 'born and bred' in Barnsley and they gave the impression that they had formed a strong bond with, and attachment to, their place of birth. The testimony of participants 4 (see Table 3, p.136) and 30 (see Table 29, p.182) emphasises this point:

Well, the fact that there's not a university in Barnsley makes it hard as well because there might still be people you know if there's a university in Barnsley but going all way to Sheffield to do it, there's going to be nobody that you know there. But if there was one in Barnsley then you're familiar with your surroundings and it'd be more comfortable.

As long as I was still around home I wouldn't be so bothered about leaving home to go and live in like Huddersfield (*17.5 miles away*) but as long as I was still around near home...ideally, I'd live in Barnsley, well definitely...

It is worth returning to Woolver (1992) who outlined that whilst in general terms, deprived areas had lower levels of attachment, for those who felt attached very often family and social networks were key factors and this certainly appeared to be the case with my participants. Perhaps it was the fact that the participants were attached to their locality that prevented them from seeking out new experience and opportunities for personal development (Fried, 2000) such as participating in HE. The fact that they, in the main, appeared to share the same attitudes, behaviours and dispositions (*habitus*) as other members of their network seems to have, once more, influenced their decision. As participant 15 illustrates:

Like I've got my mates...I've been friends with them like forever...like we like the same stuff...we knock about in the same place. I just don't want to leave them, none of them...

Table 32 - Participant 15

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
15	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Wombwell

Being members of a particular social group and being from a working-class background, much like their friends, the participants appeared to have an inclination towards certain dispositions, values and 'strategies of action' and whilst they were likely influenced by their cultural history, they were also seemingly influenced by present happenings and by their friends (Cuff *et al.*, 2006).

There was also evidence of some specific institutional ties. Interestingly, several participants at Village Sixth Form had made it very clear that had they been able to participate in HE at their present educational institution, they would have done so. This was explained best at the end of my fourth interview, when I was thanking participant 4 (see Table 3, p.136). As she was about to leave, she told me that:

If I could do it here you know, I would...a degree, I just haven't got the confidence to leave here [Village Sixth Form]. I know everyone here...they know me...it's like being at home...I'd also be able to stay at home with my mam and that would suit both of us.

In the eyes of the majority of participants, such an emotional attachment appeared to be positive. The way they talked about their locality and the people they socialised with, both in Barnsley and at their sixth form (particularly at Village Sixth Form), gave the impression that it had enriched their lives and influenced their values and goals (Giuliani, 2003). It appeared that the majority of the participants, in belonging to a working-class locality and having a working-class identity, struggled with the idea of belonging outside of their local geographical context, both physically and emotionally. It appeared that the participants' ties to their locality had moulded and, to some extent, constrained the formation of their individual identities, as the friendships which they had fostered within their own 'close-knit' local communities, characterised by a shared habitus, were recognised and validated within the participants' local friendship networks. This, in turn, likely impacted upon the structure of their habitus itself (Ingram, 2009). I am reminded of the work of Archer and Leathwood (2003) who discussed how identity is embedded within common-sense notions of what is appropriate for individuals and that many of the reasons given for non-participation are grounded within identity and emotion discourse. This also appeared to be the case with the participants of this study as their dispositions and behaviours seemed to be influenced by their working-class background and identity, which was socially restricting (Ingram, 2009). They just did not want to leave their locality and have to meet new people, if the interview testimony was to be believed. As participant 20 discussed:

Everyone I know lives in Barnsley, family, mates, footie....why would I want to leave, when I've lived here all of my life? Most folk who leave come back anyhow...

Table 33 - Participant 20

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
20	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Monk Bretton

This also appeared to have influenced both their educational and career aspirations, with the majority of participants having quite restricted horizons, as their own locality tended to be representative of their world view (Connolly and Healy, 2004). Whatever they chose to do needed to be within their own locality.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given what has already been discussed, within the interview testimony there was also evidence to suggest that the participants' communities, which could be described as homogeneous in terms of lower income and being socially deprived, appeared to be rich in bonding social capital (Coleman, 1988) which is typified as being exclusive and inwardly looking and helps people to 'get by' (Field, 2003; Fitzpatrick, 2004). As touched upon, the participants' social relationships and interactions with like-minded people with whom they had a common background and shared outlooks and values could be a possible reason why the participants might choose not to leave their locality. As participant 6 (see Table 17, p.155) points out when discussing where he would attend, had he chosen to participate in HE:

I'd prefer to go local; I'd rather stay at home. It's easier. Everyone's here like this is my life, Barnsley's my life and I know that sounds like, well, awful but it just is.

I am reminded of the work of Giuliani and Feldman (1993), Giuliani (2003) and Livingstone *et al.* (2008) who referred to local social relationships or interactions that can form between people who process common backgrounds, interests, culture, religion or lifestyles. The participants seemed to have forged strong bonds within their local community and Barnsley as a whole, because it appeared to meet their particular needs and match their goals and lifestyle.

Interestingly, a minority of participants appeared to be developing strategies to accrue social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) which is dependent on the size of the network of connections that they are able to mobilise, as well as the amount of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) that the members of their network possess. Some of the participants seemed fully aware that their network of relationships could be used. In the main, such 'strategies of action' were likely to reproduce social relationships in the short-term, such as going to work with family members or friends of family members. There were some examples of more long-term 'strategies of actions' aimed at establishing social relationships, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Within the majority of interview testimonies, there was evidence to suggest that the participants' strong tie to their locality affected their self-confidence. The interview testimony appeared to show that the majority of the participants would not have the self-confidence to leave their locality had they chosen to participate in HE and, with very few exceptions, had they chosen to participate, they would have applied to local institutions, commuted to university and continued to live in their family home. In fact, of those participants who would have been happy to move out of the locality, only one of them would have considered moving out of Yorkshire. The remainder wanted to be able to



return to Barnsley throughout the week and for weekends. The following extracts taken from participant 28 emphasises these points:

No, somewhere local because I don't want to move away anyway. I wouldn't want to leave my mam. Erm, feeling like you haven't got all your friends and your family and everyone round you all time.

I know I'd be able to do it because I'm quite independent and I make friends easy, but I don't want to, as well I just don't think I'd like to be away for each term.

Table 34 - Participant 28

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
28	F	17	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

In accordance with Baxter *et al.* (2007) who discussed how a lack of personal confidence can influence HE participation decisions, the interview testimony suggested that the participants had confidence issues that influenced their choice not to participate in HE. Confidence was alluded to, both explicitly within the interview testimony, as participant 13 (see Table 23, p.163) and 29 (see Table 10, p.140) discuss:

I'm not 100% sure but I definitely want to think about it and try and build my confidence up to go. I think I'm just scared about going. I don't know, just scared to go for it and things like that. I don't know.

I'm scared about new people and stuff, I suppose. I've always been shy and stuff about going in to new things...I've just not got the confidence to go. I'm shy and I daren't talk to people ...maybe in 12 months' time.

More confidence, that's what I lack and that's why, you know, that's why I don't feel like I'm ready and that. I need confidence to go out there and give it a go instead of just doing what I'm doing you know...I've got to believe I can achieve.

However, it was also implicit within the interview testimony, without being referred to directly, as was illustrated by the testimony of participants 6 (see Table 17, p.155), 13 (see Table 23, p.163) and 22 (see Table 8, p. 139):

Well, I weren't intending not to go; I wanted to go...I had everything done and everything filled in, universities chosen which I was going to go to and which courses and all that, but it got to that stage where I thought I'm not going to get in, I don't think I'll get full awards for my work so I'm just going to have to withdraw.

Like, I get right shy about meeting new people and I'm not proper sure about what I want to do yet so I don't want to go for, like, years and change my mind. I'm just right nervous about meeting people and about just talking to people.

Yeah, and besides there were only me that applied to university that I know so there would've been about a thousand people that I'd never seen before so that put me off as well.

The above testimony seems to infer that some of this lack of confidence stemmed from worrying about meeting new people and moving out of their comfort zone where they felt safe, where they belong and where they fit in. Once more, it appeared that the

participants' culture provided them with a sense of identity and belonging that facilitated common understandings, traditions and values that enabled them to build a sense of local identity and solidarity and attachment which, in turn, impacted upon their confidence as members of their community (Brennan, 2005). They seemed confident in their locality, they fit and they knew the rules of the game. For the majority of participants, the direct and indirect pedagogic action that had been carried out by peers and family members appeared to have made non-participation the right thing and easiest thing to do (Bourdieu, 1973). Participant 28 (see Table 35, p.204) backs this up nicely, whilst also referring to issues that pertain to self-confidence:

Staying on here an extra year, I think it'd give me more self-confidence of what I can do rather than what I can't do. All I think about is what I can't do and not what I can do so I think it'll, yeah, it'll give me more confidence to push myself to go do it, do what I want to do and know what I want to do. A few of my friends are going to do the same and they think it's a good idea...when I ran it past my mam, she also liked it as an idea, so I'm gonna go for it.

## **6.4 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, the second of two findings chapters, I have given consideration to the broad theme of family, friends and peer networks and how they impact on confidence and identity. In doing so, I have reviewed some of the participants' verbatim testimony which highlighted the influence of family, friends and peer networks.

Within this chapter, I have demonstrated that the participants seemed to place value on their parents' opinions. Whilst there was some evidence that the parent(s) of the participants would have supported them had they chosen to participate, significantly the

parents seemed unable to tell their children anything of note about HE. Consequently, I suggest that the participants did not receive enough information to help them make an informed decision. This is significant because of the stock they placed on their parents' opinion; although they had been given some information from other sources, the value they placed on parental information outranked this. In being from a working-class and socially deprived background, the participants' parent(s) did not appear to have the extensive resources of social or cultural capital that they could draw on in the pursuit of relevant information about HE. They did not know the 'legitimate culture' when it came to HE, or the correct way of doing things.

Within this chapter I have evidenced that, in spite of apparent parental support and the value the participants appeared to place on the opinions of their parent(s), the participants still chose not to participate as the majority of them did not appear to believe that their parent(s) actually did want them to participate. Significantly, there was some suggestion that parents might have offered support as they believed that it was the right thing to do, but it appeared that a significant number of parents found the thought of their children leaving the locality particularly unpleasant. This, coupled with the fact that the participants' parents made no attempt to persuade their children to participate once they had decided not to and the fact that they were quick to steer them towards employment, could be viewed as evidence to support the participants' suggestion. The participants' decision not to participate is also significant, as there is some evidence to suggest that part of their reasoning behind non-participation was the result of them thinking it would help their parent(s) financially and that more generally participation might have a negative impact on their family. It seemed that there was a

strong affective bond between the majority of the participants and their families. A sense of solidarity emphasised trust and giving: a 'family feeling'.

Within this chapter, I have also demonstrated the importance of the participants' wider social network, particularly grandparents and close friends. It seemed that there were close bonds between the participants and their close family and friends and that as they were born and lived in Barnsley, they had a common background, shared the same attitudes, behaviours and dispositions and a definite attachment to their locality that was both physical and emotional. It seemed that the majority of the participants, in being from a working-class and socially deprived background, had a working-class identity and consequently they struggled with the idea of living outside of their locality.

I closed this chapter by discussing the idea that the strong ties that the participants had to their locality impacted on their self-confidence and that the participants did not appear to have the self-confidence to attend university, particularly a university that was not local. It seemed that this lack of confidence was related to discomfort with respect to moving out of a familiar area, having to meet new people and generally moving out of what they considered to be their comfort zone, where they felt safe and where they fitted in.

# **Chapter 7 Social Deprivation and Widening Participation: The Continuing Power of Local Culture**

## ***7.1 Chapter Introduction***

Within Chapters 5 and 6, the data that were gathered was set out. Each of the chapters tackled one broad theme: Chapter 5 interrogated expectation, understanding and uncertain pathways, whilst Chapter 6 considered the importance of family, friends and peer networks.

This final chapter discusses the conclusion that can be drawn as a result of the research that was undertaken. Within this chapter, I pay particular attention to the research questions below:

- To what extent do the expectations, motivations, and aspirations of a group of young adults impact on their HE participation decisions?
- What prevents young adults from entering HE?
- How do social, cultural and personal factors contribute to the group's decision-making processes with respect to entry into HE?

In doing so, I tackle the overall aim of this study with the intention of refining the discussion set out in the previous two chapters. Each research question will be considered. Research questions 1 and 2 will be discussed collectively and will form a part within this chapter. Research question 3 will also form its own discrete section of this chapter. If section one concentrates on what prevents young people from participating in HE, taking account of their subjective expectations, motivations and aspirations, section 2 pays particular attention to how social, cultural and personal

factors contribute to the participants' decision-making processes with respect to entry into HE. I refer to how objective social structures such as social class, the family or education, as well as embodied structures such as gender appear to influence the participants' 'strategies of action', attitudes and behaviours in considering their HE participation decision. I also outline how my research contributes to knowledge in the area of widening participation. I close this chapter by offering some final conclusions and offer some examples of potential post-doctoral research that would help answer some of the questions that this research raises.

As illustrated in Chapter 1, this chapter pays particular attention to the participants' 'subjective hopes' and 'objective chances' and considers whether there was an adjustment between such hopes, aspirations, goals and expectations, which may have been both subtle and even unconscious (subjective hopes) and the situation that they found themselves in as a result of their place in society (objective chances) (Jenkins, 1992).

As discussed in Chapter 1, ultimately, I was interested in the influence that the participants' culture had on their HE participation decision making. In considering influence I was mindful of Bourdieu's (1998) concept of symbolic violence, which I discussed in Chapter 3 and how this can impact on influence. As a result of the imposition that the participants' culture appears to have on them, which they seem to view as being legitimate, power relations are allowed to be obscured. Such misrecognition is predicated on the pedagogic processes that take place at the participants' sixth form and within their social network which influence them to make decisions that they view as being legitimate, but that may, in fact, not be in their own

best interest. For the participants, the misrecognition of legitimacy likely went unnoticed and it became the norm. So, in considering influence, I have discussed what the participants viewed as influencing their decisions.

In tackling the above research questions, I will make some tentative suggestions as to why young people, with appropriate qualifications, from the most socially deprived areas of Barnsley are underrepresented within HE. However, I am careful about the claims and assertions I make, given the criticisms levelled at interview data in Chapter 2. I start the discussion of conclusions by giving consideration to the first two research questions.

## ***7.2 What Prevents Young People From Participating in HE and to What Extent Do Expectations, Motivations and Aspirations Impact on Their Decision?***

The first part of this chapter considers what prevents young people from participating in HE and outlines the extent to which participants' expectations impact on their decision making and in attempting to do this, I give consideration to the key motivations that appear to influence their decision making in relation to HE participation. I close this part of the chapter by attempting to evaluate the importance and impact of the participants' aspirations on their participation decisions.

I argue that the participants appeared to have some definite expectations when it came to participation and this impacted on how motivated they were to participate in HE. I would like to suggest that such expectations seem to be shaped by their place of study, their friends and family and, most importantly, by their parent(s) and that this impacted on their motivations and aspirations.



Both sixth forms, it would seem, tried to inform the participants about, and shape their perception of, what participation in HE involved. Whilst there was some uncertainty initially, in spite of the information they were given through talks at sixth form or open days, the majority eventually began to discuss what they expected HE participation to be like. They referred to the large number of students at university, and the potential size of the lectures (in terms of student numbers) and size of the lecture theatre itself, the need to develop autonomy due to the independent study that would have to be undertaken, being expected to carry out large amounts of work and that they would have a lot of time off. So, whilst initially they proclaimed that they were not sure, it would appear that they had a partial idea of what to expect. However, whilst they had been given information by their sixth form, they still did not have enough information about HE participation to make a truly informed decision; at least, this is what they appeared to believe. I would like to contend that the missing ingredient in the participants 'HE information cocktail' was parental. As discussed in Chapter 6, the influence that parents had on their decision making, with regard to HE participation, was inferred throughout the interview testimony. All 36 participants outlined conversations with their parent(s) but, not surprising, as none of the parents had participated in HE, they did not appear to be able to pass on the information that the participants craved: the tacit knowledge that only really comes when you participate yourself that lets you know what university is really like. Whilst the participants had some understanding of what HE participation might involve for them, they would never fully know what to expect until they were able to obtain the information they would have found most legitimate, from their parent(s), or at least this is how it seemed. This is an interesting finding, it suggests that we need to draw in parents more in order to help young people. Whilst I cannot, with any certainty, say that being given information based on their

parents lived experiences would have made them change their participation decision, what I can be fairly certain about is that parents were the source of information that the participants rated most and, on this occasion, they could tell them very little, or so it appeared. This reinforces the work of Brooks (2003); McShane (2003) and Dodgeson (2004) amongst others.

Participants tended to concentrate on issues that meant something to them which I suggested could be deemed as negative. The words they associated with HE participation were: stress, pressure, intensity, workload, deadlines, exams and autonomy. Very little terminology that might be seen as being more positive was discussed. The participants inferred that such expectations influenced their participation decisions.

As discussed at length within the findings chapters, the participants had low expectations of the support that would be available, should they participate, and this seems to have had a negative impact on them with regard to HE participation. As discussed, the participants suggested that the academic support mechanisms that were on offer at their respective sixth forms helped them to complete work. They also implied that they relied on their social network more broadly for support and this comforted them. Consequently, grandparents and close friends, with whom they had strong social bonds, were referred to throughout and their viewpoints also appeared to hold value and had the potential to sway. Some grandparents and close friends had a negative opinion of HE and this appeared to demotivate the participants with regard to participation. This reinforces the work of Brown *et al.* (2004), Heath *et al.* (2008) and Fuller (2011) amongst others.

As discussed in Chapter 5, what I have classed as academic related support seems to instil a sense of belonging and solidarity amongst participants because it was also evident throughout the participants' wider network. It appeared that support was an expectation because it was motivational and without guaranteed support, they were not prepared to participate. This is a key finding which I return to later in this chapter. Their expectations of what might be termed excessive support seemed to have been transmitted from the sixth forms' hierarchy, to the respective Learning Mentor and Progress Coach and finally to the participants. Support as a value appeared to have been institutionalised within the sixth forms, as well as within the home. I would like to suggest that the majority of participants wanted the same amount of support in HE, as they received in the sixth form, should they participate, but they were not expecting it and this was a reason not to participate. Particularly interesting was the fact that some male participants, whilst expecting support at sixth form, were worried about getting the same level of support in HE because of how it might make them look to people they did not know (Mac and Ghail, 1994; Francis, 1999). Support appeared not to be viewed negatively when it was offered at sixth form by any participant, in safe surroundings, where everyone received support. Academically related support appeared integral for my participants to participate in HE and it was the main 'strategy of action' they employed to help them pass their level 3 qualification. As I touched upon in Chapter 5, they showed a sensibility towards support; that was part of their world view with regards to education.

A further expectation that impacted upon their motivation to participate was debt and the expectation that HE participation was not value for money. They seemed to treat HE participation as they would buying any other consumer item. If they bought an HE

experience, then they expected a job - a good job - at the end of it. There had to be a guaranteed benefit to participation, particularly a career benefit. As discussed, their attitude to debt was particularly complex. The participants' main motivations seemed to be to make money, not to be in debt, as that was just not the right way to do things; debt equalled risk and uncertainty. It almost felt that for the participants and their families, that not incurring debt was expected – a cultural rule. As referred to in Chapter 5, university debt was seen as a debt for life and there were no guarantees that appropriate employment would be secured to enable them to pay back an incurred debt. The expectation of such a debt seemed to have been one of the motivations behind the participants opting to look for a job once they finished at sixth form. It was an authorised 'strategy of action'. There is, however, a key finding that cannot be overlooked. Whilst it seemed clear that the participants held their parents' opinions in very high regard and whilst the impression given was that parents would support their children should they wish to participate in HE, the participants still chose not to participate. This is significant, as there seemed to be an inference that they did not believe their parent(s) and that they were only supportive because they were being good parents or because it was the right thing to do (I return to this later in the chapter). The impression given was that this was reciprocal, as one of the motivations behind non-participation seemed to be based on the expectation that their family would suffer financially, should they participate. Key issues often seemed to be discussed in terms of the collective and not the individual. I would like to propose that a sense of family solidarity had been inculcated within the majority of the participants and this appeared to be an influencing factor when it came to HE participation.

This study has also uncovered some interesting findings relating the participants' aspirations and how they impacted upon their participation decision making. What seems clear is that the participants, in choosing not to participate in HE, have different aspirations. They do not seem to have low aspirations, necessarily. Their aspirations appeared to be inspired by their place of study, their wider social network, their parent(s) and by a sense of doing what might be right for their family. I am once more reminded of Swidler's (1998) work here which outlined how culture can influence people's actions when they know that their decisions will be interpreted by, and impact upon, other people. For example, participants seem to aspire to gain an apprenticeship, yet seemed to have no ideas how to obtain one. What they did know was that it was a way into the labour market and they liked the idea of that. As I discussed in Chapter 5, although an apprenticeship gave them no guarantees, the participants gave the impression that they liked the idea of money, work and education. It made the cost benefit analysis add up for them and their parent(s). This was a 'legitimate' aspiration or course of action as their place of study had steered them towards it, once they had chosen not to participate. It also suited their parent(s) because they would be working and earning, and it also suited the participants as they essentially eliminated themselves from HE participation in a manner that was deemed legitimate. However, in some respects apprenticeships felt a little like a forced aspiration or expected aspiration. There were some examples of participants talking about their short and long-term aspirations and even what might be termed fantasy futures and, for the participants, they were achievable alternatives to HE participation. The participants wanted a variety of jobs, some realistic without HE participation and others less so. It also appeared that gaining employment was synonymous with their sense of identity, and that this linked to the common values and understandings exhibited by the participants. Their main

aspiration, however, was to gain employment as this was important to their family. This in itself was interesting. It was not always clear whose aspirations were being discussed, their own or their parents'. Many of the participants appeared uncertain of what do next.

For the participants and their parents, there appeared to be an expectation that participation in HE seems to equal having to leave their locality. There was even reluctance, by some, to travel to Barnsley to participate in HE. I would like to suggest that it seemed that the bonds that the participants had fostered with their families and friends impacted on their decision making and this, taken in conjunction with the attachment they had forged with their locality, meant that the participants appeared unwilling and even ill-equipped to leave their locality to participate. This reinforces the work of several studies including Woolver (1992) and Health *et al.* (2008) as well as Watts (2006) who proposed that participations decisions were linked to the lives and life styles of those who did not see the benefit of HE. Interestingly, some participants suggested that they would have participated, had they been able to do so in their sixth form. This was particularly the case at Village Sixth Form. So for some, it appeared to be the potential of leaving their locality that particularly impacted on their decision not to participate. They felt unable to commute to Barnsley from where they lived, three miles away.

I would also propose that a lack of personal confidence seemed to be an influencing factor on the decision making and the motivation of the majority of participants, and I would contend that this lack of confidence appeared to have a direct link to the participants' ties which they had forged within their social network (family, friends and

place of study). Having to meet new people who may not be like them seemed an unpleasant prospect. They felt safe where they were, in their own comfort zone, where they felt confident.

### ***7.3 How Do Social, Cultural and Personal Factors Contribute to the Decision-making Process with Respect to Entry into HE?***

Whether issues pertaining to the participants' expectation of what HE participation might involve, their motivations to gain employment or their present/future aspirations, many of the same issues appeared to be shaping, and impacting upon, their decisions. Whilst the discussion above considers the subjective points of view pertaining to the participants reasoning for non-participation, this alone was not adequate to fully explain their decisions. I was also interested in that which shaped and moulded such choices. Consequently, in the second part of this chapter, I consider some of the key issues outlined above and outline how culture and objective social structures such as social class, the family or education appear to have influenced the actions, attitudes and behaviours of the participants of this study, with respect to HE participation. Also, as discussed in Chapter 3, the participants' local community was considered in terms of its social structure, taking account of things such as the network of relationships among its members and key institutions, which in this particular study were the respective sixth forms.

To help me do this, I utilised some of the Bourdieuan concepts I discussed in Chapter 3 as a framework against which to interrogate the expectations, motivations and aspirations of the participants, in explaining how cultural, social and personal factors

influence their decision making. I considered Bourdieu's concepts of practice, field, capital and symbolic violence, and I paid particular attention to habitus.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, I reviewed many definitions and considered the ideas of numerous authors to create a definition of culture that was applied throughout my thesis:

Culture is a way of life consisting of traditions. It is represented by rules, beliefs, values, symbols and expected behaviours, conceptualised as a set of actions and forms of discourse, by groups of individuals situated within a particular local community. Culture provides a sense of local identity, belonging, solidarity and a common understanding that facilitates common local meanings that are accumulated over time.

Having undertaken this study, I would like to tentatively suggest that in coming from a working-class, socially deprived background, the participants' culture seemed to provide them with some sense of identity and belonging that facilitated common understandings, traditions and values that have helped them to build a sense of local identity and solidarity which, in turn, impacted upon their confidence as members of their local community (Brennan 2005). I could infer that the participants have developed shared practices, common patterns of reactions and accepted ways of doing things when it came to HE participation. It seemed logical to them that they would get an apprenticeship or find a job after they left sixth form. It was the rational thing for them to do. A good example, which was touched upon above, was their common reaction to seek out support from their place of study. This reaction had a common pattern: they would spend as much time as they wanted, as many times as they needed with teachers, mentors and coaches in order to give them the best opportunities to pass their



level 3 qualification. This was a fruitful practice. The need for, and benefit of support was something they talked about as a group and support seemed part of the fabric of the sixth forms.

This links nicely to habitus, which appeared to influence the participants' expectations, motivations and aspirations and could be seen to play a part in their choice not to participate. Whilst their habitus seemed to allow for some individual agency, the participants seemed predisposed to behave in a particular manner (Reay, 2004) because their habitus was shaped by their present and past circumstances (class, family etc.) and as a result of their educational experiences and upbringing (Maton, 2012). The participants' habitus likely impacted on how they saw things within their world in terms of beliefs and values and, as a result, they had certain dispositions towards particular behaviours and 'strategies of action' (Cuff *et al.*, 2006). Again, they had an accepted way of doing things which appeared to be socially influenced by their sixth form and their family and friends, but particularly by their parent(s). Whether their habitus generated 'strategies of action' that were transformative or constraining appeared to be influenced by both their family and place of study because their habitus was also a product of their early childhood experiences and family socialisation which was likely to have been shaped and reshaped as the participants encountered their socially deprived, working-class outside world (Reay, 2004).

As I outlined earlier, it seemed clear that the participants' habitus influenced their expectations, motivations and aspirations, both broadly and with regard to HE participation. I would propose that their apparent personal decision not to participate in HE was influenced by both cultural and social factors and was, in fact, a collective

endeavour. A specific example of this can be illustrated by returning to their relationships with their parent(s). It could be implied, having carried out this research, that cultural rules are important here. To some extent, such rules dictated how the participants responded to their parent(s). For instance, it was expected behaviour that parental advice and opinions held value; it was expected and it was listened to. Nonetheless, in spite of the information they gleaned from other sources about HE participation and however comprehensive it was, without validation from their parent(s), the credibility of the information was diminished and this appeared to have shaped their disposition towards HE. Participants listened to and valued what parents had to say in the same way that their parent(s) appeared to listen to their parents, and valued what they had to say. If the participants were to be believed, there was solidarity, a common understanding and a mutual respect that was conceptualised in a set of 'strategies of action' that manoeuvred the participants, in this particular instance, away from HE participation and towards the world of work. So, what could be viewed as a personal decision seemed to have been influenced by social activities and cultural factors.

As briefly considered above, the participants gave the impression that there were strong affective bonds within their close family members that appeared to have facilitated the formation of specific dispositions that gave what Bourdieu (1998) called a family feeling that was uniting and social. However, as the parents were not bestowed with the right type or amount of cultural capital or social capital, when discussing HE participation, for instance, they could not give their children what they needed. This, in conjunction with the fact that the participants also socialised with people who appeared to have similar outlooks, dispositions and amounts of cultural and social capital, who had also not participated, ensured that they could not get the grapevine knowledge they craved. As

a result, they appeared to have collectively developed a sense of what was for them and was not (Crossley, 2012) and this was influenced by the culture in which they were immersed and their social interactions with family and friends.

Of real interest was the fact that whilst the participants lived in socially deprived areas, they gave the impression of being attached to their locality (Woolver, 1992). I would like to propose that the majority of participants seemed ill-prepared to seek out experiences that they believed might lead to them leaving their locality. They felt comfortable living and socialising in a locality with a network of people with whom they seemed to share the same values, attitudes, behaviours and dispositions. Whilst I might suggest that this could have stunted the formation of their individual identities in much the same way as Ingham's (2009) study, as well as their agency like Atkins (2009) proposed, the majority of the participants seemed to view this positively, as they took comfort from a collective identity and habitus. My participants gave the impression that there were accepted ways of doing things and I would like to propose that exposure to their environment, socially and culturally, appears to have gone some way towards shaping their choices. Perhaps by virtue of being from a socially deprived and working-class background, the majority of the participants appeared to have had similar experiences. Such similarities seemed to be the result of the opportunities they had been afforded, because of the social relationships they had fostered and the structures they have encountered and this impacted on decision making. A good example of such influences can be illustrated by returning, once more, to their attitude to debt. Their upbringing and background appears to have shaped their habitus in regard to debt. They favoured no debt over debt, irrespective of the amount or the reason for the debt. This reinforces the work of Melcalf (1997) who discussed how the less affluent can regard HE as irrelevant and

Watts and Bridges (2006) who proposed that better paid jobs were far from guaranteed as a result of participation. Similarly, Callender and Jackson's study (2006) pointed out that choices can be constrained by costs, with students from lower income families fearing debt and that this played a pivotal role in their decisions. With my study, there appears to be evidence of cultural reproduction as the participants seem to have perpetuated a clear set of shared beliefs and values pertaining to debt, as a result of parental/family attitudes that were likely historical. Developing 'strategies of action' that helped to prevent debt seemed to have been conditioned by the participants' habitus (Bourdieu, 2000). Their habitus predisposed them to behave in a particular manner when it came to debt; again, there were cultural rules. Employment was much more likely to bestow economic, social and cultural capital and, once more, this goes some way towards explaining why the participants' aspirations, in some cases, almost seemed formulaic and manufactured. The participants would likely find their place in the world, living with or near parents in work, in Barnsley, if their testimony is to be believed and thus culture would be reproduced.

The participants' position within the sub-field of sixth form education and their personal worry about their potential position within the field of HE also appears to have influenced their decision making with respect to participation in HE. Whilst there was an apparent match between their habitus and the sub-field of sixth form education, there appeared to be a potential mismatch between their habitus and the field of HE. They anticipated feeling like 'fish out of water' as a result of their expectation of HE and this had a negative impact on their participation decision. I found their concern about being 'fish out of water' fascinating and I would like to once again suggest that the culture that they had been immersed in from birth, their working-class and socially deprived

background and their social network went some way toward shaping their expectations, motivations and aspirations and that this consequently impacted on their participation choices. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, various pedagogic processes have taken place that appear to have been misrecognised as legitimate by the participants which have influenced their attitudes and beliefs pertaining to HE participation, so much so that non-participation appeared to be the most appropriate course of action. Such attitudes and beliefs seem to have become normalised and viewed as being legitimate, even though they may actually not be in the participants' best interests. The pedagogic action that took place within the family and with friends, which seemed to be viewed as being more legitimate than that which took place in the sixth forms, which extolled the benefits of HE participation is a case in point. In spite of their apparent initial support for participation, participants' parents appeared to quickly exhibit collective expectations and socially inculcated beliefs (Bourdieu, 1998) pertaining to employment. The socialisation that took place in the family and with peers made them believe that non-participation was best and that employment was the right thing to do. It was the pedagogic authority of the parent(s), in the eyes of their children, which allowed the pedagogic action that took place to be viewed as being legitimate. Whilst I can only speculate here as I had no contact with parents, it may be that their pedagogic ethos predisposes them towards work rather than HE and a recognition that education is only truly of value if it translates positively into the labour market. Such explicit teaching would very likely influence the participants' habitus and consequently lead to cultural and social reproduction with enculturation or social learning appearing to take place.

## ***7.4 Contribution to Knowledge, Implications for Future Practice and Research***

This thesis makes contributions to knowledge in the area of widening participation in several areas. For example, this research helps us to understand why the young people in this study have not been influenced in the same way that some people have by the change in attitude towards HE under the apparent pressure to participate that was placed on them at their sixth form. This in itself is a significant contribution. What is it that has made the participants of this study do something that might be viewed as not objectively being in their best interest? Are they misrecognising something that could be of benefit? Are they misrecognising norms and accepting their own destiny in a way that appears normal, that in actual fact is reproducing inequality? Of real interest is that they appear to be standing up to a norm of society more broadly as it has been normalised to go to university, yet my participants still choose not to. They seem to be resisting hegemonic expectation and what is expected of them. This study has helped to illustrate several potential reasons for this which, although contradictory at times, are still influential.

More specifically, this research enhances our understanding of the complex, yet subtle influences that can lead young people to choose not to participate in HE, particularly with regard to the participants' predisposition for academic related support and the influence of their parents.

Whilst there appears to be an abundance of research that attributes student HE drop out to a lack of support from tutors (Dodgson and Bolam 2002, Noland 2003), this research helps to enhance our understanding of the importance of academic related

support and how the perceived lack of support in HE can be seen as a legitimate reason for non-participation. This is a distinctive contribution.

As discussed throughout, the respective sixth forms appear to have instilled a need for academic related support in the participants. Whilst this helped to build their self-confidence within the sub-field of sixth form education, without guarantees of similar levels of academic related support in HE, the participants gave the impression that they were not prepared to participate – to gamble. The expectation of academic related support was the norm in terms of their educational experiences and expectations, if they were going to succeed. The low expectations of academic support, should they participate, seemed to have a negative impact on them with regard to HE participation. As discussed, the academic support mechanisms that were on offer at their respective sixth forms helped them to complete work and pass their level 3 course. Their cultural repertoire, their ‘tool kit’, did not appear to stretch to HE participation without a substantial amount of academic related support. Academic related support appeared to have been inculcated into their habitus and support as a value had been institutionalised within the sixth forms and normalised by the participants, so much so that the majority inferred that they were unable to participate unless they had guarantees of the same amounts and types of support, should they participate. This is significant. This research enhances our understanding of both the benefits and drawbacks of academic related support within a sixth form environment and its consequences.

There are some notable implications for future practice here. There appears to have been some contradictory imperatives placed on the sixth forms. They seem to have

had to support the participants excessively in order to get acceptable results, whilst trying to prepare them properly for HE. Even though all students passed, they all relied heavily on the academic related support that was on offer. As touched upon in Chapter 1, there is evidence to suggest that some sixth form students are over-reliant on being told things and they expect excessive support. Whilst I can fully recognise the dilemma sixth form tutors face, given the imperatives placed on them, if such students are to participate, they need to have the self-confidence to do so. Tutors need to design sessions that encourage students to find things out for themselves, develop autonomy and enhance the quality of the students' learning and consequently, help them to prepare for what HE demands, whilst still enabling them to pass their course. Of course, teaching and pastoral staff need backing from their respective institutions if this is to be realised. The participants' worry about not being given enough support appears to be a significant reason why they have not been influenced in the same way as some people have who chose to participate.

This research also tells us more about the apparent influence of parents on decision making. Whilst other studies have indicated that parental influence is important, this research has found out more subtleties about the way this works and how parents appear to influence their children's decisions. A good example of this relates to the participants being unconvinced by their parents' apparent support for HE participation. Parents appeared to have a sustained influence on the participants' non-participation decisions even though, when taken at face value, the majority appeared to initially encourage their children to participate. If the participants were to be believed, parent(s) always seemed to have something to say, some advice to give or an opinion. Participants were used to parent(s) telling them what they thought and felt; this



appeared to be the norm - a cultural rule. Their lack of advice and guidance, on this occasion, seemed to disorient the participants and make them disbelieve their parents. They appear to have taken a lack of parental information about HE as an indication of their parents not wanting them to participate. A common pattern of reaction to this lack of information was non-participation and this seemed to have its own intrinsic logic. It appeared that a particular type of cultural capital and ethos had been transmitted to the participants from their parents and such internalised values appear to have contributed to the participants' attitudes towards HE participation. Once more, this has implications for future practice. It seems that parents and children need to get a better sense of the wider benefits and the point of education and its intrinsic value. Ignoring this and focusing entirely on the extrinsic values in publicity and outreach has not worked well with participants or their parent(s) because, of course, these cannot be guaranteed, and the participants and parent(s) seemed to expect an end result.

Whilst I realise that there is no guarantee that the parent(s) of the participants would participate, I would like to suggest that there appears to be a need for the much-maligned adult education/lifelong learning which sought to enhance people's appreciation of the non-vocational dimensions of education. If parents and communities experienced life-enhancing education, they might value it more for their children and be able to articulate this to them. As Osborne, Kearns and Yang (2013) point out when discussing the building of a learning society, whilst national governments have a major role in setting the agenda, it is the regions, cities and communities where the real action takes place.

The respective sixth forms could also offer summer camps and extended HE immersion experiences to help to give students a sense of belonging more to universities. Perhaps it could be arranged for them to have some HE teaching at their sixth forms to help prospective students feel like they could be part of HE and that HE belongs to them. Parent(s) could also be encouraged to get involved. In order to make a difference here, it appears that there is a need to change the habitus of the whole community and improve its social and cultural capital.

This research also tells us something more about the intense affiliations people can have for their home and community and the profound influence this can have on decision making. It adds to our understanding of the importance of the rich bonding social capital that can exist within families, the emotional attachment people can have to their family and their community and the influence this can have. This should not be viewed as a negative. Participants viewed their emotional attachments positively, as they appeared to enrich their lives and influence their beliefs and values.

### ***7.5 Post-doctoral Research Opportunities***

Whilst this research, in concentrating on the participation decisions of suitably qualified young people who live in a close-knit, socially deprived, ex-mining community, has helped highlight an aspect of widening participation that has not been extensively researched, in doing so it has highlighted potential further, post-doctoral study opportunities. For example, from a sociological perspective, it would be useful to compare students from a similar background who decided to participate in HE, in order to find out the motivating factors behind their decisions. I would be interested to ascertain whether they believed that HE was more likely to allow them to gain suitable

employment – a good job - or whether there were more intrinsic reasons such as enjoying a particular subject or wanting to get away from Barnsley. From a psychological perspective, I would be interested in focusing on personality to ascertain whether there was any correlation between participation decisions and types of personality. For example, are those people with more relational personality types less keen to lose their close knit social networks and those who are more self-reliant more willing to leave Barnsley and participate? This research has also raised some questions about learning mentors, progress coaches and other supporting roles pertaining to their remit and influence, as well as parental influences, and this warrants further research.

## **7.6 Conclusions**

### **Some cruel observers**

Roberts (2004, p.90) points out that some cruel observers described Barnsley as “...a small town in Yorkshire a couple hundred miles north of London geographically, but several time zones away culturally”. There is little doubt that the demise of the Yorkshire coal industry and with it, Barnsley’s once thriving economy, in conjunction with low levels of education and high levels of economic inactivity has shaped and influenced the way of life in Barnsley. In the past, the town had a fairly high level of economic activity and it was an industry that required some specialist knowledge and skills (Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, 2007). During this time, therefore:

...coalfield areas and communities felt a lesser need for educational qualifications and progression because jobs were often available (with training) that did not appear to require academic qualifications.

(Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, 2007, p.6)

Given the fact that the participants interviewed in this study lived in socially deprived areas and in being from a working-class background, it is perhaps not altogether surprising that they chose not to participate in HE. The interview testimony indicated that their choice not to participate seems to have been based around issues that were multiple and varied, as discussed at length. Such decisions, although personal, appeared to be significantly influenced by social and cultural issues and impacted upon by parents and wider networks.

Yet interestingly, in spite of the conditions in, and characteristics of, their local community, the majority of participants appeared to value education broadly. Their expectation, however, was that any education that was undertaken had to lead to something and could not be education for education's sake. Extrinsic rewards, particularly employment related rewards, were of key importance. None of the participants talked about loving a particular subject or the potential for personal growth, should they participate. I would like to suggest that their motivation was purely extrinsic. In fact, that the participants completed a level 3 qualification and even considered participation in HE could be viewed as an encouraging sign, given the current education levels in Barnsley and the lack of value placed on academic education in the not-too-distant past.

All of the participants that were interviewed had a degree of motivation and they seemed to believe that their level 3 qualifications might benefit them in whatever they decided to do. However, the same cannot be said for HE qualifications. Whilst some of the participants may have viewed HE as 'not being for the likes of them' (Bibbings, 2006, p.76), this was not the opinion of the majority of participants. There was no real sense of them not being good enough, although it must be stressed that even for the majority, there was a variety of reasons (as discussed) that meant participation appeared not to be an option and so consequently they ruled themselves out. Their construction of HE was that it was high cost, both financially and socially, and that these costs may outweigh future benefits (Hutchins and Archer, 2001; Watts and Bridge, 2006). Whilst they were not participating, if they had, then it had to be local and for some, more local than in the centre of a town in which they lived. That just was not near enough. They inferred that they did not want to leave their local community, believing that there was a greater cost to HE out of their locality and this was linked to issues of their own self-confidence. Whilst this may seem surprising, there is evidence to suggest that some individuals tend to identify strongly with their own community centre rather than even Barnsley as a whole (Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, 2006). Perhaps this goes some way to explaining why some participants stated that they would only consider attending in their locality and would not have considered studying at UCB, for instance. Participating in HE at their present educational establishment or even within their town would help remove some of the social costs attached to widening participation. For example, had those participants who suggested they would have participated at their respective sixth form been able to, the need for them to adapt to change, and to fit in, would be minimal. Whilst I am not suggesting that this should be available, this is perhaps understandable. The majority did not seem

to have the confidence to study further afield which suggests that little has changed amongst certain social groups with respect to their sense of entitlement and social confidence during the past 20 years of supposed widening participation. This is important and as discussed in Chapter 4, it has been suggested that many middle-class students express a strong sense of entitlement about going to university because of their schools and families (Crozier *et al.*, 2010). Being given advice by parents and/or family members who had been to university themselves is all part of the preparation that participants in this study could not access. Parent(s) appeared to be pivotal to the participants' decision making, not just in terms of what they said, whether believed or not, but also what they did not say. As discussed, there was some suggestion that parents, who were unable to pass on much information about HE participation, might have offered initial support, as they believed that it was the right thing to do, and that the participants' decision not to participate, in part, may have been the result of them thinking it would help their parent(s) financially and that, more generally, participation might have a negative impact on their family.

## **Final thoughts**

In Chapter 2, I explained that I was concerned with the participants' 'subjective hopes' and 'objective chances' and whether there was an adjustment between such hopes, aspirations, goals and expectations (subjective hopes) and the situation that they found themselves in as a result of their place in society (objective chances) (Jenkins, 1992). I would like to suggest that, for the majority of the participants, their 'subjective hopes' regarding participation in HE seem to have adjusted to the 'objective probability' of participation, and that there is evidence of both social and cultural reproduction. For the participants, the situation that they found themselves in, coming from working class

backgrounds and living in socially deprived areas of Barnsley, seemed to have influenced their HE aspirations as well as their hopes and goals more broadly, and this resulted in them being steered towards the world of work in one way or the other. Much like Maton (2012) suggests, the participants seem to have internalized the objective chances which they face and, as a result, considered futures that they believed to be realistic. The participants presented realism about their future and the majority only seemed prepared to attempt what they viewed as being possible. Issues that were significant to them have been discussed and it is suggested that such influences were orientated by their habitus. For the participants their beliefs, outlooks and practices seem to have been influenced by an array of stimuli, which impacted upon their educational choices.

Whilst the participants did not appear to blame 'the objective order' for them choosing not to participate in HE, they did blame their own inadequacies as a reason for non-participation, particularly when discussing their lack of self-confidence and their need for academic related support. Their choice not to participate in HE also seemed to, in part, be the result of 'practical' limitations imposed upon them because of their place within the sub-field of sixth form education and their worry about their possible position within the HE field because of their social connections, background and class position. Whilst their habitus captured how they made their participation choices, their expected position within the field of HE seems to have impacted upon the range of choices they saw as being realistic. Their present and past experiences in this sub-field of sixth form education shaped what they would require from a future HE field, should they participate. For the majority, there was no suggestion of them gambling by participating in order to gain additional capital in the long run. There also appears to be evidence of

enculturation, with the culture of the parent(s) being transmitted and passed on to the participants. Equally, there is evidence to suggest that social reproduction has taken place, as there was no suggestion that the participants' social arrangements were going to change any time soon with their short-term opportunities to enhance their capital, which could lead to an upward trajectory, seeming limited and unlikely as they intended to stay in their socially deprived area and not participate in HE.

It is important to note that in reaching these conclusions, I attempted not to miss the logic of my participants' practices when it came to their HE participation decisions, as discussed in Chapter 2. I have been thorough in my justification of using some Boudieuan key concepts (practice, field, capital, habitus and symbolic violence), as well as a three-level methodology as a framework against which to interrogate the participants' decision making. I carried out some extensive research into culture in order to devise a definition that was workable and that appeared to fit the participants and I was also careful not to let my own social origins and coordinates, and subsequent predisposition towards HE participation, cloud my judgement. What I mean to say is that I have tried to construct the findings in a manner that does not make non-participation appear the wrong thing to do. I have tried only to illustrate their apparent reasons for non-participation, whilst offering some explanation for the possible reasons for them choosing not to participate. In doing this, I have been critical throughout and have attempted not to take things for granted. In telling the story of the participants' choices, I have been interpretive and analytical and, in doing so, I have tried not to evidence my opinions and hopes with regard to my participants' decisions relating to participation. For example, I was very aware of the power dynamic that exists in an interview situation. To alleviate some of the problems attached to possible bias, all



interviews followed the same protocol and guidelines and I ensured that interviewees were at ease during the interview process, as outlined in Chapter 2 (Gray, 2004; 2009). I have also been clear about the implications of using data collected by semi-structured interviews and the subsequent influence that this had on the assertions and claims that I have made within this study. Throughout, I was clear that my job was not to try and influence their decisions, or persuade them to participate. Although difficult, it was imperative that I did not abuse my power and try to influence their participation decision which was not always easy, given the potential I saw in some of the participants.

To reiterate then, this research has shed further light on some interesting issues around non-participation in HE and it has helped me to understand why some young people with appropriate qualifications, from the most socially deprived areas of Barnsley, are underrepresented within HE. In particular, it appears that:

- parents do not inculcate their children with the tacit, 'legitimate' knowledge they crave because parents do not have an HE lived experience;
- participants are over-reliant on academic related support and this has a detrimental impact on HE participation;
- not being in debt is a cultural rule that makes the HE cost/benefit analysis not add up;
- participants were subtly steered towards employment within their own locality for which they had a strong attachment;
- culture provided the participants with a sense of belonging and facilitates common understandings;
- participants had strong affective bonds and a collective identity;
- cultural rules are important and participants have shared beliefs and values;
- pedagogic processes have taken place that appear to have been misrecognised;
- parents have pedagogic authority.

Finally, whilst I might claim that this study has illustrated the continuing power of local culture, it seems clear that it was the influences on the participants' culture that were truly influential, such as their parent(s), family, close friends, their working-class and socially deprived background and even their sixth forms, which eventually seemed to align with family and friends in pointing the participants towards the world of work, whether an apprenticeship or a job. Consequently, there is an abundance of influences that continue to shape and reproduce the culture in Barnsley that go some way towards explaining why the participants choose not to participate in HE and why they do not want to leave Barnsley.

With this in mind, I think it apt to finish this study by reiterating the words of participant 6:

...Barnsley is my life and I know that sounds like, well, awful, but it is.

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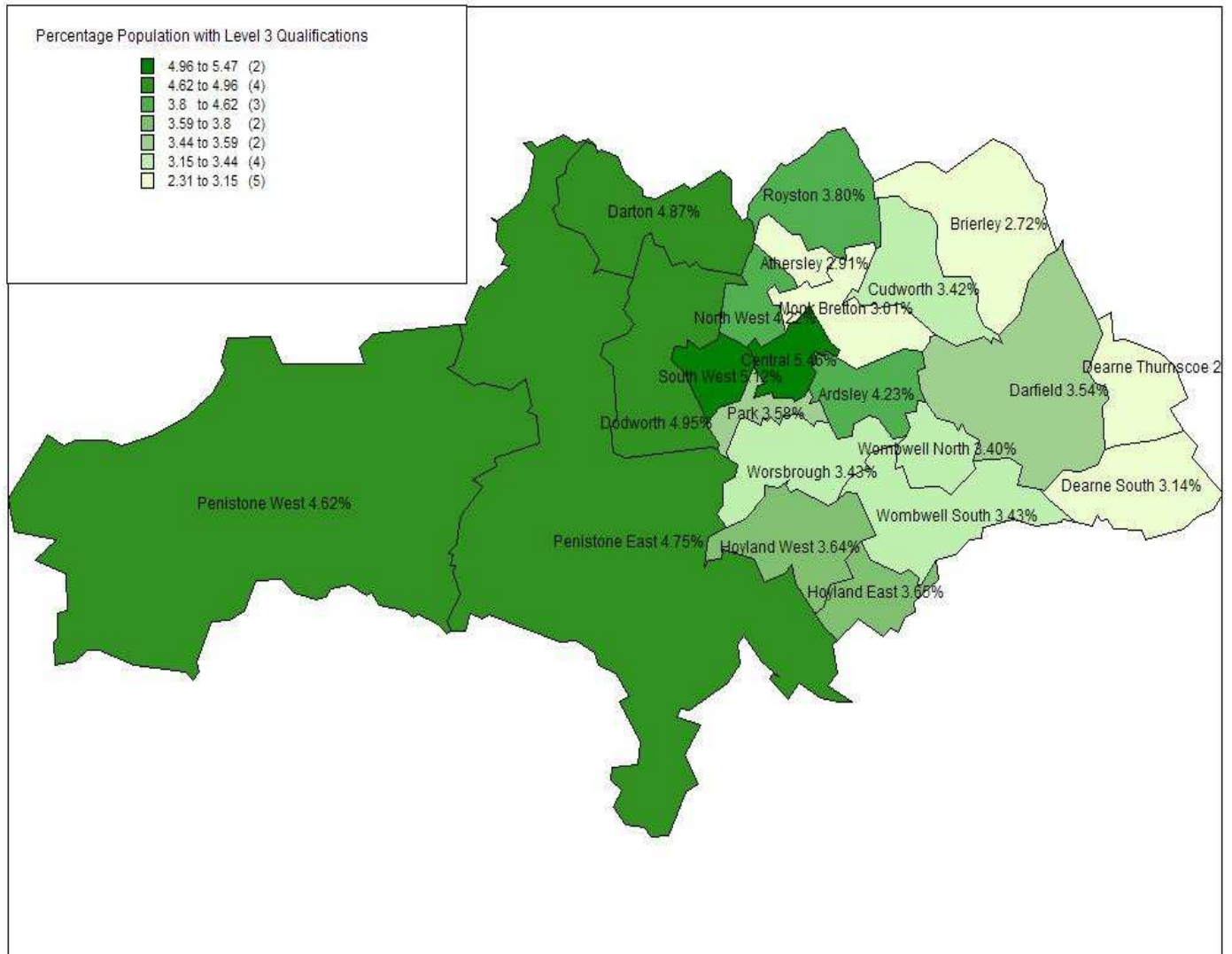
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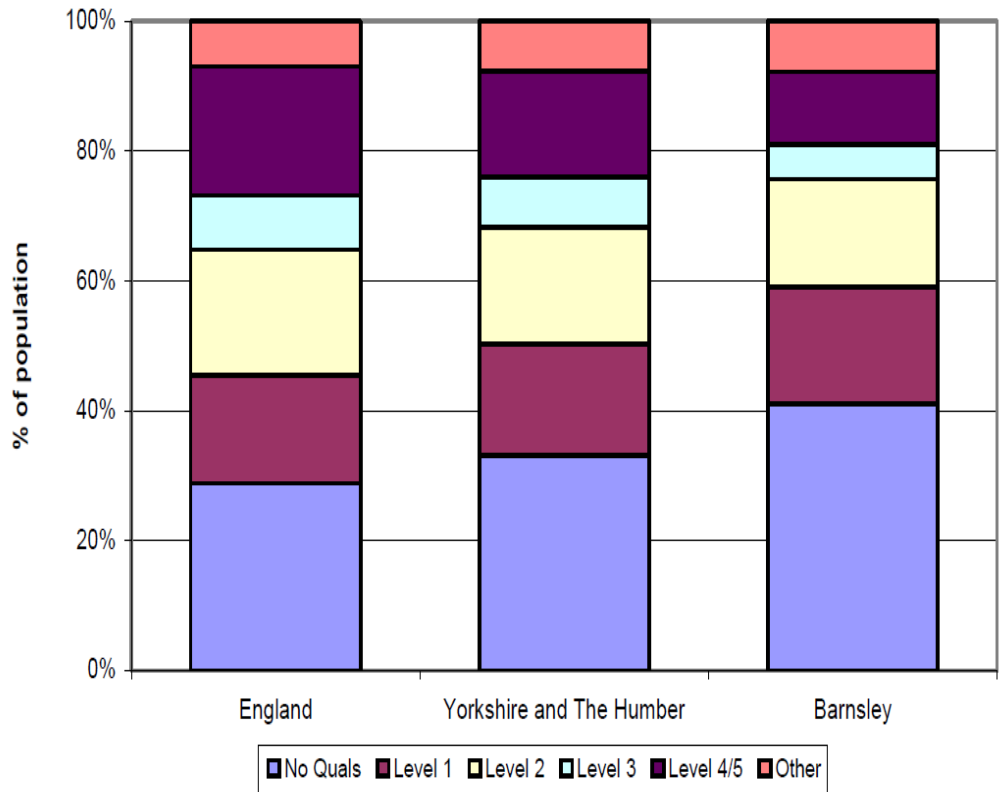
# Appendices

## Appendix 1 - Percentage of the Population with Level 3 Qualifications 2004/05



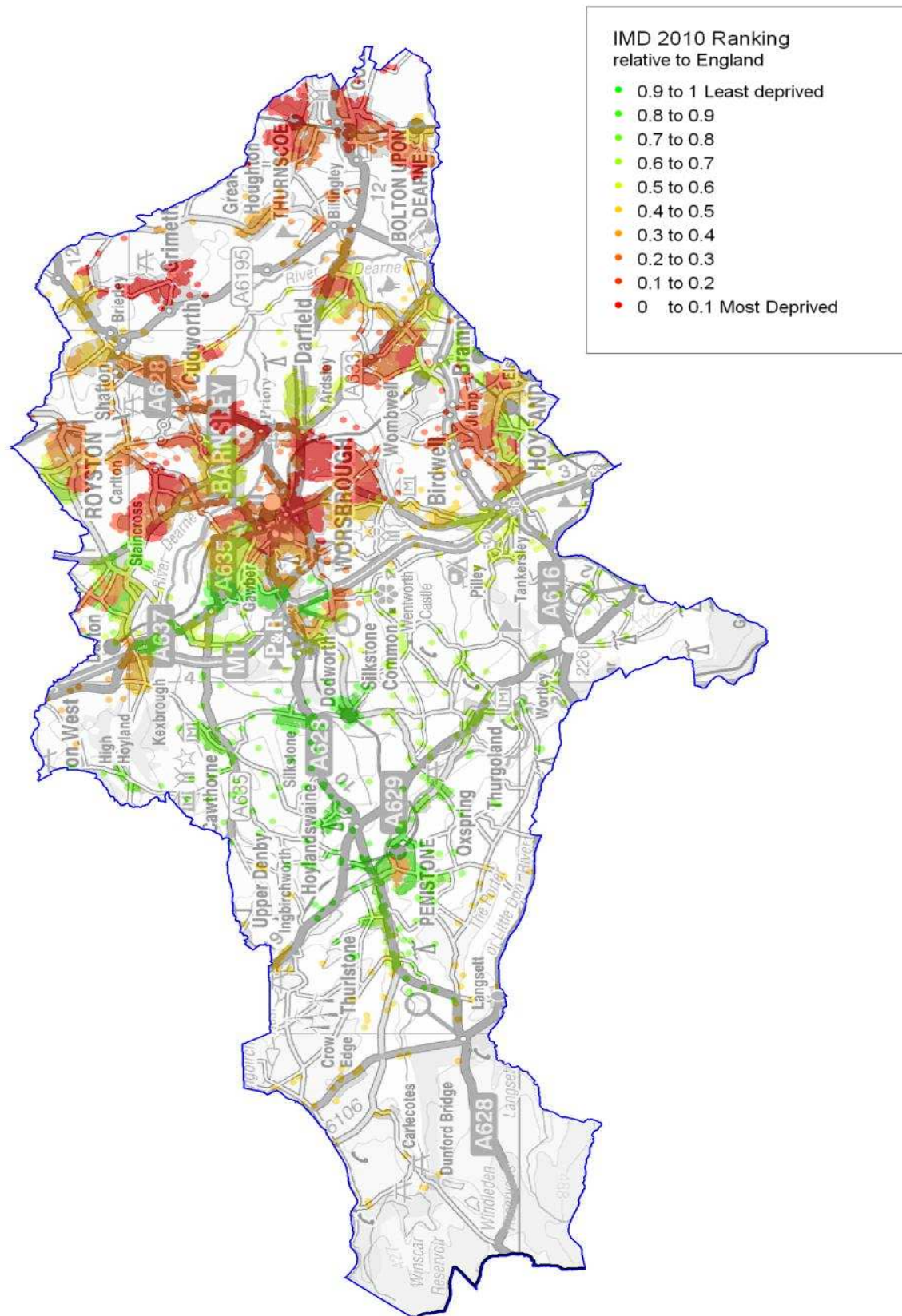
(Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, 2006)

**Appendix 2 - Level of Qualification in Barnsley, Yorkshire and the Humber and England**



(Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, 2006)

## Appendix 3 - Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010





(Yorkshire and Humber Health Intelligence, 2014)

**Appendix 4 - Participation Rates in the Barnsley Borough Based on the POLAR3 Definition Period**

Ward	Participation Rate	Quintile
Penistone East	42%	4
Penistone West	40%	4
Dodworth	35.9	3
South West	33.2	3
Darton	29.5%	3
North West	23.2%	2
Birdwell	22.8%	2
Hoyland West	22.8	2
Central	21%	2
Royston	20.6%	1
Wombwell South	20.2%	1
Hoyland East	19.1%	1
Brierley	18.5%	1
Darfield	18.1%	1
Park	17.7%	1
Cudworth	17.1%	1
Ardsley	16.3%	1
Worsbrough	15.8%	1

Dearne South	13.8%	1
Wombwell North	13.5%	1
Monk Bretton	12.7%	1
Dearne/Thurnscoe	10.5%	1
Athersley	10.5%	1

## Appendix 5 - Participant Consent Form

The following key areas were discussed with participants, prior to them being asked to read and fill in the consent form:

- I have received sufficient information about the study;
- I understand that I am free to refuse to take part if I wish;
- I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any-time without having to provide a reason;
- I know that I can ask for further information about the study from the researcher;
- I understand that all information arising from the study will be treated as confidential;
- I agree to take part in the study;
- I understand the recording system that will be used and why it is being used.

Title of Project:

Social deprivation and widening participation: The continuing power of local culture

Name of Researcher: Wayne Bailey

Participant Identification Number for this project.

Please initial box

I confirm that I understand the information given for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.

I agree to take part in the above project.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant Date Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person taking consent Date Signature

(if different from researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Date Signature

Copies:

One copy for the participant and one copy for the Principal Investigator / Supervisor

## Appendix 6 - Interview Schedule (Pilot Study)

### Introduction

- Welcome participants and introduce myself
- Explain the recording system that will be used and ask if the participant is happy
- Explain anonymity of the participants
- Ask if the respondent has any questions

Main questionnaire	Notes and follow up questions
1 What do you intend to do instead of attending university?	Probe issues around this topic  What are their immediate / future aspirations?
2 What made you decide not to go to university?	Probe issues around <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations of HE</li> <li>• Financial implications</li> <li>• Benefits vs. costs of HE</li> <li>• Social background / Friends / Family</li> <li>• Parental opinions of university</li> </ul>
3 What would need to be put in place for you to be able / want to access HE?	
4 What do you think being at university would be like?	Probe issues around <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University life and study whilst at university</li> </ul>

### Conclusion

Thank the participants and ask if they have any questions.

## Appendix 7 - Interview Schedule (Final)

### Introduction

- Welcome participants and introduce myself (explain my research)
- Explain the recording system that will be used and ask if the participant is happy
- Explain anonymity of the participants
- Ask if the participant has any questions
- Tell them they can withdraw from the process at any stage.

### Interview

Main Questionnaire	Notes and follow up questions
1 What do you intend to do when you leave college/school?	Probe issues around What are their immediate / future aspirations?
2 What were your reasons for deciding to do this?  3 Did you consider going to university at all? Why not?	Probe issues around Key drivers – things they want from life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations of HE</li> <li>• Financial implications</li> <li>• Benefits vs. costs of HE</li> <li>• Social background / Friends / Family</li> <li>• Parental opinions of university</li> </ul>

4 Do you think there is anything that would have made you want to go to university instead?	
5 What do you think being at university would be like?	Probe issues around <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• University life and study whilst at university</li></ul>
6 Is there anything you would like to add about your hopes and ambitions?	

#### Conclusion

Thank the respondent, and ask if they have any questions.



## Appendix 8 - Sampling Strategy

Stage 1	A decision was made that a sample was needed as it was not possible to interview the entire population.
Stage 2	A specific sample was chosen that was representative of the wider population. The key features were that participants had gained a level 3 qualification, lived in socially deprived areas, were from working-class backgrounds and had chosen not to participate in HE.
Stage 3	A non-probability sampling approach was followed.
Stage 4	Access was sort and granted at two sixth forms in Barnsley.
Stage 5	The people who were required to be in the sample were identified and approached with the aid of a liaison.
Stage 6	The size of the sample was determined when saturation appeared to have taken place.
Stage 7	Accessed was gained via letter and managed through a liaison.

(Cohen *et al.*, 2011)

### Appendix 9 - Participant Information

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Highest Qual.	Place of Study	Ward
1	M	17	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
2	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
3	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
4	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
5	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
6	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
7	M	17	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
8	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
9	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
10	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

11	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
12	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
13	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
14	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
15	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Wombwell North
16	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Athersley
17	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Monk Bretton
18	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Wombwell North
19	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Athersley
20	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Monk Bretton
21	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Monk Bretton
22	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Athersley

23	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Athersley
24	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Monk Bretton
25	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Wombwell North
26	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Athersley
27	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
28	F	17	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
29	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
30	F	17	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
31	F	17	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
32	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
33	M	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Wombwell North
34	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Town Sixth Form	Athersley

35	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough
36	F	18	White, British	Level 3	Village Sixth Form	Worsbrough

## Appendix 10 - The Sub-field of Sixth Form Education

### Key facts about the sub-field

- Sixth form education is viewed as a social space that is reminiscent of a sub-field (in Bourdieuan terms).
- It is viewed as something that is reminiscent of a field itself.
- The individual sixth forms are not viewed as sub-fields themselves, they are viewed as key agents within the sub-field.
- As a sub-field, sixth form education is a social space that has its own rules and this structures how the agents including, participants act through the relations of power which exist between them.
- Participants are positioned relative to others within the sub-field. However, in conjunction with this, the sub-field is also structured by the participants' 'strategies of action' and how the 'rules of the game' within this particular sub-field are interpreted by them.
- The position they hold within this sub-field is dependent on the amount and relative weight of capital they possess (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic) (Bourdieu, 1986).
- As a result of the above, a 'logic of practice' is created which shapes the behaviour of the participants within this sub-field.
- The participants' habitus mediates such practices and the participants' dispositions influence the social space itself (Colley, 2003).
- As inhabitants of this particular sub-field, the participants of this study have all gained five GCSE grade C or above including Maths and English or equivalents.
- There are currently more than 150,000 students aged 16 -18 studying at a sixth form college.
- There are 94 sixth form colleges across England the sector accounts for 14% of acceptances to higher education.
- Sixth form colleges out-perform all other providers of 16-18 education on a range of measures.

- Sixth form colleges provide 16-18 education and act as a valuable stepping-stone between the worlds of compulsory education and higher education and employment.
- Over 150,000 students are currently enrolled at a sixth form college with almost 90% studying for A levels (or an equivalent level 3 qualification).
- The continued success of sixth form colleges has meant that increasing numbers of schools, academies and general FE colleges are rebranding themselves as 'sixth form colleges'.
- There are 1,345,700 16-18 year olds in England are currently in full time education.
- Over 150,000 of these young people are enrolled.
- 20% of A levels in England are delivered by sixth form colleges.
- Sixth form colleges account for 14% of the 17-19 year olds accepted by higher education institutions.
- 76% of sixth form colleges are judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted

(Igoe and Kewin, 2013).

## **Appendix 11 – Example Interview Transcript**

### **Participant 6 transcript**

Morning (participant 6), thank you for agreeing to be interviewed, I really appreciate it. Thanks for filling in the participants' consent form and agreeing that this interview can be recorded. So just to reiterate, if you decide that you want to stop the interview, at any time, just let me know.

Are you happy to start?

Yes

Thanks

So, you have been here studying at Village Sixth form for the last two years?  
What have you been studying?

I've been doing a business course, it's been ok.

Are you happy to talk about what you intend to do, when you leave Sixth form?

Yes, that's fine

So you've decided not to go University and I understand it's quite a last minute decision, so what do you want to do instead of going to university?

I'm thinking about doing a car mechanics course. I've been looking into it and I'm really interested in doing it. It made me rethink going to university and it's changed my mind. I just want to get a job, I suppose. If I can't get a job as a



mechanic and do a course, think I'll get a job in a shop, or with my dad. I'll get some experience doing any old job and save a bit of cash.

So you are going to carry on doing some sort of study?

Yeah, I'm going to be in studies and learning still but not at University, it's at a company, local like. I'd be learning all about cars and stuff, studying and still getting paid and I really like the sound of that. I've talked it over with people here and they have pointed me towards lots of information.

Have you got a job?

No, I ant got a job no, not yet – applied for a few though, local like. Going to apply for the dent thingy next week - just got to ring up.

But that's what you'll hope it leads to? So where's this course you have to do?

Yes, it's in Sheffield.

So how did you hear about that?

Because my dad's a bit fiddly with his cars and if he gets a dent in he gets them all took out all time and that, and he uses this company and he's asked them all about it and he says if you're interested give me a ring. So that's

what I'm going to do, give them a call and get some work with them. I could take my dad's dents out then. To start with, I was going to go to Uni and do a business course in the town and I thought about applying after someone came here to talk to us about life and that.

So it's not that you don't know what you want to do it's just that you've changed your mind as to what you want to do? So what are the main reasons that you decided to go down this route and try to get you a job rather than going to university?

Well, like I said, I was all for it at first going to university, I went on this trip, this media trip to Sheffield Hallamshire for a day and it just weren't for me at all, I just didn't feel comfortable with it. It would have been ok in the town, but not there, it wasn't for me. Not liking Hallam got me thinking about Uni generally and that and it made me feel right uncomfortable.

What made you feel uncomfortable about it, is there anything specifically that you could mention?

No not really it's not that much different from here but for some reason I just didn't like it. The size or things like that or things like that. Yeah the size of it or something like that; I can't really explain it. I don't want to go to a place and it's not familiar, you get some familiarity from being here and I like what's around me and things like that. It's alien and you might not know anybody.

Here at sixth form, I know everybody from school and the teachers are right helpful. Not sure that I'd get that there.

Do you think that would worry you?

Yeah and besides there were only me that applied to university none of my right good mates bothered, so there would've been about a thousand people that I'd never seen before, so that put me right off as well. It's a confidence thing; I haven't got the confidence to go not with not knowing anybody. I'm not alone here, I don't know anyone who likes going anywhere when they don't know anyone. Confidence it's all about having the confidence.

Did anything else worry you at all?

The cost of going, because I've actually witnessed that with people in my family who have been to university. My cousin went to uni to do sports science but he's lumbered with debt because sports science never caught on. When people leave and they've not really fulfilled what they wanted to do and then they've been with this debt and struggled to pay it off and because I've seen that, that's put me off a bit as well. Debts, well, like corrosive. It costs but you don't get anything from it. If I'm being honest, I like the idea of having some money, to buy stuff, and I'd like to learn to drive and to buy a motor of some sort, so me and my dad could do it up. He'd like that too I reckon.

What about your immediate family, have any siblings or your parents been to university?

Siblings?

Brothers or sisters?

No nobody in my very close family, like my mum, dad, uncles, grandmas or granddads have never been but we've all established ourselves in life. The fact they haven't been makes a difference. My parents want me to go; well they just want what's best for me. They think that as long as I'm getting what I want then they're not bothered, but because they've not been to university, my mum and dad just left school and got a job, so are not familiar with this. But they were happy for me to go if I had decided to go, or so they said. Well, I think my mam would have liked to have gone. That's probably why she is so supportive about me going. My mum did sit down with me and say "do you actually want to go because you can go if you want to", I did say "...no I really don't want to". Still not sure whether she really wanted me to go though.

So what would have to be put in place then to make you decide to go to university and where maybe would you have gone?

Well the fact that there's not a university in Barnsley makes it hard as well because there might still be people you know if there's a university in Barnsley, but going all way to Sheffield to do it there's gunna be nobody that

you know there. But if there was one in Barnsley then you're familiar with your surroundings and it'd be more comfortable.

So if it had run at the University Campus Barnsley then would you have considered doing it then?

Yeah I'd have considered it but you've still got the money haven't you, this debt that you've still got to get into to do it, there's some right horror stories about debt and people not being able to pay. It might've changed my mind a little bit but I still wouldn't have been 100 per cent sure that I wanted to do it. I'd have done it here, if I could have carried on in this environment, because I've been going to this school seven years, so it'd have just been "I've been there done that" so I'd have carried on. I know all teachers and I'm comfortable with sitting down and talking to them, cos you know when you go to university you've got to get to know everybody again. I know I've said that already, but it really is a big deal to me, it really is. If you could transport everything I've got here, there and it didn't cost anything, I'd do it.

I'm assuming you applied to Sheffield so you could stay locally, so would you have gone and moved to wherever you'd gone to university?

No definitely not I'm a bit of a home boy. I would have had to stay in Barnsley so it would have had to have been train or via bus. I'd prefer to go local; I'd rather stay at home. It's easier. Everyone's here like this is my life, Barnsley's my life and I know that sounds like, well, awful but it just is.

What do you think university would have been like?

Hard work. I'd have thought it'd have been a stressful time and I know a lot of people say it's good but I'd have thought there'd have been a lot of stress involved as well and I don't cope with stress right well. Ask my teachers here. The teachers here are right helpful, if you need to talk to them about anything there fine with it. Makes you feel better about what you've got to do and that. I don't mind hard work at all, but I need to have help to make sure that I'm on the right lines. What's the point of doing loads of work, without any help, and it's all wrong. That would be a right waste of time wouldn't it.

What type of stress do you think there would be?

Things like being overloaded with work and stuff and getting a deadline and I really dunt cope with stuff like that. I know a lot of people say it's good but I'd have thought there'd have been a lot of stress involved as well and I don't cope with stress well at all, like I said. I like to do work in my own time and being at sixth form that's what I've got used to and I think that might just hit me like a rock when I go to university.

Is there anything you would like to add about your hopes and ambitions?

Not really no. But I will say that I am determined to get a job working with cars and fixing them. Like I said, I'm going to ring the dent company my dad goes to and hopefully get some work there mending dints and doing a course that tells me how to do it. Sheffield's not that bad, if I can come home every

day and I'll get paid and have a few quid in my pocket. I want to get a job that pays well in the long run and that trains me up. If I'd gone to uni, I might not have got a good job anyhow.

Anything else?

It's not been as bad as I thought it would this, I wasn't really looking forward to this and wasn't going to turn up to talk to you, but's it's been better than class.

Ta.

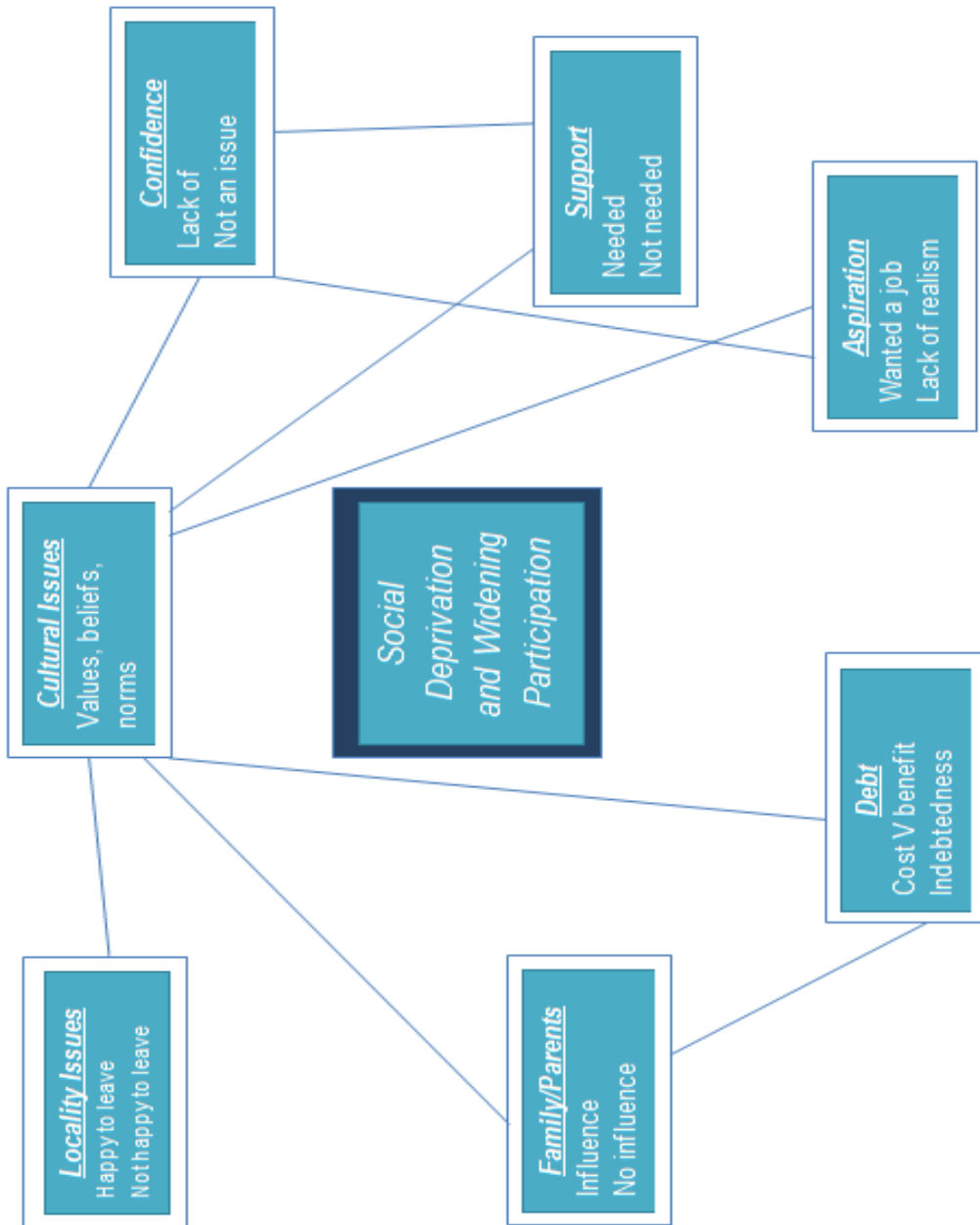
I'm glad it was better than class, thank you for your time, I hope you mechanics course and job work out.

## **Appendix 12 - Initial Ideas / Codes**

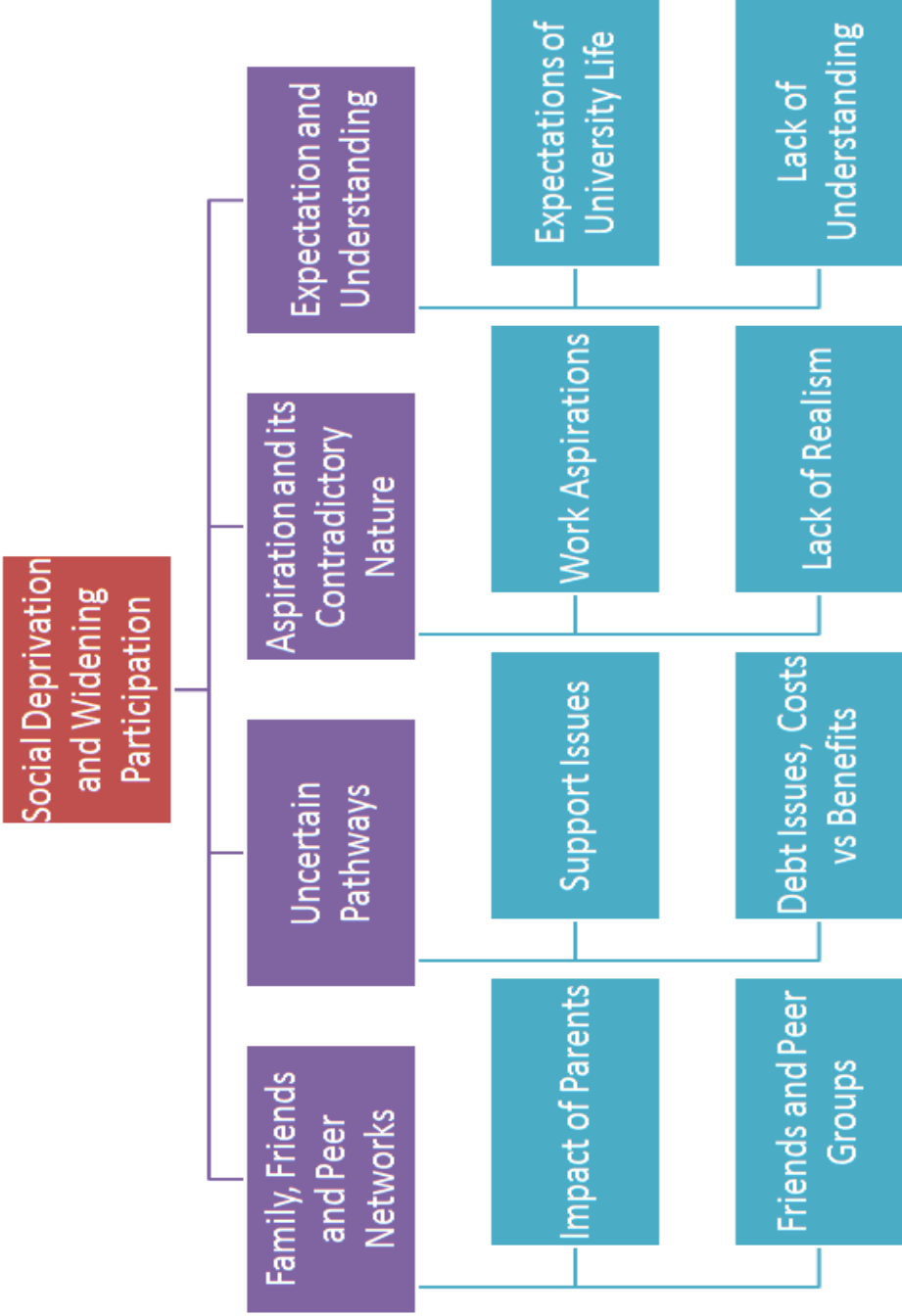
- Confidence issues
- Contradictory aspirations and a lack of realism
- Cost vs. benefit
- Debt aversion
- Debt (not an issue)
- Expectations of university life and a lack of understanding
- Family and the role of parents
- Locality issues
- Network influences
- Support issues
- Uncertainty



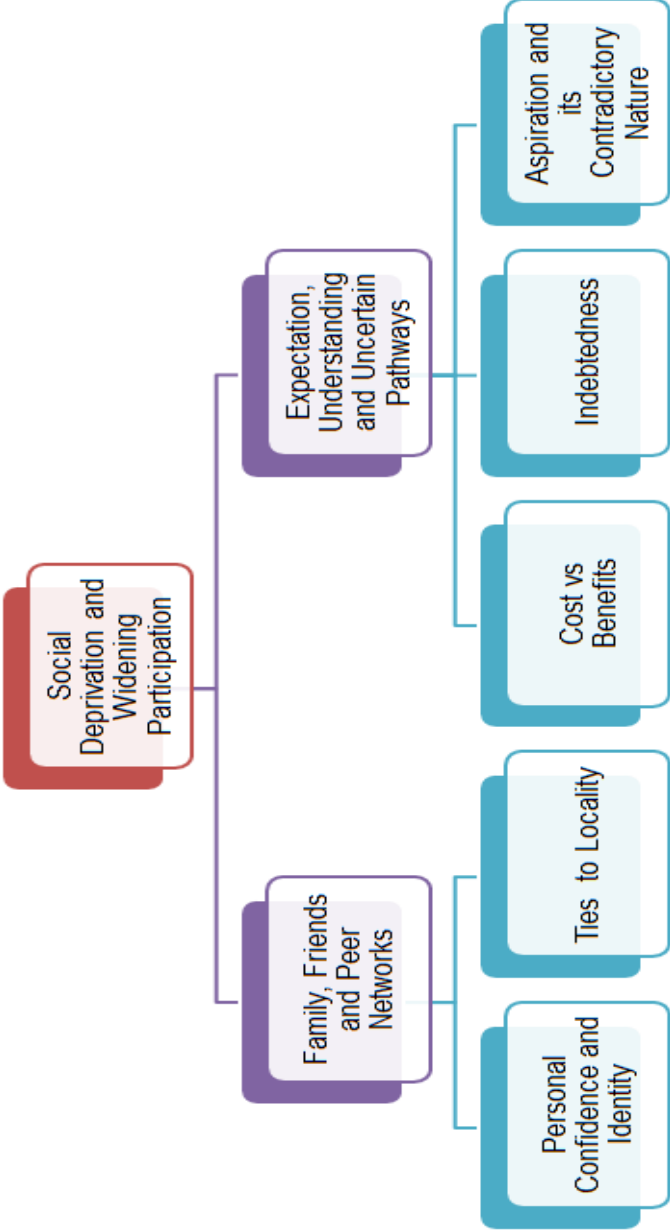
**Appendix 13 - Emergent Candidate Themes**



Appendix 14 - Refined Candidate Themes



Appendix 15 - Final Themes



## **Appendix 16 – Example of the Coding Process**

### **Example of data analysis (with a selection of quotations)**

The following document offers an example of the data analysis process and highlights how the theme, expectation, understanding and uncertain pathways was arrived at.

The example refers to one transcript and includes a selection of additional verbatim commentary to help illustrate the processes that were undertaken.

After reading the transcripts repeatedly, initial ideas were noted down. As can be seen in the interview transcript for participant 6 below, coding was undertaken from the outset and this helped to establish the initial ideas and codes.

#### **Participant 6 transcript**

Morning (participant 6), thank you for agreeing to be interviewed, I really appreciate it. Thanks for filling in the participants' consent form and agreeing that this interview can be recorded. So just to reiterate, if you decide that you want to stop the interview, at any time, just let me know.

Are you happy to start?

Yes

Thanks

So, you have been here studying at Village Sixth form for the last two years? What have you been studying?

I've been doing a business course, it's been ok.

Are you happy to talk about what you intend to do, when you leave sixth form?

Yes, that's fine

So you've decided not to go University and I understand it's quite a last minute decision, so what do you want to do instead of going to university?

Expectations  
Support Issues  
Cost v benefit  
Aspirations and their  
Contradictory Nature

I'm thinking about doing a car mechanics course. I've been looking into it and I'm really interested in doing it. It made me rethink going to university and it's changed my mind. I just want to get a job, I suppose. If I can't get a job as a mechanic and do a course, think I'll get a job in a shop, or with my dad. I'll get some experience doing any old job and save a bit of cash.

Aspiration

So you are going to carry on doing some sort of study?

Aspiration

Yeah, I'm going to be in studies and learning still but not at University, it's at a company, local like. I'd be learning all about cars and stuff, studying and still getting paid and I really like the sound of that. I've talked it over with people here and they have pointed me towards lots of information.

Have you got a job?

No, I ant got a job no, not yet – applied for a few though, local like. Going to apply for the dent thingy next week - just got to ring up.

But that's what you'll hope it leads to? So where's the course you have to do?

It's in Sheffield.

How did you hear about that?

Because my dad's a bit fiddly with his cars and if he gets a dent in he gets them all took out all the time and that, and he uses this company and he's asked them all about it and he says if you're interested give me a ring. So that's what I'm going to do, give them a call and get some work with them. I could take my dad's dents out then. To start with, I was going to go to Uni and do a business course in the town and I thought about applying after someone came here to talk to us about life and that.

So it's not that you don't know what you want to do it's just that you've changed your mind as to what you want to do? So what are the main reasons that you decided to go down this route and try to get a job rather than going to university?

### Expectations

Well, like I said, I was all for it at first, going to university, I went on this trip, this media trip to Sheffield Hallamshire for a day and it just weren't for me at all, I just didn't feel comfortable with it. It would have been ok in the town, but not there, it wasn't for me.

Not liking Hallam got me thinking about Uni generally and that and it made me feel right

uncomfortable.

What made you feel uncomfortable about it? Is there anything specifically that you could mention?

### Expectations

No not really it's not that much different from here but for some reason I just didn't like it.

The size or things like that or things like that. Yeah the size of it or something like that; I

can't really explain it. I don't want to go to a place and it's not familiar, you get some familiarity from being here and I like what's around me and things like that. It's alien and you might not know anybody. Here at sixth form, I know everybody from school and the teachers are right helpful. Not sure that I'd get that there.

### Support issues

Do you think that would worry you?

Yeah and besides there were only me that applied to university, none of my right good mates bothered, so there would've been about a thousand people that I'd never seen before, so that put me right off as well. It's a confidence thing I suppose; I haven't got the confidence to go, not with not knowing anybody.

### Support issues

I'm not alone here, I don't know anyone who likes going anywhere when they don't know anyone. Confidence it's all about having the confidence.

Did anything else worry you at all?

The cost of going, because I've actually witnessed that with people in my family who have been to university. My cousin went to uni to do sports science but he's lumbered with debt because sports science never caught on. When people leave and they've not really fulfilled what they wanted to do and then they've been with this debt and struggled to pay it off and because I've seen that, that's put me off a bit as well. Debts, well, like corrosive. It costs but you don't get anything from it. If I'm being honest, I like the idea of having some money, to buy stuff, and I'd like to learn to drive and to buy a motor of some sort, so me and my dad could do it up. He'd like that too I reckon.

### Cost v benefits

What about your immediate family, have any siblings or your parents been to university?

Siblings?

Brothers or sisters?



No nobody in my very close family, like my mum, dad, uncles, grandmas or granddads have never been but we've all established ourselves in life. The fact they haven't been makes a difference. My parents want me to go; well they just want what's best for me. They think that as long as I'm getting what I want then they're not bothered, but because they've not been to university, my mum and dad just left school and got a job, so are not familiar with this. But they were happy for me to go if I had decided to go, or so they said. Well, I think my mam would have liked to have gone. That's probably why she is so supportive about me going. My mum did sit down with me and say "do you actually want to go, because you can go if you want to", I did say "...no I really don't want to". Still not sure whether she really wanted me to go though.

What makes you think that?

Well she says she does, but when I've asked her about it, she's got nothing to say, that's not like my mam at all. She's always got something to say.

So what would have to be put in place to make you decide to go to university and where would you have gone?

Well the fact that there's not a university in Barnsley makes it hard as well because there **might still be people you know if there's a university in Barnsley**, but going all way to Sheffield to do it there's gunna be nobody that you know there. But if there was one in Barnsley, then you're familiar with your surroundings, and it'd be more comfortable.

So if a course you were interested in, had run at the University Campus Barnsley, would

you have considered doing it?

Yeah I'd have considered it, but you've still got the money haven't you, this debt that you've still got to get into to do it, there's some right horror stories about debt and people not being able to pay.



**Cost v benefits**

It might've changed my mind a little bit but I still wouldn't have been 100 per cent sure that I wanted to do it. I'd have done it here, if I could have carried on in this environment, because I've been going to this school seven years, so it'd have just been "I've been there done that" so I'd have carried on. I know all teachers and I'm comfortable with sitting down and talking to them, cos you know when you go to university you've got to get to know everybody again. I know I've said that already, but it really is a big deal to me, it really is.



**Support issues**

If you could transport everything I've got here, there, and it didn't cost anything, I'd do it.

You discussed going on an open day to Sheffield, if you had applied to go to university, would you have gone and moved to wherever applied?

No definitely not I'm a bit of a home boy. I would have had to stay in Barnsley, so it

would have had to have been train or via bus. I'd prefer to go local; I'd rather stay at home. It's easier. Everyone's here like this is my life, Barnsley's my life and I know that sounds like, well, awful but it just is.

What do you think university would have been like?

Hard work. I'd have thought it'd have been a stressful time and I know a lot of people say it's good but I'd have thought there'd have been a lot of stress involved as well and I don't cope with stress right well.



**Expectation**

Ask my teachers here. The teachers here are right helpful, if you need to talk to them about anything there fine with it. Makes you feel better about what you've got to do and that. I don't mind hard work at all, but I need to have help to make sure that I'm on the right lines. What's the point of doing loads of work, without any help, and it's all wrong. That would be a right waste of time wouldn't it.



**Support issues**

What type of stress do you think there would be?

Things like being overloaded with work and stuff and getting a deadline and I really dunt

cope with stuff like that. I know a lot of people say it's good, but I'd have thought there'd have been a lot of stress involved as well and I don't cope with stress well at all, like I said. I like to do work in my own time and being at sixth form, that's what I've got used to and I think that might just hit me like a rock when I go to university.



### Expectation

Is there anything you would like to add about your hopes and ambitions?

Not really no. But I will say that I am determined to get a job working with cars and fixing them. Like I said, I'm going to ring the company my dad goes to and hopefully get some work there mending cars and doing a course that tells me how to do it. Sheffield's not that bad, if I can come home every day and I'll get paid and have a few quid in my pocket. I want to get a job that pays well in the long run and that trains me up. If I'd gone to uni, I might not have got a good job anyhow.



### Aspiration

Anything else?

It's not been as bad as I thought it would this, I wasn't really looking forward to this and wasn't going to turn up to talk to you, but it's been better than being in class. Ta.

I'm glad it was better than class, thank you for your time, I hope you mechanics course and job work out.

Once all 36 transcripts had been read through several times and highlighted in the same manner as transcript 6, the following initial ideas were highlighted (phases 1 and 2 of the thematic analysis):

- Contradictory aspirations and a lack of realism
- Cost vs. benefit
- Debt aversion
- Support issues
- Uncertainty.

Once the initial ideas had been decided upon, the data was reread (several times) and colour coded and placed into tables (see Table A). From the initial codes, the emergent candidate themes were developed (phase 3). The emergent candidate themes had to say and capture something important in relation to the research questions highlighted in Chapter 1. I looked for 'keyness' and in doing so, I looked for relationships which informed the coding process. The emergent candidate themes (that became part of expectation, understanding and uncertain pathways) included:

- Confidence
  - Not an issue
  - Lack of
- Aspirations
  - Wanted a job
  - Lack of reality
- Debt
  - Cost vs. benefit
  - Fear of indebtedness

- Support

These issues were consistently present within the interview testimony. Table A evidences how I arranged the data I collected.

**Table A**

<b><u>Verbatim quotations</u></b>	<b><u>Emergent Candidate Themes</u></b>
<p><b>Participant 1</b> - I ant really got that much expectations for university cos I dunt know really know anybody who's been or what's involved; I'm not right certain about any of it, to be honest.</p> <p>I'm hoping to do an ATT in Accounts. It's an apprenticeship and you get paid at same time. I talked about it with me mam and she thinks it's a good idea. You go on to take all like these tests and go on to become a certified accountant. It just seems like the right thing to do...</p> <p><b>Participant 3</b> - I know my friend Amanda's boyfriend goes and he gets loads and loads of time off. I think he's had five months off. But I think it's good for meeting new people and all that. But I think you have to work more independently though when you're in uni what's the point of that? So that's summat else I'd have to get ready for as well? .</p> <p>Like working on my own where, like, here you get loads and loads of help and that from teachers, whereas there, like, you get your lectures and then you work on your own and it's not like that here, so I'm not quite that ready for it...At sixth form we get it when we want really, I wouldn't finish with out in 'cause I need it.</p> <p><b>Participant 4</b> - Erm well we've still sat in all the things about university in tutorials, so we know as much as most other people do and erm just lectures and lessons like</p>	<p><b><u>Expectations</u></b>  <b><u>Support Issues</u></b>  <b><u>Cost and Indebtedness</u></b>  <b><u>Aspirations and their Contradictory Nature</u></b>  <b><u>Black (not used)</u></b></p>

you have at college but you dunt have to study as many subjects. Erm I dunt know that's abart it really! I'd be in a massive lecture room, and I'd have to work independently without any help from my teacher.

My mam says debt's right bad, she won't even have a credit card. She says she got caught out in the past.

I'm interested in health care and stuff like that so I want to go for an apprenticeship in the NHS.

I don't ever want to be nothing. I never want to be out of a job. I always think in a couple of years if I'm not doing what I want to be doing, I can always go back to university and do something in the future.

**Participant 5** - I guess it'd be same as it is here but there'd be a lot more people. You have to work on your own...I'm already no good with deadlines. If I'm being honest I'm not sure what studying at uni would be like.

**Participant 6** - I'd have thought it'd have been a stressful time and I know a lot of people say it's good but I'd have thought there'd have been a lot of stress involved as well and I dunt cope with stress reight well.

Things like being overloaded with work and stuff and getting a deadline and I really dunt cope with stuff like that.

I like to do work in my own time and being at sixth form that's what I've got used to and I think that might just hit me like a rock when I go to university.

**Participant 8** - I think it'll be a good experience. Night life's supposed to be good. I dunt wanna move away from home yet either so that's another reason.

I asked my cousin abart it. She says it's

good she comes over for weeks at a time so I ask her about it. She says worst thing about it's probably fees cos she's struggling with money and stuff.

**Participant 9** - From what you hear about it on telly and see on telly whatever, it's just one long party really and I was listening to radio other day and she had one lecture a week and I can't understand that. You're going to university and you're paying all that money to go and you've got one lecture a week it's ...

...but I think for everybody especially coming from here, and I'm not saying Barnsley is as deprived as what everybody makes it out, it isn't as bad as what everybody says but I think coming from an area like this where traditionally people haven't got that much money, it is a problem.

I've actually got a job already, signed contracts and everything and it's what I would have wanted to do at university if I would've gone. It is marketing and product development of a nationwide company, I suppose you could call them, but they're mainly Yorkshire. I'll get to know lots of people. I've done a lot of work with them in the past. I actually did my work experience there and it's all come into focus since then. I do work with them in holidays; they know me. This holiday just gone, I worked every day so that's what I'm planning on doing and it's hopefully gonna lead me on to greater things.

**Participant 10** - I'm not expecting it to be easy, I think it's gonna be pretty hard work but I think it's gonna be really good erm for getting to know yourself a lot more, learning how you do with time keeping and things like that, if you living there and stuff.

Firstly, I'm gonna do a year out doing a teaching assisting job 'cause I've been offered it and I'm finalising everything. It's



in current place that I'm in now. I'm gonna do that for one year and look at a way into possibly getting into university and then into teaching eventually.

**Participant 13** - I dunt know everybody's told me to go cos it's like everybody says they regret it if they dunt and things like that so that's made me like quite intrigued a little bit.

**Participant 14** - It'd be similar to college just harder work and more effort to be put in.

If I do go to university, it'll cost me a lot of money so I'll be in a lot of debt and even with a degree with climate the way it is now, there's no guarantee I'll get a job with a degree, so I can't pay my debt off, so I'm looking at paying debts 'til I'm near retirement. I may as well just get a job...

I hope that I can achieve what I want to achieve. I've aspired to it and put things in place. A club professional would be nice and there's a few clubs in America that are looking for professionals, so it'd nice to be a club pro over in America.

**Participant 16** - Yeah it'd be too intense, work would be a lot harder, I'd just want to pack it in after a few weeks. Work's intense, you've got to stick to deadlines, meet targets and all that and I just can't do stuff like that.

...it's hard, isn't it, for students and stuff and you've got all this debt hanging over you when you've done and I just don't want that. I don't know, I just don't like thought of having it, having debt. It fills me with dread.

I've got a job for a couple of years at the minute. I've got work at Tesco and when I get a bit older, I'm gonna train up. I just hope I do well in the future and I hope I do well without going to university 'cause I

really don't think I need to go to be honest, and that's my opinion...I'm gonna work my way up.

**Participant 17** - I wunt say it'd be bad to go but stories I've heard, it's like they do have a laugh and they do meet people in a different place and they're away from home, away from their parents so it would be good but ...

As soon as we get into the common room they ask us what they can help us with before I've even thought about it.

I'm going to try and get in the police force at every opportunity I can, in about two or three years, and then I've got more life experience.

**Participant 18** - It'd be a whole new experience being by myself not knowing anybody.

No-one wants to be in debt really, do they? Yeah, that's another thing that I didn't want, to be leaving owing money so really ...I don't know how to explain it. Just knowing you're in debt and knowing that you owe out money really, and it takes ages to pay back. That's it.

**Participant 19** - I've seen external sources which'll provide me with a PDR technician course which is paint-less dent repair and I've been looking through that and I'm really interested in doing it and it's changed my mind from going to university. Jane [learning mentor] put me on to it and my dad thinks it a great idea.

**Participant 21** - Err, well it'd be ok like but I mean if I went to uni I'd do their police courses, but like I say I just dunt really wanna go to uni at all.

Yeah, that's a lot as well, all cost issues and having to borrow off student loans and when you have to work, you have to give it

back and things. It's a lot of money. It's getting in debt before I can even get a job. It makes me feel like I wanna run away and not go to university.

For meantime try and look for a job, either a part-time job or a full-time job as soon as I leave and then in future I wanna become a police officer, so I'm gonna look into that...I just need to get a job...

**Participant 22** - I expect it to be right big classes and, you know, loads of people and I'd get right nervous about that, like asking for help.

What's the point of going to uni if you can't do it yourself and you need loads of help from people you don't know? What's the point...?

I don't want to be recognised as someone who needs a shed load of support.

I'm thinking about doing an apprenticeship in this school, a housekeeping apprenticeship.

**Participant 23** – Stressful cos it's a lot of work init? Loads and loads of essays and stuff and lectures and listening to people. Depends what you wanna do really isn't it?. Like, if you wanted to do summat that wasn't really practical, you'd really just be sat listening and writing and not much else really.

...they're always on about it... they are trying to brainwash us...

**Participant 24** - Like school really. Just like we've done trips to universities with school and it just seems to be practically same, apart from they've got, like, living quarters on campus and other things. They've got halls and rooms and everything near. It just seems pretty much same but for older students.

...I'd be in a massive lecture room, and I'd have to work independently without any help from my teacher.

I think it'd be more like on your own really, 'cause your tutors in your lecture room, they'd just give you lectures and send you off and tell you to come back when you've completed your work whereas here at sixth form, we can go and ask for help. If we're stuck on a certain part of our course, we can go and say "will you be able to help me out with this?" and they'll come and sit down with you and spend so long with you until you get hang of it. If I didn't have that support and I weren't able to progress with my work then I wouldn't be able to complete would I?

I've been doing BTEC level 3 in sports science so I'm hoping to get a job in the sports industry somewhere like a gym or just somewhere like JJB Sports, summat to do with sports, but I'm not too sure how to go about it. That's what my dad wants...but I'm not sure if I even wanna work in a sports shop. I might just stay at sixth form...I dunno what to do.

**Participant 25** - Probably... well probably work through day and then, well not work but you know just go into your lessons through day and then it's just drinking int it all night, that's probably all it is. I think it'd be really intense and, I dunt even like it here to be honest, I do like it but I dunt like pressure on getting stuff done. I prefer to do it in my own time and there I'd have no chance cos I'd have everybody on my back do this, do this, do this.

Second chances here, like, if you don't hand summat in then "give it me next week" makes you get it in but there I don't think you'd get that. I think it'd be if you don't get it on this day, you don't get it in. You get a lot more assistance I think than you would there. I think it'd just be like, right you listen, you do that and then you

go off and do it.

**Participant 26:** Because if I don't meet deadline here then they just give you a different deadline or say "give me it when you've finished" where at university I'd probably get kicked out or summat.

**Participant 27** - Just a lot of independent studying that's all I can think of really. Er a bit of good and bit of bad cos I do struggle in some areas with stuff and then it shows you can be reliant on yourself though.

**Participant 29** - I think it'd be a good experience cos obviously it's being summat completely different to what school is. Erm environment cos like you're in a different environment to what you're usually in and different people like you know, more hours, I don't know what else.

**Participant 30** - Challenging, erm possibly cos it's like a harder course and things like that erm and like if they do exams and things like that and studying for exams cos I'm more a practical coursework person rather than exam person.

**Participant 31** - I don't think it'd be as good as here 'cause, like, you've got loads of students haven't you at uni, depending on what course you're on and here, here you can have 1:1 time with your teachers, 'cause classes are only really that small so I think it'd be big change for me to go to uni to study. I feel at home here, you can go to teachers whenever you want and they'll help you...they don't make you feel like idiots.

**Participant 32** - Yeah, here I feel like I've got some more support and I, like, know teachers so they are easier to approach and to ask for help.

**Participant 33** Well, I am focussing on a job or apprenticeship within the travel and tourism industry with a bit of business background 'cause that's what I'm

studying at minute and that's what I enjoy to do, really. I wished they'd mentioned them earlier, not just when I told them I want off to uni.	
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After the emergent candidate themes were highlighted, the transcripts and Table 1 were read, reread and analysed again to see if anything had been missed. It was clear that the emergent candidate themes were not broad enough to be sustained; consequently they were adapted and spread across three broader refined candidate themes (phase 4) (see Table B below). The refined candidate themes were:

- Uncertain pathways
  - Support issue
  - Debt issues
  - Cost vs. benefits
- Aspiration and its contradictory nature
  - Work aspirations
  - Lack of realism
- Expectation and understanding
  - Expectation of university life
  - Lack of understanding

**Table B**

**Refined candidate themes (relating to Expectation, Understanding and Uncertain Pathways)**

<b><u>Refined Candidate Themes</u></b>	<b><u>Verbatim Quotations</u></b>
<p>1. Uncertain pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Support issues</li><li>b. Debt issues</li><li>c. Cost vs. benefits</li></ul>	<p>P3 Like working on my own where, like, here you get loads and loads of help and that from teachers, whereas there, like, you get your lectures and then you work on your own and it's not like that here, so I'm not quite that ready for it...At sixth form we get it when we want really, I wouldn't finish with out in 'cause I need it.</p> <p>P4 My mam says debt's right bad, she won't even have a credit card. She says she got caught out in the past.</p> <p>P9 ...but I think for everybody especially coming from here, and I'm not saying Barnsley is as deprived as what everybody makes it out, it isn't as bad as what everybody says but I think coming from an area like this where traditionally people haven't got that much money, it is a problem.</p> <p>P14 If I do go to university, it'll cost me a lot of money so I'll be in a lot of debt and even with a degree with climate the way it is now, there's no guarantee I'll get a job with a degree so I can't pay my debt off so I'm looking at paying debts 'til I'm near retirement. I may as well just get a job...</p> <p>P16 ...it's hard, isn't it, for students and stuff and you've got all this debt hanging over you when you've done and I just don't want that. I don't know, I just don't like thought of having it, having debt. It fills me with dread.</p>

	<p>P17 As soon as we get into the common room they ask us what they can help us with before I've even thought about it.</p> <p>P18 No-one wants to be in debt really, do they? Yeah, that's another thing that I didn't want, to be leaving owing money so really ...I don't know how to explain it. Just knowing you're in debt and knowing that you owe out money really, and it takes ages to pay back. That's it.</p> <p>P21 Yeah, that's a lot as well, all cost issues and having to borrow off student loans and when you have to work, you have to give it back and things. It's a lot of money. It's getting in debt before I can even get a job. It makes me feel like I wanna run away and not go to university.</p> <p>P22 What's the point of going to uni if you can't do it yourself and you need loads of help from people you don't know? What's the point...?  I don't want to be recognised as someone who needs a shed load of support.</p> <p>P24 I think it'd be more like on your own really, 'cause your tutors in your lecture room, they'd just give you lectures and send you off and tell you to come back when you've completed your work whereas here at sixth form, we can go and ask for help. If we're stuck on a certain part of us course, we can go and say "will you be able to help me out with this?" and they'll come and sit down with you and spend so long with you until you get hang of it. If I didn't have that support and I weren't able to progress</p>
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<p>2. Aspirations and its contradictory nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Work aspirations</li> <li>b. Lack of realism</li> </ul>	<p>with my work then I wouldn't be able to complete would I?</p> <p>P25 Second chances here, like, if you don't hand summat in then "give it me next week" makes you get it in but there I don't think you'd get that. I think it'd be if you don't get it on this day, you don't get it in. You get a lot more assistance I think than you would there. I think it'd just be like, right you listen, you do that and then you go off and do it.</p> <p>P26 Because if I don't meet deadline here then they just give you a different deadline or say "give me it when you've finished" where at university I'd probably get kicked out or summat.</p> <p>P31 I don't think it'd be as good as here 'cause, like, you've got loads of students haven't you at uni, depending on what course you're on and here, here you can have 1:1 time with your teachers, 'cause classes are only really that small so I think it'd be big change for me to go to uni to study. I feel at home here, you can go to teachers whenever you want and they'll help you...they don't make you feel like idiots.</p> <p>P1 I'm hoping to do an ATT in Accounts. It's an apprenticeship and you get paid at same time. I talked about it with me mam and she thinks it's a good idea. You go on to take all like these tests and go on to become a certified accountant. It just seems like the right thing to do...</p> <p>P4 I'm interested in health care and stuff like that so I want to go for an apprenticeship in the NHS.</p> <p>I don't ever want to be nothing. I never</p>
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	<p>want to be out of a job. I always think in a couple of years if I'm not doing what I want to be doing, I can always go back to university and do something in the future.</p> <p>P9 I've actually got a job already, signed contracts and everything and it's what I would have wanted to do at university if I would've gone. It is marketing and product development of a nationwide company, I suppose you could call them, but they're mainly Yorkshire. I'll get to know lots of people. I've done a lot of work with them in the past. I actually did my work experience there and it's all come into focus since then. I do work with them in holidays; they know me. This holiday just gone, I worked every day so that's what I'm planning on doing and it's hopefully gonna lead me on to greater things.</p> <p>P10 Firstly, I'm gonna do a year out doing a teaching assisting job 'cause I've been offered it and I'm finalising everything. It's in current place that I'm in now. I'm gonna do that for one year and look at a way into possibly getting into university and then into teaching eventually.</p> <p>P14 I hope that I can achieve what I want to achieve. I've aspired to it and put things in place. A club professional would be nice and there's a few clubs in America that are looking for professionals, so it'd nice to be a club pro over in America.</p> <p>P16 I've got a job for a couple of years at the minute. I've got work at Tesco and when I get a bit older, I'm gonna train up. I just hope I do well in the future and I hope I do well without going to university 'cause I really don't think I need to go to be honest, and that's my opinion...I'm gonna work my way up.</p>
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	<p>P17 I'm going to try and get in the police force at every opportunity I can, in about two or three years, and then I've got more life experience.</p> <p>P19 I've seen external sources which'll provide me with a PDR technician course which is paint-less dent repair and I've been looking through that and I'm really interested in doing it and it's changed my mind from going to university. Jane [learning mentor] put me on to it and my dad thinks it a great idea.</p> <p>P21 For meantime try and look for a job, either a part-time job, or a full-time job as soon as I leave and then in future I wanna become a police officer so I'm gonna look into that...I just need to get a job...</p> <p>P22 I'm thinking about doing an apprenticeship in this school, a housekeeping apprenticeship.</p> <p>P24 I've been doing BTEC level 3 in sports science so I'm hoping to get a job in the sports industry somewhere like a gym or just somewhere like JJB Sports, summat to do with sports, but I'm not too sure how to go about it. That's what my dad wants...but I'm not sure if I even wanna work in a sports shop. I might just stay at sixth form...I dunno what to do</p> <p>P33 Well, I am focussing on a job or apprenticeship within the travel and tourism industry with a bit of business background 'cause that's what I'm studying at minute and that's what I enjoy to do, really. I wished they'd mentioned them earlier, not just when I told them I want off to uni.</p>
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<p>3. Expectation and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Expectations of university life</li> <li>b. Lack of understanding</li> </ul>	<p>P1 I ant really got that much expectations for university cos I dunt know really know anybody who's been or what's involved; I'm not right certain about any of it, to be honest.</p> <p>P3 I know my friend Amanda's boyfriend goes and he gets loads and loads of time off. I think he's had five months off. But I think it's good for meeting new people and all that. But I think you have to work more independently though when you're in uni what's the point of that? So that's summat else I'd have to get ready for as well.</p> <p>P5 I guess it'd be same as it is here but there'd be a lot more people. You have to work on your own...I'm already no good with deadlines. If I'm being honest I'm not sure what studying at uni would be like.</p> <p>P22 I expect it to be right big classes and, you know, loads of people and I'd get right nervous about that, like, asking for help.</p> <p>P23 Stressful cos it's a lot of work init? Loads and loads of essays and stuff and lectures and listening to people. Depends what you wanna do really isn't it? Like, if you wanted to do summat that wasn't really practical, you'd really just be sat listening and writing and not much else really.</p> <p>P24 ...I'd be in a massive lecture room, and I'd have to work independently without any help from my teacher.</p> <p>P29 I think it'd be a good experience cos obviously it's being summat completely</p>
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	different to what school is. Erm environment cos like you're in a different environment to what you're usually in and different people like you know, more hours, I don't know what else.
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Once phase 4 was completed, the transcripts were reviewed again (on several occasions). Once again, it became clear that some of the refined candidate themes did not have enough data to sustain them as individual themes. For example, the fourth refined candidate theme (family, friends and peer networks) had a similar amount of data to the three refined candidate theme discussed in Table B. Consequently, I reworked the three refined candidate themes into one broader and more sustainable theme, expectation, understanding and uncertain pathways (phase 5). Whilst I was happy with this theme, I reviewed the entire data set again, to see if it reflected the meaning that emerged from the data. This entire process was worked through on several occasions throughout a 4-year period.